

The AEF Battlefields

From

OVER THE TOP

An AEF Battlefield Guide

By Michael E. Hanlon, Editor/Publisher



American Soldiers Flooding into the St. Mihiel Salient, Depicted in
Beyond Seicheprey, by Capt. J. Andre Smith,

This guidebook has been inspired by some things I've experienced during my over quarter-century study of the First World War. I made my first tour of the Western Front in 1990 and was amazed how different the battlefields looked in person, and how what I saw changed my thinking about what had transpired there. Simply reading about the battles, I found, was both insufficient for understanding them and, at times, deceptive. I came back home determined to share these insights. This led me to a secondary career as a battlefield tour leader—a job I've had off and on since. Since both my personal interest and that of my group of travelers—nearly exclusively Yanks—are strongly focused on the American experience in the war, I've made many trips to the U.S. battlefields. My groups are heavily made up of well-read Great War buffs, but what they have read about America's battles in the war are either sketchy or go out of their way to underplay the U.S. involvement in the war. Consequently, they are always surprised by the number of the Doughboys' battlefields, their size, and their wide spread from Flanders to the Vosges mountains. This guidebook is intended to help readers get sense of the scope of the nation's war effort and to keep the names, dates, locations and basic details about the AEF's major battles sorted out. I've also decided to focus on the major battles, which by my accounting number 10. On page 3, you will see a map I use for my battlefield tours to show the distribution of the main American operations in the war. It has its genesis in the infamous WWI PBS documentary of the 1990s, *The Great War and the Shaping of the 20th Century*, in which two American historians ridiculously misinformed viewers that the United States had only fought one battle in the First World War. For two decades I have waged a campaign to correct the damage they did. This work will be useful for you if you are planning a trip to the battlefields or if you want some basic information to pursue study of the AEF or of one of the battles. I hope you enjoy reading it and get to travel to the battlefields yourselves. **MH**

American Battlefields of World War I

- Key:
- Sites shown have major American monuments and/or cemeteries
 - Relative size of circles indicates size of American Forces
#1 = Division of 28,000 #6 = Full Army of 500,000
 - Numbering in approximate chronology of opening of battle

Battles Shown:

- Cantigny — First U.S. Attack
- Defense of Marne River Line at Chateau-Thierry, includes Battle of Belleau Wood and Battle at Chateau Thierry
- Second Battle of the Marne, Has Defensive & Offensive Stages
- Defense of Mt. Kemmel with British Army
- Capture of Frapelle (In Vosges Mts, Not Shown on Map)
- St. Mihiel Offensive — First Independent U.S. Operation
- Meuse-Argonne Offensive, By Some Measures, the Largest Battle in American History
- Breaking of the Hindenburg Line with British and Australian Forces
- Battle of Blanc Mont Ridge with French Forces
- Flanders Offensive, Under King Albert of Belgium



28–30 May 1918

Cantigny



Quick Facts

Where: The Somme Sector, North of Paris

Check the Location on the Master Map (Page 3)

AEF Units Participating: 1st Division

US Commander: Major General Robert L. Bullard

Opposing Forces: German 82nd Reserve Division

Memorable For: First US Offensive and Victory

Overview

From: *An Illust. Companion to the First World War*

As the third spring offensive of the German Army was getting underway along the Aisne River, the first American attack of the war took place to the west at Cantigny, a village near Montdidier in the Somme region. It had fallen to the German Eighteenth Army during the first spring offensive in March. The 1st Division was moved to the sector in late April. The Germans spent most of the month of May enthusiastically pounding the Yanks with artillery and gas. It was only learned afterwards that Ludendorff had ordered any new American formations singled out for 'special treatment'.

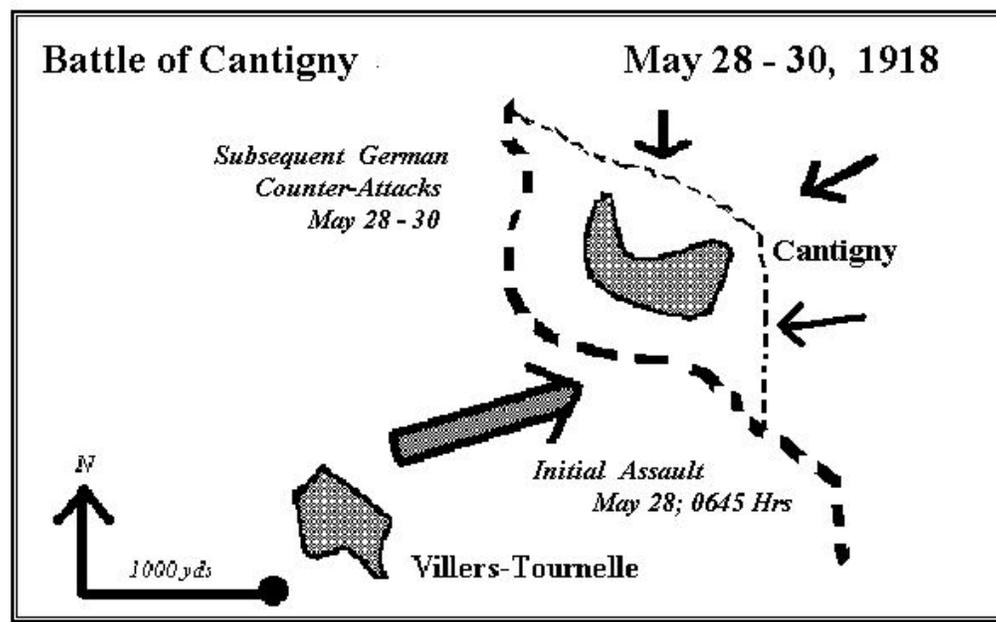
After bearing up well under its nightly initiation rite, the Division was ordered to take the highly fortified village Cantigny to test its offensive capabilities. The town was captured on the first day of the assault (28 May) with the Division's 28th Infantry Regiment in the lead. After taking over 200 prisoners, the Americans withstood a series of strong counterattacks which died out during next two days.

The victors suffered 1,603 casualties including 199 killed. Although Cantigny was a local operation, it boosted Allied morale to see the AEF finally on the offensive. With the deployment of the 2nd and 3rd divisions to the defense of Chateau-Thierry quickly following this small victory, the German high command were shown that the long feared American infusion of manpower was becoming a reality.

The Operation

By: Major General E.F.McGlachlin, Jr., Commander, 1st Div., in the Army of Occupation

The 28th Infantry Regiment attacked Cantigny at 6:45am, May, 28, 1918, after violent artillery preparation of one hour. The regiment advanced in three lines. The objective was reached as per schedule at 7:20am. Patrols were immediately pushed forward and automatic rifle posts were established in shell holes on the line of surveillance to cover the consolidation. The second line, which advanced, consolidated with a line of trenches and wired the line of resistance. The third line, on it's arrival, began the consolidation of three strong points, one about 200 meters east of the chateau in Cantigny, the second in the woods at the northeastern exit of Cantigny, and the third at the cemetery just north of Cantigny. Throughout, the attack progressed with slight resistance and with practically no reaction on the part of the enemy artillery. The section of French flame throwers proved invaluable in cleaning up the town of Cantigny and driving the enemy out of dugouts.



During the cleaning up of Cantigny, our troops were engaged in minor fights, but for the most part, the village was gained with rapidity and with considerable ease.

At around noon the enemy artillery and machine gun fire became heavy. From this time on and during the 72 hours following, the positions about Cantigny were heavily shelled both by large and by small caliber guns. Enemy machine gun fire was also heavy. At 7:30pm, a small enemy infantry counter-attack was reported to have been delivered without success against the Bois Fontaine. At 5:10pm, the enemy launched from the western tip of the Bois Framicourt another counter-attack. This was broken up by our artillery. The attack was followed at 6:45pm, after a heavy preparation and barrage fire, by enemy infantry

advancing in several waves from the southern and western edges of the Bois Framicourt. The first wave succeeded in getting through before our barrage was put down. It was driven back by infantry fire, and the following waves were smothered by artillery fire. During the night of May 28-29, the two companies of the 18th Infantry in reserve were ordered into the operation.

May 29

Between 6:00am, and 7:00am, the enemy launched two small counter-attacks which were quickly broken up by artillery. At 5:45pm, the enemy launched its second heavy counter-attack. Left elements of the 28th Inf. drew back slightly, but the remainder of the line withstood the attack. Artillery and infantry fire broke up this assault.

May 30

At 5:30am, the enemy made his final counter-attack. It was preceded by a barrage of heavy preparation fire. The enemy attacked in two waves from the Lalval Wood. This attack was also broken up by rifle, machine gun and artillery fire.



Cantigny Doughboy by Stephen Spears

Key Sites to Visit

1. **Center of Jump-off Line, Villers-Tournelle Cantigny Road**
49.661272, 2.484313
2. **U.S. Battle Monument, Village Square**
49.663307, 2.490939
3. **Cantigny Doughboy, Village Square**
49.663065, 2.491517
4. **Cemetery (Key Defensive Position)**
49.666897, 2.491695
5. **1st Division Memorial**
49.659301, 2.501500

31 May – 10 July 1918

Defense of the Marne River Line



Machine Gunners of the 3rd Division at the Marne

Quick Facts

Where: The Aisne-Marne Sector, in and around the town of Château-Thierry on the River Marne 35 miles northeast of Paris. Check the Location on the Master Map (Page 3)

AEF Units Participating: 2nd and 3rd Divisions, elements 28th Division, under French command

Opposing Forces: From German Army Group Crown Prince - Numerous divisions from the Seventh Army Commanded by General Max von Boehm.

Memorable For: The halting of the greatest threat to Paris since 1914; a signal to the world the AEF was going to be a factor in the war.

Overview

The third great German attack of their 1918 offensive struck on the Chemin des Dames on the morning of May 27th. Preceded by a dense gas barrage and accompanied by tanks, the attacking columns broke the French line into fragments. The German advance swept across the Aisne and Vesle Rivers with such ease that [their] high command committed to the deepest possible penetration [to threaten Paris]. The German columns pressed on to the Marne, a gain of thirty miles in three days, the swiftest German gain of their three attacks. Posters were put up in Paris warning the civilian population to leave. The

government archives were crated for dispatch to Bordeaux. . . Marshal Foch had few resources left to meet this ultimate threat.

However, some American support was now ready and was now to be called on. Two American Divisions were within reach of the crisis point. The 2nd, a fully equipped, and] the 3rd, without its divisional artillery, were placed at the disposal of the French.

What ensued was forty-one days of continuous action -- from May 31st to July 10th -- in the vicinity of a pleasant river town previously little known to Americans, Château-Thierry entailed four operations by the forces General Pershing sent to fight under French Command.

- The Battle for Château-Thierry
- The Battle for Belleau Wood
- The Capture of Vaux
- Securing Hill 204

At Château-Thierry

On May 30th the 3rd Division was ordered to report to the French 6th Army which had fallen back to the vicinity of Château-Thierry where the German penetration had reached its deepest point in France. There was apprehension of the Germans crossing the Marne, at least in sufficient force to seize a bridge head available for later renewed attacks.

Arriving first at Château-Thierry near 6:00 pm on May 31st, the 7th Machine Gun battalion conducted a reconnaissance. They determined that the 10th French Colonial Division was in contact with the German advance in the northern edge of the city. [Château-Thierry straddles both the northern—the larger section—and southern sides of the Marne.] The Battalion set up its guns on the south bank where its fire could defend the approaches to the bridges and in addition could command much of the city on the north side of the Marne.

When darkness fell that night one section of Company A, under 1st Lt. J.T. Bissell, was sent across the west bridge to take up an outpost position on the north bank. He was to fight a delaying action if attacked, to keep the main line of the Battalion notified of developments, and to fall back to the south bank if attacked in force.

During the day, June 1st, the Germans pressed their advance vigorously. To the northwest they drove the French into Belleau Wood, and to the west they took [the village of Vaux and Hill 204, towering above the surrounding terrain, and thus completely isolated Château-Thierry. They failed, however, to penetrate into the city in force.

Meanwhile the main body of the 3rd Division, moving more slowly by railroad and later by marching, approached the area with orders to prevent the Germans from crossing the river be-

tween Château-Thierry and Dormans [to the east]. The infantry without artillery or engineers, reached the scene on June 3rd. By this time the crisis had passed. The 3rd Division had prevented a crossing of the Marne and secured a major portion of Château-Thierry. Activity in sector shifted to the west of the city where the 2nd Division had been deployed.

Key Sites to Visit at Château-Thierry

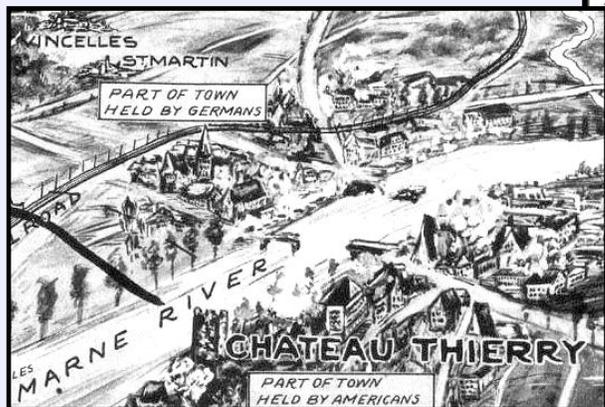
- 1. View of C-T from south side of Marne**
49.042102, 3.394855
- 2. 3rd Division Memorial**
49.044080, 3.398173
- 3. Memorial Church, town square**
49.045838, 3.402468

Belleau Wood

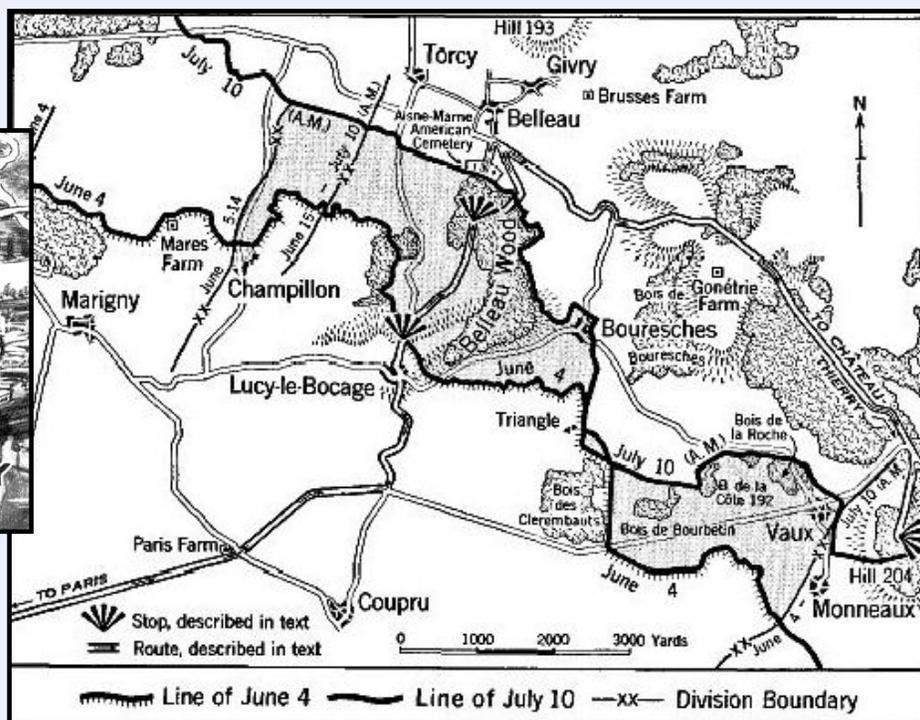
From Thoughtco.com

On June 1, Major General Omar Bundy's 2nd Division took up positions northwest of Château-Thierry, close to Belleau Wood near Lucy-le-Bocage with its line extending south opposite the village Vaux. With their attack at Château-Thierry stalling, the Germans launched a major assault on June 4. Supported by machine guns and artillery, the Marines were able to hold effectively ending the German offensive in Aisne.

The following day, the commander of the French XXI Corps ordered the division's 4th Marine Brigade to retake Belleau Wood. On the morning of



3rd Division Deployment, May-June 1918



2nd Division Sector, May-June 1918

June 6, the Marines advanced, capturing Hill 142 to the west of the wood. Twelve hours later, they frontally assaulted the forest itself. To do so, the Marines had to cross a wheat field under heavy German machine gun fire.

In addition to the assault on the woods, the 2nd Battalion, 6th Marines attacked into Bouresches to the east. After taking most of the village, the Marines were forced to dig in against German counterattacks. On June 11, following a heavy artillery bombardment, the Marines pressed hard into Belleau Wood, capturing the southern two-thirds. Two days later, the Germans assaulted Bouresches after a massive gas attack and almost retook the village. With the Marines stretched thin, the 23rd Infantry extended its line and took over the defense of Bouresches. After a rest out of the line on June 23, the Marines launched a major attack into the forest, but were unable to gain ground. Suffering staggering losses, they required over two hundred ambulances to carry the wounded. Two days later, Belleau Wood was subjected to a fourteen-hour bombardment by French artillery. Attacking in the wake of the artillery, US forces were finally able to completely clear the forest. On June 26, after defeating some early morning German counterattacks, Major Maurice Shearer was finally able to send the signal, "Woods now entirely—US Marine Corps."

Key Sites to Visit around Belleau Wood

1. Circle BW via Lucy-le-Bocage – Bouresches – Cemetery Entrance – BW Access Road

49.045838, 3.402468

49.062560, 3.308537

49.081780, 3.292249

49.062934, 3.280353

(You are now at the center of the Jump-off line of 6 June 1918)

2. Belleau Wood Glade: Memorial, Captured German Weapons, Informational Kiosks, Walk to Hunting Lodge and Cemetery Overlook

49.073221, 3.290810

3. Aisne-Marne Cemetery Visitor's Center

49.079443, 3.292000

4. 26th Division Church

49.081917, 3.293253

5. Devil Dog Fountain

49.085495, 3.290624

Vaux

During their fighting for the Bois de Belleau, the front of the 2nd Division's 3rd Brigade, with the exception of the support lent to the Marines at Bouresches, had been comparatively quiet.. A notable exception was a German gas attack on the night of June 23-24 which caused over four hundred gas casualties. The position of this brigade had never been satisfactory, forming as it did a deep indentation. A plan evolved for a series of partial operations, each well supported by artillery, which should culminate in the attack of the village of Vaux.. The final attack would be made in conjunction with a French assault on hard-to-capture Hill 204 on the right [east]. They would be supported by four companies of the US 28th Division. The two infantry regiments would attack side-by-side with the 23rd on the left assaulting the Bois de la Roche and the 9th Infantry taking the village itself.

The hour for attack was fixed at 6.00 P.M., July 1st.. At 5.57 the rolling barrage fell; at six o'clock it began to move forward, a hundred yards every two minutes, slowing down slightly after passing Vaux. The infantry followed closely. The artillery had done its work. Within one hour after the barrage was placed beyond the objective, all Germans remaining within it were killed or captured, and the Americans were digging in.

Key Sites to Visit at Vaux

1. 2nd Division Jump-Off Line Marker

49.039740, 3.315440

2. Limit of French Advance/View Hill 204

49.040935, 3.350218

Hill 204

With its commanding view over both Vaux and Château-Thierry, nearby Hill 204—present-day site of the major U.S. memorial in the sector—was held by determined German forces until the middle of July. A combination of French and units from three American divisions were committed to take the hill over a six-week period. The French-American offensive launched on 18 July 1918, led to a full German withdrawal from the Château-Thierry sector, pre-empting any efforts to retake the hill.

Key Sites to Visit at Hill 204

1. U.S. Memorial

49.042119, 3.370954

2. Overlook of CT and River Marne

49.041965, 3.372908

15 July – 16 September 1918

Second Battle of the Marne



American Troops Flooding Into the Sector

Quick Facts

Where: The Aisne-Marne Sector, 40-70 Miles Northeast of Paris In a Triangular Area Bounded by Chateau-Thierry, Soissons and Reims

Check the Location on the Master Map (Page 3)

AEF Units Participating: Nine U.S. Divisions Under French Command

Opposing Forces: German First, Third, Seventh and Ninth Armies

Memorable For: Starting with the Last German Offensive of the Great War and Becoming the Allies' First Victorious Offensive of 1918

Overview

In his memoirs, General Ludendorff wrote that the Second Battle of the Marne had been the critical turning point in the war: "This was the first great setback for Germany. There now developed the very situation which I had endeavored to prevent. The initiative passed to the enemy. Germany's position was extremely serious. It was no longer possible to win the war in a military sense."

The battle opened with the fifth German offensive of 1918 and was followed three days later by an Allied counteroffensive, which lasted until early September. That initial defeat—in what amounted to a single day—of a German attack on a 55-mile front from Château-Thierry to east of Reims, would be the Allies' first clear victory in 1918 on the Western Front. Germany would never mount another offensive nor celebrate another victory after 15 July 1918.

But the Second Battle of the Marne was not over. By the date of this fifth German offensive, General Ferdinand Foch had learned to read Ludendorff's strategy. He had anticipated it and prepared his own strike against the bulge southward in the 1918 front between Soissons and Reims. As Michael Neiberg describes in his history *The Second Battle of the Marne*:

Mangin's Tenth Army began the second phase of the battle at 4:35 a.m. on July 18. More than 9. 21,000 artillery pieces opened fire simultaneously

on German positions. Unlike the German barrage just three days earlier, the Allied cannonade of July 18 caught their enemies completely by surprise. The first day of the Allied counter-offensive was a massive success. In total, the Allies captured 20,000 prisoners of war. One American regiment had captured 3,000 prisoners from five different German divisions, an indication of the confusion in German lines. The Battle of Amiens, which began on 8 August 1918, in Ludendorff's words the "black day" of the German army. A black day it surely was, but in terms of both raw number of Germans who had surrendered and the tremendous shift in momentum, July 18 was significantly more important.

Intense fighting ensued through mid-August as German forces fought with desperation to avoid a catastrophic envelopment that could cost them an entire army. Not satisfied with the results to date, on 18 August, Generalissimo Foch ordered a renewed push to totally eliminate the salient created in the German's May offensive. In less than a month that was accomplished and the focus of operations shifted to other sectors for the war's end game.

One additional point is worth noting. The reserves that Ludendorff called upon to prevent an utter disaster in the Marne salient in July were those

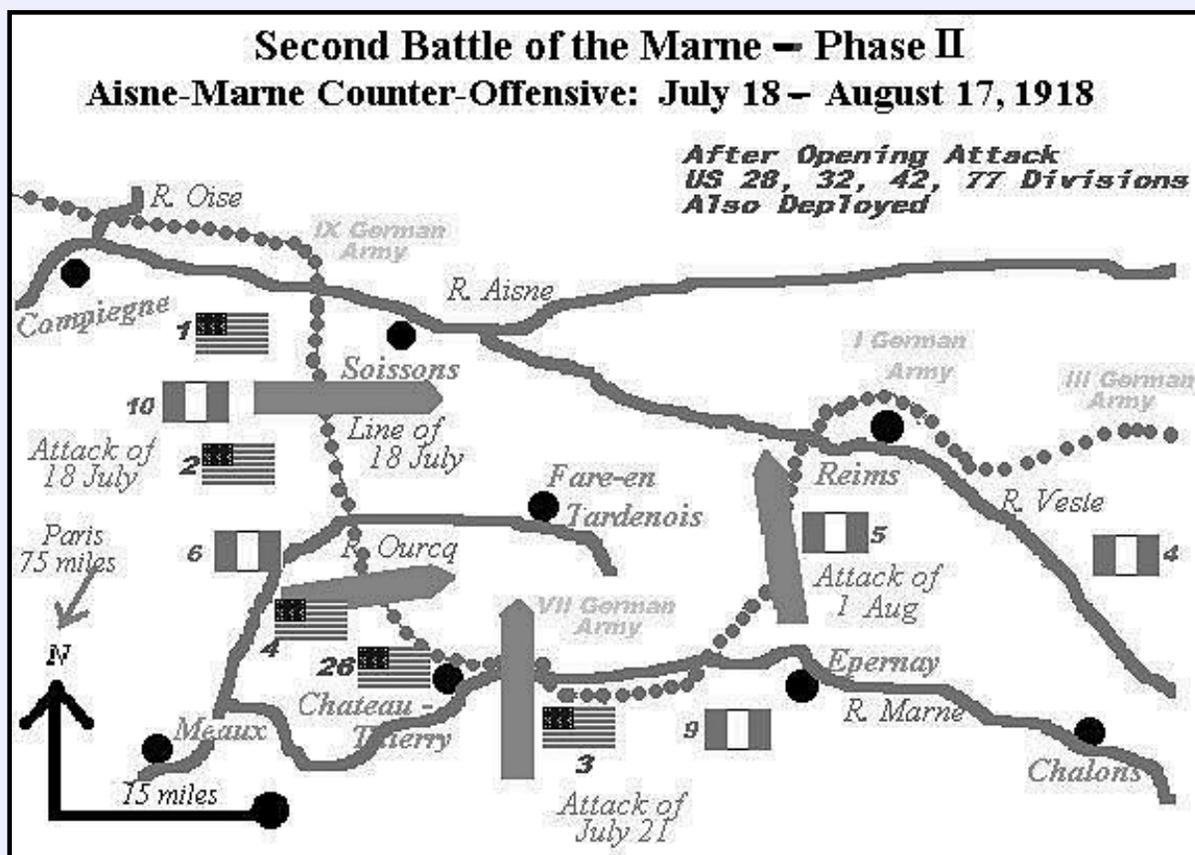
intended for another German offensive against the British Army in Flanders, Operation Hagen, scheduled for 1 August. Thus, had the Allies not administered the double defensive/offensive defeats of the German forces in July, the British forces would have had the Germans at their throats soon again in Flanders and very likely would not have had the freedom of action to launch their 8 August attack in the Somme sector.

The Second Battle of the Marne is best understood by thinking of it as multiple operations organized in three phases, one defensive and two offensive from the Allies perspective.

Phase I: The 5th German Offensive of 1918, July 15-17, 1918

July 15: Three and one-half German Armies attack in the early morning. The 3rd Division of AEF makes a strategically important stand on the left end of the Marne River line. The episode earns the "Rock of the Marne" honorific. The 42nd Rainbow Division performs similarly to the east of Reims near Navarin Farm in the Champagne.

July 17: German units occupy southern bank of Marne between Epernay and Chateau Thierry and advance their line 7 miles east of Reims



Key Sites of Phase I to Visit

- 1. Rock of the Marne Site, Rail Embankment**
49.067144, 3.504574
- 2. Rock of the Marne Site, View 38th Infantry Positions**
49.071002, 3.495095
- 3. Navarin Farm: Memorial & Battlefield**
49.218793, 4.543046



Oise-Aisne American Cemetery

Phase II: The Aisne-Marne Counteroffensive, July 18-August 17, 1918

July 18: French 10th and 6th Armies attack the salient from the west Tanks are used effectively and four American divisions lead a rapid advance. German high command decides to reinforce the salient to avoid a rout.

July 19: American units south of Soissons start meeting fanatical resistance. German air force commands the air.

July 21: Second assault against the salient from the south. Five more AEF divisions would eventually be committed.

July 28-Aug 2: Four U.S. Divisions in battles around Sergy; Ourcq River line crossed.

Aug 4-22: Tenacious battle before Vesle River at Fismes and Fismette as German Army defends vigorously on the Vesle.

Phase III: The Oise-Aisne Offensive, August 18-September 16, 1918

Aug 18: French 10th Army launches major offensive near Soissons

Aug 28-Sep 2: US 32nd Division captures key town of Juvigny cutting the Soissons–St. Quentin road. Germans find Vesle line untenable and withdraw before River Aisne.

Sep 4: Vesle River crossed; US 28th & 77th Divisions advance.

Sep 16: Last full American division in sector [77th] relieved as the axis of the French and American offensive operations shifts east to the Champagne and Verdun sectors

Before the Second Battle of the Marne had ended, the initiative [on the Western Front] had passed to Allied hands, where it would remain, and Ludendorff would be compelled to postpone indefinitely his cherished Flanders offensive. With German morale sagging, it was clear that Ludendorff's hope of crushing the Allies before the United States could put a large force in the field would not be realized. Even as the Second Battle of the Marne was winding down the Pershing's First Army had begun its first offensive as an independent force at St. Mihiel.

Key Sites of Phase II to Visit

- 1. 1st Division Capture of Berzy-le-Sec Chateau**
49.332922, 3.311666
- 2. 1st Division Furthest Advance Memorial, Buzancy**
49.313836, 3.336613
- 3. 2nd Division Furthest Advance Marker Tigny**
49.277657, 3.331012
- 4. Les Fantômes Second Marne Memorial**
49.214915, 3.411666
- 5. Croix Rouge Farm Memorial**
49.132832, 3.521799
- 6. Quentin Roosevelt a. Fountain & b. Crash Site**
 - a. 49.192780, 3.616870
 - b. 49.19056 3.62417
- 7. Visitors Center, Oise-Aisne U.S. Cemetery**
49.200787, 3.549189

Key Sites of Phase III to Visit

- 1. Pennsylvania Bridge, Fismes**
49.312376, 3.679537
- 2. 4th Division Marker Near Bazoches**
49.312376, 3.679537

18 August – 4 September 1918

Mt. Kemmel



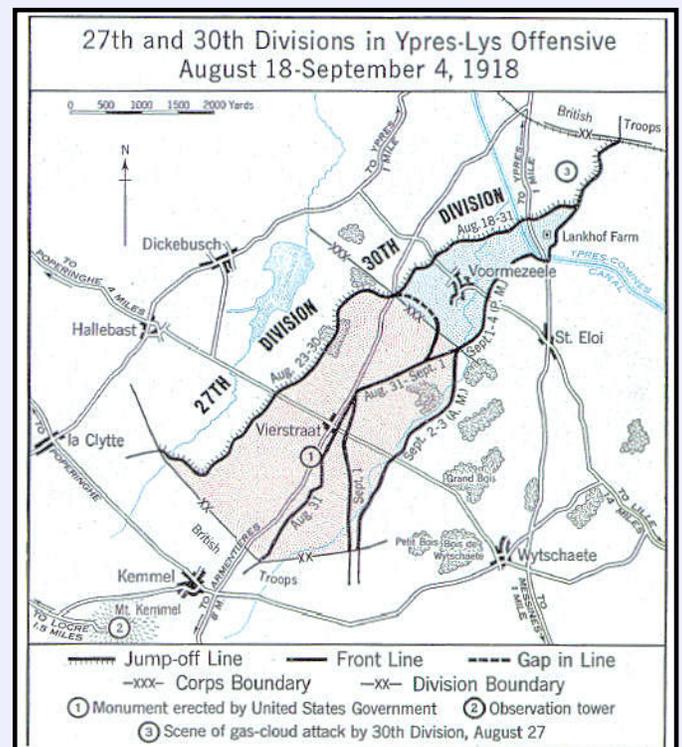
American Forces Deploying Near Mt. Kemmel, Ypres Salient

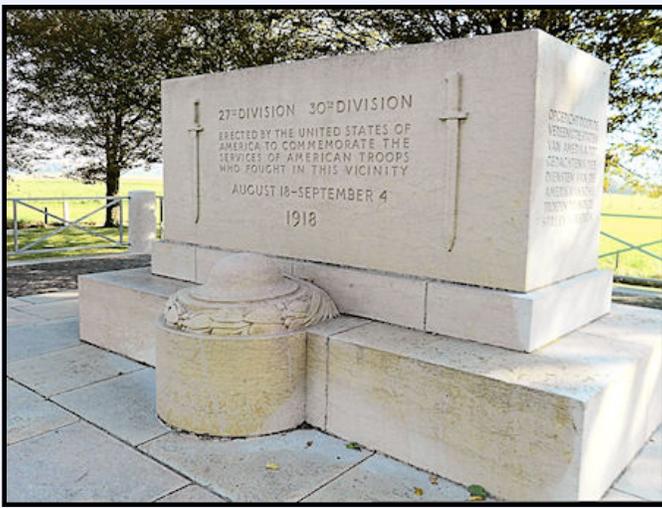
Where: 3 miles south of Ypres, Belgium
Check the Location on the Master Map (Page 3)
AEF Units Participating: U.S. II Corps: 27th and 30th Division
Opposing Forces: German Fourth Army
Memorable For: Deployment of a detached AEF corps to fight under British Command

and the 30th Division was directed to send out strong patrols the next morning. According to its instructions if no determined opposition was encountered by the patrols of the 30th Division it was to advance and occupy a new line which included the village of Voormezeele.

Despite General Pershing's goal of consolidating all U.S. forces under his command, a number of divisions fought for extended times with the French and British armies. Two divisions, the 27th and 30th, spent their entire tour in training and in deployment under British Command. They were designated the II Corps of the AEF and placed under the immediate command of American Major General George W. Read. During the summer of 1918 they were trained at the front by attaching small units to British organizations, and on 18 August they assumed complete charge of adjoining divisional sectors on the line south of Ypres, immediately north of Mont Kemmel.

It was discovered on August 30 that the Germans were making a general withdrawal from the Lys salient for the purpose of shortening their front line. Consequently, the 27th Division was ordered to reconnoiter the situation on its front that night





U.S. Mt. Kemmel Memorial

The 27th Division reconnoitered that night and encountered resistance. However, about 10:00 a. m. on August 31 information was received from the British XIX Corps that the enemy had retired from Mont Kemmel. The division was therefore, ordered to move forward in conjunction with the British troops on its right. This movement was started promptly and the objectives, which included the village of Vierstraat, were reached about 4 :00 p.m. The patrols of the 30th Division, on the other hand met with considerable resistance on the morning of August 31 so the division did not attempt to advance during that day.

The 27th Division attacked again at 7:00 a. m. on September 1 after a 3½-hour artillery bombardment. Machine-gun nests were overcome and all objectives were taken before noon. Shortly thereafter, having received new orders, the division

attacked. once more but a German counterattack combined with heavy machinegun fire forced it to withdraw slightly.

Early on September 1 the 30th Division moved forward to beyond Voormezele and by 8:30 a.m. had reached the objective prescribed. The 27th Division did not make a determined attack on September 2 because it was obvious from the stubborn fighting of the previous day that the Germans were no longer retiring but had taken up strong new positions from which they were prepared to defend vigorously. The division, however, pushed its units forward until they had contact with the new German line along its entire length.

On September 2 the 30th Division repulsed a small attack in the area northeast of Lankhof Farm. The 27th Division was relieved on 3 September, the 30th the next day. In the short time while deployed near Mont Kemmel, the 27th Division suffered 1,300 killed and wounded, the 30th about 800.

Key Sites to Visit

1. **British Cemetery Marks the Opening Boundary Between the Divisions**
50.810676, 2.859683
2. **U.S. Mont Kemmel Memorial**
50.797720, 2.849047
3. **Creek Marks furthest US advance**
50.798459, 2.861354

17-19 August 1918

Frapelle

Quick Facts

Where: Vosges Mountains, 5 miles east of Saint-Dié-des-Vosges
Check the Location on the Master Map (Page 3)
AEF Units Participating: U.S. 5th Division
Opposing Forces: Detachments of German 31st, 77th and 123rd Divisions
Memorable For: Only Allied Victory in Vosges Mountain Sector in 1918

Since 1915 no offensive action of importance had taken place in the Saint-Dié Sector of the Vosges Mountains, only the usual routine of the trenches. The deployment of four American Divisions in the area in 1918 was to acclimate them to this style of warfare. One of them, the 5th Division, would, however, be called upon for the first large-scale operation of the war in this sector in nearly three years. The action occurred on August 17, 1918 in a salient around the mountain-valley village of Frapelle that projected into the American lines.



Observers of the 6th Infantry During the Battle for Frapelle

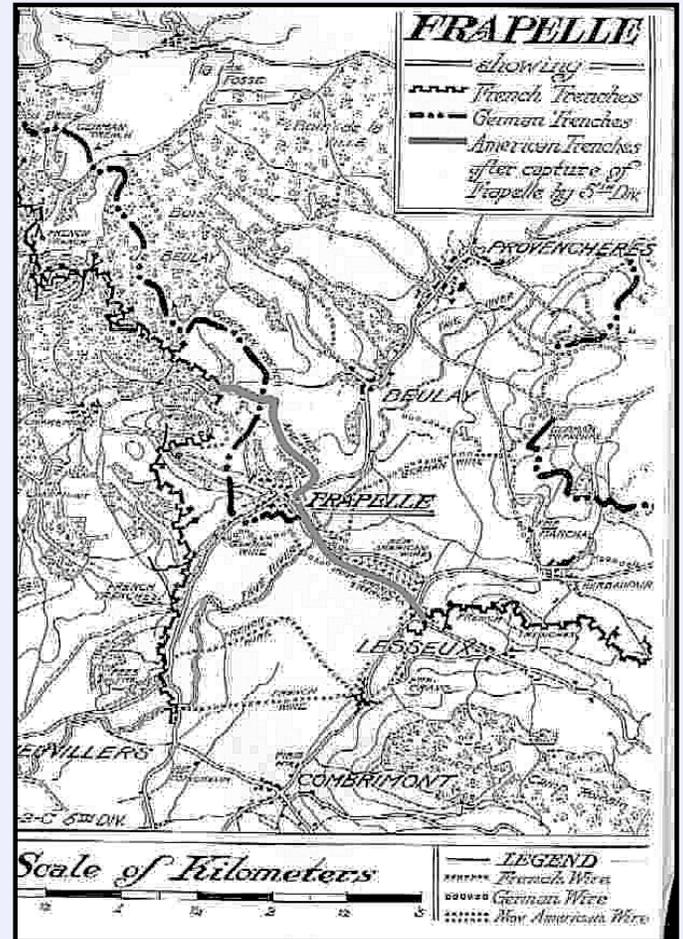
The infantry units of the 5th "Red Diamond" Division (the 60th, 61st, 11th, 6th Regiments) were all in France by May 1, 1918. On May 31, the Division was transferred to the Vosges with its headquarters at Gerardmer. In June, it was assigned to the Anould sector. The first soldiers occupied trenches late on June 14 and suffered their first casualties on the same night. From then on, the 5th Division suffered from regular German attacks. On June 17, a mustard gas attack killed 3, wounded 3 and gassed 24 men of the 60th Infantry Regiment. The Americans replied with raids on the German trenches, such as those near the Sainte-Marie Pass, and attempted to aggressively dominate no-man's-land.



5th Division Marker at Frapelle Town Hall

On July 15, the Division moved to the Saint-Dié sector. In this part of the Vosges front, the 5th Division again started patrolling and raiding the German lines frequently, both by night and by day. The first units of the Artillery Brigade joined the Division on July 28. The Red Diamond Division was then ready for a major offensive action in the **.14.**

Vosges and was given the mission of eliminating the salient into it's front extending from the village of Frapelle. (See Map)



On August 17, 1918, at 4.04 a.m., the 6th Infantry Regiment of the 5th Division attacked Frapelle after 10 minutes of bombarding of the German lines. The mission consisted in seizing Frapelle and Hill 451, north of the village. The Regiment was helped by two platoons of the 7th Engineers Regiment, the 13th Machine Gun Battalion, 36 artillery batteries and a detachment of the 99th American Aero Squadron that flew from Dogneville, near Epinal.

At 4.06 a.m., the Germans counter-shelled the American trenches but the assault was not impeded. by 6.30 a.m., the village of Frapelle was liberated after four years of occupation. The Germans immediately started a massive bombardment of the Americans, lasting three days and nights. The men of the Red Diamond Division organized their positions, built new trenches and set new wires. A German counterattack failed on August 18 and, by August 19 the American positions were completely consolidated. The Division left the sector by August 23. The Division experienced 729 casualties in the Vosges.

12-16 September 1918

St. Mihiel Offensive



Bg. General Douglas MacArthur, 42nd Rainbow Division, During the St. Mihiel Advance

Quick Facts

Where: Southeast of Verdun

Check the Location on the Master Map (Page 3)

AEF Units Participating: U.S. First Army:
Three American and the II French Colonial Corps

Opposing Forces: German Detachment C
(Gallwitz)

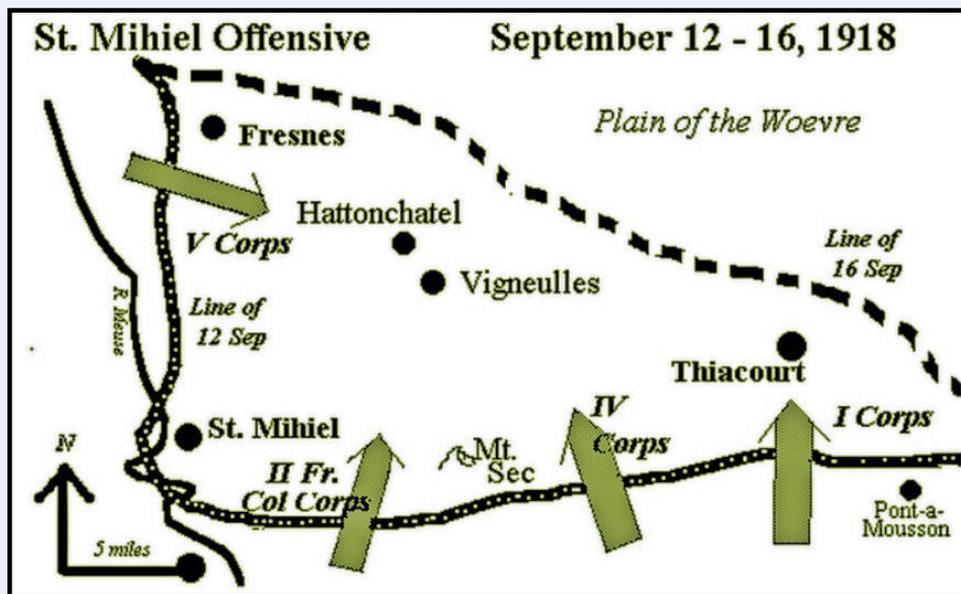
Memorable For:

- First U.S. operation and victory by an independent American army in World War I
- Eliminating a major hindrance to the Allied plans for ending the war
- The largest battle in the history of the United States to that time
- Largest commitment of airpower in history (1500 aircraft) up to that time
- First American tank attack, personally led by George S. Patton
- Tactical surprise achieved by First Army, despite commitment by German high command to withdraw from the Salient

General Pershing had a deep interest in the St. Mihiel Salient by the time his expeditionary force had begun to arrive in great numbers. He saw the St. Mihiel-Metz corridor as the royal road into Imperial Germany and had it assigned as his main operating and training area. In 1918 he started sending a number of his divisions to the St. Mihiel Salient to train. The deployments of the First ("First to Fight") and the 26th (New England

National Guard) around Apremont and Seicheprey were particularly notable. First Division was Pershing's model unit and many of its officers would hold key commands and staff positions later. Like with the others divisions assigned to the Salient, they began to learn the business of modern war and gained respect for the skills of the German Army. These lessons were passed on through the entire AEF as key staff of the division were given commands of other divisions, corps, and the Second U.S. Army.

The Yankee Division, on the other hand, was not one of Pershing's favorites because of its National Guard origins and over the political background and independent-mindedness of its commander, Major General Clarence Edwards, whom he would ultimately relieve of command. Nonetheless, it was the 26th Division that would fight the first regimental-size action of the AEF at Seicheprey on 20 April 1918. It was a messy affair, where the Yanks—despite warnings beforehand of a massive impending trench raid—managed to take greater losses than the attackers. It was all part of the learning curve for the AEF, though, where it learned firsthand the German skills at planning and executing operations precisely. It also gave a signal of seriousness to the German Army, which was surprised when many of the cornered Yanks fought to the death rather than surrender.



By mid-year, with 10,000 American troops arriving each day, Pershing's force was ready to operate on its own. His troops, under French command in the Second Battle of the Marne, were just wrapping up the largest-scale fighting by the United States since the Civil War. An independent American army was now feasible. The United States First Army became operational on 31 July and was assigned to take over the St. Mihiel sector to launch an offensive. Pershing's First Army headquarters moved to Souilly just west of the St. Mihiel area on 13 August. The concentration of troops for the operation started almost immediately.

Subsequent negotiations between Foch and Pershing resulted in tabling any follow-up attacks through Metz into Germany. Pershing was forced to compromise on his hope to fully exploit the Salient and promised that the St. Mihiel attack would be followed two weeks later with a major assault launched between the Meuse River and the Argonne Forest.

The Germans suspected that an attack in the Lorraine was being prepared but believed that would not take place until late in September. In anticipation of this attack, and to shorten their front line because their reserves on the Western Front were being depleted, the German High Command issued orders on 11 September for a gradual withdrawal from the Salient and the destruction of all things of military value that could not be moved. However, heavy rain was moving into the area, so most of the withdrawal was not initiated. The rain also masked the last-minute movement of the U.S. troops into attacking positions.

An intense bombardment of the hostile positions began at 0100 on 12 September and lasted for four hours. At 0500 the infantry of the main attack on the south face jumped off. The attack in the forests of the Meuse Heights was launched three hours later. The offensive concept for St. Mihiel was that these two attacks would converge up as soon as possible, cutting off the Salient and trapping most of the German defenders. Thanks to additional artillery furnished by the French, the First Army had nearly 3,000 guns to support the attack. French and British port reinforcements brought the total number of airplanes up to nearly 1500, which was the greatest concentration of air power up to that time.

V Corps (26th, 4th, and 15th French Colonial divisions) advanced down the Meuse Heights on the west face of the Salient. The 26th division played the key role there with the 15th Colonial Division on the left finally fully securing Eparges. Having attacked earlier in the morning, IV Corps (1st, 42nd, 89th Divisions) and I Corps (2nd, 5th, 90th, 82nd Divisions) meanwhile drove against the southeast face. At the same time the II French Colonial Corps made a secondary attack liberating St. Mihiel, and maintaining pressure on the German forces while they were being encircled by the two main attacks.

As a limited offensive, the St. Mihiel operation would be a striking success. The First Army took 15,000 prisoners and 257 guns at a cost of about 7,000 casualties. The success was based on the tactical surprise that was achieved and of particular note was American know-how applied to wire cutting. One division had purchased every wire cutter they could locate in the town where they were posted before the offensive was launched.



1st Division Artillery Firing Toward Mont Sec

However, the operation had not succeeded in bagging as many of the 65,000 German troops in the Salient as it might have. The German commanders ordered the planned-for withdrawal expedited as soon as they realized a major assault had been launched. The American divisions with the job of closing the Salient, however, had all advanced readily to their first-day objectives (short of closure) and halted. The result was that thousands of German troops slipped away the night of the 12th and morning of the 13th. It would be 0200 on the morning of 13 September when elements of the 26th Division reached the closure point, Vigneulles on the western edge of the Woëvre at the foot of the Meuse Heights. At dawn, a patrol of the 1st Division approaching from the south met them.

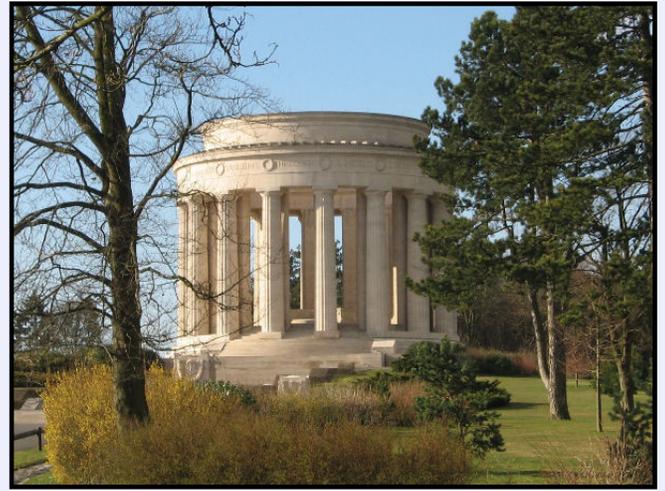
This marked the closure of the Salient. A general push toward Metz followed for the next three days, when a halt needed to be called. Another offensive was to be launched west of Verdun in less than two weeks and needed attending to.

Thus, the strategic opportunity to press on toward Metz in the German Army's most vulnerable location was passed upon for the time being. The more experienced American divisions were sent to the Argonne.

The units left to occupy the sector for the next two months were treated to the full delights of trench warfare, especially bombardments with explosives and gas, as the enemy dug in along his partially prepared "Michel Zone" of defenses.

While his army was fighting in the Argonne, though, General Pershing kept up his planning for exploiting the St. Mihiel Salient. He reorganized

his forces and created the Second U.S. Army to fight in the ground before Metz. Eventually, Generalissimo Foch was won over to the concept of exploiting the area of the now-reduced Salient for a major advance, but one broader than what Pershing had been thinking of in September.



U.S. Memorial Atop Mont Sec

Three armies were to attack on 14 November 1918, First Army and Second Army attacking side by side out of their respective positions east of the Meuse and the Woëvre Plain with a new army commanded by General Charles Mangin on their left flank. The Armistice precluded this operation, of course. Second Army was asked to mount some local attacks starting on 9 November to gain some positional advantage had the Armistice been terminated, but the war ended before this evolved into a major operation. Thus, the Allies never fully exploited the strategic opportunity present in the Lorraine during the war.

Key Sites to Visit

1. **Drive 26th Division advance, Tranchée de Calonne to 1st Division Marker, Vigneulles**
Start: 49.037166, 5.571564
Finish: 48.978404, 5.715150
2. **Bois-Brûlé Trenches**
48.857163, 5.606989
3. **Mont Sec U.S. Memorial**
48.889492, 5.712610
4. **Seicheprey, Site of April German raid and Start of Patton tank attack**
48.869409, 5.790724
5. **French-American Memorial Thiacourt**
48.954124, 5.865625
6. **Visitor Center, U.S. St. Mihiel Cemetery**
48.956977, 5.852321
7. **Épargés Early-War Mining Operations**
49.064701, 5.618540

26 September – 11 November 1918

Meuse–Argonne Offensive



Doughboys of the 80th Division Advancing in the Argonne Forest

Quick Facts

Where: Northwest and north of Verdun

Check the Location on the Master Map (Page 3)

AEF Units Participating: U.S. First Army commanded by General John J. Pershing until 16 October; then by Lt. General Hunter Liggett. Three U.S. corps plus one French corps; 23 American divisions rotating were involved.

Opposing Forces: Elements of approximately 40 German divisions from the Army Groups of the Crown Prince and General Max Carl von Gallwitz participated in the battle, with the largest contribution by the Fifth Army of Group Gallwitz commanded by General Georg von der Marwitz.

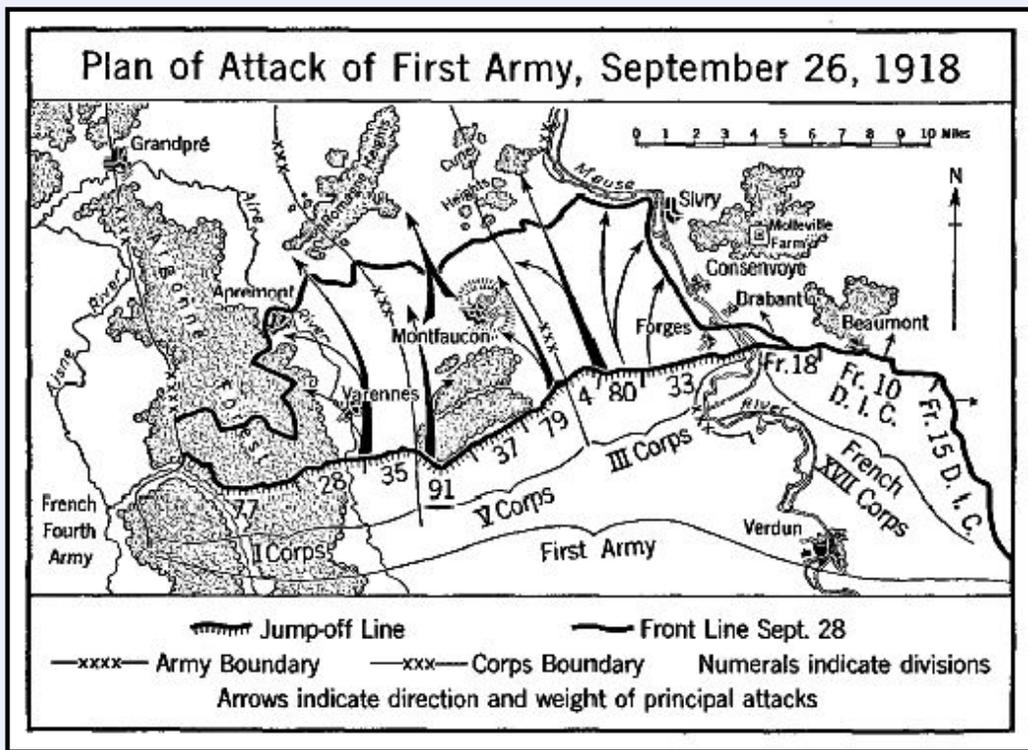
Memorable For:

- Largest of the AEF and the largest battle in American history by several measures.
- Learning ground for American military for the rest of the 20th century. Numerous future Army Chiefs of Staff and Marine Corps Commandants participated in the battle.
- America's largest European cemetery.
- Source of many legends and traditions, including the Lost Battalion, Sgt. York, Balloon Buster Frank Luke

The area between the Meuse River and the Argonne Forest was chosen for the U.S. First Army's greatest offensive of the war because it was the portion of the German front which the enemy could least afford to lose. The lateral communications between German forces east and west of the Meuse were in that area and they were heavily dependent upon two rail lines that converged in the vicinity of Sedan and lay within 35 miles of the battle line. The nature of the Meuse-Argonne terrain made it ideal for defense. To protect this vitally important area, the enemy had established almost continuous defensive positions for a depth of ten to twelve miles to the rear of the front lines. The movement of American troops and materiel into position the night of 25–26 September 1918 for the Meuse-Argonne attack was made entirely under the cover of darkness. On most of the front, French soldiers remained in the outpost positions until the very last moment in order to keep the enemy from learning of the large American concentration. Altogether, about 220,000 Allied soldiers were withdrawn from the area and 600,000 American soldiers brought into position without the knowledge of the enemy.

Opening Phase

Following a three-hour bombardment with 2,700 field pieces, the U.S. First Army jumped off at 0530 hours on 26 September. On the left, I Corps



penetrated the Argonne Forest and advanced along the valley of the Aire River. In the center, V Corps advanced to the west of Montfaucon but was held up temporarily in front of the hill. On the right, III Corps drove forward to the east of Montfaucon and a mile beyond. About noon the following day, Montfaucon was captured as the advance continued. Although complete surprise had been achieved, the enemy soon was stubbornly contesting every foot of terrain. Profiting from the temporary holdup in front of Montfaucon, the Germans poured reinforcements into the area. By 30 September, the U.S. First Army had driven the enemy back as far as six miles in some places, but the advance was bogged down due to inexperienced units and commanders, poor logistics due to lack of transport, and non-existent roads and a lack of coordination between artillery and infantry.

The Middle Phase:

The month of October would prove to be the worst of times for General Pershing's troops. This was especially true for the period Oct. 8–18, when the First Army was simultaneously attacking the highly defensible heights of the central Argonne sector and forcing its first crossing to the east of the Meuse at the foot of another formation of heights that were also well-defended. The AEF in this period was in a similar position to the Army of the Potomac at Fredericksburg in 1862, on a vaster scale. The rate of killed and wounded during this period was 2-3 times greater than the average for the full battle, Sep. 26–Nov. 11. The daily average in this period was 1,200 killed and 3,800 wounded and gassed during this stage.

By October 8th, fighting had become intense for the First Army across a 23-mile front. In the west, the Lost Battalion was finally evacuated from their trap and Sgt. York would perform his famous deed—earning one of 16 Medals of Honor for actions this day. In the center, a hot battle was raging for control of the Romagne Heights. On the east side of the Meuse, two divisions, the 29th and 33rd had begun the push for the Meuse Heights.

The First Army had to learn while continuing the attack. General Pershing brought in experienced divisions and more combat engineers, and eventually appointed his best senior general, Hunter Liggett, to command First Army. George Marshall



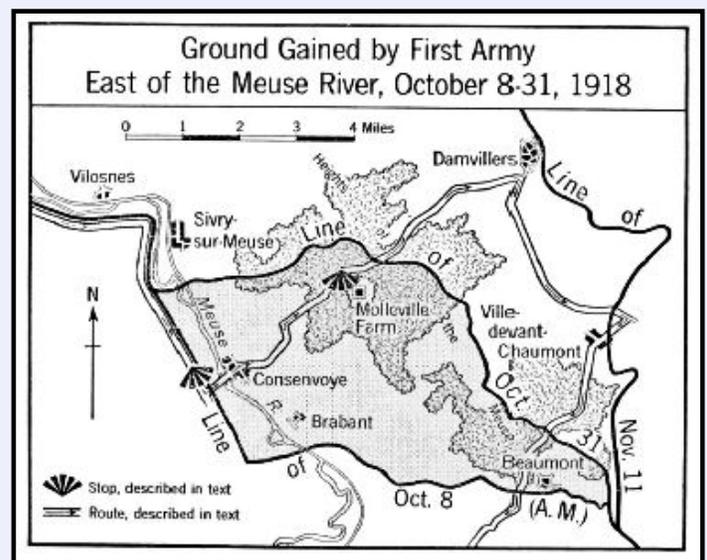
U.S. Memorial Atop Montfaucon

was giving the job of operations officer and new corps commanders were brought in. A new approach was prepared and a renewed general offensive was prepared.

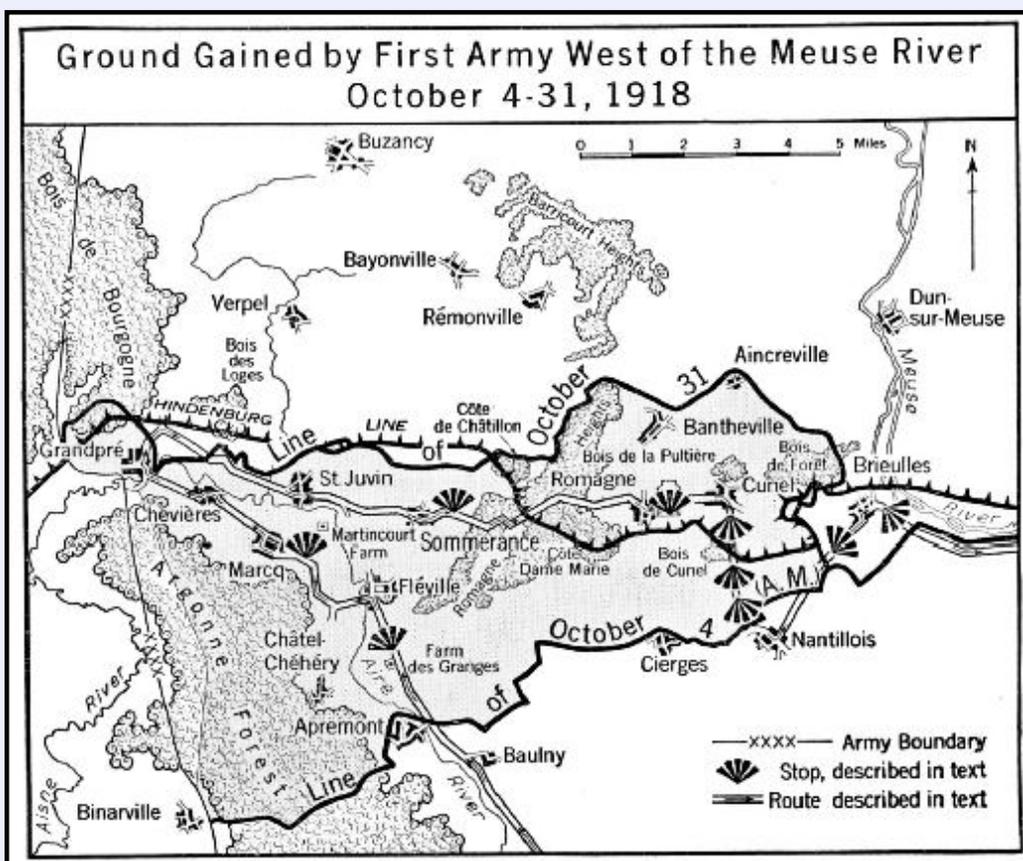
Comparative Terrain



Top: Middle Phase – Hilly and Wooded
Bottom: Final Phase – Open Country



The attack scheduled for November 1 would be the most important and influential operation of the war for the American military. It convinced the future leaders, thinkers and commanders of the army that the best way to take objectives and keep casualties to a minimum was to overwhelm the enemy with firepower, while using high mobility to avoid getting bogged down.. The legacy of the November 1 attack lived on through and after the Second World War, helping define a new and unique "American Way of War." Historian John Eisenhower wrote that his father thought Operation Overlord undoable without the experience the Army gained in the Argonne.





End Game of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive

The final chapter of the great offensive by the U.S. First Army began at daybreak on 1 November after a two-hour concentrated artillery preparation. It would be the most important and successful American operation of the Great War.

The key roles in the assault were played by the III and V U.S. Corps, commanded by two future Army Chiefs-of-Staff, John Hines and Charles Summerall, respectively. They were supported by more artillery than ever assembled by the United States military. Tactics emphasized mobility and supply techniques were improved to support a rapid advance. The lessons of the earlier battles had been absorbed and corrections made. Its progress exceeded all expectations.

By early afternoon of 1 November, the formidable last Hindenburg Line position on Barricourt Heights had been captured, ensuring success of

the whole operation. That night the enemy issued orders to withdraw west of the Meuse and the battle turned into a rout, sometimes with U.S. forces racing north faster than the retreating Germans. By 4 November, after an additional

Key Sites to Visit

1. Vauquois mining area and 35th Division jump-off point
49.204147, 5.068022
2. Varennes Pennsylvania Memorial
49.226143, 5.031505
3. Montfaucon U.S. Memorial
49.272054, 5.141961
4. Lost Battalion Memorial & Viewpoint
49.250858, 4.906652
5. Entrance, Sgt. York Memorial Trail
49.284435, 4.950586
6. Visitor's Center U.S. Meuse-Argonne Cemetery
49.336048, 5.093241
7. Overlook: Opening of Final Phase
49.352046, 5.099449
8. 5th Division Bridge at Dun-sur-Meuse
49.385292, 5.182806
9. Frank Luke Memorial at Murvaux
49.388265, 5.238761
10. Overlook: Final night of the war, Meuse River crossing by 2nd Division
49.580787, 5.106662
11. Overlook: Sedan from point of furthest advance by First Army
49.664916, 4.926986
12. Sgt. Henry Gunther, 79th Division (last man killed during WWI) Memorial
49.313905, 5.425837

crossing of the Meuse by the U.S. First Army, the enemy was in full retreat on both sides of the river. Three days later, when the heights overlooking the city of Sedan were taken, the U.S. First Army gained domination over the German railroad communications there, ensuring early termination of the war.

Attention was shifting to the next U.S. strategic objective, Metz to the northeast, as the entire First Army began shifting their axis of attack in that direction. Meanwhile, the Second U.S. Army was renewing action down on the temporarily quiet St. Mihiel Sector. The Armistice ensued, however, before further major offensives could be mounted.

About the American Casualties:

U.S. Casualties—Meuse-Argonne Off. (47 days)
 Killed:
 26,000; daily average = 533/day
 Wounded and Gassed:
 90,000; daily average = 1,914/day

27 September – 20 October 1918

Hindenburg Line & Beyond



30th Division Soldiers & Tanks with Captured Prisoners atop the St. Quentin Canal Tunnel

Quick Facts

Where: Somme Sector, north of Paris
Check the Location on the Master Map (Page 3)

AEF Units Participating: U.S. II Corps, 27th and 30th Divisions, a Tank Brigade and supporting units, under the British Fourth Army. U.S. General George Read commanded the corps, but during this action it was under operational control of Australian general John Monash.

Opposing Forces: Elements of numerous German Divisions mainly from the Eighteenth and Ninth German Armies.

Memorable For:

- Only U.S. units to fight entirely under British Command
- U.S. forces fighting under tactical command of Australian General Monash
- Breaking the strongest of the German Army's defense lines

The U.S. II Corps—still under British Command—was moved to the Somme sector in the fall of 1918 and played an important role in the British Army's 100-day final offensive. The operation to outflank the German positions along the River Somme had begun on August

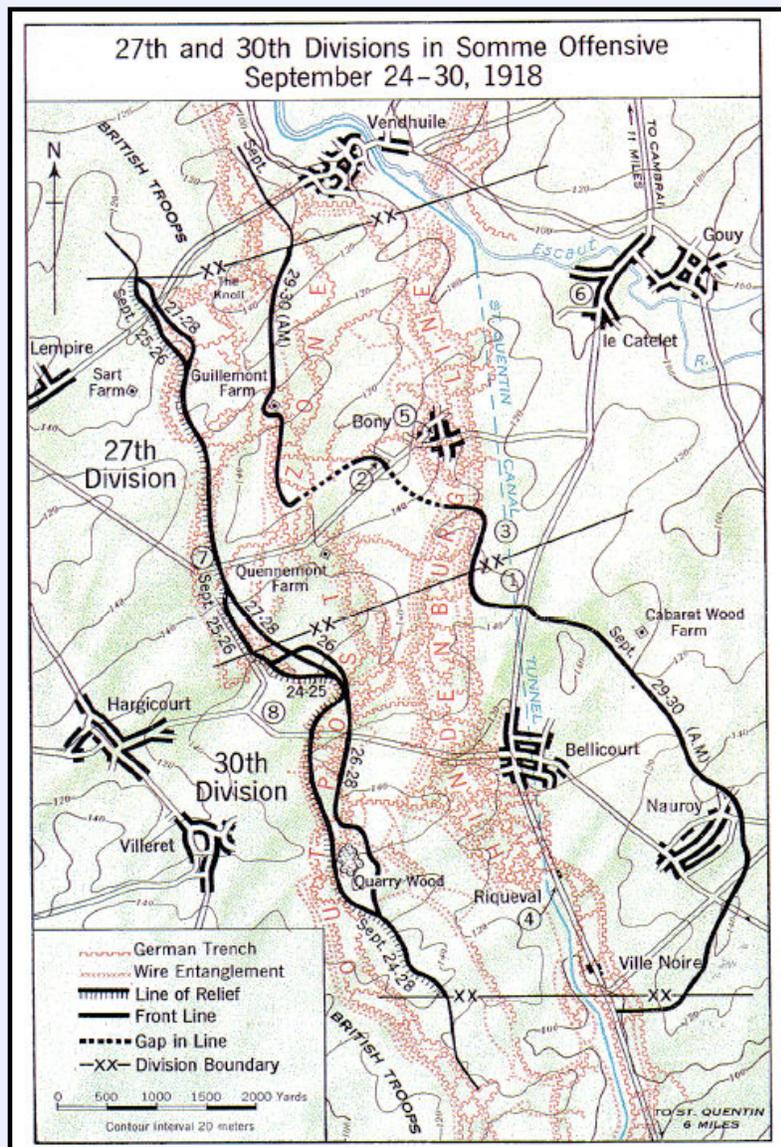
21. These forced the Germans to evacuate the line of the Somme and the Canal du Nord. By a series of local attacks, carried out in the second and third weeks of September, three British Armies secured the remainder of the positions required for an attack on the main defenses of the Hindenburg Line. The line of resistance of the Hindenburg position mostly ran from the St. Quentin Canal east. However, the network also incorporated the canal tunnel running from Bony to Riqueval in which the Germans had anchored barges that furnished living accommodations for large numbers of troops. At the tunnel sector, the main German defenses were west of the canal. These defenses consisted of two strongly organized and heavily-wired lines of continuous trenches: To this tunnel sector came the American II Corps, with the American 27th and 30th Divisions, for participation in the assault on the Hindenburg Line, planned for September 29. Its mission was to lead the attack on the front of the Australian Corps, break through the German positions, and cross the canal.

On the night of September 23/24, the American 30th Division of the II Corps entered that part of the line situated just west of Bellicourt, and took over a front of some 3,800 yards, about 1,000 yards west of the Hindenburg Line, where the canal was underground. On the following night, the American 27th Division entered the line north of the 30th Division, and took

over a front of about 4,500 yards. Their assigned objectives were: for the 30th Division, Bellicourt; for the 27th, Bony. Both Bellicourt and Bony were strongly fortified.

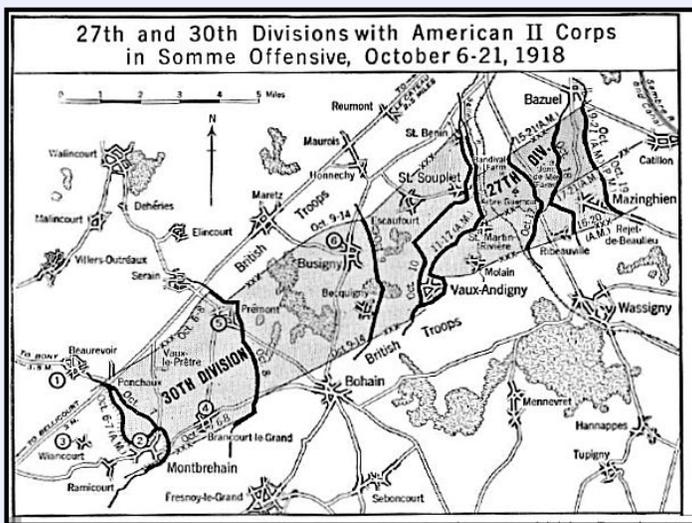
The 30th Division had taken over a sector with a favorable line of departure for the main attack on September 29. Its operations on September 27 and 28 were merely to rectify and strengthen its lines. The front taken over by the 27th Division, however, was distinctly unfavorable for launching an attack. It was dominated by a German position which ran along the crest of an elevation confronting it.

At 5:50 a. m., on September 29, Rawlinson's Army took up the advance on a front of twelve miles. Its right corps quickly crossed the St. Quentin Canal, and by evening had gained commanding ground well to the east. In the center, the American 30th Division rapidly penetrated the German defenses and captured Bellicourt and Nauroy. On its left, the 27th Division had not gained the designated line of departure at Zero hour. Some of its units had advanced, but others had not. The artillery barrage was in place more than a thousand yards ahead of the infantry: and in the intervening space, German machine guns and artillery wrought havoc among the advancing waves of American infantry. On the front of the 27th Division, only one of the 39 Allied tanks engaged survived to cross the Bellicourt Tunnel. Nevertheless, both divisions fought their way forward, and by noon on September 29 had reached the German positions on the crest.



U.S. Monument atop St. Quentin Canal

During the night of September 30–October 1, the American II Corps was withdrawn from the line for a short rest. They were re-deployed north of St. Quentin on October 6th. On the morning of October 7th the 30th Division attacked from the vicinity of Montbrehain and advanced 10 miles over the next four days. After reaching the banks of the River Selle, they were relieved by the 27th Division which held the river line for six days. On the 17th the 30th Division returned to the line and both units participated in an attack across the Selle. Both divisions advanced to heights 6,000 yards to the east of the river. By October 20th both of the exhausted divisions had been sent to the rear for rest. Between them they captured nearly 4,000 prisoners during this operation. During their service with the British Army in Flanders and against Hindenburg line, the II Corps suffered over 17,000 killed, wounded or captured.



Advance to the Selle River



27th Division Advancing to the Front at St. Souplet

Key Sites to Visit

1. Jump-off line on boundary of 27th (left) and 30th Divisions

49.973659, 3.199050

2. Visitors Center U.S. Somme Cemetery

49.985018, 3.213332

3. U.S. Monument atop St. Quentin Canal

49.975132, 3.232106

4. View Bellicourt Tunnel Entrance

49.950713, 3.235852

5. 30th Division Memorial, Riqueval

49.951097, 3.236445

6. Montbrehain, View Launch Point of 7 October attack

49.967541, 3.340869

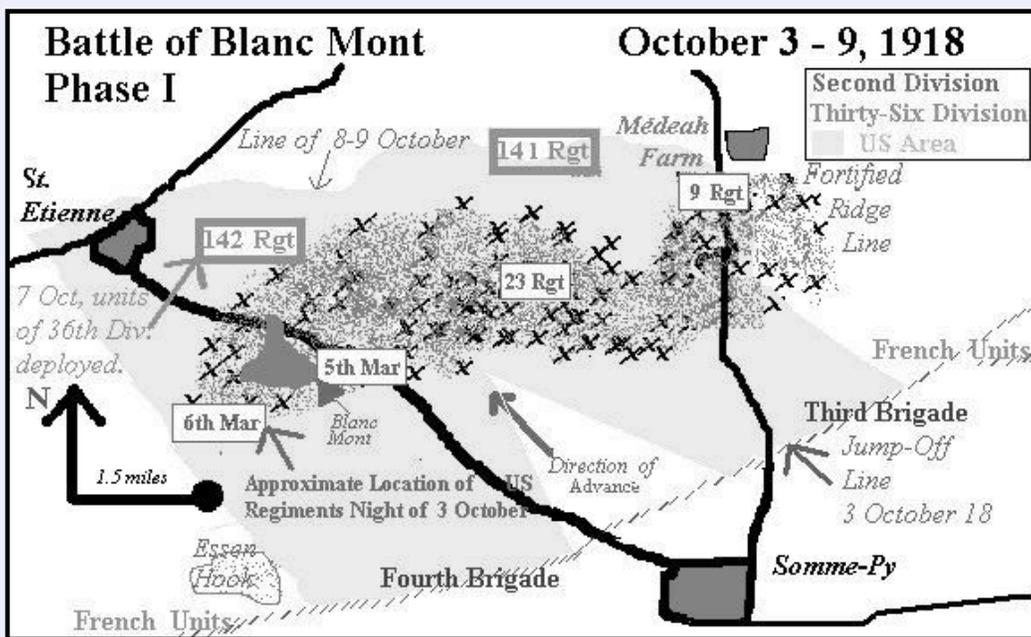
7. St. Souplet Cemetery, town captured by 30th Division 10 October, cemetery was originally a temporary U.S. burial site

50.053325, 3.523467

3-27 October 1918 Blanc Mont Ridge



German Defenders atop Blanc Mont, View to Southeast



Quick Facts

Where: Northeast of Reims

Check the Location on the Master Map (Page 3)

AEF Units Participating: US 2nd and 36th Divisions assigned to French Fourth Army

Opposing Forces: Bavarian 13th, German 200th and 213th Divisions, portions of Six Additional Div.

Memorable For: Causing the German Army to Abandon the Champagne Which They Had Held for Four Years; innovation of Choctaw Indian code talkers for secure communications

Anchor of the German defensive line in the Champagne, Blanc Mont seems hardly worthy of the "Mont" part of its name. From the nub's crest, however, the entire Champagne region can be observed from Reims to the Argonne Forest. Blanc Mont held out against every assault by the French Army for the better part of the Great War. It was considered so secure that Kaiser Wilhelm was invited to observe the opening of one 1918 offensive from its heights.

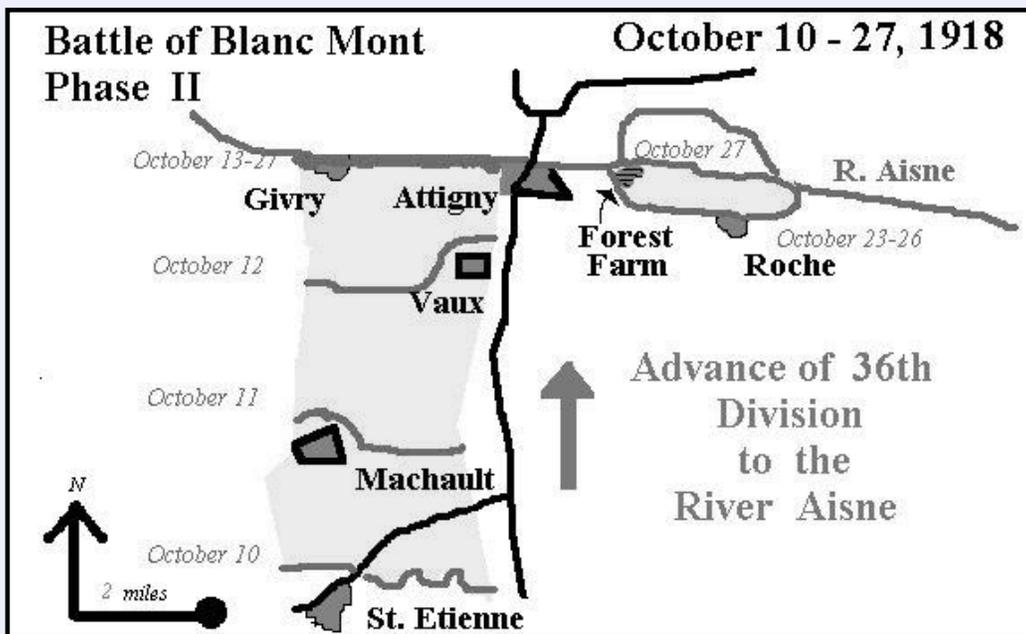
In October 1918 it fell to a single assault by the Marines and Doughboys of the 2nd Division in a single morning and then became one of the grimmest battlefields in American history as the German Army repeatedly tried to retake it. In a second phase of the operation, the 36th Texas-Oklahoma National Guard Division moved into the line, helped capture the fortified village of St. Etienne, used by the enemy to organize their counterattacks, and then pursued the German Army 13 miles to the Aisne River. Blanc Mont may be the most forgotten victory in American history. **.25.**

Early in war the German Army had intensely fortified this promontory and proceeded to crush French offensives in both the Spring and Fall of 1915. Afterwards, the strength and reputation of the bastion seemed to guarantee permanent possession of the chalky plains of the Champagne for the invaders. French planners looked elsewhere for possibilities of breaking through. But by the end of September 1918, the time had come for a grand roll-back; it was time for the Allies to regain occupied France and Flanders.

The French in the center of the Western Front needed to match the advances of her allies, the British to the north and the Americans to the east, but it was out of fresh assault infantry to take a bastion like Blanc Mont. The answer, it was decided, was to commit some American divisions. The mission to take Blanc Mont ridge was given to the experienced Doughboys and Marines of the AEF's 2nd Division and—in reserve—the un-blooded Texas and Oklahoma National Guardsmen of the 36th Division—nearly 50,000 men. They were placed at the disposal of French Fourth Army Commander Henri Gouraud, one-armed hero of both the Gallipoli campaign and the recent defense along the Marne.



The Impressive Blanc Mont Memorial



After a bloody, but successful, two-hour initial assault on the Morning of October 3rd, all four infantry regiments of the 2nd Division—now commanded by the senior Marine in France, Maj. Gen. John Lejeune—found themselves atop the ridge, but separated, each partly surrounded and forced to fend off an uncountable series of counterattacks. The French units on either side had been unable to match the speed of advance of the Americans and had left them floating freely in enemy territory, without support on either flank. Consequently, the German defenders and reinforcements were able to infiltrate and attack from almost every direction.

Actions by the 36th division on the flanks October 9-10 were disorganized, but the enemy knew a withdrawal was necessary. By the evening of the 10th the race was on. The boys from Texas and Oklahoma gathered themselves then executed a wild open field dash of thirteen miles, all the way to the River Aisne. The opposition, however, was highly experienced at mounting rear-guard actions against the charging Doughboys. The 36th Division suffered 2,500 casualties in what turned out to be its only action in the war. By the 13th of the month the river line had stabilized four kilometers from the Aisne. On the 27th the division made a successful push to the river, capturing a stronghold at Forest Farm. Both American divisions were earmarked for redeployment back with Pershing's forces.

What transpired around Blanc Mont in October 1918 was a vicious battle that cost America over 7,800 men, killed and wounded. Marshal Petain (then still a hero) called what happened there the greatest single achievement of the 1918 campaign.



Fortified St. Etienne

Part of the 36th Division had to move into the line to fill in the gaps and support a precarious position some Leathernecks had nicknamed "The Box". Units from both divisions collaborated on October 7th and 8th in capturing the machine gun filled strongpoint of St. Etienne, a village almost two miles northwest of Blanc Mont. This proved to be the decisive blow. The battered 2nd Division was sent to the rear to rest and regroup.

Key Sites to Visit

1. **2nd Division marker at jump-off point**
49.257693, 4.547692
2. **U.S. Memorial and visitor's center**
49.284449, 4.535995
3. **St. Etienne Cemetery**
49.310615, 4.497296
4. **Givry Bridge, Canal/River Aisne overlook**
49.491103, 4.538305

30 October – 11 November 1918

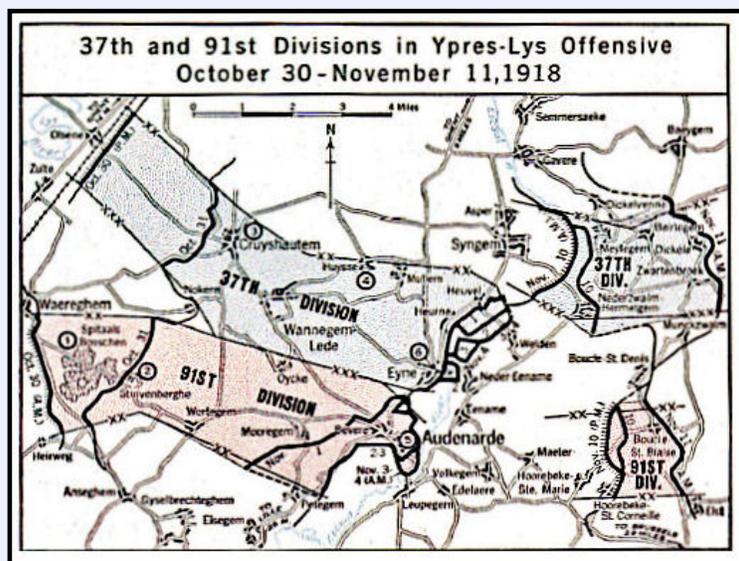
Flanders Offensive



Crossing of the Scheldt by the 316th Engineers

The Allied Group of Armies of Flanders, composed of Belgian, British and French forces and commanded by King Albert I of Belgium, renewed its offensive on 14 October 1918. On the 19th, Courtrai fell to the British Second Army, which pushed on beyond the Lys River towards the Scheldt (aka Escaut) River. However, by 20 October progress in Belgium had stalled, again victim to battle damaged bridges and roads, weather, skillful German rear guard resistance, and a prolific use of booby traps and mustard gas. King Albert consoli-

dated his forces and set about bringing forward artillery, supplies, and reinforcements, directing that all be in place for a renewed offensive. The French forces in particular had been depleted by combat, and required additional manpower if they were to regain their momentum.



Quick Facts

Where: Flanders Sector, 25 miles east of Ypres
Check the Location on the Master Map (Page 3)

AEF Units Participating: U.S. 37th and 91st Divisions, under King Albert's group of armies and French tactical control

Opposing Forces: Elements of the Fourth German Army.

Memorable For: U.S. forces helping liberate Belgium and the forced crossing of the Scheldt River, 2 November 1918

General Pershing agreed to support the effort in Flanders by sending two divisions, which had both seen service in the opening of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. The 37th "Buckeye" (Ohio National Guard) was deployed with the French XXX Corps and the 91st "Wild West" (primarily draftees from the west coast) was assigned to the French VII Corps.

The new push began at 0530 on 31 October, and featured brief preparatory barrages followed by rolling barrages. Within the French sector the 37th Division captured Cruyshautem and fought its way to the Scheldt between Heuvel and Eyne. At the river, the division's engineers threw footbridges across and the charging infantry charged over and formed a bridge-head, which they held against German counterattacks.



91st Division on Parade, Audenarde Town Square

Key Sites to Visit

1. **Flanders Field U.S. Cemetery Visitor's Center**
50.873581, 3.452041
2. **U.S. Memorial Audenarde** (Difficult Parking)
50.846633, 3.602367
3. **Audenarde Town Hall and Square**
50.843611, 3.603889
4. **Ohio (37th Division) Bridge**
50.870312, 3.627049

Just to the south, the 91st Division had attacked at the same time, pushing past Waregem, clearing dense woods, and captured the town of Audenarde. They were positioned to make their own crossing of the river, when both American divisions were pulled out of the line for a rest on 4 November.

On the 10th of November both divisions were returned to the line and were again advancing successfully when the Armistice went into effect. For both divisions their final halt point was about 12 miles from the original jump-off point of 31 October.

November 1917 – April 1920 Other Operations of the AEF

The previous ten sections of this guidebook covered the major battles of the American Expeditionary Forces. They were selected for their size—the number of troops involved—or their strategic or tactical importance. These operations, however, did not constitute all the fighting by American forces during hostilities. Here is a partial list of the actions that—for lack of a better term—we are calling "other".

• **93rd Division Operations in the Champagne**

The four U.S. segregated regiments fought separately under different French Divisions. However, if their fighting in the fall 1918 in the Champagne was aggregated, it would be the equivalent of a major battle fought by a full division.

• **Second Army Offensive of 9 November 1918**

The next major offensive of the AEF by the new Second Army was initiated in the St. Mihiel Sector. was halted due to the Armistice.

• **Seicheprey Raid, St. Mihiel Salient**

In April, the 102nd Infantry of the 26th Division, was targeted by a special German force of shock troops. American defenses were penetrated deeply and the Yanks suffered casualties and lost prisoners.

• **Battle of Hamel, Somme Sector**

On 4 July 1918, several companies of the 33rd Division supported the Australian Corps attack on the fortified village of Hamel. The action is considered one of the tactical masterpieces of the war.

• **Non-Western Front Deployments**

Full U.S. Army regiments were deployed to the Italian Front, Northern Russia, and Siberia during the war. The troops in Russia fought after the Armistice and the last of them did not return home until April 1920.