



Photos contributed

This image from the State Archives of North Carolina shows the Hindenburg Line — the 30th Old Hickory Division Operations, Sept. 23 to Oct. 19, 1918.



The headstone of Van Grissett Mintz

## The World War I story of 1st Sgt. Van Grissett Mintz

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SPECIAL TO THE BEACON

Van G. Mintz was born and raised in Shalotte. Van had a brother who also served in World War I, Pvt. James Roland Mintz.

On June 23, 1916, Van enlisted in the North Carolina National Guard, served in Mexico, and then was eventually assigned to Company E, 119th Infantry, 30th "Old Hickory" Division.

Previous reports described training with the 30th Division at Camp Sevier, S.C., the transportation to France, and events up to and including the Hindenburg Line assault.

The advance continued, as shown on the map above. The 119th Infantry began advancing at 3:30 a.m. Oct. 8. They formed at Premont. They began capturing material and liberating French citizens who had been under German control for four years.

From History 119th Infantry, 60th Brigade, 30th Division. U.S.A. Operations in Belgium and France, 1917-1919:

*"Upon the entrance of the Americans into the village and before the Germans had been driven entirely out, the civilians were in the streets offering the soldiers hot coffee. They could not be too kind to their liberators. It seemed to surprise them greatly that the troops occupying their town then were friendly Americans. They thought that the British had freed them and it was sometime before they could believe the truth."*

They arrived close to Busigny, and then waited until the following morning to resume their advance. Regimental HQ had moved to Premont and a runner was used for communications. Wires had been nearly impossible to maintain throughout the barrage, so pigeons and dogs were also often used for communications.

"The advance continued without meeting very strong resistance until the town of St. Souplet on

the west bank of the LaSalle River was reached, about 3 p.m. that afternoon.

Here the enemy apparently had time to make some preparation and to bring up a few reserves, as the heights immediately east of the river were well protected. Heavy machine gun and artillery fire was received from the entire ridge covering the regimental front. It was practically impossible to advance up this open incline without the sacrifice of a great number of lives.

Repeated efforts were made to cross the river, and at a few points were successful but due to the nature of the terrain and the terrific machine gun fire, it was deemed necessary to dig in and hold the line along the west bank of the river, as a counter-attack was anticipated, but never materialized. The left flank of the regiment at this time was connected with the 25th British Division, but the right flank was exposed, as the 120th Infantry had not kept up, causing the line to bend back in front of several fortified machine gun posts.

*"Confronting these conditions, the line was ordered to halt and make good a general line along the west bank of the LaSalle River and gain contact with the 120th Infantry, which was done later that night. During the day's operation, the regiment advanced to a distance of 4,000 yards and captured the towns of Escaufort, St. Souplet and St. Benin, liberating 706 French civilians. A large number of machine guns and several field pieces were captured with a large supply of ammunition."*

*"That afternoon about 2:30 p.m., Regimental Headquarters moved from Premont to Busigny."*

*"The night of Oct. 9-10 was spent in consolidating the captured position and to gain contact with the unit on the right that had been held up by machine gun fire. It was the plan that as soon as this connection had been made, an artillery barrage was to be laid down on the whole front, thus enabling the entire line to advance."*

*The German position could not be taken without this preliminary preparation by the artillery, so strongly was it defended."*

The regiment then rested for five days. Cpl. Mintz was slightly wounded during these operations. He returned to duty Nov. 1, 1918. The Regiment had completed another intense advance while he was recovering. They were now replenishing and filling their ranks with replacements for those killed or wounded. Mintz was now Sgt. Mintz for "gallantry under fire." The Regiment would not fight again, as the Armistice was signed before they were ordered back to the battlefields.

After returning to America, 1st Sgt. Mintz required more hospitalization and was finally honorably discharged Aug. 13, 1919. He was reported as 35 percent disabled.

The Raleigh News and Observer published this news from Goldsboro on Aug. 21, 1919, p.3: "Sergeant Van G. Mintz, of Co. E, 119th Infantry, who served under Capt. E.H. Bain, of this city, in Mexico and later in France, and was promoted to sergeant for gallantry under fire, and who has been a patient at the government hospital in Asheville since the return of his division, has arrived in Goldsboro and is being cordially greeted by his many young friends here."

Camp Sevier, S.C., became a tuberculosis treatment hospital for discharged soldiers after the war. Mintz was a patient there in 1920. He was married in 1922 in Greenville, S.C. According to the published notice, he had accepted a government job in Waynesville, outside of Asheville (The Greenville News, Greenville, S.C., Nov. 22, 1922, p.8.).

Van Grissett Mintz passed away May 13, 1929, at 36. His death record lists his occupation as salesman. He left behind a wife and young daughter, Elizabeth Mintz Hair. He was laid to rest in Mintz Cemetery.

If you would like to help us honor Brunswick

County World I veterans, go to [caswellriflerange.com](http://caswellriflerange.com) or email [ftcaswellriflerange@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto: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.*