

# War Diary of Charles G. Sellers, Sr.

Jan. 1, 1918 - Mar. 30, 1919

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## Introduction

Through the bitterest winter in a generation, a band of raw recruits were gouging muddy Camp Sevier from the piney woods of western South Carolina. On New Year's Day, 1918, one of these volunteers in the Great War to save democracy sat down in his drafty tent (perhaps by now a hut) to start a diary. Maybe he was fulfilling a New Year's resolution. More likely he had just received as a Christmas gift the pocket-sized, leatherbound booklet in which he inscribed his first entry. This *Soldiers-Sailors Diary and English-French Dictionary* offered brief spaces, three to a page, for abbreviating the events of every day in 1918. During Private Sellers's remaining fifteen months of military service, whatever his reasons and wherever he was, he never once missed a daily entry.

## The Author

Charles Grier Sellers, Sr. was the third of eight siblings born on a small farm in western North Carolina's Cleveland County. Here along the Muddy Fork of Buffalo Creek, the Sellers had been growing corn, hogs, and cotton since the late eighteenth century. They were descended from a long line of butchers in the little Germanic state of Baden. In 1728 the latest of these, Phillip Heinrich Söllers, migrated to Philadelphia with his wife Catherine and four children. Putting down roots thirty miles to the north in Bucks County, he changed his name to Sellers as more indicative of its pronunciation, and left enough descendants to establish the town of Sellersville. In the 1790's two of his sons, George and John, followed the tide of German and Irish migrants pouring southwest down the Great Wagon Road to find cheap land in the Carolina backcountry. The "Irish" were mainly Protestant Scots whom the English had settled in Ulster, but whose descendants had not yet devised the label "Scotch-Irish" to distinguish them from the later flood of maligned Catholic Irish immigrants.

Taking up acreage along the Muddy Fork, the Sellers wove themselves into an intricate web of kinship through three generations of intermarriage with their closest neighbors, especially the Oates and the Adams. As a child Charles took delight in visiting his mother's birthplace, a quarter-mile walk up the road, to be spoiled by Aunt Mary and Grandmother Adams; and he later delighted his children with tales of the boogers and varmints that lurked along this route at night.

"Aunt Mary's" was a fine example of a rare vernacular style in post-frontier architecture. Built back in 1807 by the first John Oates of square-hewn logs, it was intermediate, in size and pretension, between the crowded log cabins of the early white settlers and the airy plantation houses that arose on richer soils than those drained by the Muddy Fork. The marvels of the Oates/Adams house included a shady porch, an imposing second story reached by a winding stair, a tall chimney, and portholes in the gable ends of the second floor, apparently for defense. Hopefully more pictures will turn up of this important lost relic of a vanished life.

Here in "My Mansion House" in 1849, the second John Oates (Charles's great-great-grandfather) signed a will distributing a considerable estate, including five slaves. "My small Negro girl Harriet Jane" he allotted to his granddaughter Katharine, wife of Charles's Grandfather Felix Sellers, farmer and part-time blacksmith. So far as the record reveals, this was the Sellers' only involvement with the tragic contradictions of slaveholding. And they produced no Confederate heroes.

Young Charlie's life found direction in the one-room school to which he trudged several miles each schoolday during childhood. There the teaching of Miss Laura Plonk won his lasting gratitude and affection. Drawing in his teens on the start she gave him in arithmetic, he amazed the neighborhood with his genius for figures in computing the board-feet turned out by his father's peripatetic saw-mill. And his diary would exhibit the start she gave him in spelling, grammar, and vocabulary.

Meanwhile, with further schooling unavailable, Charlie left home to clerk in a relative's country store at nearby Crowder's Mountain. Here this increasingly purposeful young man mustered the confidence and resources for a more audacious leap. Packing up his scanty belongings, he moved east across the wide Catawba to the regional metropolis Charlotte, the farthest from home he had ever been. Crossing a still wider cultural chasm, he was exchanging the static certainties of rural life for the opportunities, perils, and excitements of the city.

This classic instance of "chain migration" was facilitated by interlocking structures of kinship and faith. Cousin John Sellers had established himself in Charlotte several years earlier, and now provided lodging and tutelage for the kinsman following in his footsteps. From Cousin John's overcrowded apartment, Charlie soon graduated to the Young Men's Christian Association, where exercise and spartan lodging shielded pious newcomers from urban vice.

Church was the major socializing force for mobile young men. The Sellers' devotion to the "reformed" theology proclaimed pre-eminently by John Calvin had undergone a cosmetic change on the Great Wagon Road. They had no sooner left behind in Pennsylvania the German Reformed Church of Calvin and Huldreich Zwengli than they met on the road a providential alternative. Some Ulster Scots were carrying south a devoutly reformed offshoot from the Church of Scotland, the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church of Calvin and John Knox.

The ARP's stemmed from the "Covenanter" struggle to save the Presbyterian purity of their national Church from English-inspired corruptions. The great Scottish/Ulster-Scottish migrations of the eighteenth century carried many Covenanters to America, and their ARP congregations survived least corrupted in the more culturally isolated regions of the small-farm upper South. Nowhere else, even today, is classic Calvinism so scrupulously preserved and so intransigently preached. ARP's are best known for rejecting hymns composed by mere mortals, instead raising the congregational voice exclusively in the divinely inspired Psalms of David from the Bible. David's solemn and joyful paeans to Jehovah and His Creation, it can well be argued, as set to the stately meters of the Covenanters' cherished Scottish *Psalter*, far outshine the average sentimental hymn in taste and beauty, whatever their theological provenance.

But already such newfangled luxuries as pipe organs and stained glass were creeping into the denomination's more prosperous urban congregations. In town, ARP's found they needed such amenities to compete with other denominations in attracting new members. For many of the rural brethren, however, all this smacked of idolatrous "graven images," and foreshadowed the great schism over hymnals that years later would complicate Sellers' lives.

Charlie's parents derived his middle name "Grier" from a clan of prominent ARP preachers. Doubtless this eased his entrée into ARP circles wherever he went. The ARP communalism of his boyhood Bethel congregation was replicated

seamlessly in the rural Pisgah congregation at Crowder's Mountain, and then in the flourishing urban congregation established by earlier migrants to Charlotte. A genial young bachelor about town who played a mean harrmonica, Charlie quickly extended his network of friendships, as his diary indicates, to nearby towns having ARP churches—Kings Mountain, Rock Hill, Mooresville, and Statesville.

After honing his skills at a business college in Charlotte, this promising youth was employed in 1912 as a clerk by the Standard Oil Company. He would eventually manage the office of Standard/Esso/Exxon's North Carolina division, with several hundred employees. But first there was a war to be fought.

### **The 113<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Regiment**

Charles had been with Standard Oil for five years when Congress declared war on Germany in April, 1917. Still a bachelor at age 28 and highly eligible for military service, he had to decide quickly whether to volunteer or wait to be conscripted. The scales were tipped in June when the War Department called on North Carolina to organize a volunteer, six-battery regiment of field artillery. Six towns got going fast enough to nab a battery, and one of them was Mooresville, where Charles had friends and sometimes attended the ARP church. Recruiting began on June 13, and in less than four weeks the regiment was fully recruited. "C. G. Sellers" enlisted in Mooresville's Battery F at Charlotte on July 2. Standing 68 inches tall and weighing 140 pounds, he was recorded as having dark eyes and black hair.

Private Sellers was joining a complicated organization. These were the essential levels of unit and command with which he dealt:

- Battery F: Comprised almost 200 men and four gun squads, each firing a horsedrawn cannon.
- Second Battalion: Comprised three Batteries, D, E, and F, all from western North Carolina. The First Battalion comprised Batteries A, B, and C from the eastern part of the state.
- 113<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Regiment: Comprised the First and Second Battalions.
- 55<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Brigade: Comprised three Regiments, the 113<sup>th</sup>, 114<sup>th</sup>, and 115<sup>th</sup>.
- 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division: Comprised three infantry Regiments and supporting units. The 113<sup>th</sup> Artillery Regiment, along with the rest of the 55<sup>th</sup> Brigade, trained with and were expected to furnish artillery support for the 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. In combat, however, military exigency diverted them to other Divisions.

Although assignable to any of these units for guard duty or work details, Charles belonged most immediately to Battery F, the Second Battalion, and the 113<sup>th</sup> Regiment. He developed a lifelong admiration for his battery commander, Captain Reid R. Morrison, a physician and militia officer from Davidson, just south of Mooresville. After the war, his esteem for battalion commander Major Alfred L. Bulwinkle was only enhanced by Bulwinkle's extreme conservatism as the perennial

Democratic Congressman from the Gastonia/Charlotte district. To command the regiment, the Governor had appointed Colonel Albert L. Cox, formerly a Superior Court judge.

As soon as the 113<sup>th</sup> was mustered into federal service on July 25, the six batteries began impromptu drilling in their respective towns, and by September every volunteer had been supplied with at least one cotton uniform. On August 20, Charles's Battery F was ordered from Mooresville to Greenville, S.C., where they were praised for "splendid work" in hacking a training camp out of a muddy forest. The rest of the regiment joined them in raw new Camp Sevier on September 15. By the time Charles started his diary on January 1, serious training was under way.

### Transcribing and Editing the Diary

In these pressured jottings on the fly, the flowing Spencerian hand taught by Miss Plonk blotches, ink fades, and paper discolors. Even when words are decipherable, haphazard capitals and missing or inscrutable punctuation obscure sentence structures. Standardized capitals, commas, and periods have therefore been provided for easier reading, but every effort has been made to decipher and record wording and spellings as written. Square brackets indicate editorial comments.

The writing has a few persistent idiosyncracies. "Quite" often means "quiet." The symbol "a/c" oddly seems to stand for "on account of" or "due to". Quotation marks enclosing words or phrases sometimes signify positive or negative feeling. And the many unidentified personal initials, especially those of possible lady correspondents, could provoke years of further family research.

Explanatory boxes flesh out the diary's necessarily terse and laconic notations. Explanatory information in the boxes, as well as extensive quotations of vivid narrative (*indicated by bold face italics*), are drawn from the excellent *History of the 113<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery 30th Division* (Raleigh, N.C., 1920). The regiment's Historical Committee made a splendid choice in picking the commander of the regimental supply company, Captain Arthur Lloyd Fletcher, to write the history.

Fletcher was a man of unbounded energy and surprisingly varied talents. Previous business success in Raleigh may well have recommended him to be among the Governor's first regimental appointments, so as to get the complicated supplying of the new regiment off to a fast start. He turned out to be a superb supply officer, who recognized from the start that the regiment would eventually be stopped in its tracks by collapse of the overworked horsepower on which it depended for both supplies and mobility. His frustration with his brigade commander's indifference to this critical problem occasionally breaks through the studied impartiality of his narrative voice.

Improbably enough, the superb doer Fletcher also turned out to be a superb writer. Seemingly without much practice at writing, he steered clear of commas and

apologized diffidently for his “newspaper style.” Yet his prose is so vivid and his eye for telling detail so sharp that he is quoted here often and at length. Fletcher’s expressive voice gives life, depth, and emotional context to Corporal Sellers’s diary. Fletcher’s volume contains in addition masses of statistics and rosters, along with a profusion of fascinating photographs. And all this is instantly available free at: <http://docsouth.unc.edu/wwi/fletcher/fletcher.html>.

Between June 1, 1919, when Fletcher was invited to write the regimental history, and some time in 1920 when it was published, the indefatigable author “was able to give to the history only such spare time as could be found in the evenings and on holidays.” Although he completed his formidable volume under these conditions in little more than a year at most, he still felt constrained to apologize. “It has taken a long time to finish this work,” he explained, because at the same time he “held an exacting and extremely difficult job that required his undivided attention for every working hour of the day.”

To the far more modest task of editing Corporal Sellers’s diary, I bring some modest military experience and warm memories of my father as a superb story-teller. Almost nightly he succumbed to demands from his children to “tell us a story”--about “when you were a little boy,” or “when you were in the war.” Although particulars of his many anecdotes in each category elude memory, his war stories certainly included much stringing of telephone lines between battery and front, manning forward observation posts, and jumping into convenient bomb craters to escape bursting shells. Collectively they impressed youthful minds with a vivid sense of war’s miseries, from constant mud and rain, through bursting shells and poison gas, to arbitrary maiming and death. A grandson remembers to this day Grandfather’s story about the helmet that saved him from a stray bullet as he sat in his tent.

While saluting Captain Fletcher’s impressive achievement and its enhancement of the diary’s narrative, I also feel constrained to echo--with far more reason and far less excuse--his apology that it’s taken such “a long time to finish this work.”

Charles Grier Sellers, Jr.  
S/Sgt., 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division

# DIARY

**1918**

**Wed., 1/2** Went on hike in snow. It began to snow again before we got back in a.m. Half holiday in p.m., still snowing.

## First Days at Camp Sevier

*It was grub stumps, pile brush, rake trash all day long and the bugle called you again early the following morning to start it all over again.... The weather was bitter cold before the men could be furnished with winter clothes.... They lived under canvas through the worst winter the South had experienced since 1898....*

*It should not be understood that clearing away the "forest primeval" was the only thing going on at Camp Sevier.... While half of a battery was out in the woods hard at work, the other half would be at standing gun drill or doing "squads east."... Each organization provided itself with wooden guns, there being no real guns available, and drilled faithfully.... But...a most exacting and rigid course of instructions in all phases of artillery work was carried out despite the fearful weather.*

**Thurs., 1/3** Went on hike in snow & ill in a.m. Stable duty in p.m.

**Fri., 1/4** Went on hike. The roads were covered with ice, could hardly stand up. Did stable duty in p.m.

**Sat., 1/5** Stables [cleaning] and regular drill in a.m. Holiday in p.m. Raining.

**Sun., 1/6** Stables, after which I stayed in tent all day. Was very muddy and raining all day.

**Mon., 1/7** Drilled on guns all day. The wind blew hard and fiercely cold. Almost froze.

## Early Training at Camp Sevier

Lieutenant Jacques J.L. Popelin of the French Army visited Camp Sevier to advise on training. He recalls conditions there in this letter to an officer of the 113th:

*We had nothing to work with.... You remember as well as I do that we had at first no more than four 3" guns, without equipment, for the whole brigade; we had no maps.... You had no or very few horses, and when you got some more, you had no harness to hitch them up and drill.*

*There were no instruments, not even field glasses; no telephones except the buzzer, which was of small help because of the lack of wire; no plane tables, save the regular ones, which were unfit for artillery work, with their fixed compass and loose unsquared sheet; no signaling projectors, and no good manual on liaison, on aerial observation, on the use of meteorological elements, not even correct range tables for your 3" guns you would never fire on the front; and no description of the 75 m/m gun about which you have been told so many things, which you would use "over there" and which very few officers only saw before their landing in France.*

*Invention and imagination had to supply the missing means of work. You taught mounted battery drill without horses nor guns, each man walking along where he belonged to, as if he had been riding a draft horse or sitting on a limber. You taught standing battery drill with wooden guns carrying wooden sights, and with wooden B. C. instruments.*

*Perhaps, at the time you were bound to use them, many an officer or man did not realize how much they did help. They looked like playthings, but every one learned an awful lot on them. The proof of that is no more to be made, we saw it plainly when the regiment started its firing at Cleveland Mills.*

**Tues. 1/8** Regular drill on wooden guns and signal practice in a.m. Same in p.m.

**Wed., 1/9** Regular drill in a.m. Holiday in p.m. Rev. W.B. Lindsay came down to see me. A pretty warm sunny day.

**Thurs., 1/10** Regular drill all day. A warm sunny day.

**Fri., 1/11** Stable duty only. It sleeted, snowed, and rained all day. By night every thing covered in ice, large trees breaking down. Wind fierce at night.

**Sat., 1/12** On sick report. Wind still fierce, ground covered with ice, fiercely cold.

**Sun., 1/13** Still very cold. Did stables. Went to S[unday] S[chool] at Y.M.C.A. Wrote some letters in p.m.

**Mon., 1/14** Regular drill in a.m. Half holiday for 113<sup>th</sup> in p.m.

**Tues., 1/15** Regular drill in a.m., also in p.m. On guard at night (stable).

**Wed., 1/16** Did stables and fatigue [army jargon for routine gang labor, such as cleanup]. Preparing for inspection by an Asst. Secy. of War in [p.m.?)

**Thurs., 1/17** Regular drill in a.m., also in p.m. "Pay Day"

**Fri., 1/18** Regular drill in a.m. and p.m.

### **On Furlough**

Private Sellers's route and activities on furlough invite considerable surmise about his civilian social life. Its geographical setting can be calculated by the distances and directions from Charlotte of the various places mentioned.

The family farm was 31 crowflight miles WNW from Charlotte, and 4 miles farther NW lay the tiny village of Waco. The closest real town, 6 miles south of the farm, was Kings Mountain, where the Sellers frequently traded, worshipped, and socialized with members of the local ARP church. Sister Ada would marry one, and sister Emma would come to live with them on a farm just outside town while working in the local cotton mill.

Kings Mountain was a stop on the Southern Railway's Washington-to-New Orleans mainline, 28 miles W of Charlotte. Greenville, S.C. was 76 miles farther SW down the mainline (104 miles from Charlotte), and Camp Sevier a few miles more. Charles's other South Carolina destination was far off the mainline. Rock Hill was 17 miles almost due south of Charlotte on a spur line, requiring a considerable detour en route to the Queen City from Camp Sevier.

From Charlotte another spur railroad ran north to Mooresville (23 miles) and Statesville (33 miles). After the war, the Statesville/Mooresville ARP nexus would bless Charles with an accomplished bride.

Private Sellers's last day on furlough was an emotionally important one in his life.

**Sat., 1/19** Did stables, then signal practice. Qualified in semaphore. Started home on furlough in p.m. Was in Rock Hill at night. Saw B.P.

**Sun., 1/20** Came from Rock Hill to Charlotte. At church at 1<sup>st</sup> A.R.P in a.m. Spent bal. of day and night with W.M.S. Went home with miss G.F.

**Mon., 1/21** Went over to the Soco [Standard Oil Co.] office. Took dinner with Mrs. Hoover. Went to Mooresville at night. Spent night at J.W.B.'s.

**Tues., 1/22** Left Mooresville at 11 o'clock. Spent few hours in Charlotte. Started home over S. and L. [?]. Got left. Came over Sou[thern Railway] to Kings Mtn. Got home about 7 o'clock.

**Wed., 1/23** At home all a.m. Went to Waco in p.m. Took supper J.L. Woods. Got back home about 11:30.

**Thurs., 1/24** Walked with Pa up to W.J. Wolfe's in a.m. Went by where [sister] Emma was teaching (3 B School), on my way back to train back to Camp Sevier. Arrived back in camp about 10:40 p.m.

### **The Geography of Kin and Faith**

For the rapidly growing family that Charles established after the war, life would long be shaped by the tugs of kinship along the right-angled axes that connected Charlotte with a formidable host of ARP Templeton/Morrison in-laws to the north, and with the old Sellers homeplace to the west. The bitterest tug came quickly. The soldierly son's comradely stroll with "Pa" across the branch and up the big hill to the Wolfe place had been a major rite of passage. A proud father was showing off a no doubt smartly uniformed son to a leading neighborhood family. Only two days later a stricken son was summoned back home to bury his father in the Bethel church graveyard. Sixty-five-year-old David Sellers had died without warning, at 11 P.M., of "Paralysis or Apoplexy." Abruptly Charles was wholly on his own, and henceforth youngest brother Giles would anchor the western arm of the kinship axis.

**Fri., 1/25** Regular drill. Tried out the telephone and buzzer [telegraph sender] for first time in a.m. Tried them again and had signal practice in p.m. Was promoted to Corporal while was at home. Moved to another tent at night.

### **The Non-Com[missioned Officer]**

The promotion, along with the pattern of daily activities recorded in the diary, suggests that Corporal Sellers was coming to be valued as a quick learner who took to technical complexity like a duck to water. He does not seem to have been a regular member of a gun crew. What is impressive is how many collateral technologies he was being schooled in—signals, telephone, telegraph, wigwag, semaphore, poison gas.

*By slow degrees every man found his place. Men who had come to camp privates demonstrated their fitness for places of responsibility.... A good private is a precious possession and one to be cherished, but a good non-com is worth his weight in gold. It takes long, hard, sustained effort to develop one.*

**Sat., 1/26** Regular drill in a.m. Went to Greenville together with G.N.W. in p.m. Arrived back at camp about 7:30 p.m. Mud everywhere. [Apparently added to this entry after Charles learned on 1/27 of his father's death on 1/26] Date of father's death, 11 o'clock p.m. Cause Paralysis or Apoplexy.

**Sun., 1/27** Did stables. Went to preaching. Just when services were over, I received telegram saying father was dead. Caught train from Greenville 1:50. Arrived home about five o'clock. Roads fierce a/c [on account of] mud.

**Mon., 1/28** Raining and freezing. Father buried at Bethel [ARP Church,] 12 o'clock m. Arrived back home about 2 p.m. Remained at home balance of day. [Brother] Robt.'s birthday.

**Tues., 1/29** Remained at home all day. Emma & Ruth went back to school in a.m. Rob & family went home in p.m. [Sister] Ada's birthday.

**Wed., 1/30** Raining again. At home all day. Wrote some letters.

**Thurs., 1/31** Still raining. Took dinner with S.R. Wolfe. [Brother] Giles and me came to Kings Mtn. in p.m. Spent night with J.C. Lackey.

**Fri., 2/1** Left K.M. on #39 at 9 o'clock for Camp Sevier. Arrived at camp 12 m[eridian]. Drill and signal practice in p.m. Sun shined part of day. Went to brigade YMCA to movie at night.

**Sat., 2/2** Raining again. Did stables. Had inspection by Gen. Gutley. Holiday in p.m. Loafed. "Ground Hog Day." Dark, cloudy, and raining all day.

## Horses and Their Byproducts

*It was several months before the regiment had its full quota of horses and mules, but they came at last and they were all that could be desired.... Feeding and grooming these animals under the weather conditions that prevailed was a tremendous task. To make a bad matter worse, the accumulations of soiled bedding [straw] and manure from the corrals amounted to ... an average of twenty [wagon] loads daily for many months.*

No wonder "stables" and "corral" are becoming the commonest work assignments listed in Corporal Sellers's diary.

- Sun., 2/3** Did stables. Went to Greenville to church in a.m. Went to brigade YMCA at night. Wrote some letters. Stayed for preaching.
- Mon., 2/4** Regular drill in a.m. Also in p.m. Went to YMCA to movie at night.
- Tues., 2/5** Regular drill in a.m. and p.m. On guard at night, first time as corporal of guard.
- Wed., 2/6** On guard all day. F.H. took mumps. Ward & Fink moved to woods. Pharr at home.
- Thurs., 2/7** Regular drill in a.m., half holiday in p.m. Went to G'ville. Got home about 10:30.
- Fri., 2/8** Regular drill in a.m. Patched tents in p.m. Went to YMCA to movie at night.
- Sat., 2/9** Stables, signal practice, and worked at corral in a.m. Half holiday in p.m., went to Sevier Station. Shot pool.
- Sun., 2/10** Did stable in a.m. Went to YMCA and wrote some letters in p.m.
- Mon., 2/11** Regular drill a.m. and p.m.
- Tues., 2/12** Regular drill a.m. and p.m.
- Wed., 2/13** Regular drill a.m. and p.m. Went to Liberty Theater to show at night.
- Thurs., 2/14** Regular drill in a.m. Drill and "Pay Day" in p.m.
- Fri., 2/14** Regular drill in a.m., holiday in p.m. On stable guard and in charge quarters at night.
- Sat., 2/16** In charge of quarters all day.
- Sun., 2/17** Stables. Loafed around our camp balance of day.
- Mon., 2/18** Regular drill in a.m. Horse struck me on foot.
- Tues., 2/19** On sick report account of sore foot. Stayed in quarters all day.

### **Going to Town**

Given the rawness of Camp Sevier and the severity of the winter, Corporal Sellers took refuge in the comforts of nearby Greenville surprisingly infrequently.

Mainly he visited the YMCA or attended a Sunday morning church service, usually returning to camp early.

This pattern prompts speculation about the sudden spate of Greenville evenings in late February.

- Wed., 2/20** Regular drill in a.m. and p.m. Enjoyed concert by some ladies from Greenville at YMCA at night.
- Thurs., 2/21** Went to division hdqrs., took test in wig-wag in a.m. Went back in p.m. for test in semaphore.
- Fri., 2/22** Holiday. Went to G'ville in p.m. Got back about 10:30.
- Sat., 2/23** Regular drill in a.m. Went to Greenville in p.m.
- Sun., 2/24** Stables. Went to Greenville to church. Got back about 9 a. [*sic*] m.
- Mon., 2/25** Regular drill, signalling, a.m. and p.m.
- Tues., 2/26** Regular drill in a.m., holiday in p.m. Went to Sevier Station to Y at night.
- Wed., 2/27** Regular drill in a.m. and p.m.
- Thurs., 2/28** Stable inspection and muster in arms. Drill in p.m. On stable guard at night.
- Fri., 3/1** In charge of quarters all day.
- Sat., 3/2** Drill in a.m., holiday in p.m. Went to Greenville, S.C. Back to camp 9:30.
- Sun., 3/3** Stables, after which went to S[unday] S[chool] at YMCA. Loafed in quarters in p.m.
- Mon., 3/4** Stables. Harnessed and hitched horses to guns for first time. Did signal practice.
- Tues., 3/5** Signal practice in a.m. Signal and horse back riding in p.m.
- Wed., 3/6** Stables and signal practice in a.m. Holiday in p.m., stayed in quarters.
- Thurs., 3/7** Regular drill a.m. and p.m.
- Fri., 3/8** Regular drill a.m., exercised horses in p.m.

**Sat., 3/9** Stables and reg[imental] test in signaling in a.m., holiday in p.m.

**Sun., 3/10** Stables. Went to Greenville to church in a.m. Got back to camp about 3 p.m. Loafed in quarters balance of day.

**Mon., 3/11** Regular drill in a.m., and am on guard at night stable and charge of quarters.

**Tues., 3/12** In charge of quarters all day. To non-com[missioned officer] school at night.

**Wed., 3/13** Regular drill a.m. and p.m.

**Thurs., 3/14** Regular drill in a.m. Holiday and Pay Day in p.m. Non-com school at night.

**Fri., 3/15** Regular drill in a.m. and p.m.

**Sat., 3/16** Stable and had regi[mental] picture made in a.m. Holiday, went to G'ville in p.m.

**Sun., 3/17** Raining, did stables. Did nothing balance of day.

**Mon., 3/18** Regular drill in a.m., and p.m. took horses to remount to dip them. Non-com school at night.

**Tues., 3/19** Finn went to hospital with mumps. Regular drill in a.m. In p.m. went horse back riding at 3:30. Non-com school at night.

**Wed., 3/20** Raining. School in mess hall in a.m. Regular drill in p.m. To Liberty Theater at night.

**Thurs., 3/21** Stables. Went to division headquarters for test in wigway [wigwag] signaling in a.m., and back in p.m. for test in semaphore. Non-com school at night.

**Fri., 3/22** Regular drill in a.m., holiday in p.m. Went to Greenville. Got back to camp about 3:30. Non-com school at night.

**Sat., 3/23** Stables. Regimental test in signaling in a.m. Holiday in p.m. Went to Gastonia to see N.A. Came back to K[ings] M[ountain] on #43. Got home about 3:30 a.m.

**Sun., 3/24** At home. Left for Camp Sevier about 4:30 p.m., arrived at camp about 10:00 o'clock.

**Mon., 3/25** The regiment went over beyond the 105<sup>th</sup> Engrs. to clean out a branch. On reg[imental] guard at night.

**Tues., 3/26** On guard all day. Went to YMCA at night to preaching.

**Wed., 3/27** Stables. Went to Paris “Hippodrome” to see some “War Pictures.” Went out and formed B.C. [the meaning of these frequently used initials is not apparent] detail. Mounted [guard?] in p.m.

**Thurs., 3/28** Regular drill in a.m., drill and fatigue in p.m.

**Fri., 3/29** Regular drill in a.m., drill and fatigue in p.m.

**Sat., 3/30** Stables and inspection in a.m., holiday in p.m. Horseback riding in p.m. Went to Greenville at night.

**Sun., 3/31** Stables in a.m. Went riding in p.m. To Greenville at night. [This added entry probably pertains to the following day, 4/1] First call in a.m. 4:30 a/c mixup in changing to new time. Muster for pay at 8 o'clock a.m.

**Mon., 4/1** Regular drill in a.m. and p.m.

**Tues., 4/2** Regular drill in a.m. & p.m.

**Wed., 4/3** Regular drill in a.m., holiday in p.m. Went to ride, came back, went to Greenville, had picture made.

**Thurs., 4/4** Regular drill in a.m. and p.m.

**Fri., 4/5** Regular drill in a.m. and p.m. Got orders to prepare to start to range – Sat. a.m.

### **Shooting Big Guns**

*The arrival of real guns created much excitement in camp. They came after many promises and many delays, and while they were aged and uncertain in action, they were highly prized. The regiment secured four of them.... The guns were placed on the parade ground and a regular schedule for gun drill was prepared by which each organization got its turn with regularity and every gun was in use every working hour. Rain or shine, no organization missed its drill period. The winter was unusually bitter but it made no difference.... The men learned that firing cannons was no longer a simple matter, but that they must take into consideration the density of the air, the temperature of the powder and sundry meteorological facts and circumstances.*

During the first half of April each of the 113<sup>th</sup>'s two battalions spent a week firing *at the artillery range at Cleveland Mills, about twenty miles north of Camp Sevier. This period of practice firing, the first the men had had, was one of unusual interest to them. For months they had been going through the motions of loading, aiming, and firing. They had stood gun drill until they were letter perfect in the execution of every command, and the gun squads moved like well-oiled machines. The men wondered if they could handle "live" shells as smoothly as they had the wooden shells, and if the report of the guns would rattle them; and they were possessed of a great and burning curiosity to see their officers work under conditions approximating actual warfare. They could hardly wait to get on the range and at work.*

**Sat., 4/6** Stables. Got ready to start to range at 1 o'clock. Hiked from one to six o'clock. Went into camp for the night. Slept with G.N.W, in "dog tent."

**Sun., 4/7** Breakfast at 7 o'clock. Resumed march at 8 o'clock, arrived at range about eleven o'clock a.m. Began raining about 3 o'clock, still raining when went to bed.

**Mon., 4/8** Still raining, quit about 9 o'clock, very muddy. No firing except simulated. Had first real work in establishing communication.

**Tues., 4/9** Began firing. Battery D first period, E, and then "F" in order. I had no special duties.

**Wed., 4/10** "E" carried out the guns, got in position, and began firing, but due to difficulty in getting up Mtn. were late. F and D fired in order. I kept record at B.C. station.

**Thurs., 4/11** "F" carried out guns and got in position by 8:30 o'clock, ten minutes before time to begin firing. D and E fired in order. I kept record at B.C. station.

**Fri., 4/12** E carried out the guns. F and D fired in order. I kept record at B.C. station.

**Sat., 4/13** D carried out guns and fired a few rounds. F and E didn't fire any. Holiday in p.m. Went up to the targets.

**Sun., 4/14** Started at 7:30 for camp, arrived at camp 3:30. Very tired and dusty.

**Mon., 4/15** "Pay Day" Went to Greenville at night. Back about 9:30.

**Tues., 4/16** Stables and fatigue, work all day.

**Wed., 4/17** Stables. Went with B.C. detail to school.

**Thurs., 4/18** Stables. To division headquarters for test in wigwag and semaphore in a.m. Holiday in p.m.

**Fri., 4/19** Stable. To school in a.m. and p.m.

**Sat., 4/20** Stables, inspection and checking equipment in a.m. Holiday in p.m.

**Sun., 4/21** Stables. Went to reg[imental] preaching, Battery C mess hall. Went riding in p.m. On guard at night.

**Mon., 4/22** On guard all day.

**Tues., 4/23** Regular duties, first lesson in sketching.

**Wed., 4/24** Received orders to check equipment and hold myself in readiness for services abroad.

### **Advance Party to France**

*On April, 19, 1918, Colonel Cox was directed by the Division Commander to name 18 officers and 30 enlisted men as an "advance school detachment" to precede the regiment to France for instruction. This detachment left the regiment on April 30<sup>th</sup> and sailed from New York on the steamship George Washington on May 8<sup>th</sup>. They landed at Brest, France and reported at the U.S. Artillery School Camp at Camp de Valdahon, France. This detachment rejoined the regiment at Camp de Coetquidan, France on June 22, 1918. It consisted of the following officers and men:... Corp. Charles G. Sellers, of Battery F....*

Each of these men would spend a month studying the latest techniques and equipment in one of the various artillery-related specialties. Officers studied one of the following: Firing; Reconnaissance and Orientation; Aerial Observation; and Wireless or Telegraphy. The enlisted men were grouped into "Departments" of Materiel; Telephone; Wireless; and Observation and Liaison. Corporal Sellers was among the three corporals and four sergeants constituting the Wireless Department. Collectively they would provide a cadre of technical competence for the whole regiment.

*The departure of these men stirred the regiment to fever heat. The whole outfit, both officers and men, were wild to be on the move and eager to get at the foe. The news from Europe at that time was not cheering. Germany had launched the first of her big drives in March. The result had been disastrous for the allies. In April Germany again smashed through the allied lines for big gains and it began to look like the war would be over before the eager warriors of the One Hundred and Thirteenth could reach the scene of action.*

*En route to France via Hoboken, the untraveled Corporal Sellers had an exciting day*

in New York.

**Thurs., 4/25** Went to infirmary for physical [*sic*] examination in a.m. Went riding in p.m.

**Fri., 4/26** Stables. Went to Dr. for examination 10:30 a.m. Went to Greenville in p.m. At social ARP Church at night.

**Sat. 2/27** Went to Dr for examination at 10:30 a.m. Confined to quarters. Loafed around balance of day.

**Sun., 4/28** Stayed in quarters all day a/c quarantined or confined to quarters.

**Mon., 4/29** Made preparation to leave camp Tuesday.

**Tues., 4/30** Stood muster in a.m. Boarded train and left camp about 2 o'clock p.m. Stopped in Charlotte for few minutes. Slept on train.

**Wed. 5/1** Got up about 7:30 a.m. Arrived Washington about 9:30. Stopped few minutes. Red Cross served lunches & coffee. Arrived Phila. About 1:30 p.m. Stopped about 1½ hours.

**Thurs., 5/2** Arrived Camp Merrit N.J. about 1 a.m., went for examination. On nothing balance of day.

**Fri., 5/3** Did nothing in a.m. The YMCA and Red Cross served lunches and coffee in p.m. at YM.

**Sat., 5/4** Did nothing in a.m. On guard in p.m.

**Sun., 5/5** Went to N.Y. Saw a very good show. Went to entertainment, both show and entertainment free. Took in some of the sights.

**Mon., 5/6** [In pencil] Just ran out of Pen. Went to Drs. for examination. Got orders to be ready to leave Camp Merrit at 5 o'clock Tuesday a.m.

### Crossing the Atlantic

Corporal Sellers and the advance detachment had a far easier crossing on the liner George Washington than did the rest of the regiment, which followed later on a much criticized British vessel.

- Tues., 5/7** Left Camp Merritt about 7 o'clock, arrived port of embarkation [*sic*] and went on board about 1:30. Recd. [?] first meal on board 3 o'clock.
- Wed., 5/8** Onboard ship. Breakfast 8 o'clock. Left port about 4 o'clock p.m. On the way.
- Thurs., 5/9** Onboard ship. Weather fine. Was placed on lookout duty on 3 hours each day.
- Fri., 5/10** Onboard ship, weather fine, nothing eventful.
- Sat., 5/11** Onboard ship, weather fine. Doing 3 hours watch duty each day at eight hour intervals. Saw a whale.
- Sun., 5/12** Onboard ship. Wind blowing, sea running pretty high. Went to preaching.
- Mon., 5/13** Onboard ship. Sea very quite [*sic*]. Lost most of the day a/c gun crews doing target practice.
- Tues., 5/14** Onboard ship. Sea getting pretty rough. Rained some, wind blowing. Began to get sick in p.m. Still on duty.
- Wed., 5/15** Onboard ship. Still a little sick, but still on duty. Roughest sea we have had. Began to feel better in p.m.
- Thurs., 5/16** Onboard ship. Weather fine, sea quite [*sic*]. Feeling much better.
- Fri., 5/17** Onboard ship. Weather fine, sea quite [*sic*].
- Sat., 5/18** Onboard ship. Had scare by submarine at 3:40 a.m. Arrived at Brest, France, 11 a.m. Arrived at camp 9 p.m.
- Sun., 5/19** Spent a very quite [*sic*] day in camp. Wrote some letters.
- Mon., 5/20** Stayed in camp in a.m. Went for short hike in p.m. Stopped at small village.
- Tues., 5/21** Went on about 5 mile hike in a.m. Stopped at same village as yesterday. Spent p.m. in camp.
- Wed., 5/22** Went on short hike to a small village. Spent about 2 hours on kitchen police in p.m. Got orders to move next morning.

## Training at Camp de Valdahon

Leaving Brest by train, the advance detachment and Corporal Sellers spent two days and nights crossing France at its widest point. To avoid congestion and the fighting, they followed a great southerly arc around Paris and then back up to the Camp de Valdahon just short of the Swiss border. Here they had nearly a month of constant classes, practice, and testing in the various specialties. Corporal Sellers concentrated on wireless telegraphy, advancing from group 3 to group 2 in proficiency on the "buzzer."

One Sunday the corporal had "a fine time" visiting picturesque Besançon, whose "interesting sights" included his first view of an ancient cathedral. But intense study left no time for experiencing more fully this beautiful region of Alpine horizons and Burgundy wine.

**Thurs., 5/23** Reveille at 3:30, prepared to march at 5 o'clock. Left Brest about 9 o'clock on train. Rode all day and all night.

**Fri., 5/24** Still on train. Rode all day and all night. Made very poor time.

**Sat., 5/25** Still on train. Arrived at destination about 2:30. "La Valdahon" [Camp de Valdahon], a very good camp.

**Sun., 5/26** Not feeling very well. I stayed in barracks most all day. Wrote a letter home.

**Mon., 5/27** Did nothing in a.m. except police [army jargon for clean] barracks. Went to QM [Quartermaster] in a.m. and drew overseas caps. After returning was instructed where to report for studies or instructions.

**Tues., 5/28** Reported for duty 8 a.m. Had buzzer practice 2 hours in a.m. and 2 hours in p.m.

**Wed., 5/29** 2 hours buzzer practice in a.m. and 2 hours in p.m.

**Thurs., 5/30** Holiday.

**Fri., 5/31** 2 hours buzzer practice in a.m., 2 hours in p.m.

**Sat., 6/1** Buzzer practice and practical lecture on wireless in a.m. Holiday in p.m.

**Sun., 6/2** Went to preaching at YMCA in a.m. Stayed in barracks in p.m.

**Mon., 6/3** Did panel signal practice all day.

**Tues., 6/4** Did panel signal practice all day. Got my first mail here. 1 letter from L.B. and one from N.W. [?]. Also a card from N.W. [?].

- Wed., 6/5** Did projector work all day.
- Thurs., 6/6** Had work with the wireless receiving instruments. Received letter from B.P.
- Fri., 6/7** Worked with the receiving instruments.
- Sat., 6/8** Have buzzer practice in a.m., holiday in p.m. Received letters from Emma, Lillie, and N.W.
- Sun., 6/9** Went to Becanson [Besançon] on pass. Saw some very interesting sights, had fine time. Got back to camp about 8:30 p.m.
- Mon., 6/10** Had buzzer practice in a.m. Had test in p.m. "Pay Day"
- Tues., 6/11** Was promoted from group 3 to group 2 in buzzer classes.
- Wed., 6/12** Had practice with wireless receiving sets, both a.m. & p.m.
- Thurs., 6/13** Had buzzer test in a.m., practice with projectors balance of day. 55[th Field Artillery] brig[ade]. Beat 5[th] F.A. 7 to 4 in ballgame.
- Fri., 6/14** Buzzer practice and wireless receiving today.
- Sat., 6/15** Raining. Had buzzer practice and test. Holiday in p.m.
- Sun., 6/16** Still raining. Stayed in barracks most all day.
- Mon., 6/17** Still raining and muddy. Had buzzer practice in a.m., nothing in p.m.
- Tues., 6/18** On kitchen police all day.
- Wed., 6/19** Did nothing in a.m. Prepared to leave in p.m.
- Thurs., 6/20** Train left Vald[a]hon 8 o'clock. 12 men including myself and 5 officers missed train. Rode to Beconson [Besançon] in box car. Left there at 11:30 p.m. in 1<sup>st</sup> cl[ass] passenger car.

### **Almost Back to Brest**

From Camp de Valdahon, a five-day journey by train took the advance party all the way back across France. They would rejoin the 113<sup>th</sup> and the rest of the Fifty-Fifth Artillery Brigade, just arrived from Camp Sevier, at Camp de Coetquidan near the village of Guer on the eastern edge of Brittany. The first three days of the trip were

especially hectic for Corporal Sellers and eleven others. For the second time in this brief diary, he got left at a train station.

**Fri., 6/21** Arrived Dijon 1:30. Slept couple of hours. Caught train to Chagny, arrived 10:30. Left at 5 for Never[s], arrived 1:30.

**Sat., 6/22** Left Never[s] at 5:30, arrived Tours 10:30 a.m. Stayed over till 7:30 p.m. Caught up with our other troops. Started on with them.

**Sun., 6/23** Arrived at Redon via Nantes at 1:30 p.m. Stopped and stayed over till 8 o'clock Monday a.m.

**Mon., 6/24** Left Redon at 8 a.m. and arrived at camp 12 m. "Camp Coetquidan"

### **Training at Camp de Coetquidan**

Along with the other units of the Fifty-fifty Artillery Brigade, the 113<sup>th</sup> would undergo two months of training in the U.S. Artillery School at a historic base that was *one of the best artillery training camps in France.... Napoleon...built the old stone barracks that housed the One Hundred and Thirteenth Field Artillery. The old buildings were comfortable, fairly easy to keep clean, and the men were well pleased with them....The regiment was well fed at Camp de Coetquidan. The Camp Quartermaster at all times had a bountiful supply of good American frozen beef, good bread, plenty of jam, sugar, coffee, bacon, beans and other eatables....*

*No time was lost in getting down to hard work. The camp authorities were on the job, the instructors were good men and willing workers, and within two days the regiment had settled down to a training schedule that called for sixteen hours of hard work every day in the week except Sunday. There were schools of every variety and the officers of the regiment were assigned to various special branches of work, according to the capabilities they had shown. The schools were all well equipped and fitted out for the work to be done. Instruments and other equipment that the men and officers of the regiment had read about and heard of vaguely in the States were there ready for their use and they entered upon this stage of training with vast enthusiasm....*

**Tues., 6/25** Went to wireless school in a.m. Prepared to go on guard in p.m. at 4 o'clock but it was mistake.

**Wed., 6/26** On detail bringing rations from Q[uartern]. M[aster]. in a.m. Prepared to go on guard at 4 o'clock. Was put in charge of outpost guard.

**Thurs., 6/27** On guard all day. Wrote some letters.

**Fri., 6/28** Went to telephone school in a.m. Nothing in p.m.

**Sat. 6/29** Had inspection and some close order drill in a.m., nothing in p.m. Went to ball game between 113<sup>th</sup> F.A. & 105<sup>th</sup> ammunition train. Score 7 – 6 favor 113<sup>th</sup>.

**Sun., 6/30** Stand muster at 9 o'clock. Went to preaching (YMCA) by Chaplain Lacy. Wrote some in p.m.

**Mon., 7/1** On the range with firing battery in a.m. Went to telephone school in p.m.

### **French 75's Arrive!**

*There was some uncertainty about the guns..., but to the regiment's great delight they came in less than a week, twenty-four slim camouflaged French 75's, brand new, right out of the factory. The regiment had no horses, and trucks were secured to haul them from the railroad station at Guer to camp, a distance of about three miles. The guns were quickly distributed among the batteries and the training of the gun squads began again with a rush. Every organization had its own full equipment. Nobody had to wait for anyone else to "get off the guns." There were guns for all....*

*The French 75-millimetre gun is unlike any other gun on earth and just about as far removed from the American 3-inch gun as it is possible for a gun to be...., and the men had to begin again at the bottom.... Before their period of training was over there was not a French gun squad in camp who could execute an order with the speed of these new men.*

**Tues., 7/2** On the range in a.m. Went to the telephone school in p.m. Anniversary of enlistment.

**Wed., 7/3** Did some close order drill, went to Q.M. and drew gas masks in a.m. Examination in telephone in p.m.

**Thurs., 7/4** "Holiday" Brigade review in a.m. Field athletic and ball game in the p.m. 113<sup>th</sup> carried off the honors in most every event, especially the ball game.

**Fri., 7/5** Close order drill in a.m. Went to telephone school in p.m. [Illegible word] on communication [illegible word].

**Sat., 7/6** Inspection in a.m., holiday in p.m. Ball game.

**Sun., 7/7** Slightly sick. Went to YMCA to preaching in a.m. Did nothing in p.m.

## Gas School

Corporal Sellers had rejoined the regiment with his role in Battery F still undefined. After attending a single class in wireless telegraphy, he seemingly abandoned the skill he had mastered with such effort at Valdahon. For several weeks he dawdled--guard duty, a couple of telephone classes, work details, and several days on the range with everybody else to fire the new guns. He even got addicted to rooting for the 113<sup>th</sup>'s winning baseball team.

Then he discovered in Gas school his primary mission for the rest of the war. Gas masks had been issued just two days before, and with combat looming, Battery F had a more pressing assignment than telegraphy for its best available non-com.

The Germans had introduced chemical warfare in 1915 with a devastating chlorine attack on unprepared troops. Now they were about to deploy their far more lethal mustard gas, and a higher level of chemical warfare seemed imminent. American commanders on the threshold of no-man's-land strove with belated zeal to guarantee their men the best possible protection from chemical attack. Apparently for Captain Morrison that meant choosing the painstaking and dependable Corporal Sellers for Gas Non-Com of Battery F.

Perhaps all along the captain had guided this bright young man's military schooling through every artillery-related technology in preparation for some such major responsibility. The Gas Non-Com would be responsible for knowing everything about poison gases. Along with the gas officer, he would train the whole battery in every aspect of preparing for and responding to an attack and treating victims. And he alone would be responsible for maintaining, testing, and teaching the use of gas masks, warning alarms, and all other necessary equipment.

Gas increasingly occupied the Corporal's time and attention. First he attended Gas school three mornings straight, maybe to try it out at the captain's suggestion. During the next two weeks, he led the whole battery to a gas chamber to check their gas masks. Then, during his last three weeks at Camp de Coetquidan, he spent almost every weekday, or sometimes a half day, at Gas School. During this crash course he recorded, in the booklet that became Volume 2 of his diary, 74 pages of remarkable notes on every aspect of gas warfare and practical defenses against it. They could be a uniquely valuable source for understanding the army's response to gas warfare at the battlefield level.

**Mon., 7/8**      Went to Gas school in a.m. Did nothing in p.m.

**Tues., 7/9**      Went to Gas school in a.m., did nothing in p.m.

**Wed., 7/10**      Went to Gas school in a.m., did nothing in p.m.

**Thurs., 7/11** Worked at corrals all day.

**Fri., 7/12** Took detail to Guer to unload ammunition. Got back about 2 p.m.  
Worked at corral balance of day.

**Sat., 7/13** Did stables at corral and stood inspection in a.m. Holiday in p.m.

**Sun., 7/14** On duty looking after bath house, etc. Took stroll over in country after supper.

### Off-duty Pleasures

Corporal Sellers's after-supper stroll stands out as one of the few records of his leaving the camp. Apparently, however, one didn't have to leave this camp to meet French people or patronize French entertainment facilities.

*The regiment received its pay promptly on the first of every month and this was very pleasing to the men, who found plenty of places in and around the camp where francs could be spent freely. Like all French camps and villages, Coetquidan abounded in little wine shops and drinking establishments with restaurants as a sideline. The men fell for vin rouge, vin blanc, cognac and other concoctions, mixing them indiscriminately. This proved disastrous to their stomachs and to their records and the infirmary and guardhouse did a rushing business. By and by they came to realize that France was not threatened with an alcoholic drought and that there would always be plenty of the stuff around and, to quote their own slang expression, the men "laid off of it."*

*In the evening and on Sundays the men were learning much about the French. They found much in the little towns around camp...to admire. They could never get enough of the delicious French dishes that were set before them at the little eating houses..... Men and officers were permitted to visit Rennes on Saturday evenings and Sundays..., a beautiful old town of about 100,000 people.... There were good hotels and restaurants, amusements of various kinds, one of the most wonderful city parks in the world, the "Jardin des Plantes," a museum worth crossing the ocean to explore and many other things distinctly worth while. The people of Rennes were kind and hospitable, and much interested in American soldiers. Officers and men, the One Hundred and Thirteenth Field Artillery loved Rennes and never missed an opportunity of going there.*

Corporal Sellers finally got to Rennes and "went to church" on July 28. But there's no indication that he often joined his fellow soldiers in wineshop roistering or visits to the "little towns around camp." Perhaps he was preoccupied with getting himself and his battery prepared for a gas attack.

- Mon., 7/15** Worked at corral all day.
- Tues., 7/16** On duty at corral [sic] all day. Went on reg[imental] guard at night.
- Wed., 7/17** On guard all day.
- Thurs., 7/18** On the range in a.m., at corral in p.m.
- Fri., 7/19** Went out with telephone detail in a.m. At corral in p.m.
- Sat., 7/20** At corral in a.m. Holiday in p.m.
- Sun., 7/21** Did stables and went to preaching in a.m. Went horseback riding with G.N.W. in p.m. J.C. Brown died with heart trouble. Our first casualty.

### **French Horses**

Multiplying references to corral duty and horseback riding in the Corporal's diary signify another big step toward readiness for combat.

*Horses began to arrive by the last of June and by the middle of July the regiment had 1,105 horses. A horse-buying detail had been sent out into Normandy..., and horses began to arrive in great numbers. They were fine horses, but...in France the horse is an honored and pampered member of the family.... Small wonder then that when he joins the American Army, stands out on a picket line with nothing but a leaky sky to cover him, and does the hard work that he is called upon to do, he contracts pneumonia and lies down to die. The regiment lost scores of horses at Camp de Coetquidan, and later it was to lose them by hundreds. Every effort was made to "season" these animals by degrees and thus fit them for the hard work they were forced to do, but in those days the call was for speed and more speed and there was not time for seasoning raw animals. They were treated as the men were accustomed to treating American horses and they could not stand up under it.*

- Mon., 7/22** Worked at corral in a.m. Went to Gas Chamber with battery for test of masks, and to J.C. Brown's funeral in p.m.
- Tues., 7/23** Worked at corral in a.m. Also in p.m. On guard at night.
- Wed., 7/24** On guard all day.
- Thurs., 7/25** Worked at corral all day.

**Fri., 7/26** Worked at corral in a.m. Started to Reg[imental] Gas School in p.m. Have 1 hour in a.m. and 1 hour in p.m. each day.

**Sat., 2/27** Prepared for and stood inspection in a.m. Holiday in p.m.

**Sun., 7/28** Went to Rennes on pass. Went to church and saw several interesting sights. Got back about 7 p.m.

**Mon., 7/29** Went to Gas School in a.m. 1 hour. Also 1 hr. in p.m.

**Tues., 7/30** Went to Gas school in a.m. & p.m.

**Wed., 8/1 [7/31]** Went to Gas school in a.m. In p.m. got two letters from home, one from L.P., B.P., and N.W.

**Thurs., 8/2 [8/1]** Went to gas school in a.m., and B[attalion] was review[ed]. The whole regiment in p.m.

**Fri., 8/3 [8/2]** Went to Gas school in a.m. and p.m.

**Sat., 8/3** Went to Gas school in a.m. Had inspection in p.m. Balance of day holiday.

**Sun., 8/4** Went to preaching at YMCA in a.m. Wrote some letters in p.m.

**Mon. 8/5** Went to Gas school in a.m.

**Tues., 8/6** Went to Gas school in a.m. & p.m.

**Wed., 8/7** Went to Gas school in a.m. & p.m.

**Thurs., 8/8** Went to Gas school in a.m. & p.m.

**Fri., 8/9** Went to Gas school in a.m. & p.m.

**Sat., 8/10** Went to Gas school in a.m. Had review and inspection in p.m.

**Sun., 8/11** Went to preaching at YMCA in a.m. Wrote some letters and went out to see game in p.m.

**Mon., 8/12** Went to Gas school in a.m. Battery started on road march in p.m. I went on guard at night.

**Training Ends with a Bang**

The 113<sup>th</sup> had a spectacular graduation exercise. Corporal Sellers was still so entangled in last-minute preparations for defending against gas attacks that he was left in camp when Battery F marched off for the combined maneuvers of the entire 55<sup>th</sup> Brigade. Here suddenly every facet of the artilleryman's experience in battle became starkly and thunderously vivid.

*The three [artillery] regiments, ammunition train and other units, operated under conditions simulating actual warfare.... The Coetquidan range is one of the best in the world. The high ridge extending to the south of the camp offers the finest opportunity of observing the effect of fire and the accuracy of aim. The broad terrain, marked by sunken roads, ruins of deserted villages and patches of woodland, affords a wide range of targets and the students have every opportunity of viewing with their own eyes the actual effect of the fire from their guns. This is of great importance in the training of artillerymen.... It was a wonderful sight to stand on the crest of the ridge... and watch the bursting of the shells.*

*From headquarters...would come an order stating that a body of troops was moving along a certain sunken road and giving the coordinates of their position. A few quick commands to a battery commander out of sight beyond the hill and back would come the answer "Battery \_ [fill the blank] on the way." A few seconds later and four little white smoke balls would appear in the air, about thirty feet above the spot designated. They would be using shrapnel. Another time concentrated fire on an enemy gun position would be called for and in a few seconds high explosive shells would be crashing around it, all in plain sight of the observer on the hill. There were regimental operations in which each regiment practiced work of trench and wire demolition, protective barrages and offensive barrages. It was a wonderful show.*

*The day...will never be forgotten.... Seventy-two guns were in action and the things they did to the terrain...beggars description. It sounded like all of the Fourth of July celebrations the United States had ever had, rolled into one.... The machine gunners were in position in front of their batteries holding off imaginary Germans. The signal details were stringing wires and the wireless was chattering away, transmitting order from the general to his regiments and orders from the colonel to his battalions, reports of observers, and reports from firing batteries. Up overhead aeroplanes practiced observation work and reported on the accuracy of the firing....*

*The brigade operation was carried on into the night. The signal details were sent out into "no man's land" with instructions to send up flares and rockets just as they were handled on the front and at some time during the night to call for a barrage that would put every gun into action. All kinds of rockets, red, green, yellow, all meaning something, and each calling for some sort of action on the part of the waiting artillerymen, were sent up at intervals.... The men of the regiment never saw a more spectacular "show"... than... when the brigade barrage was called for and every gun in the brigade responded. The guns were hidden behind the hills but over on the target range every shell-burst could be seen, while overhead the shells shrieked and whined.*

**Tues., 8/13** On guard all day. Battery on road march.

**Wed., 8/14** Went to Gas school in a.m. & p.m.

**Thurs., 8/15** Went to Gas school in a.m. & p.m.

**Fri., 8/16** On Range Guard all day. Don Sutton got shot accidentally by Frenchman battery on road march.

**Sat., 8/17** Looked after fatigue work in quarters preparatory to inspection when battery returns from march.

**Sun., 8/18** Went to preaching and bible class at YMCA in a.m.. Went to ball game in p.m. 113<sup>th</sup> won over 324<sup>th</sup> F[ield]. A[rtilery]. 8 to 1.

**Mon., 8/19** Went to Gas school in a.m., did nothing in p.m. After retreat battery went thru GPDO [illegible word].

**Tues., 8/20** Did almost nothing all day. Gave lecture on Gas after retreat.

**Wed., 8/21** On stable guard and in charge of quarters.

**Thurs., 8/22** Regular duties in a.m. & p.m.

[Pencil replaces ink]

**Fri., 8/23** Prepared to leave for front.

**Sat., 8/24** Packed up preparatory to leaving for front in the a.m. Left camp 4:00 o'clock p.m., boarded train, and left station 9 o'clock.

### **Heading for the Front**

The 113<sup>th</sup> departed from Camp de Coetquiton in two trains. A first detachment of headquarters and supply elements left on August 23, and Battery F followed the next day with the rest of the regiment. Swinging in a southerly arc around Paris, they turned northeast to Toul, the railhead and strategic central fulcrum of the main battle line.

*The regiment arrived at Toul after a journey of two days and one night.... All along the road there were great munitions factories, aerodromes, artillery parks...and thousands of other evidences of war activities. Train after train bearing wounded Americans passed them and scores of hospitals, tent and frame, met their gaze. As they drew near the front the sound of heavy guns could be heard faintly above the*

*noise of the train and very plainly at the stops....*

*In their excitement and interest the men forgot the discomfort under which they traveled and were as jubilant a bunch as ever traveled toward the front. They made the journey in the familiar French box cars, every car bearing the inscription, "Hommes 50—Chevaux 8 (en long)," meaning that the capacity of the car was forty men, or eight horses, provided that the horses were placed side by side, facing the ends of the cars. The odor of the horse was there and other drawbacks, but there are worse ways of traveling, as the regiment can testify.*

**Sun., 8/25** On train all day.

**Mon., 8/26** On train all day. Arrived at destination 9:00 o'clock p.m. Unload and bivouaced a mile outside of station for night.

## **Geography and Strategy**

As a major rail hub and transit center for the Allied line, Toul was humming. In fact, the advance billeting detail couldn't find any place for lying down that wasn't already claimed by some unit. The first detachment had to sleep by the tracks upon arrival, and the second, Corporal Sellers's diary suggests, didn't do much better the following night.

The stretch of the Meuse River flowing north from Toul had great strategic significance. It afforded the Germans' only direct invasion route through the tortured terrain west of the French/German border and on to Paris. But the French had plugged the gap with a chain of fortifications along the Heights of the Meuse from Toul north to the impregnable bastion at Verdun. In 1914 these obstacles had forced the German invaders to swing far north and then west through the Belgian lowlands before turning south into France. Although Verdun, on the west bank, had repelled a major German attack, the invaders had used the occasion to thrust a militarily ominous German salient south along the east bank 30 kilometers beyond Verdun, to the *quaint old town of St. Mihiel*, a third of the way to Toul. Meanwhile farther west, in Belgium and northwestern France, four years of unparalleled carnage had bogged down in a stalemate of trench warfare along the Marne River, all too close to Paris.

*The St. Mihiel salient at this time was very quiet.... The French had tried in vain to push the Germans back and straighten out the salient. In one tremendous effort they took Mont Sec, the great stronghold that completely dominated the whole sector, only to lose it in less than an hour, leaving 20,000 dead on the field of battle. After this the French made but little effort to gain on this part of the front and it came to be known as a "quiet section."... It furnished almost perfect conditions for the*

*seasoning of raw troops. There was just enough action to give the officers and men self-confidence.*

Things were about to change.

**Tues., 8/27** Rested in bivouac all day. Left at 8:30 p.m., arrived at new bivouac at 4 o'clock a.m. 8/28.

[Ink replaces pencil for this line only] Menil a Tour.

### **Night March Up to the Line**

*The men of the regiment will never forget that long night march from Toul to the "Foret de la Reine." Here the regiment's fine training in road work proved its value. Road discipline was perfect. Orders were that no lights were to be permitted, not even a lighted cigarette, and the column moved forward in the darkness. Heavy trucks, passenger cars, wagon trains and all sorts of traffic swept by them going the other way. Ambulances plunged along without a light and with horns silent. At the front the sound of the automobile horn meant one thing and one thing only, "gas." Any sounding of a klaxon horn might result anywhere in a gas scare and much confusion, so the drivers carried small whistles to warn pedestrians and slower wheeled traffic. Later they were to experience a great deal of this, but it never impressed them as did this first night on the road from Toul to Sanzy.*

*When they had cleared the crest of the high hill that lies north of Toul, the country lay open for miles toward the north and east. As the battle lines then stood they could see along twenty miles of the fighting front and the things they saw that night will be fresh in their minds as long as they live. Above the rumble of their wagons and caissons and the rattle of the harness and equipment, they could hear the steady roar of the guns, very much like distant thunder. Now and then there was a louder noise, indicating that some battery not many miles away was firing, and a bright flash would light the sky....All along the line rockets were shooting heavenward and now and then a flare would go up, indicating that some nervous doughboy was growing apprehensive, fearing a raiding party in No Man's Land, or that some Boche was likewise perturbed. It was a beautiful sight and indescribably thrilling to these raw men who spent a solid year dreaming about these things and longing with all of their souls to be in the great war and doing their part. Those rockets, those bright flares and the steady roar of guns told them, too, that men were dying out there in front of them and there came the realization that probably death awaited them also out there....*

*The outfit arrived in the edge of the "Foret de la Reine" after midnight, having traveled about twelve miles. The moon was rising and its light helped the men to get*

*settled. Picket lines were stretched between trees and the men unrolled their packs, stretched their "pup tents" and were soon asleep....*

Wed., 8/28 Rested in bivouac all day. Attached to 89<sup>th</sup> Division

### **Foret de la Reine / Queen's Forest**

*The regiment will always be thankful for that never-to-be-forgotten week of beautiful weather that followed.... For nineteen days the regimental echelon was in... a beautiful stretch of woodland, full of mighty oaks and beeches. It afforded the finest cover in the world for the regiment, so long as the rains came not.... The regiment moved over further into the woods after a week on the outskirts, in order to get better cover.*

*When rain finally came...existence became a nightmare. The soil was of a loose variety and with fifteen hundred men and a thousand horses tramping over it in the rain, its condition became exceedingly trying to the flesh and to the spirit. With all its discomforts the men were soon to look back upon their stay in the "Foret de la Reine" with longing and deep regret, for there on the very edge of the forest was Sanzy, where two Salvation Army lassies kept open house and baked the most delicious pies and doughnuts the men had tasted since leaving home. The "Y" had a well-stocked hut there too, and the Division Quartermaster had a regular honest-to-goodness bath-house where there was hot water in plenty and clean clothes and soap.*

Thurs., 8/29 Rested in bivouac all day. Left at 9:30 (firing battery only) for positions on front. Arrived and went into some old dugout positions at 3:30 a.m. 8/30.

### **First Fire on the Enemy**

*The batteries lost no time in getting into action. Beginning two days after their arrival in the "Foret de la Reine," two batteries were at all times occupying positions along the front and doing as much firing as they were allowed to do. To Battery F belongs the honor of firing the first gun at the foe for the One Hundred and Thirteenth and this battery and Battery E were the first to occupy positions at the front.*

*The firing batteries occupied positions along the front near Beaumont, Ansauville, Hamonville, Flirey and Limey. All of these were old French positions, the location of every one of which was known to opposing German batteries, and it*

*was necessary to use the utmost caution in going to and from the positions and in the matter of making trails or other signs about the positions that might be visible to the all-seeing eye of the aerial observer and his camera.*

After three days rest in the Foret de la Reine, the men of Battery F was sent down to spend two days in the old French artillery positions on the front line, where they fired the first shot and spent the night in one of the adjacent villages. Other batteries rotated in behind them as they climbed back up to "the horseline," the rear area in the Foret where horses were corralled and soldiers rested. Only after a solid week of rest was Battery F rotated back to the front, four days before the situation along the Meuse changed drastically.

**Fri., 8/30** Arranged our dugouts and positions in a.m., and laid guns and registered in p.m. First gun fired about 5 o'clock. Everything quite [*sic*].

**Sat., 8/31** Rested in position all day. Everything quite [*sic*]. Came back to bivouac or horse line at night. Arrived about 3 o'clock a.m. 9/1.

[Ink replaces pencil]

**Mon. [Sun.], 9/1** Rested all day. No unusual happenings.

**Mon., 9/2** Still inactive. Nothing doing except aerial, mostly for observation.

### **Air Warfare in Its Infancy**

*The Boche airman was very active along the St. Mihiel salient at that time. It was in easy reach of the big flying fields of the Germans at Conflans and Metz and for the first two weeks of the regiment's stay in the woods, the Boche came very near having things his way in the air. The men never tired of looking at the air fighting and watching the work of the "archies" as the anti-aircraft guns were called. They witnessed many a stirring fight high over their leafy shelter, saw many observation balloons shot down and sought cover from hostile airmen many times. Orders were to get off the roads, take all possible cover and remain as still as possible when any sort of aeroplane came within hearing and buglers were put on watch to sound a warning call.*

**Tues., 9/3** Still inactive, except as day before.

**Wed., 9/4** Still nothing doing except a possible increase in aerial activity due mostly to bright weather. About 10 p.m. o'clock a very much exaggerated gas alarm came down, and after a lot of excitement and confusion it was found to be false. However we were well prepared for it if it had been real.

## Gas Alarms

*The regiment had been well trained in the matter of gas defence before leaving Camp de Coetquidan. There the men had practiced wearing their masks at work for an hour and two hours every day for several weeks and they knew all of the fine points about the handling of their masks and the masks of their horses. In the "Foret de Reine" there was opportunity of putting their knowledge to the test under conditions that were very realistic. The "Foret de Reine" was too far from the front for there to be any very serious danger of a gas attack, but the majority of the men did not know this. Masks were worn at all hours under all sorts of condition and men slept with them under their heads.*

*With the men keyed up to the highest pitch all the time, gas alarms naturally had to happen. If a truck driver or an ambulance driver forgot and sounded his klaxon horn on the road, or if a motor backfired, the chances were that a gas alarm would start, provided that it happened at night. Real gas alarms, sounded in the front line trenches, were taken up by klaxon, pistol fire and other means and spread rapidly over the back areas sometimes to a depth of ten miles or more, in incredibly short time. The country for many miles back of the lines was packed with troops, camp infringing on camp and their lines often overlapping. Gas guards, always alert and anxious to protect their sleeping comrades, were afraid to take chances and spread the news energetically, preferring to arouse their camps with a false alarm rather than to run the risk of permitting a gas attack to creep up on them.*

**Thurs., 9/5** Nothing doing. Another false gas alarm about 9 p.m.

**Fri., 9/6** Nothing doing. Raining. Another false gas alarm about 5 a.m. 9/7.

**Sat., 9/7** Nothing doing all day. Got orders about 8 p.m. to leave at once to take up positions on front. Raining.

[Pencil replaces ink]

**Sun., 9/8** Arrived at positions about 3:45 a.m. Got guns in position and slept most all day. Moved over a short distance and pitched shelter tents in woods. Still raining and very muddy.

**Mon., 9/9** Slept in shelter tents most all day. Moved out at night to billets in village in rear of positions. Still raining.

**Tues., 9/10** Loafed in village and billets all day.

## *The First "All-American Offensive"*

Meanwhile, as American reinforcements arrived, the Allied commanders began planning a mighty effort to break the stalemate on the Marne. To divert German resources, the untried American troops on the St. Mihiel/Verdun front were ordered to launch a surprise offensive against the badly outnumbered Germans facing them. The 113<sup>th</sup> would provide artillery support for the 89<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

Up to now in this peaceful sector, *there seemed to exist a sort of agreement between the belligerents not to stir up strife. At the time the One Hundred and Thirteenth arrived things were beginning to liven up a trifle.... The French were beginning to complain with some bitterness that the Americans were stirring up trouble and with some cause. The front line trenches had been taken over by American doughboys full of pep and eager to start something. Back of them were American artillerymen fresh from long training on target ranges, spoiling for action. Consequently, when the doughboy called for artillery assistance, his American brethren in the rear could not be restrained. All the cherished traditions of the St. Mihiel sector were smashed time and again, to the great dismay of the French, who feared German retaliation and the destruction of Toul and Nancy....*

*On September 10, 1918, the regiment...was pronounced a finished, dependable fighting unit and it was moved forward to "offensive" positions which had been reconnoitered with great care, in preparation for the real fighting that was just ahead of them.... For many nights prior to the regiment's moving forward to these advanced positions there had been evidence that something big was going to happen.... The forests for miles and miles back from the front were jammed full of Americans of every branch of the service.*

*There was something indescribably thrilling in the endless streams of traffic that toiled along the the darkness, starting at nightfall and covering every foot of the roads for twenty miles back of the front until daylight and then mysteriously disappearing. Caissons loaded with shells; 75's and 155's [cannon] rumbling along; wagons laden with rations and horse feed; ambulances creeping along, dispatch riders on motorcycles, truck trains loaded with soldiers; big tanks and little tanks; the creak of leather and the rattle of chains; monster G.P.F. 6-inch, tractor drawn, dimly seen in the night.; long, long lines of doughboys slogging along in the mud; machine-gun outfits with their mule-drawn carts; the odor of tired, sweating horses; darkness, deep and dense, with never the flare of a match or the glow of a cigarette.*

*The American army, young, zestful, full of faith in itself and with enthusiasm unbounded, was gathering itself for its first leap at the throat of the Hun, was preparing for the furious onslaught that knew no lessening of fury until the German hosts had been hurled back across the Meuse and that part of the famous "Hindenburg Line"... , so long impregnable, was only a memory.*

Wed., 9/11    Loafed in village and billets all day. Still raining.

### **The Battle of St. Mihiel**

*On the morning of September 11<sup>th</sup>, the top officers of the 113<sup>th</sup> were called to Brigade Headquarters at Loucey for the last conference preparatory to the launching of the big All-American drive on the St. Mihiel salient. They learned that the American General staff had decreed the smashing of the German lines on both sides of St. Mihiel, the taking of that most formidable of German strongholds Mont Sec, and the complete straightening out of the salient. The first plans called for only twenty minutes of artillery preparation in the way of [barbed] wire-destruction before starting the rolling barrage that was to precede the infantry.... There was a conference of the battery commanders on the afternoon of the 11<sup>th</sup> in which the plans were carefully studied and every move for the drive carefully mapped out. Battery E was designated...to advance with the doughboys, ready to smash machine gun nests or other German impediments at close range....*

*At...11:00 p.m...word came to regimental headquarters that "D" day was September 12 and at 11:30 p.m. came news of an entire change of program. Instead of twenty minutes of fire preceding the rolling barrage, firing was to begin at one o'clock in the morning and there was to be fire for preparation, harassing fire, gas shelling, and every other variety of trouble-making for the enemy.... Some of the batteries received their new orders less than three quarters of an hour before the time set for firing to begin....*

Thurs., 9/12    Gun squads got orders to report to position at once. Firing began at 1 a.m., continued till 7:30. Got orders to advance. Moved up about 10 kilos. Arrived about 9 p.m. Still raining.

*[1 a.m., 9/12] The night was pitch-black. Rain fell steadily. Rockets and flares began to go up occasionally and there was an occasional rumble of firing far off but in the area out ahead of the One Hundred and Thirteenth everything was quiet.... Officers and men were keyed up to the highest nervous tension they had ever experienced. It seemed that the hour would never come. Watches had been carefully synchronized so that every gun, large and small, on that entire front would fire at the same instant.*

*Out there in the rain the gun squads took their positions, the battery executive ran his pocket flash light furtively over the stacked ammunition, noted that every man was in place, dipped under cover for a last look at his data and instructions, slipped back to speak a reassuring word to the eager artillerymen, broke away to listen to last minute admonitions from his battery commander at the other end of the telephone*

*line.... Would the hour never come? The battery executive with eyes glued on the luminous dial of his watch, counted the seconds. Finally it came.*

*One o'clock," he called, "let her go!"*

*And then came an explosion that shook the very earth, rocked the giant oaks of the forests for miles around and lit up the heavens so brilliantly that one could have read a newspaper miles back of the roaring, crashing front. More than two thousand American guns, ranging from the 75-millimetre gun on the fiery edge of battle to the giant naval guns on railway tracks, miles back of the line, took part in this mighty artillery bombardment, the greatest artillery concentration in the history of the world. During...the battle of St. Mihiel, these American guns fired a total of 1,000,000 rounds of ammunition in approximately four hours....*

*The infantry climbed out of the trenches promptly at five o'clock in the morning. They found the enemy [barbed] wire in front of them ripped into shreds, their trenches caved in, their machine gun nests deserted or the gunners dead at their posts. Ahead of them, "as per schedule" rolled a protective and offensive accompanying fire. They encountered "pill-boxes," as the concrete machine gun nests were called, that had been missed by the artillery and these they took with the bayonet, if it could be done without too great loss of life. If the "pill-box" could not be flanked, or cleaned out with grenades, the doughboys sought what shelter the terrain afforded and sent back for a 75. Here was where the artilleryman found a task to his liking and up across the fields and through the woods on a dead run would come a gun section, the men clinging for dear life to the bouncing [gun] carriages and lying low over the necks of their horses. In less time than it takes to tell it, the 75 would be in position and spouting death and destruction in the direction of the obstacle that had held up the advance and in a few minutes the doughboys would go on again.*

*It will be hard for those who did not see them in action that September morning...to realize the exultation that swept through the One Hundred and Thirteenth Field Artillery. No obstacle could stop them. When deep trenches and wrecked roads and bridges confronted them in what had been No Man's Land and in the territory back of the old German lines, the horses were unhitched from the carriages and led, pulled, and shoved across, while willing hands seized the guns and caissons and carried them over places that look impassable.... Time and again on that memorable day the regiment did the impossible....*

*By noon on September 12, half of the work that the American General Staff had allotted ten days for, had been accomplished. More than half of...the salient had been covered and thousands of Germans had been made prisoners. The roads from the front back to the prison pens at Sanzy were full of them, and slightly wounded doughboys who were able to walk back to the rear, were given squads of captured Huns to take back with them. Mont Sec, almost impregnable to frontal attack, had been virtually pinched off...but the main strength of the American thrust was at the*

remainder of the salient.... *Less than twenty-four hours after the drive started,...two...American divisions...met at Vignuelles,...coming from the west and...from the east. The St. Mihiel salient was no more.*

[Ink replaces pencil]

**Fri., 9/13** In position on high hill. Fired till enemy got out of range. Did nothing except wait for orders balance of day and night. Saw some dead lying on field over which we advanced.

### **The Drive North**

As the Germans retreated, the Americans pursued them northward across a devastated landscape of shell craters, smashed villages, and rotting corpses.

*Aeroplanes in great numbers were overhead, patrolling every foot of the front for many miles. American and French flyers were assisted during this drive by several units of crack British arimen and these Britishers were wonderful fighters. They kept the air free of Boche aviators for the duration of the drive.*

*The most striking thing...was the hustle and bustle on the...roads that had benn deserted by day and traffic-laden only at night. There was no longer any pretense at concealment. Wagon trains, caisson trains, truck trains, artillery—horse-drawn and motorized--, tanks, balloon trucks, long lines of infantry, hundreds of ambulances with their loads of wounded, jammed the roads for miles.*

*Boche prisoners were coming back in great companies, with happy, grinning doughboys and military police in charge of them. The Boche looked happy, too. They were glad that the war was over for them and they had already tasted American rations and American tobacco....*

The advance brought the regiment on the 13<sup>th</sup> to *a happy valley where the Boche had long lived in perfect content, with immense gardens.... There were fine concrete dugouts for both officers and men,...bathrooms with hot and cold water, electric lights,...bowling alleys, summer pavilions with rustic tables and seats.... The firing batteries had been without what they called "regular food" for two days, having had to depend on their iron rations, but here in the valley they found some...cows, hogs, rabbits, and chickens that the Germans had left, and they feasted....*

*On the hills around these positions the Germans had made preparations to do much fighting. There were countless numbers of machine gun positions. Every ridge had scores of them, and every clump of bushes hid a machine-gunner's lair. In the areas of fiercest fighting, American dead and German dead lay everywhere in the fields. The burying details were not able to keep the fields cleared. The roadsides*

*were lined with dead horses, many killed by enemy shell-fire but the majority dead from overwork and exhaustion.*

**Sat., 9/14** Rested waiting for orders all day. Got orders to move about 8 p.m. Traveled by road all night.

As German resistance stiffened on the 14<sup>th</sup>, the regiment's transportation was breaking down. *The French Fourgon wagon is a poor cargo carrier, lacking space and...in itself a load for four horses. The regiment's horses were breaking down under the strain and it was with the utmost difficulty that enough were found to move the guns, caissons, and wagons.... The hard work of preparation for the St. Mihiel drive had worn the horses to the bone and sapped them of their vitality. They had delivered to battery positions for this action a total of 24,000 rounds of ammunition, a tremendous amount, when it is considered that the work had to be done in a steady downpour of rain and over muddy trails that made it difficult to haul even a single caisson. Then when the Germans broke and ran, a dogged chase across twelve kilometres of trackless country, accidents and shell-fire completed the work of destruction. They died by scores. But there was nothing anyone could do about it. There were no more horses and it was up to the regiment to conserve those it had, strip down to the tightest possible marching order and keep going....*

Late on the 14<sup>th</sup> the regiment resumed its advance on *a night of much stress and strain. The roads were blocked by traffic of all kinds. It developed that many artillery brigades were on the move, going in the same general direction, and every outfit had to make a regular schedule or there was the devil to pay at all road crossings. Things were badly messed up that night many times and no one envied the M.P.'s their job of unsmarling the mix-ups.*

*To add to the excitement and general interest of the movement, the Boche kept hammering away at the road all night long. Boche aeroplanes were overhead at almost every stage of the journey. Several times they swooped down and cut loose on the moving column with machine guns....*

*The roads...that night were subjected to heavy shelling, much of it phosgene gas.*

**Sun, 9/15** Stopped at small devastated village about 7 a.m. Rested there all day. Left about 7 p.m., still by road. Travelled all night. "Rambecourt"

*The regiment was caught in a traffic jam at Essey and while it stuck there, unable to move, the village was bombed by Boche aviators and Boche artillery*

*dropped many shells into the village, both gas and high explosive. Many horses were hurt, several being killed, but not a man was injured. The regiment learned that night just how much nerve it takes to "sit steady" under such trying conditions.... Fighting men..., as long as there is movement and plenty of it,...can stand almost anything, but...the most trying situation is to be caught..., without shelter and absolutely unable to move, on a road on which the Boche had almost perfect range....*

*In Rambecourt that night, food for the men was bountiful but there was great scarcity of horse feed.*

**Mon., 9/16** Stopped about 7 a.m. on M[euse]. River. Rested all day. Went bathing in River. Just below Sampaginy.

*After a day of rest in Rambecourt the regiment got under way with orders to proceed to Mecrin. This proved to be another eventful night.... There was a full moon...and on such nights...aviators took wing and traveled far and near, their planes carrying racks of bombs.... Within a mile of Rambecourt the regiment ran into an air-tight traffic jam. The macadam road gleamed like silver under the light of the moon and the regiment offered a fine target, strung out there along the road for three miles. Within ten minutes after the long column had stopped, the men heard the unmistakable hum of a Boche motor.... It seemed that that plane hovered over them for an hour and scores of them expressed a desire to have the Boche "drop his pills and get it over with." This he finally did, three striking the ground in a soft, slushy field one hundred yards to the right of the column, making a terrific noise but doing no damage. He flew on toward the head of the column and came back, dropping two on the other side of the road. All this time searchlights were looking for him and American and French planes were up hunting for him. Finally the lights found him... Then from all points of the compass, converging on the Boche, came the allied planes, their tracer bullets cleaving the air. The wily Boche side-slips, plunges, dips, does a back-flip and drops out of the light, making a clean get-away. It was quite a thrilling show.*

*The regiment pulled into Mecrin on the banks of the Meuse on the morning of September 16<sup>th</sup>. Here the outfit remained for thirty-six hours. There was good grazing for the horses in the meadows around the village and while the buildings were badly shot up, there was shelter in plenty for the men, and the halt was very pleasant. Practically every man in the regiment enjoyed a swim in the river.*

**Tues., 9/17** Still resting on M. river. Left there about 7 p.m. still by road. Stopped about 2:30 a.m. at small village. "Nicy"

## A New Mission

The 113<sup>th</sup>'s sharp turn westward at Essey had undercut the general impression that the next attack would be on massively fortified Metz just across the German border, and when the the regiment crossed the Meuse at Mecrin, it was obviously headed northwest instead toward the awesome complex of German weaponry hidden in the tangled ravines of the Argonne Forest. The mounting flood of American reinforcements and the stunning American victory at St. Mihiel had convinced the Allied command to advance the timetable for a grand offensive all along the front. An American assault on the Argonne could draw off enough German resources to make an Allied breakthrough on the critical Marne front possible. And if the Americans could punch through the Argonne, they could seize the railroad on which the Germans' whole western front depended.

To insure surprise, the offensive was scheduled for September 25, overwhelming the few roads with an astonishing effort to concentrate all available American forces at the Argonne only thirteen days after their breakthrough at St. Mihiel.

**Wed., 9/18** Rested all day. Resumed journey at night. Stopped about 3 a.m. at Deuxnouds.

**Thurs., 9/19** Rested all day. Raining almost all day. Resumed march at night, roads very muddy. Marched all night.

**Fri., 9/20** Reached destination about 8:30 a.m., very muddy and tired. Slept balance of day. "New Eschlon [Echelon]" Will remain for few days.

Three more night marches brought the 113<sup>th</sup> to the edge of the Argonne and a three-day pause for rest at a camp in the Bois de Blaulieu.

*Fair weather had ceased on the night of the 17<sup>th</sup> and the sun was not seen again for weeks. It rained every day and every night. The bottom dropped out of the roads. Only a few of the macadam roads "stood up" under traffic. Part of the regiment was quartered in cootie-infested shacks. The remainder pitched shelter tents in the wet woods and even at that, fared better than their brethren in the buildings.*

**Sat., 9/21** Inactive all day except regular duties of looking after gas material, battery cleaning, other material. False gas alarm at night.

**Sun., 9/22** Raining all day long. Went to preaching in battery area by Chaplain in p.m. Got orders to move at 8:30 p.m. Raining and awfully muddy. Got soaking wet. Travelled about 10 kilos, slept in barracks.

***On the night of September 22d the regiment moved to the Bois de Brocourt,...and went into camp in wooden shacks. Here the regiment began to make preparations for the part it was to play in the greatest battle American soldiers ever took part in, the Battle of the Argonne.***

**Mon., 9/23** Slept till about 10 a.m., had breakfast. Spent remainder of day drying clothing and sleeping. Got order to go to positions at 8 p.m. Still very muddy. Raining some, cleared off at night.

**Tues., 9/24** Arrived at guns' positions about daylight. A lot of delays [on] account of congested traffic. Slept in bushes & woods most of day. Shells whistling & bursting around and over our head.

***The American army was in position before sunrise on the morning of September 25....How the...army carried out this movement in the limited time allotted for it is past explaining. The impossible was accomplished. Even those men who were on the ground and watching it happen were unable to tell how it was done. Orders said go and the American army went. The achievement will always remain a mystery to the Germans, who had thought the force of the American blow spent at St. Mihiel and who looked for no further movement before the spring of 1919.***

After all this effort, a French blunder delayed the opening bombardment almost a day.

[From the humorous memoir of Sgt. Geroge Graham, Headquarters Company:]  
***Back in the training days at Camp de Coetquidan, France, we wore our helmets oriented at a forty-five degree declivity on account of our baseball supremacy, but not until we were leaving our position...in the St. Mihiel drive, when a German battery got rumor of our street address, did we fully realize what becoming lids our helmets really were.... It was then that the One Hundred and Thirteenth Field Artillery, like a wet town after a prohibition revival, adopted as its motto, "the lid is on" --and that for the duration. And by the time we reached the Argonne forests we began to think of our helmets and gas masks as no less than guardian angels, the former being a protection against the pillar of fire by day, and the latter against the cloud of gas by night.***

**Wed., 9/25** About 6 a.m. was shelled slightly, no damage. Heavy bombardment to our left. Battery worked all day getting in ammunition and strengthening positions which were in open. Raining some in p.m. Started bombardment about 11:30 p.m. with big guns.

## Battle of the Argonne

*Artillery preparations began...September 26 at 2:00 o'clock [a.m.]. The regiment found itself attached to the 37<sup>th</sup> Division, Ohio National Guard, and supporting the 73d Infantry Brigade. The doughboys jumped off at 5:30 o'clock in the morning, from positions along the road running almost east and west through the ruins of Avocourt. These Ohioans showed the finest pluck and daring, attacking fearlessly and driving the Huns before them, tackling machine gun nests with the bayonet and fighting on, no matter how strong the resistance.*

*The progress of the first day was surprising. It became increasingly evident as the day wore on that the Germans had been caught napping and the doughboys pressed their advantage. Everywhere through the forest they found evidences of hasty retreat, machine guns left on their tripods, complete batteries of 77's and larger guns, anti-aircraft batteries, trucks and wagons still loaded with supplies.*

**Thurs., 9/26** All caliber guns began shooting about 2:30 a.m., and continued and [sic] unpar[al]elled bombardment and barrage [sic] till 8 a.m. Wait under orders balance of day and night in same position. False gas alarm at night.

On the afternoon of the 26<sup>th</sup>, in order to keep in touch with the fast-moving infantry and be in position to afford the maximum protection for them, the First Battalion moved forward through Avocourt and into the Bois de Malancourt, where firing was continued steadily through the night of the 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Fri., 9/27** Got orders to move 4 a.m. Started but on account of bad roads were till night reaching our new positions about 5 miles forward. Went into position in a field near Montfaucon. Raining most all day.

*On the 27<sup>th</sup> the First Battalion again moved forward to new positions that had been reconnoitered on the northern edge of the Bois de Montfaucon, in plain view of the ruined town of Montfaucon, and was joined here by the Second Battalion.*

*Here it was that enemy resistance stiffened. The Germans had hurried up new divisions from other parts of the front.... Around Montfaucon the tide of battle ebbed and flowed. There was desperate hand-to-hand fighting in the wrecked streets of the little village. Time and again the place was cleared of Germans, only to have them reform and come back in overwhelming numbers. By the afternoon of the 27<sup>th</sup> the place was definitely and finally in the hands of the American army and the One*

*Hundred and Thirteenth established an observation post on the crest of the ridge....*

**Sat. 9/28** Remained in this position all day. Saw an air battle in which a German machine was brought down near our guns. Still raining.

**Sun., 9/29** Still in same position all day. Enemy offering more resistance. Also waiting for ammunition to come up. Still raining, roads fierce.

*On September 29th [Battery A of the 113<sup>th</sup>] went forward as part of the First Battalion to positions near Ivoir, on the Montfaucon-Ivoir road, where it experienced the hardest fighting of its career. With the remainder of the battalion it was in position here eight days, four days of which the battalion was the sole support of a regiment of infantry. At one time German artillery fire became so heavy over the whole area around the battalion that the infantry and machine-gun outfits holding the front were forced to retire to cover behind the artillery. Major General Farnsworth, commanding the 37th Division, visited the battalion in person and directed that a lookout be stationed on the crest of the ridge in front of the battalion to watch for the first wave of the German attack, so that the 75's might be dragged up and direct fire poured into their ranks. The battery did much effective firing from its position here. Observers with the infantry reported many times that the battery's fire on enemy batteries, working parties, and road traffic was very effective.*

**Citation for Valor, PRIVATE WALTER N. PERRY,  
Sanitary Detachment, 113th Field Artillery.**

*During the operations near IVOIRY, 29th September, 1918, this soldier was on duty for first-aid work. While going into position the battery and advancing infantry was subjected to intense shell-fire from the enemy and many men became casualties. This soldier immediately went forward and rendered first aid to the wounded. Locating a mortally wounded soldier in an exposed position, and despite the intense shell-fire, Private Perry remained with this man, dressing his wounds and rendering all assistance possible, the wounded man later dying in his arms. His devotion to duty, disregard of personal safety, is worthy of the highest praise.*

**Mon., 9/30** Still in same position, raining some, still a lot of mud. One gas casualty. Hope.

*On September 30<sup>th</sup>, the 37<sup>th</sup> Division, battle-worn and tired, was withdrawn. The Division had suffered terrible losses in killed and wounded.... These sturdy*

***Ohioans fought their way through...tangled wilds...where every point of vantage bristled with Maxims [German machine guns]. There were machine gun nests everywhere and snipers' boxes tucked away in the tops of thousands of trees... During...eleven days [of fighting], the division left 977 dead on the field and had 4,266 wounded.***

The 37<sup>th</sup> was relieved by the 32<sup>nd</sup> National Guard Division, and the 113<sup>th</sup> (as part of the 55<sup>th</sup> Artillery Brigade), was attached as artillery support to the new infantry division. In five days of bitter fighting, this alignment captured the ruins of two tiny villages and advanced the front a few hundred yards.

**Tues., 10/1** In same position all day. Fired some. Got orders to move forward. Started about 6:30 p.m. Got in new position about 12 o'clock. Near Ivoiry.

***The fighting was constant, day and night.... The Hun was doing his utmost to stop the American advance at this pivotal point and it was this that made advancing slow and costly.***

**Wed., 10/2** Did some firing. Enemy still resisting strongly, fired on our position to such an extent as to cause us to evacuate temporarily.

**Thurs., 10/3** Enemy began shelling our positions about 4:30, and so strong and persistently had to evacuate again temporarily. Had one casualty, shot in arm. Newtmoral [?]

***Battery F had six men wounded by shell-fire and one by gas in action near Ivoiry, on the Ivoiry-Montfaucon road. While in the Argonne the battery...lost nearly all of its horses by shell-fire or over-work....***

***In the long, hard fight in the Argonne the [113<sup>th</sup>'s Sanitary] detachment served not only the sick and wounded of the regiment, but the wounded doughboys of the 37th and 32d Divisions. The number of wounded was so great that the medical detachments with the infantry and the field hospital units were totally inadequate. To make a bad situation worse there were no roads and the muddy trails that existed were blocked twenty-four hours every day by new troops and ammunition crowding in toward the fighting lines. This made it impossible to get the ambulances through for the wounded and they were piled along the roads, under improvised shelters made of blankets, or with no shelter at all, waiting for transportation. Here every man in the detachment "put out" (to quote an expressive bit of army slang) to the best of his ability and when there was a call for help, never paused for an instant to learn what outfit the sufferer was from but responded instantly. It was while going to the aid of***

*wounded doughboys in an exposed spot on the shell-swept Montfaucon-Ivoiry road that Weeks and Gibson were wounded by shell-fire.*

**Friday, 10/4** Began firing about 5 o'clock a.m. after enemy bombardment ceased. Our barrage continued about 3 hours. Got orders to prepare to move forward. I went ahead with reconnaissance detail under very heavy shell fire and some gas. Got orders not to move till further orders.

[From the Division's intelligence report for Oct. 4:]

*A terrific bombardment with H[igh] E[xplosive]s and gas began at 3:00 o'clock this morning and continued for half an hour. Several bursts of 150's were directed on main roads. The efficiency of the enemy's artillery fire was aided by...his planes....*

*Our troops moved forward at H hour [5:25 a.m.] behind a rolling barrage. Our lines were subjected to a heavy counter preparation fire of H[igh] E[xplosives] and gas, supported by heavy enemy machine gun fire. Enemy aviation much more active and aggressive than our own.... Enemy infantry activity confined almost entirely to machine gun action, supported by groups of snipers.... 36 prisoners reported....*

*The enemy had superiority of the air. Five enemy planes were brought down, one by anti-aircraft fire..., and [two] by machine gun fire. In addition to observation and registration of artillery fire the enemy used his aeroplanes to combat our planes and fire upon our front line troops....*

*On October 4<sup>th</sup>, the One Hundred and Thirteenth was called upon to fire a total of 5,719 rounds.*

**Sat., 10/5** Still in same position waiting orders. I went forward again to front lines for observing and liaison work under almost incessant shell fire all day. Also machine gun fire. Had very narrow escape from shell.

**Sun., 10/6** Still in same position. Got several letters. Had preaching under gun screen by Chaplain. Got orders to move about 4 p.m., started about 6. Traveled to rear till about 5 a.m.

### **Transfer to the Woëvre Sector**

On October 6, with the battle for the Argonne still in full swing, the 32<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division was replaced, after only six days in the theater. That afternoon the 113<sup>th</sup> was ordered to join the infantry in the march to the rear. It was no longer in shape, commanders concluded, to provide adequate artillery support for the 32<sup>nd</sup> Division's replacement.

*Two weeks of desperate fighting, day and night, following close on a long, forced march and the exhausting experiences of the St. Mihiel drive, had worn the One Hundred and Thirteenth down considerably but it had not dulled its fighting spirit. The regiment was quite ready to remain in the Argonne another two weeks, or four, so far as the men and officers were concerned, but the regiment's horses were gone.... They fell by the wayside by ones and twos and threes, until only a few hundred remained.... Out of the original 1050 that went in at St. Michel, the morning report of October 7<sup>th</sup> showed 247 classed as "serviceable." The other two regiments of the brigade were in equally bad condition. The brigade was no longer mobile, and this Battle of the Argonne being a battle of action, it was necessary that the artillery units engaged be able to move speedily. No other animals were available to take the places of the dead and disabled. The guns and other equipment were carried to the new sector in trucks.*

**Mon., 10/7** Just when preparing to leave this position, one shell fell among the drivers and horses in rear of position wounding six and killing one horse. Shelton, Tolbert, Norwood, Stambaugh, Martin O. [?], Williford. Went into bivouac, remaining till about 4 p.m. Then moved on back to Recicourt and stopped till 3 p.m. next day.

**Tues., 10/8** Left Recicourt about 3 p.m. and after one of the hardest hikes I have ever done were finally stopped about 25 kilos distant at Renoncourt, remaining till about 1 p.m. Got some good pears.

*From October 8... to October 11... the regiment was at Recicourt and en route to the Woëvre sector.... The men made the journey to the new sector afoot,...and there was not a doughboy [infantry] outfit in the A[merican] E[xpeditionary] F[orce] that could out-hike them. They liked hiking. It was better than lying out in the woods in the rain and they were always good-natured on the road.*

With a least one corporal less than enthusiastic about the first day's hike, the 113<sup>th</sup> was bound for the Woëvre sector of low-intensity warfare across the Meuse southeast of Verdun. Here they would provide artillery support for two successive infantry divisions, first the 79<sup>th</sup> and after October 25 its replacement the 33<sup>rd</sup>.

**Wed., 10/9** Left about 1 p.m., and after another hard hike of about 21 kilos, stopped at Bergnoncourt [?], a small village on the Meuse.

**Thurs., 10/10** Left about 10 a.m. and after a slow march stopped on Meuse Canal just out of Troyon, remaining here balance of day and night and next day.

**Fri., 10/11** Here we had access to the first YMCA since getting on active front, and consequently our first chance to buy any thing sweet, and rather hard to get here. Got orders to move again. Starting at 6 p.m., arrived at Eschelen [?] about 11 p.m. Near Dommartain.

**Sat., 10/12** Moved [?] Eschlon [?] in a.m. Went to Hannonville in p.m. for vegetables in p.m. [sic]. Began raining before got back about 7 p.m. Slept at guns.

*The first battery positions in the Woëvre sector were on the heights overlooking the plains of the Woëvre with...[five] ruined villages...in view. Far off across the plains lay the German positions. At that time the Germans were in possession of St. Hilaire, Marcheville, Saulx-en-Woëvre, Fresnes, Champlon and Wadonville and nearly all these towns could be seen from the regiment's forward observation posts. The Germans held the heights behind all of these towns, commanding every approach across the plains....*

*The 33d Division...proved to be a live organization and its infantry was always stirring up some sort of action all along the front. The regiment was called on for every bit of fighting skill it had, not once but many times. There was much harrassing fire to be done at night and always there were raiding parties to be protected and special missions to be carried out. Roving guns on the plains did effective work at times and the batteries took turns at occupying positions on the plains....*

*The Boche...was carrying on similar operations all the time. Every night German guns would be run out to positions on the plains and there would be lively bombardments in which all of the back areas, cross roads and [ammunition] dumps, as well as the battery positions, would be fired on.... The Boche kept this up with monotonous regularity and true German method. The firing started at the same hour every night, the length of the bombardment never varied five minutes, and all of the points singled out for attention received practically the same number of shells every night.*

*The Boche was particularly active in the air in this sector. The black cross planes came over every day and on moonlight nights, the droning of the Boche motor drove sleep away. The utmost care had to be exercised in the matter of lights.*

**Sun., 10/13** After getting breakfast at Eshlon, went with Captn. to Hannonville to look over new position. Moved battery to new position in Hamonville at night. Very muddy roads.

**Mon., 10/14** Have good dry dugouts to stay in with stoves for fires, lights, and good beds. The best accommodation in quite a while. Worked all day arrainging [sic] our new quarters.

**Tues., 10/15** Spent part of day looking town, which has had a population of about 2500. Did nothing balance of day except look over respirators.

**Wed., 10/16** Did nothing all day except spent some time looking over town.

**Thurs., 10/17** Did nothing but sit by fire, and strolled around some. Also did some washing in p.m.

**Fri., 10/18** Heated some water in a bucket and took a bath in a.m. Was in charge of a detail to gather vegetables in p.m.

**Sat., 10/19** Did nothing in a.m. except sit by fire. Examined all respirators in p.m.

**Sun., 10/20** Walked out with Capt. M[orrison]. Looked over am[munition] dumps and explored some of the building in town in a.m. Wrote some in p.m. Were shelled pretty heavily at night. Raining all day.

**Mon., 10/21** Did nothing in a.m. except walk over to Y. Wrote some letters in p.m. Sun shined most all day.

**Tues., 20/22** Did nothing in a.m. Examined all respirators of firing battery in p.m.

**Wed., 10/23** Did nothing in a.m. Wrote some letters in p.m. Battery fired a fifteen minute barrage about 11:40 p.m.

**Thurs., 10/24** Did nothing in a.m. Examined respirators in p.m. Did some writing.

**Fri., 10/25** Nothing of interest. A lone French woman came to village in p.m. Stayed all alone at night in remote part of village.

**Sat., 10/26** Nothing of interest. French woman very much disturbed, wants to go to Paris. We furnished wagon to take her to R.R. station. Boys gave her 125 francs. She seemed astonished and profuse with thanks.

**Sun., 10/27** Did nothing in a.m. except shower. Assisted by Sgt. Kelly, examined all respirators of firing battery, and wrote some in p.m.

**Mon., 10/28** Did nothing except re-arranging [*sic*] gas alarms and put up signs. A very pretty day.

**Tues., 10/29** Did nothing in a.m. Got orders to move in p.m. Left Hannonville about 10:30 p.m., arrived at position (the same ones before going to Hann.) about 12 m.

**Wed., 10/30** Began construction of quarters with the telephone detail. Also put up some gas alarms and signs. A pretty day.

**Thurs., 10/31** Worked all day on construction of quarters. A very pretty day.

**Fri., 11/1** Worked all day on construction of quarters. "A very pretty day."

**Sat., 11/2** Worked all day carrying lumber and material for use in construction of quarters. Slight rain continued most all day. Began raining about 5:30 p.m.

**Sun., 11/3** Listened to sermon by Chaplain in a.m. in pines which furnish cover for our quarters near gun positions. Did nothing in p.m. Raining most all day and at night.

**Mon., 11/4** Wrote some letters in a.m. Nothing in p.m. Sun began to shine in p.m.

**Tues., 11/5** Wrote some in a.m. Examined all respirators in p.m. Rained at night.

**Wed., 11/6** Did nothing in a.m. or p.m. except writing a couple of letters.

**Thurs., 11/7** Did nothing in a.m. Got notice to prepare to go to Gas School. Prepared to go to school in p.m. Began raining in p.m.

### **Gas School Again**

With comfortable quarters, plenty of rest and supplies, and a fresh supply of horses, the 113<sup>th</sup> was soon back in fighting trim. In early November, with the long awaited assault on Metz imminent, the American forces in the Woërve cleared the way by seizing several German-held villages.

Just in time to miss his regiment's last battle, Corporal Sellers was dispatched far to the south for further training in gas warfare, first at Gondrecourt and then farther south at Chatillon.

**Fri., 11/8** Got up at 5 o'clock, reported at reg. hqrs. at 7:30. Got to T[r]oyon at 10:30, left at 1 p.m. in trucks, arrived Landrecourt [?] 3 p.m., left 7:30 by train, arrived St Dizi[e]r 8:30 a.m. 11/9. Rained almost all night, very muddy.

**Sat., 11/9** Stopped at "Camp de la Gumb[r]est of word illegible." Very muddy and disagreeable. Had to stay inside all day. Very poor services. Left 10:30 p.m. Still raining.

**Sun., 11/10** Left St. Dexier [Dizier} 10:30 p.m., 11/9; arrived Naincours [?] 10 o'clock, changed trains; arrived Gondrecourt 3:30 p.m. Was "Deloused." Got good warm supper at hospital unit. Went on up to barracks. Very good place. Had good night sleep.

**Sun., 11/11** Went over to YMCA, then went over to adjutant's office. Got orders to go on to another school tomorrow. Went to town in p.m. Frenchmen celebrating the signing of armistice at 11 a.m.

## **Armistice !**

Isolated amid jubilant strangers, Corporal Sellers must have wished he were back with his buddies at the 113<sup>th</sup>. There *at eight o'clock on the morning of November 11th orders came down to cease firing. The Boche kept on hammering away until eleven o'clock, sending over mustard gas shells mostly. At that hour all action ceased and quiet fell upon...a shell-wrecked, torn and terribly disfigured land.... To the men of the regiment who had lived...with...the sound of guns for seventy-eight days, the silence that fell at eleven o'clock on that great morning was unreal and oppressive.*

*The night of November 11<sup>th</sup> will be remembered long by all who were privileged to be along the front. Lights flared everywhere in the woods, from every dugout and every shack, and happy soldiers wandered from post to post in the moonlight, singing songs and shouting.*

*All along the front, on both sides, American and German soldiers were sending up every variety of star rocket and flare in stock.... They would be no good for the next war, so let 'em burn. The happy soldiers staged a fireworks display such as the world had never seen before and will never see again.*

## **A Job Well Done**

The soldiers of the 113<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery had every reason to be proud of their part in the victory. Through two months of almost constant battle, they were in the vanguard of the strategically critical breakthroughs at St. Mihiel and in the Argonne. Their breakthroughs doomed the enemy supply line and made possible a general Allied advance, rendering further German resistance hopeless.

## **Casualties**

Killed in action from the 113<sup>th</sup> were eight privates and a first lieutenant. Of the 84 men injured, 39 were gassed, 34 had slight injuries, 9 were injured severely, and 2 of these died of their injuries.

Artillery units suffered far less casualties than infantry, but Battery F miraculously had no one killed in battle. At Camp Coetquidan, one man died suddenly and another was accidentally shot by a Frenchman; and later at Le Mans two more died of pneumonia in the great influenza epidemic. The battery had six men wounded by shell-fire and one by gas.

**Tues., 11/12** Left at 8:30 for Chattillon by train. Arrived Joinville, changed trains, had to wait few minutes.. Got to Chaumont at 1:15 p.m. Left at 6:00, arrived at Chattillon 8:45. Got supper and went to barracks way up on hill.

**Wed., 11/13** Got up at 5:30 a.m., breakfast at 6:00. First call for drill 7:15, and worked continuously all day except 45 minutes for dinner. The mess very poor, about 4 or 5 hundred to feed.

**Thurs., 11/14** Cold and beaucoup frost. A repetition of programme of day before.

**Fri., 11/15** Still cold and frosty. A continuation of the programme.

**Sat., 11/16** Still cold. Only two lectures and the examinations. Finished by 11 a.m., free balance of day. Went to movie at Y at night.

**Sun., 11/17** Not so cold. Prepared to leave in a.m., left at 6 p.m. Arrived at Chaumont about 9:30, slept in barracks near station. Put on first service chevron [denoting a year of service].

**Mon., 11/18** Left Chaumont 5:45 a.m., arrived St. Dizier 9:30; left 11:30, arrived at Dugny [?] 8 p.m. Slept on seat in car, train remaining in position all night. Very cold.

**Tues., 11/19** Left Dugny 7 a.m., walked 8 kilos to Rattentout [?], left there about 1 p.m. on narrow gauge R.R. Arrived back at battery about 6 p.m.

### **The Army of Occupation**

By the time Corporal Sellers broke off his now superfluous studies and got back to his unit in the Foret de la Montagne of the Woëvre district, his battery mates were busily engaged in refitting and battlefield police, or cleanup, preparatory to a major march. The 113th *was ordered to accompany the 33<sup>rd</sup> Division in Germany as part of the Army of Occupation.... The days that followed the armistice were spent in putting all equipment in the best condition possible, securing new equipment, and outfitting so as to make a creditable appearance as a unit of the Army of Occupation. Six hundred horses and mules were...issued to the...regiment and once more it was able to move without outside assistance....*

*The regiment was called upon to police an area half as big as a North Carolina county just prior to the movement.. Every square yard of it had to be covered carefully and all debris removed.... The regiment was surprised to find that it had been living and moving over deadly mines for weeks. It required nearly three weeks to get this work done. There were 6,000 mines in the area of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Division.*

**Wed., 11/20** Did nothing except wash some clothes and wrote some. The battery doing salvage work.

**Thurs., 11/21** Did nothing except write some letters.

**Fri., 11/22** Moved from old battery position back to Eschlon. Started to build house in p.m.

**Sat., 11/23** With others of telephone detail finished house. Went with Sgt. Newell to Masonic meeting at Reg. headquarters at night. 1<sup>st</sup> degree.

**Sun., 11/24** Did nothing except write some letters and read some.

**Mon., 11/25** Worked on souvenirs and wrote some letters. Raining.

**Tues., 11/26** Worked on souvenirs and sat around fire. Still raining.

**Wed., 11/27** Went to Surzy [?] and Dompere to do police work [cleanup]. Rained almost all day. Very muddy. Got back after dark, on guard at night. Had hard time finding all guards.

**Thurs., 11/28** Holiday. Still raining and very muddy.

**Fri., 11/29** Done police work again. Cleared off in p.m.

**Sat., 11/30** Still doing police work. Sun shined most all day.

**Sun., 12/1** Did nothing except write some letters.

**Mon., 12/2** Did police & fatigue work around Seuzey and Dompere.

**Tues., 12/3** Still policing around Seuzey and Dompere.

**Wed., 12/4** Did nothing. Raining most all day. Very muddy.

**Thurs., 12/5** Did nothing except wash some clothes in p.m. Raining most of day. Very muddy.

**Fri., 12/6** Got orders to prepare to move going north. Still very muddy.

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**Sat., 12/7** Left camp about 8:30 and after an all day march stopped for night at Friaucville near Conflan[s].

*In telling of the march from the "Foret de la Montagne" northward toward Germany, Chaplain Lacy opened his story with these words: "It was December 7th and not raining." Any day when rain fell not and when there was blue sky to be seen above, was worthy of mention. Men noted it carefully in their diaries and it formed a bright spot in their lives. Always there was a scramble for a bath, clean clothes and a shave. Troubles were forgotten and even the bluest and gloomiest managed to show a smile. There was always a visible uplift of spirit and laughter and song. But sunshiny days were so pitifully few!...*

*The line of march was down across the plains [of Woëvre].... This was the very route over which the regiment had been scheduled to advance toward Conflans [and Metz] on the morning of November 14th and as the men saw the condition of the roads...and the... mines and other obstructions, they were doubly thankful for the armistice, which had saved them from it....*

*Marcheville...showed very plainly the effects of the One Hundred and Thirteenth's heavy shelling just prior to the cessation of hostilities. There were fresh shell holes everywhere, so close together that they almost touched. From Marcheville on, the road was beset by entrenchments of all kinds and there was a great deal of new wire strung in the fields. It was quite evident that the Hun expected to retire, fighting.*

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**Sun., 12/8** Stayed in Friaucville all day. On guard night before and today. Still muddy.

*Friaucville, where the regiment spent Sunday, was the filthiest of all the terribly filthy villages the regiment encountered in all of its experiences in France. It had been a Boche billeting place for four years and every house was filled with Boche plunder of all sorts. Like all other French towns in the territory occupied by the Germans, Friaucville had been stripped of everything worth while. There were about fifty people there, old men, women and children. They were poorly clad, evidently poorly fed, a very abject and miserable lot of people. Their cattle, hogs, chickens and horses had been*

*requisitioned by the Germans. Every copper vessel had been taken to make German shells and their beds had been stripped of linen to make bandages for German wounded.*

□□

**Mon., 12/9** Left Friaucourt 8:30 and after an all day march passing through many villages formerly held by the Germans, we stopped at Jouderville [Joudreville].

*In all of the villages, street names had been Germanized. Every village had its "Kaiserwilhelmstrasse" and in place of the "Y. M. C. A." or "Foyer du Soldat" signs, there appeared the German equivalent, "Soldatenheim."*

□□

**Tues., 12/10** Left Jouderville [sic] at 8:00 a.m. and marched till about 1:30, stopping at Nouillon [Sur] Pont. Raining again and very muddy, also pretty cold.

**Wed., 12/11** Left Nouillon [Sur] Pont at 8:30, arrived at Rebon (near Longwy[-Bas]) 2:30 p.m. Very muddy, wet, and cold, it having rained on us all of the way, with a temperature just below freezing.

[From a humorous memoir by Sgt. George Graham, Headquarters Company:] *Shortly after joining the Army of Occupation, the One Hundred and Thirteenth, after heavy military preparations, known as pay-day, staged its third big drive--the thirteenth eliminating drive of December 12th, when the regiment advanced upon Rehon and Longwy, France, having existed almost three months, with nothing more bracing than a Y. M. C. A. lemon pop. The zero hour had arrived and the big drive was on. Cafes were successfully flanked in the champagne sector--but not without heavy casualties, which included those "half-shot" and the "dead soldiers" gathered up after the memorable "counter" attack.*

□□

**Thurs., 12/12** Left Rebon at 8 a.m. and after marching all day in the rain and mud arrived at Redange [Pétange?], Lux., about 6 p.m. Still raining and almost freezing temp. Passed from France through corner of Belgium and into Luxemburg.

## **Luxemburg**

*The regiment entered the province of Luxemburg, that strange little country, where French, German, Flemish and various other languages are spoken fluently and there are no poor people and every house is full of fat, red-cheeked babies. There are iron mines and various allied industries and the most beautiful little farms anyone ever saw. As in France, the people live in small villages, all built of stone and brick, in close communion with the pigs, cows, horses and chickens.*

*Be it recorded here that the people of Luxemburg treated the men of the regiment with all kindness. True, they put a stiff price on everything they had to sell and the system of*

*financial juggling by which they kept the German mark at a premium at a time when it was headed for the cellar and going fast, aroused no little admiration. They stuck to it firmly that a mark was worth one franc and twenty-five centimes,...and nothing else would go.*

*The men found it hard sledding for a while. It had not been easy to master the intricacies of the French monetary system and now right when they had begun to speak glibly of francs, centimes and sous, they were put up against the mark, whose value fluctuated and was rarely stable for more than two days at a time*

*They were quick to learn that the thrifty Luxemburgers were short on soap and valued a cake of soap above all things else. The small cakes of bath soap issued with the rations daily by the Supply Officer, which the men had been accustomed to throw away, became suddenly extremely valuable. With eggs selling at a franc each, it was no trick at all to take one of those tiny cakes of soap and buy a dozen eggs.*

□□

**Fri., 12/13** Stayed in Redange [?], Lux., all day. Still raining and very muddy. Not so cold.

**Sat., 12/14** Left Redange [?] at 8 a.m., reached Moutfort, Lux., about 2:30 p.m., about 30 kilos distant. Clouds broken in a.m., rained some in p.m.

**Sun., 12/15** (In bowling alley) Left Moutfort about 10 a.m. After going about 6 kilos, stopped at Assel, Lux. A very pretty day. The sun shined almost all day. About 4 kilos to German border or Moselle River. Slept in barn on unthreshed wheat.

**Mon., 12/16** Stayed in Assel all day. Still raining. Stayed in billets all day in barn.

Having crossed Luxemburg eastward at its narrow waist, the occupying army came to a sudden halt at the German border.

*As fortune would have it, the Army of Occupation, originally designed to have ten divisions, was reduced to eight divisions and the 33d Division was ordered to take positions in Luxemburg as part of the Army of Occupation reserve. This called for more marching and the regiment was on the way early on the morning of December 17th.*

For three miserable days, through rain, gale, sleet, and snow, these heroes of St. Mihiel and the Argonne trudged along the duchy's longest axis to its northern tip.

□□

**Tues., 12/17** Left Assel about 1:30 p.m., and after marching most of way facing a stinging sleet and rain, we arrived at Hassel, Lux., about 10 kilos. Slept in hallway of barn on some wheat straw.

**Wed., 12/18** Stayed in Hassel all day. A very cold, rainy, windy, and disagreeable day. Stayed inside of billets most all day. Got several letters.

**Thurs., 12/19** A strong wind blowing and raining, mingled with a stinging sleet and some snow. Left Hassel about 8:30, passed through Lux. City about 12 m. Snowing very hard. Arrived at Wolferdingen about 1:30, 7 kilos north of Lux. City. Marched facing the wind, rain, sleet, and snow most of way. Slept in barn on straw at night.

**Fri., 12/20** Still raining. Left Wolferdingen about 8:30, marched north about 21 kilos. Stopped about 2 p.m. at [Colmar] Berg, Lux. Stopped raining in p.m., clouds broken.

*On December 20th the regiment again marched through a snowstorm and billeted at Colmar-Burg and Cruhdton. Two days later the regiment settled down for Christmas, with the First Battalion, Regimental Headquarters and Headquarters Company at Bissen, the Second Battalion at Colmar-Burg and the Supply Company at Boevange.*

*Volumes might be written about the regiment's experiences in quaint old Luxemburg. The men rambled through the green fields and along the fine rock roads and visited castles that were old when Columbus discovered America. The people were kind and hospitable. So far as the regiment could learn, they were pro-French almost without exception. Luxemburg profited immensely by the war, especially during the first three years. During the last year of war the Germans had no money and the thrifty Luxemburgers began to consider them a pest. The German main lines of supply ran through this little country and they built at least one fine railroad through one end of the province. The Germans also kept up the main highways that their trucks used....*

*The general mixture of languages that prevailed in Luxemburg kept the men in confusion all the time. The girls of Luxemburg were friendly. They liked the Americans, and the lonesome and homesick Americans of the One Hundred and Thirteenth responded to their friendliness as a flower opens to the sun. Lack of knowledge of the language your beloved speaks is a serious defect and one that is annoying in the extreme, but love speaks a universal language and there are many feelings a true lover may express clearly without the aid of the spoken word.*

*But it was hard sledding to make love with one hand clutching a dictionary, labeled "Francais-Anglais et Anglais-Francais." Every man in the regiment either experienced it, or observed it, and can vouch for the truthfulness of the statement. Every man in the regiment who has had a like experience will sympathize with that cook in the Supply Company whom his captain overheard talking earnestly to a plump and pretty Luxemburg fraulein, who spoke German and French with equal ease and had been trying both on him.*

*"Now listen," he was imploring. "Venn ick bin in Luxemburg three months--compree three months?--ick parley voo Luxemburg."*

*"Ja wohl," answered his charmer with a giggle. Unfortunately for love's young dream, the budding linguist was not to remain in Luxemburg long enough to acquire a speaking knowledge of "Luxemburg."*

□□

**Sat., 12/21** Billeted in small room with six others. Did nothing except write some letters. Have a fine view of Grand Duchess's Chateau or Castle from room windows.

**Sun., 12/22** Wrote a couple of letters and read some French history.

**Mon., 12/23** Stayed in room most all day, reading, etc. Battery went on short hike. Rec'd. Xmas package.

**Tues., 12/24** Went on short hike in a.m., also in p.m. Snowed some at night.

**Wed., 12/25** "Holiday" Ground white with snow, although the sun came up clear. It began snowing again about 1 p.m.

*Luxemburg people did their best toward entertaining the men and officers during the Christmas season. They were invited to the dances that always mark the season and greatly enjoyed them. The regiment was rather hard to entertain for the reason that home ties draw a little tighter at Christmas time than at any other time of the year and North Carolina was the only place on earth that would have looked good to the One Hundred and Thirteenth Field Artillery at that particular time.*

□□

**Thurs., 12/26** Very cold. Went for hike in a.m. Snow on the hills makes pretty view. Went on guard (stables) at 3 o'clock p.m.

**Fri., 12/27** Still very cold and cloudy. Snowed again in p.m. Changed from snow to rain about dark.

**Sat., 12/28** Still raining. Sick with gripp[e]. Lay on bunk most all day. Began to feel better some time during night.

**Sun., 12/29** Stayed in quarters most all day. Cloudy. Wrote some letters.

**Mon., 12/30** Clouds broken, sun shining at intervals. Went on hike in a.m. Nothing in p.m.

**Tues., 12/31** Slightly indisposed. Stayed in quarters most all day. Raining slightly. To bed early.

**Volume 2**

Long before getting to the end of his 1818 diary (Volume 1), Corporal Sellers began filling his intended Volume II for 1819 with a mass of notes from his classes on gas warfare. As a result, the continuation of the diary begins only on page 65. Other material on the various military technologies he studied and practiced can be found in the "Memorandum" and "Addresses" pages of Volume 1. These non-diary materials are worth study.

□□

## **1919**

**Wed., 1/1** "Holiday" At [Colmar] Berg, Luxembourg. Pretty and clear in a.m. Clouds drifted over about noon, began raining again about dark. Just stayed around quarters all day.

**Thurs., 1/2** Drill and practice of Guard Manual in a.m. Short hike in p.m. Rained and sleeted some.

**Fri., 1/3** Raining and cold. Did nothing. Stayed in quarters most all day.

**Sat., 1/4** Inspection (mounted) in a.m. Nothing in p.m. Got orders to move.

**Sun., 1/5** Left Colmar Berg about 8:30 a.m., arrived Wolferdingen about 1:30 p.m. M<sup>c</sup> and myself stopped with a lady who's husband was in the German army. Had two pretty little girls and a little boy all very intelligent. Lady could speak some English.

## **Heading toward Home at Last**

*On January 5, 1919 came the orders that everybody had been hoping for. The artillery brigade of the 33d Division had come up and the 55th Field Artillery Brigade was ordered to march back to the Toul area, turn in equipment, and there take train for the Le Mans area to rejoin the 30th Division. The journey back to France was devoid of incident. It was a long, hard march. There were two days when it neither snowed nor rained but for the most part it was doing one or the other all the time and often both at the same time.*

□□

**Mon., 1/6** Stayed in quarters most all day. Had nothing to do, played Dominoes with kids. Not very cold.

**Tues., 1/7** Clear, Sun shining, pretty, and warm all day, very unusual. Did nothing all day. On battery guard at night.

**Wed., 1/8** Left Wolferdingen at 8:30, arrived at Fermange 18 kilos about 2 p.m. Stopped an hour for dinner. Another pretty day. Sun shined all day. Slept in bar-room at night. The above place about 1 kilo sth. of Bethembourg, Lux.

**Thur., 1/9** Left Fermange about 8:30 a.m. Cloudy and very foggy, also very cold, began raining about 10:30 a.m. Arrived at Beuvillers, Lorraine, about 2:30 p.m., wet and cold. Slept in house, on bunks formerly used by Germans. Distance about 24 kilos.

**Fri., 1/10** Left Beuvillers at 8 o'clock. A pretty day. Sun shined most all day. After a march of about 30 kilos we arrived at Labry near Conflans. In our march passed just west of Briey. Slept in old French ladies house.

**Sat., 1/11** Left Labry about 8:30. It began snowing about 10 o'clock and snowed hard about 2 hours. Arrived Hannonville A[u] P[assage] about 11:30, about 12 kilos from Labry. Slept in an old shot up building. Getting back near old front.

**Sun., 1/12** Left Hannonville A P at 8 o'clock Snowing very hard and cold About 10:30 the snow turned to rain which continued the balance of day with exception of about 2 hours at dinner. We arrived at Buxieres about 3:30 p.m. a march of about 30 kilos, very tired and wet. Had a room with stove to sleep in. Good!

**Mon., 1/13** Left Buxieres at 8:30 a.m. arrived at Corn[i]eville about 2:30 about 15 kilos distant. The French people very unkind. Had to billet in barns with no fires, had trouble to get there. Raining, cold, and very disagreeable.

## **Back Across France by Train**

Encamped here near Toul for a week, the 113<sup>th</sup> turned in its livestock and equipment preparatory to entraining for a camp near the Atlantic ports.

*When the regiment got through "turning in" equipment, it was stripped down to the clothes that the men wore and that was about all. Each man, by special dispensation, kept his helmet and gas mask, his canteen and blanket roll, but everything else was turned over to the supply departments of the Second Army..*

□□

**Tues., 1/14** Had good night's sleep even tho in barn, due to plenty of blankets. Cleaned guns & material preparatory to turn in. Turned in side arms in p.m. A Cold disagreeable day. Went to bed at 6 o'clock.

**Wed., 1/15** Raining and Cold. The Guns were taken to a place beyond Toul (about 25 [kilos?]) and turned in. The ones who took them didn't get back till about 1 o'clock next a.m. The other wheeled material left at a dump beyond "Menil la Zauro [?]." Only have horses now.

**Thurs., 1/16** Clouds broken, cleared off about 10 o'clock, clear remainder of day. Got horses in shape to turn in, detail came for them just before dark. Moved out of barn into a room next door, where there is a stove.

**Fri., 1/17** Detail left with our horses. No more stable calls on grooming. "Wow." Did nothing balance of day.

**Sat., 1/18** Did nothing except take a bath in a.m. Took short hike in p.m. up to observation post used in St Mihiel fight. Got orders that we would leave tomorrow.

**Sun., 1/19** Had very light breakfast. Truck came for blanket rolls about 10 o'clock a.m. Left Covnairville at 12:30 without dinner, hiked 10 kilos to Trondes, got cup of coffee & hard tack. Boarded train, 60 to 70 men in one boxcar. Train remained on siding all night [*sic*].

**The men did not find passenger coaches waiting on the siding to carry them to Le Mans. Instead there were big American box cars and they were apportioned so as to provide one car for each sixty men. Officers and men fared alike on this journey and it did not add to their composure to see train-loads of French and Italian soldiers go by in comfortable passenger coaches while they jolted along in unheated box-cars. This thing happened not once but many times.**

**The beginning of the journey put everybody in bad humor. The first train had gone forward, carrying the 115th Field Artillery. The One Hundred and Thirteenth was to follow and it boarded the train on schedule time. The regiment was not one minute late. When loading had been completed the train was pulled down the track a few hundred yards and there it remained for twenty-three hours, waiting for a French "pilot" to ride on the engine with the American engineer!**

**The journey that ensued will always remain a painful topic of discussion, wherever two veterans of the One Hundred and Thirteenth Field Artillery get together. It lasted five days and nights and fully half of that time was spent lying on side-tracks waiting for French trains to go by. The weather was as cold as weather ever gets to be in France. That journey was made endurable by one thing alone and that was the consciousness that the regiment was homewardbound and every turn of the wheels was just so much gained.**

□□

**Mon., 1/20** Got up or rather out of car at 4:30 a.m. a/c cold and not room enough lie down to rest, Sat. by a fire out side of car. Had iron rations for breakfast. Did not leave till about 3:30 p.m. and then only traveled as far as Neufchateau till six o'clock next a.m., about 50 kilos.

**Tues., 1/21** Pulled out of Neufchateau about 7 o'clock and after many long stops and very slow running we arrived about 6 p.m. at Bar-sur-Aube. Got some coffee or some did. I was on the rear of line and wasn't quite enough for all. Weather fine, rather cold but Sun shining pretty. Nothing but iron ration to eat.

**Wed., 1/22** Woke up this a.m. at Nevers after a good night's run. Still cold, but sun shining. Passed thru Bourges about 10:30, arrived at St. Pierre-des-Corp about 4:30. Got some good coffee, same eats. Heard that 114<sup>th</sup> who were behind us had wreck, 15 killed. [In this train wreck, 23 died including two privates from Batteries D and F of the 113<sup>th</sup>.]

**Thurs, 1/23** Day light found us standing on siding at Le Mans. Still clear, Sun came up pretty. Left Le Mans about 8 a.m. stopped at Sille-le-Guillaume. I got off train and with several others, including all of our officers, got left. Caught next train and overtook them at next stop. Arrived at destination (Evron) 2:30, hiked 5 kilos to billets at Messanges.

### **The Endless Wait at Le Mans**

Because all the major Atlantic ports were close to Le Mans by good rail connections, the countryside around it became the main staging area for departing American troops. The men of the 113<sup>th</sup> were billeted at first in a cluster of villages around Evron, fifty miles to the west.

□□

**Fri., 1/24** Very poor billets nevertheless had good night's rest. Real cold in early a.m. but clear, and after Sun got up a piece, it was real warm and one of the finest days I have seen. A beaucoup mail in p.m. for battery. I only got one letter.

**Sat., 1/25** Cloudy and very cold. Took hike in a.m. across country about 10 kilos. Got more mail in p.m. I only got 2 letters this time.

**Sun., 1/26** Still cloudy and cold, snowed some during night. Went to preaching in barn on straw by Chaplain Lacy, a very good sermon. Wrote some letters in p.m. Began a slow rain just before night, "freezing."

**Mon., 1/27** Ground covered with ice altho some warmer. Did some close order drill in a.m. A relay race and short hike after dinner. Snowed some at night.

**Tues., 1/28** Clear, snow and ground frozen. Did some C O [close order drill] in a.m. Cloudy and began snowing hard about noon, snowing for about hour & half. Went to Evron with M<sup>c</sup>Nally & Fogus.

**Wed., 1/29** Did nothing in a.m. except have equipment checked. Close order drill in p.m., preparatory to being reviewed by General Pershing.

**Thurs., 1/30** Drill and inspection by battery C[ommanding] O[fficer] in a.m. A light snow falling almost all day. Was reviewed by General Pershing at Enron in p.m. Got very cold while waiting. Was first inspected in ranks and then passed in review.

**Fri., 1/31** Cloudy. Not quite as cold as usual. Some drills in a.m. Went on guard in p.m. Got orders we're going to move to better billets [*sic*].

**Sat., 2/1** Snowing. Had breakfast, then made blanket rolls and policed quarters. Left Messanges at 12:30 after dinner. Still snowing, about 3 inches deep. Arrived at Chamins [?] at 4 o'clock, after loosing [sic] our way and hiking about 13 kilos. Quit snowing.

**Sun., 2/2** Very cold, but had good place for fire. Much ice and very hard to stand up. M<sup>c</sup> and me walked over to St. Susanne and back in p.m., about 10 kilos. When got back was told I had a pass to Paris this weekend, then walked to Evron to get train. Arrived at Paris at 6 a.m. next morning after standing up most of way, "very tired."

## Gay Paree

How you gonna keep 'em  
Down on the farm,  
After they've seen Paree ?  
□□

**Mon., 2/3** Arrived in Paris about 6 a.m. Spent most of the morning registering and getting rooms. Slept a couple of hours in p.m. Got up, walked over the city for a while. Went to the Zig Zag Follies at night, very good. Went to bed 1 a.m., very tired.

**Tues., 2/4** Got up about 8 a.m., had breakfast at hotel. Went on motor trip over city in a.m. Went on trip to Versailles in p.m. and to moving pictures and a promanade [sic] at night. Went to bed about 12:30, very tired.

**Wed., 2/5** Got up about 8:30. Got hair cut and shave, then spent some time visiting [illegible word] shops. Began snowing again, later turned into rain. Browsed [?] thru some of stores in p.m. Went to movie show and promanade [sic] at night. Retired about 12 o'clock.

**Thurs., 2/6** Left Paris about 6 o'clock a.m., arrived at Le Mans about 11:30. Went up town and got rooms at hotel. Spent afternoon looking over city. Went to movie show at night. Retired about 11:30 p.m.

**Fri., 2/7** Got up about 9 a.m., got something to eat. Left town about 11:30 for camp, where the Reg[imen]t. had moved to while we were gone, about 5 kilos from Le Mans. Arrived about 12:30, found Regt. in squad tents. Very cold at night, fuel scarce.

*Leaving Evron on February 5, 1919, under orders to proceed to the Forwarding Camp at Le Mans, the regiment fully expected to be aboard a transport within ten days, but it was not to be. A period of waiting ensued that taxed the patience of every man in the outfit. Conditions around Le Mans were not of the best from the standpoint of sanitation and there was more sickness than the regiment had experienced in all of its*

*history. Eight men died of influenza and scores of others were afflicted with it in lesser degree. The whole brigade was under quarantine for a while in order to check the spread of the disease.*

In one of history's deadliest worldwide pandemics of influenza, eight of the 113<sup>th</sup>'s enlisted men died between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of February.

*The men will long remember the sticky, oozy, gooey mud of the Le Mans Forwarding Camp, the mud that was with them day and night for a whole month, a month that was the most depressing month of their career, with rain falling constantly and a deadly epidemic raging. They were inspected and re-inspected, bathed, deloused and disinfected, preparatory to taking train for St. Nazaire, the port of embarkation. Something would happen to delay the movement and the whole performance had to be gone over again. This happened many times and the men never got used to it. The disappointment at each failure to move seemed to grow keener and harder to bear.*

□□

**Sat., 2/8** Did nothing in a.m. except stay in tents and try to keep warm. Went thru process of being De-loused in p.m. Got all new clothes. Fiercely cold at night, but clear. Have very little fire. Kept fairly comfortable in bed. Sent several men to hospital with "Flu".

**Sun., 2/9** Still fiercely cold and wind blowing. Had to get up and have breakfast before daylight, and take a detail to unload some railroad rails and cross ties. Almost frozen. Was quarantined for "Flu" in p.m. More men to hospital with "Flu".

**Mon., 2/10** Still clear and fiercely cold and wind blowing. The only place can keep warm is in bed. Had B[attalion]n review in p.m., and checked equipment. Had good night's sleep due to plenty of blankets. Kept good and warm, More men to hospital with "Flu".

**Tues., 2/11** Still clear and cold. Turned warmer after Sun got up apiece [*sic*]. Had inspection of equipment on field in p.m. More men to hospital with "Flu". Don't expect to be here but a few days.

**Wed., 2/12** Clear but not so cold as usual, and was real pretty day after sun got up apiece [*sic*]. Did some close order drill in a.m. Did nothing in p.m.

**Thurs., 2/13** Cloudy and warmer. Cleared off about 9:30, sun shining, pretty and warm. Went to infirmary for physical inspection in a.m. Some close order drill. Nothing in p.m.

**Fri., 2/14** Raining. Did nothing in a.m. On detail in p.m. Continued slow rain most all day.

**Sat., 2/15** Cloudy. Not very cold. Inspection, personal and of equipment, in a.m. Expect to leave for port of embarkation in few days.

**Sun., 2/16** Raining. Cleared off in middle of day, began raining again in later evening. Did nothing all day except loaf in tent. Still expecting to leave in few days.

**Mon., 2/17** Sun. shinning [*sic*] and real warm. Did Close order drill in a.m. Also some Close order drill in p.m. Flu quarantine lifted. Hear all kind of rumors about leaving.

**Tues., 2/18** Cloudy. Did nothing all day. Still haven't heard when we leave.

**Wed., 2/19** Raining all a.m. Stayed in tent and loafed. Did nothing in p.m. Very muddy. Getting awfully tired of this place.

**Thurs., 2/20** Did nothing all day. Rained some. Still muddy. Still hear all kinds of rumors about leaving.

**Fri., 2/21** Raining. Did nothing in a.m. Got pass to Le Mans in p.m. Went on over to another camp to see J.M.S. [?]. Still raining hard. Got real wet. Stopped while in Le Mans on my way back. Got back to camp about 9 o'clock.

**Sat., 2/22** "Holiday" Did nothing in a.m. Saw ballgame in p.m. Very windy and rather cold. Went to Y[MCA] at night to boxing contest and movies. Heard that we leave next Wednesday.

**Sun., 2/23** Raining. Went to preaching at Y in a.m. by Chaplain. Rain ceased. Went to open air boxing contest in p.m. Heard that Div[ision] begins to move Wed. Artillery goes first.

**Mon., 2/24** Raining intermittently all day. Most of the battery on detail grading railroad. I stayed in tent all day. Heard that date of departure has been moved up till next Monday.

**Tues., 2/25** Still raining and very muddy. I was on detail with most of battery, still working on railroad. Got very wet. I hope we don't have to stay here very much longer.

**Wed., 2/26** Did nothing in a.m. except wash some clothes. Sun shining and very windy. Still expect to leave next Monday.

**Thurs., 2/27** Went on brigade guard at 10 a.m. and continued thru the night. Still expecting to leave here Monday.

**Fri., 2/28** A real pretty day. Came of[f] guard at 10 a.m. Had regimental review in p.m. Heard today that we leave Tuesday.

**Sat., 3/1** A very pretty day. Had inspection of equipment in tents in a.m. Nothing in p.m. Got orders to be ready to move Tuesday.

**Sun., 3/2** Raining intermittently. Did nothing in a.m. Went to ball game in p.m. Got pass to Le Mans but sold it for 75 francs.

**Mon., 3/3** Went for physical inspection in a.m. and to meeting for organizing "Old Hickory Assn." Was paid off after getting supper. Rained hard most all night. Some of the boys are afraid the ocean will get up.

**Tues., 3/4** Made Rolls and policed in area preparatory to leaving. Left quarters about 1:45. Hiked to station and boarded train at 3:40 and left there at 4:20. Spent the night in box car. Arrived at St. Nazaire next a.m.

### **Anchors Aweigh !**

**On March 6th the regiment marched up the gang-plank of the *Santa Teresa*, one of Uncle Sam's transports, and on the night of the same day the *Santa Teresa* put out to sea, headed for the United States of America.**

**The men were delighted with the *Santa Teresa*. They went aboard remembering the "mutton and spuds" diet of the *Armagh* and they were not prepared for the food that was dished out to them on their first line-up for chow. It was good all the way, well cooked and of pleasing variety, and the men were delighted with it.**

**Life aboard ship was pleasant, in the main. There were a few days when the *Santa Teresa* rolled and pitched in the clutches of a storm and there was considerable sea-sickness among the passengers, but the bad weather passed.**

□□

**Wed., 3/5** Got off train about 6 a.m., hiked with full pack about 5 kilos to camp. Got breakfast, and had physical inspection. Went to YMCA at night.

**Thurs., 3/6** Left camp for to [*sic*] board the ship at 9:50. Got some refreshments at YMCA, boarded the small transport *Santa Teresa* at 11:30. Only our Reg[imen]t, about 500 casuals. Pulled out of harbor about 9 p.m. after I had gone to bed.

**Fri., 3/7** Woke up about 7:30, went on deck. Cloudy, sea pretty rough. Got sick about 11 o'clock. Very sick all balance of day and night.

**Sat., 3/8** Sea still rough. It is also still cloudy. Am still pretty sick. Sun shined a short while in middle of day.

**Sun., 3/9** Sea getting rougher, still cloudy, and strong wind blowing. Am pretty sick [?] yet haven't eaten anything in most entire days. Got to feeling better in p.m. Ship tossed all night.

**Mon., 3/10** Am feeling much better. Still cloudy and the roughest sea we have had, waves coming over second deck, wind blowing fierce. Sun shined some in Midi [?].

**Tues., 3/11** Sun shining, sea much calmer. Spent a much more pleasant day.

**Wed., 3/12** Heavy fog turning into rain, which continued all day. Wind increasing towards night.

**Thurs., 3/13** Windy and raining, and a real sea storm on. The waves going so high as to cause our ship to look real puny, and at times going entirely over top of ship. The sun came out, and it became calmer towards night. Had to slow down and lost a lot of time [several words illegible].

**Fri., 3/14** Sea much calmer and sun shining. Pretty full speed resumed. Clouds drifted over, and began raining again about 11:30 a.m., continuing through the day. Turned cold towards night.

**Sat., 3/15** Clear, sun came up pretty. Still pretty cold. Some snow flurries drifted over during the day, and snowed pretty hard couple of times. The calmest sea we have had.

**Sun., 3/16** Snowing and real cold. Heard snow was six inches deep in N.Y. Sun came out pretty warm later in day. Sea still calm. Went to preaching by Chaplain Lacy in Sailors Quarters in p.m.

**Mon., 3/17** Still pretty cold and cloudy. Sun broke through clouds at times during the day. Got orders during night to land at Newport News instead of Hoboken, N.J.

**Tues., 3/18** Raining and heavy fog lying close to the water. Had to stop and wait for fog to clear up. Sighted land about 1:30, after sun had come out pretty and warmer. Arrived in Hampton Roads about 6 o'clock. Remained all night on ship.

**U. S. A. !**

*The regiment landed at Newport News on March 18, 1919 and was quartered near that city for a period of four days.*

□□

**Wed., 3/19** Pulled into dock and disembarked about 8:30. Marched out to Camp Stuart, arriving about 10:30. Was deloused again. Had dinner, good, then went to Y. Seemed old times at Camp Sevier. This camp here is overlooking the bay.

**Thurs., 3/20** Raining reminds me again of France. Regt. had pictures made in a.m. Went to town in p.m. Expect to leave here Sunday.

**Fri., 3/21** Sun shining and wind blowing. Did nothing in a.m. Took a stroll out on beach in p.m.

**Sat., 3/22** Had final inspection in [illegible word], preparatory to leaving tomorrow. Did nothing in p.m.

## **Welcome and Parade in Raleigh**

*The regiment was ordered to Camp Jackson, Columbia, S. C., along with the remainder of the 30th Division, for muster out. It was arranged, much to the delight of every member of the regiment, that the regiment should visit Raleigh en route to Columbia and spend one night and one day in the Capital of their beloved State.*

*Faithful to its Sunday movement tradition, the regiment landed in Raleigh late Sunday evening, March 23d, and was met at the train by the most enthusiastic crowd of people thWelcomeat ever assembled in that good old town. The people had arranged to entertain the men at their homes and they were at the Union Station waiting for their guests. Suppers were waiting for the hungry soldiers in five hundred homes and the "billets" they found prepared for them were of a variety they had not seen in all of their foreign travels. When the trains bearing the men arrived in Raleigh there was no attempt at keeping the men in any sort of formation. They were turned over to their hosts and hostesses, with instructions to assemble on the following morning in time for the parade that was to be a big feature of the home-coming exercises.*

*Monday, March 24, 1919, will long be remembered in Raleigh. Before nine o'clock the streets were full of people. Special trains on all of the railroads brought thousands. Thousands more came in automobiles, buggies and wagons. It was the biggest crowd ever seen in Raleigh and the happiest. People who had no relatives or friends in the regiment came for miles to greet the boys and fathers, mothers, brothers, wives and sweethearts were on hand in vast numbers.*

*The parade at 11 o'clock on Monday, March 24th, was very impressive. Governor Bickett and a large party of notables occupied the reviewing stand.... After marching by the reviewing stand and encircling the Capitol, the regiment took the long road out Hillsboro Street to the Fair Ground, where a bountiful dinner had been spread. There were vast quantities of barbecue and Brunswick stew, inexhaustible stores of fried chicken, cake and ham and the men did full justice to them. Following the dinner, the men were dismissed once more and scattered all over Raleigh. They reassembled that night for entrainment and not a man was missing; not a man had been drunk or even faintly "illuminated"; not a man had been in any kind of trouble whatsoever. It was a great day for the regiment and a great day for Raleigh.*

□ □

**Sun., 3/23** Clear and sun shining pretty. Boarded train and left Camp Stuart about 11 a.m. Arrived at Raleigh, N.C. about 9 p.m.. Was received very enthusiastically. Spent the night (Sgt. [Henry B.] Newell & me) with a Mr. & Mrs. Satterfield, very pleasantly.

**Mon., 3/24** Paraded on the streets in a.m. Then to Fair ground where had speeches by Mayor Johnson of Raleigh (very good), Gov. Bickett and Col. Cox. And then one of the most elaborate dinners imaginable for such an occasion. Then to ball game (saw Jake W. [?]). Went with Grady W. out to his sisters [?] for support. Left Raleigh about 12 M.

## **Discharge at Camp Jackson**

*On the night of March 24, 1919, the regiment entrained for Camp Jackson, Columbia, S. C., and arrived in Columbia on the following day. There was no parade in Columbia and no formal reception, but everybody in that hospitable city turned out and gave the boys a welcome that was second only to the wonderful welcome they had been accorded in Raleigh. Columbia homes were open to the regiment and so remained for its entire stay there.*

□ □

**Tues., 3/25** Clear and sun shining, almost hot feeling (par-low [?]). Arrived Camp Jackson about 1 p.m. Was inspected and had dinner. Slept a few hours in p.m. Had formation for signing some records after supper. Then went to a show at Liberty Theater.

**Wed., 3/26** Clear and still pretty hot. Went for physical examination in a.m. Went to Columbia in p.m., and as nothing was left off for entertainment of soldiers, I had a swell time. Saw a good Keith [?] show at night.

**Thurs., 3/27** Raining and consequently some cooler. Cleared off later in day. Signed for pay and discharges in p.m. Had a special supper at 8 p.m., bought with extra mess funds.

**Fri., 3/28** Cooler and clear. Wrote some letters in a.m. Received Discharge about 3 p.m. Stayed in camp that night.

**Sat., 3/29** Left Camp Jackson about 4:30 a.m. Caught train and left Col[umbi]a. about 5:15. Arrived in Charlotte 9:30. Stayed about 4 hours. Went on to Mooresville, spent balance of day there.

**Sun., 3/29 [30]** Left Mooresville at 11 o'clock & arrived home about 7 p.m.

*Finis La Guerre*

“Lucida Handwriting,” 36-point, produces a remarkably accurate impression of the appearance and graphic bravura of Corporal Sellers’s conclusion to his war diary.

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