



Photos contributed



A gun of Battery D, Twenty-first Field Artillery, in action during the Frapelle engagement. Noyemont-le-Fosse.



Keeping an eye on the Boche, in a front line O. P. of the Sixth Infantry, near Croix de Charenton in the St. Die Sector.

The insignia of the 1st Army 5th Division

## WWI Profile: Herbert Burnall Ward 1894-1918

BY NORMA ECKARD

Herbert Burnall Ward's WWI Draft Registration shows he was living in Ash, single, and working on his family's farm. His registration included his previous service, one year at Fort Sherman. This was also handwritten on his NC WWI Service Card with the dates April 22, 1916 – May 21, 1917.

Herbert had four brothers near his age. They were never called to duty. Willie Davis Ward was disabled due to a broken foot. Luther Lewis Ward was employed by the U.S. Government as a mail carrier, while John Butler Ward was a substitute carrier. George Brooks Ward Jr. was too young for the 1917 Draft Registration but did register in September 1918 when the age range was expanded.

Herbert was ordered to report for duty on Oct. 4, 1917. He was accepted for service on Oct. 15, 1917, at Camp Jackson, S.C. A handwritten notation states that they were intended for the 322nd Infantry of the 81st Division, but as previously included in the 81st Division history, many soldiers were transferred to other needed divisions.

On Feb. 6, 1918, Pvt. Ward was assigned to Company M, 11th Infantry, 5th Division. He had moved up and down in rank during that time, likely because of the shuffling of men where needed. On April 1, 1918, he attained the rank of corporal, which he would hold for the remainder of his service.

The previous post describes the creation of the division and activities up to the taking of Frapelle. The 5th Division's next operation was at St. Mihiel, the first all-American operation of the war.

The American First Army was organized in August and September 1918. The training schedule emphasized open warfare methods. The use of maps and compasses, and rifle and machine gun firing was stressed, and the wearing of gas masks was enforced for training.

The Division began a 50-kilometer march on Sept. 4. Absolute secrecy was maintained. All marching was between the hours of 8 p.m. and 4 a.m. No lights were permitted. By day the troops and trains remained concealed. The area around Martincourt was the destination of the Fifth Division.

Those forced night marches stand out most vividly in the mind of every man in the Division. It was the first hurry-up march the troops had undergone; the weather was one continuous downpour of rain; the roads were slippery and wound over steep hills and through wet woods; as the organization approached the lines the traffic on the highways grew denser and denser until those arteries were solid-streams of vehicles and men, with a current in each direction.

Orders were that the artillery should be in the sector and in position by Sept. 8, but the enormous traffic on the roads, the scarcity and wretched condition of the horses and the incessant rain made it impossible to complete the march on time. Forage was scarce and water was often unobtainable. Horses died along the road or had to be abandoned to the mercy of French peasants. The muddy ground made the entrances and exits of woods extremely difficult; sometimes as much as three hours were consumed merely in getting organizations out of the woods and on the road. The strain on men and animals was terrific. Sleep was almost unheard of.

Fourteen American divisions were gathered for the operation: 1, 2, 4, 5, 26, 42, 82, 89, 90; Reserve: 3, 35, 78, 80, 91. The objective was to reduce the German's occupation of the St. Mihiel salient, or the triangular portion jutting out as shown in the map below. The plan was to cut it off on all sides with the various divisions. The Germans had been prepared for the possibility of withdrawal to the famous and supposed impregnable Hindenburg Line, which the 30th Division would break in their famous assault on Sept. 29. But the Germans were still taken unaware.

The blackness of the nights and the perpetual rain exhausted everyone. The military police especially were called upon for supreme effort, for they had to act as column markers throughout the night and then spend the ensuing day getting in position for the next stage of the Journey. Officers and men alike were footsore and weary from exposure to the raw weather and loss of sleep when the brigades reached their designated stations.

The 5th Division was assigned to drive practically due north, about 8 kilometers, to the Hindenburg Line.

The German positions that faced the troops of the Fifth Division were excellently situated for defense. They included four successive heights, three of which were defended by well-organized systems of trenches. Each of the heights commanded several valleys where enemy reserves were stationed and from which counter attacks might normally be planned should the heights be taken.

The Germans had foreseen the attack and had prepared for withdraw. But the attack came 48 hours before it was expected, so the assault caught the Germans as they were beginning evacuations. Because of the secrecy of the attack, the Americans faced reduced resistance.

By midnight before the morning of Sept. 12, the troops had reached their posts for the attack. At 1 a.m. the bombardment began.

The roar of cannon was deafening and bursts of flames lit up the sodden sky. At first the Hun artillery attempted to reply, but by 1:55 a.m. their last gun was silent. Doughboys waiting in the trenches were impatient of the delay. Already all except the forward strands of defensive wire in front of their jumping-off trenches were cut to speed their advance. The rain soaked everyone to the skin. H hour was 5 a.m.

At 4:30 a.m., the machine guns all opened up a heavy barrage of indirect and overhead fire on the points in the German lines when counterattacks might come.

At the instant that the barrage came down the Doughboys dashed forward. Four thin waves of mud-stained men, helmeted and under full pack, bayoneted rifle in hand, swept through the lanes in their own barbed wire. It was not quite dawn.

The enemy "must have quaked as the avalanche descended upon them." Frantic calls by them for counter-barrages were unanswered.

Machine gunners had difficulty in keeping pace with the fast-going Doughboys. The unwieldy tanks struggled to catch up, but floundered in the mud and shell-torn stretches of No Man's Land.

German prisoners taken by the infantry began arriving at 6:15 a.m. A photo shows prisoners taken by the Tenth Brigade (6th and 11th Infantry) being escorted by the 5th Division. Ultimately, 1,210 enlisted men and 32 officers were taken prisoner by the 5th Division during the operation.

Cpl. Ward and the 11th Infantry descended on Vieville, taking the town. Dressing stations were opened, caring for the wounded and serving hot coffee, bread and corned beef, and chocolate to tired soldiers. The orders were "Press advance to the First Phase Line. Rush digging with great vigor." The advance pushed on.

The 6th Infantry met less resistance than the 11th.

The troops had to cross open fields in the face of fire from heights where machine gunners were making a stand. The resistance of the enemy grew stiffer.

The First Day Objective was reached and the troops began to dig in. Everywhere the first day's operation of the American Army had been successful.

Losses in the Division that day were heavy. The 11th Infantry alone lost three second lieutenants, three more officers were KIA, 18 officers were wounded, 450 enlisted men were wounded, and 144 were KIA, including Cpl. Herbert Ward.

The Division would go on to end the successful operation, capturing the St. Mihiel salient and driving to the Hindenburg Line. It wasn't won easily, as the enemy fought hard and continued targeting the Americans after being driven beyond the Hindenburg Line. In total, the 5th Division had casualties of 1,612 from Sept. 12-16. Most were suffered by the 6th and 11th Infantries. Thirteen officers were killed, 44 wounded, and 11 gassed. The enlisted men had 305 killed, 1,123 wounded, and 116 gassed. Two were captured.

The spoils won by the 5th Division were high: Twenty-five 77-mm guns, four 105-mm guns, thirteen 150-mm guns, seven anti-tank guns, one anti-aircraft battery, 30 trench mortars, 125 machine guns, 550 rifles, over 100,000 rounds of artillery and trench mortar ammunition, 65 horses, 30 flat cars, several miles of railroad equipment, one complete field hospital, 20

wagons, and thousands of dollars worth of signal, engineer and medical property, many maps and secret documents, and other miscellaneous property.

It is not known when Corporal Herbert Burnall Ward was killed that first day. It is hoped that he experienced some of the success of this major victory for the Americans, made possible due to his sacrifice.

Corporal Herbert Burnall Ward's remains were returned on May 23, 1921. He was laid to rest in Ward Cemetery in Brunswick County with his family. A military flat marker is displayed.

**Source:**

The Society of the Fifth Division (1919) The Official History of the Fifth Division USA, During the Period of its Organization and its Operations in the European World War, 1917-1919. New York, Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Company.

If you would like to help us honor Cpl. Herbert Burnall Ward or another Brunswick County WWI veteran, email the Friends of Ft Caswell Rifle Range at [ftcaswellriflerange@gmail.com](mailto:ftcaswellriflerange@gmail.com) or go to [www.caswellriflerange.com](http://www.caswellriflerange.com)

A future fundraiser, Oktoberfest, is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 12, at the Caswell Beach public service facility building (fire station) from 4 to 9 p.m. to raise funds for publishing the book of Brunswick County men and women that served in WWI; to continue historic preservation of the rifle range memorial and to Honor Brunswick County WWI veterans. There will be a dinner and dance with music by The Back Porch Rockers. More information will follow.

Another Roll Call is planned for Veterans Day on Monday, Nov. 11, at 11 a.m. beside the 1918 Fort Caswell Rifle Range Memorial in Caswell Beach.