



Images contributed

Aux Remount Depot 310, Camp Sevier, S.C., March 16, 1918



The first official divisional shoulder patches of the U.S. Army



The 2nd insignia is the 81st Division headquarters shoulder insignia circa 1918.

THE INJURED.

Private Dewey Kilpatrick, Co. I, 321st infantry; home address, Asheville, N. C., 19 Silver street; slightly injured.

Private Richard Gray, Co. F, 321st infantry, R. F. D., No. 2, Shallotte, N. C.; slightly injured.

Private Chester Sirey, Co. I

The Wilmington Dispatch reported the deadly train accident on the front page of the May 10, 1918, edition.



RAILROAD TRESTLE LEADING INTO CAMP

Railroad trestle leading into Camp Jackson, S.C.

The World War I profile of Pvt. 1st Class Richard Herbert Gray

BY NORMA ECKARD
SPECIAL TO THE BEACON

Richard Herbert Gray was born, raised and lived his life in Brunswick County. A partial family tree is located in Family Search. Two of Richard's brothers, Harvey Winfield Gray and Oscar Llewellyn Gray, are also World War I veterans.

Richard's World War I Draft Registration shows he was single, living in Shallotte, and working in the logging industry.

The first draft for the National Army was Sept. 5, 1917. Five percent of the registered men were called that day. Richard was among the 5 percent called and one of the first five Brunswick County men ordered to report for duty. On Sept. 9, 1917, he reported and was formally accepted on Sept. 17. Training began at Camp Jackson, S.C.

The 81st Division had just been organized in August 1917 at Camp Jackson. It was primarily created with those drafted such as Richard Gray.

Another man who arrived that day was Thomas "Jack" Pinkney Shinn from Kannapolis, N.C. He wrote a diary rich in details and his impressions. Anyone wishing to understand the experiences of those in the 81st Division infantry regiments or just general front line experiences may want to read the 86 pages found at the link on his name on the website. Excerpts will be included in the WWI Profiles for the 81st Division. Jack Shinn reached the level of 1st Sergeant while serving.

When these first men arrived at Camp Jackson, only a small clearing had been made for some barracks. Those of us who came into camp dur-

ing those first weeks spent almost as much time cutting trees, digging stumps, working roads and doing "landscape gardening" as in the study and practice of things purely military. We were naturally very slow in understanding what digging stumps and "policing up" cigarette "ducks" and match sticks had to do with winning the war.

But in the emergency, we obeyed orders out of loyalty to our government and to humanity, as if by instinct, and the work was done regardless of how menial or difficult. (Source: History of the 321st Infantry, NC Archives.)

In October, about half of the men were transferred out of the 81st, mostly to the 30th "Old Hickory" Division. This transfer continued through the fall, winter and spring of 1918. Those remaining in the 81st wondered if their division would become a depot division (training and receiving unit).

This changed during May 11-18, 1918, when the division was moved to Camp Sevier, S.C., and rapidly grew to war strength. But most were raw recruits, some having less than two week's training.

The 81st Division is officially known as the "Stonewall Division" but is popularly known as the "Wildcat Division." The division adopted the wildcat insignia from the common wildcat of the Carolinas and Wildcat Creek that ran through Camp Jackson. The brigades, regiments, and specialty units adopted different colors for their patches. Shown to the right is the 81st Division headquarters shoulder insignia circa 1918.

The division commander, Maj. General Charles J. Bailey, believed the insignia promoted division unity

and raised morale. When the War Department ordered the removal of unauthorized patches from their uniforms, Gen. Bailey took the matter to Gen. Pershing. On Oct. 19, 1918, Pershing directed each division commander to submit a sleeve insignia design for review and approval. The 81st sent their design that day, obtaining approval, and becoming the first official divisional patch in the U.S. Army.

"The first U.S. Army patches were produced by sewing or gluing pieces of cloth together. Most of these early patches were made from material the soldiers either had at hand or could obtain easily, such as the brown wool from their U.S. Army blankets, shirts, or puttees (their wrap-around leggings). Most of the colored cloth came from discarded or captured French and German uniforms." (Source: AEF Shoulder Insignia.)

Before moving to Camp Sevier in May 1918, advance groups were sent ahead to prepare for the regiments. Pvt. 1st Class Richard Gray from Brunswick County was part of the advance group, as well as Pvt. 1st Class Jack Shinn, who wrote this in his diary:

Friday, May 10, 1918
I was ordered to take 6 privates and go to Camp Sevier to prepare for the Regiment that was to follow a week later. We loaded the train and started but our train was thrown from a tressell [sic] 45 feet high. Nine men were killed and twenty-six wounded. The trip was postponed until the next day.

Richard Gray was one of the wounded. His injuries would not have been known except for Jack Shinn's diary in the North Carolina Archives and researching further for details of the ac-

cident. Nine men were killed and they were reported as "killed by accident." The men wounded seriously were reported as "seriously wounded" in their service records. But those injured slightly, as Richard Gray was, were never reported as wounded.

At some point after this injury, Pvt. 1st Class Richard Gray was transferred to the Aux Remount Depot 310, Camp Sevier, breeding horses for cavalry. He remained there until he was honorably discharged March 27, 1919.

He returned after the war to Shallotte, where he raised a family. Richard Herbert Gray passed away Aug. 14, 1962. He and his brothers were laid to rest in Chapel Hill Cemetery in Shallotte.

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

Another roll calling event will be Saturday, April 6, at the rifle range starting at 11 a.m. The yearly fundraiser will be Saturday, May 4.

A monument was 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 this year 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 who 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. Wil-

liam 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

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