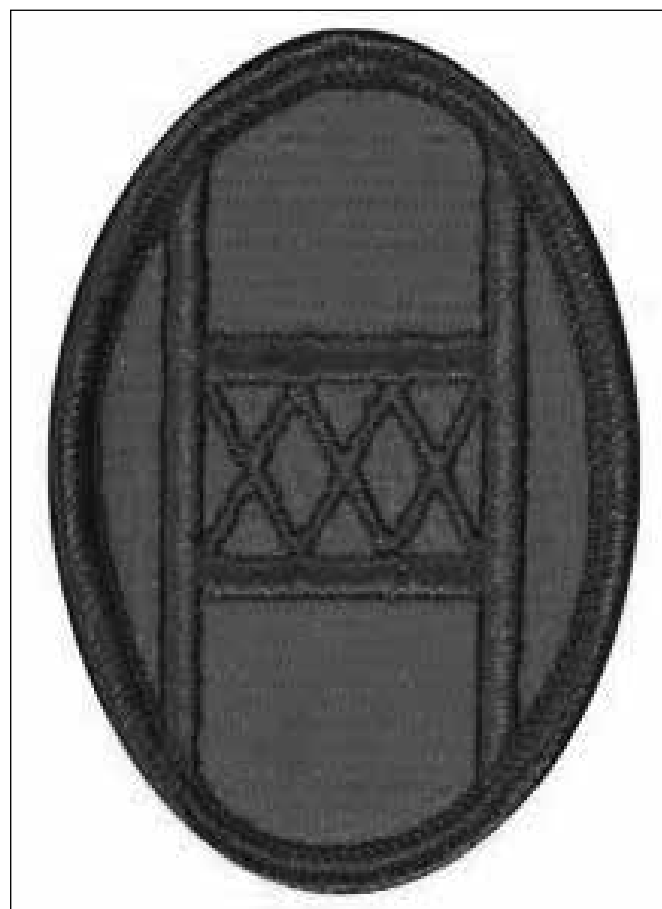




Hindenburg Line fallen soldiers

Photos contributed



Old Hickory Patch worn on military uniforms, 30th Division

Remembering North Carolina's deadliest day of World War I

BY NORMA ECKARD
SPECIAL TO THE BEACON

The 30th Division "Old Hickory" was organized in October 1917 with men primarily from North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee. The division was the first to breach the infamous Hindenburg Line on Sept. 29, 1918. This day was not only North Carolina's deadliest day of the war, but was also Brunswick County's deadliest.

The Hindenburg Line was a defensive position in France built by the Germans in 1916. Ninety miles long with up to six defensive lines, containing fields of heavy barbed wire woven so thick as to resemble a mass of vines and briars up to 100 yards deep, it seemed impenetrable. A large subterranean system of tunnels with hidden exits and entrances formed a safe method for communication and reinforcement for the Germans.

Over the entire area were machine guns without number, not only the probable approaches, but every inch of front was covered by one or more guns.

The Germans believed the position could not be taken, and even when lost, prisoners would not believe it to be possible, and laughed at those who would tell them. It was the turning point of the war.

At 5:50 a.m. Sept. 29, 1918, the men from the 30th Division assaulted this terrible line on a front of 3,000 yards, captured the whole Hindenburg system, then advanced still further and took the tunnel system with all the German troops hidden in it and next captured the towns of Bellicourt, Nouroy, Riqueval, Carriere, Etricourt, the Guillaime Ferme (farm) and Ferme de Riqueval.

"The Canal Tunnel sector of the German line north of St. Quentin was tremendously fortified, with passageways running out from the main tunnel to hidden machine gun nests. Into these nests the German gunners returned after the American assaulting waves had passed, and poured a destructive fire into their rear. But through everything the men of the "Old Hickory" division forced their way until the fortified zone was conquered in one of the most desperate single conflicts of the war."

Reported casualties from Brunswick County in the 30th Division:

Killed in action: Pvts. Harvey T. Chadwick and Harry Langdon Pigott, both of Shallotte

Died of wounds: Pvt. Benjamin Bante Smith (Ash). Pvt. Smith died Oct. 17 of wounds suffered Sept. 29. He was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and British Military Medal.

Wounded: Cpls. Calmer Thomas Clemmons, George Harker Hewett, Lindsey Pigott and Rufus Earl Sellers of Supply, Elder Eugene Heath of Bolivia and Lawson Ballard and Pvt. Thedford S. Lewis of Supply

Military Services Day at the North Carolina Museum of History marked the 100th anniversary of "Breaking the Hindenburg Line" by honoring the service and sacrifice of North Carolinians during World War I. Read more at ncmuseumof-history.org/military-services-day.

If you would like to help us honor Brunswick County World War I veterans, go to caswellriflerange.com or email ftcaswellriflerange@gmail.com. Three hundred fifty Brunswick County World War I veterans have been honored to date.

A monument will be placed at the site of the rifle range in

Caswell Beach Veterans' Day 2018 in honor of the men and women from Brunswick County who served their country. A book, "To All Those Who Served in World War I from Brunswick County, N.C.," is to be published during 2019 containing all 724 names, as well as a historical overview of the 1918 World War I Rifle Range Target Pit Storage Room.

We would like the public to review the names of the following Brunswick County men who died during World War I to make certain they have not forgotten anyone that may have perished or missed someone while researching names that should be on this list.

Killed in action: Pvts. 1st Class Walter S. Brock and Erastus I. Nelson, Pvts. Harvey T. Chadwick, Jimmie Griffin and Harry L. Pigott, Cpl. Herbert B. Ward

Died of wounds: Pvts. William C. Hewett and Benjamin B. Smith.

Died of Disease: Pvts. William F. Brooks, Carl J. Danford, Manning Hall, Claudie H. McCall, Elijah Milliken, Kendrick W. Outlaw, Cecil S. Pierce, Samuel C. Swain, Guy E. Watson, David Williams and Fred Wilson, Pvt. 1st Class John W. Carlisle, David L. Doshier (cook), Seaman James C. Edwards, Sgt. Robert G. Farmer

Before the monument is engraved, they need the public to help verify the list. If you see a discrepancy or know a name to be added, email ftcaswellriflerange@gmail.com.

The rifle range memorial and monument dedication will be held on Veterans' Day, Sunday, Nov. 11, at 11 a.m. at the site in Caswell Beach.

Norma Eckard of Caswell Beach is president of Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range Inc.