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# *WORLD WAR I*

In the early 1900's the United States was no longer challenged by small bands of native Americans, but by the modern, well-equipped, large-unit armies of global powers, such as Britain, Germany, and Japan. The Army began to change from the frontier constabulary of company-sized posts dotting the West, into a modern land force. In the process, the artillery corps, which had been centered around coastal fortifications and harbor defense, was divided. In 1907, the bulk of the artillery became the Coastal Artillery Corps and the remainder became the Field Artillery organized into six regiments of 36 four-gun batteries. Our own 8th Battery, Artillery Corps was renamed Battery D, 5th Field Artillery Regiment. The 5th Regimental Headquarters and 1st Battalion were formed from units in the Fort Leavenworth area and the 2nd Battalion was formed from existing units stationed in the Philippines.

In the spring of 1909, our unit deployed with the 1st Battalion to assume occupation duty in the Philippine Islands from the 2nd Battalion. It was on this occasion that Lieutenant (later General) 'Schnitz" Gruber, a member of our regiment, wrote "The Caisson Song," which was performed at a regimental ceremony to mark the event. The song was adopted by the Artillery, and later modified as the official Army song.

Between 1907 and 1911, our battery continued to move around the country. From Fort Leavenworth, the regiment moved to Fort Sheridan, Illinois, and later to Fort Snelling, Minnesota. In 1914, our unit moved to Fort Sill, Oklahoma. The oldest sports trophy in our units' collection is a silver cup awarded at a field day held that summer at Fort Sill.

In June 1916, following raids into the United States by Mexican guerrilla forces under Pancho Villa, our unit was reassigned to Camp Ringgold, Texas, to perform guard duty along the border. Our unit did not cross the border with the Punitive Expedition under General John J. Pershing, but on June 9, 1917, the 1st Expeditionary Division (later 1st Infantry Division) was formed at Fort Bliss, Texas, from the units that were on border duty. These units were the 16th, 18th, 26th, and 28th Infantry Regiments and the 5th, 6th, and 7th Field Artillery Regiments. The 5th was selected as the medium artillery unit of the division.

With war declared in Europe, our unit departed Texas in July 1917, moved by train to Hoboken, New Jersey, and then sailed to France. Because of a lack of ships, we sailed without our guns and horses. Part of the second convoy of troops to arrive in France, Battery D arrived at St. Nazaire on August 14. The regiment moved to the

artillery-training center at Le Valdehon, near the Swiss border, and received French 155mm Schneider howitzers, while the other regiments received French 75's. The three regiments formed the 1st Artillery Brigade on August 16, 1917 and trained for two months with new guns and horses.

Unknown to the American "doughboys," the exhausted French Army was in the midst of a wave of mass mutinies at the time of our arrival. The Allies demanded that the Americans be sent into the French and British Armies as individual replacements, or at least in company or battalion formations. General Pershing, overall American commander in France, refused, insisting that the Americans fight only as part of an American Army. His concept prevailed, and as part of Pershing's training plan, American units occupied relatively quiet sectors of the front before being sent to more active sectors. The 1st Division occupied the Sommervillier sector in Lorraine from October 21 - November 20, 1917, for which our unit earned the streamer embroidered LORRAINE 1917. During the next four months of training and defensive operations, the Fifth Regiment fired 26,327 rounds.

In November of 1917, Imperial Russia was overthrown by the Communists and withdrew from the war. This allowed the Germans to rush their soldiers from the Eastern to the Western Front. In the spring of 1918, with numerical superiority for the first time on this front, General Ludendorff launched the first of his "Peace Offensives," throwing the full weight of the German Army at the British and French defenders. In the third attack, the French requested and received the 1st Division as reinforcements at a portion of the front in Picardy, on April 24, 1917. The Germans made small gains against the French, seizing the towns of Montdidier and Noyon, but did not break through.

On May 28, 1918, the 1st Division counterattacked to seize the town of Cantigny in what was the first American offensive action of the war. Our unit was among 20 U.S. and French batteries of 155mm howitzers which performed the counter battery mission and destruction fires on Cantigny itself. Starting at 0545, we quickly suppressed the German artillery with a mix of high explosive and gas shells, a common technique in that war. When we shifted onto German positions in Cantigny itself, some observers claimed to have seen buildings lifted into the air. Artillery fire was credited with annihilating three German companies in Cantigny. German counterattacks were not well coordinated, and most were broken up by artillery fire from the 155mm howitzers. Between 25 April and 8 July, the Fifth fired 91,647 rounds: 7,008 of them fired on May 28 and 29 near Cantigny. The streamers were later awarded to our unit for this action was inscribed MONTDIDIER-NOYON and PICARDY 1918. Additionally, we received a French Croix de Guerre with Palm, embroidered LORRAINE & PICARDY for our valorous conduct.

The Division Artillery celebrated the Fourth of July at war by conducting battery-level contests in a now relatively quiet sector. An English colonel judged battery occupations and a French general presided over a horse show; all the while the guns were supporting a series of trench skirmishes with the Germans. At noon, we

participated in a ten-minute salute into the German lines. That night we fired a large number of mustard gas shells to suppress the German artillery during a French raid.

On July 11, 1918, the 1st Division was assigned to the French Tenth Army and began moving to positions north of Paris to participate in the Aisne-Marne Offensive. In four days, our unit made three road marches of 14, 16, and 19 hours. The offensive was designed to reduce a salient near Soisson that brought the Germans to within 70 kilometers of Paris. The Germans struck first but their attack failed. While all of our guns were not able to fire at H-hour on July 18, all were firing by H+30 in a rolling barrage. In the three-day attack, our unit constantly advanced behind the infantry. On July 23, we began firing in support of the 15th Scottish Division. The streamer we earned for this campaign is inscribed AISNE-MARNE.

Our next operation was to help support an attack by 16 divisions to reduce a salient around the town of St. Mihiel. Our guns contributed to a 4-hour prep, which began on September 12 at 0100 hours. The Germans did not expect our attack and were in the process of moving several of their units out of the area. Our fires caught their convoys in the open and were extremely effective. More than 16,000 Germans were taken prisoner in this campaign for which we were awarded a streamer inscribed ST. MIHIEL.

The final action of the war was the Meuse-Argonne offensive. Following another long road march, the attack began on September 26, 1918. The 35th Division encountered heavy German artillery fire, and on September 28, the 1st Division was committed in its sector. Our unit began supporting the Division's attack on October 4, and remained committed until November 1. In that time, we supported the 1st, 2nd, 42nd, and 82nd Divisions. The streamer for this action was inscribed MEUSE-ARGONNE, and to commemorate our actions in several operations, the French Government awarded us a French Croix de Guerre with Palm embroidered AISNE-MARNE & MEUSE ARGONNE.

Following the Armistice on November 11, our unit performed occupation duty in the Rhineland until August 1919, when it was ordered to the port of Brest. By September 6, 1919, all elements of the 1st Division had arrived at Hoboken, New Jersey. On September 10, the 1<sup>st</sup> Division made a triumphal march through New York City, led by General Pershing himself. To the men of our unit, of course, this was a return home. Hamilton, Doughty, and their men who had marched triumphantly down, instead of up, Broadway at the close of an earlier war would have been proud of their successors.

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