

THE OCONOMOWOC GUARD'S PART IN WWI
(Facts relative to the Oconomowoc Guard and Louis Braatz are in bold.)

The National Guard had its origins in the colonial militia. Congress and citizens were uncomfortable with sending regular soldiers into the streets to restore tranquility in cases of civil violence. It wasn't in the tradition inherited from English law for soldiers to be used to enforce civil law. In addition, a law had existed since 1878 that forbid using federal military forces for law enforcement. Therefore, state militias were used to quell civil violence. The U.S. Constitution required state militias be organized, armed, and disciplined by the federal government. The states would retain the responsibility to train the militias.

On 7-27-1898, Oconomowoc's Company M, 5th Wisconsin National Guard Infantry Regiment, was organized. On 6-10-1899, Company M was transferred to the 1st Wisconsin National Guard Infantry Regiment.

The modern era of the National Guard began in 1903 when the state militias began to be organized, equipped, and trained according to the same standards as the U.S. Army.

On March 9, 1916, Pancho Villa crossed the border into New Mexico and killed 20 Americans. U.S. troops, under the command of Gen. John Pershing, pursued Villa into Mexico. This exposed the Mexican border to the danger of raids. So, 3,000 reservists from National Guard units from Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona were mobilized on May 9, 1916 to be sent to guard the border against further invasion while regular Army troops were pursuing Villa.

On June 1, 1916, a federal law called the National Defense Act went into effect. The National Guard became the successor to the old organized state militias. Regular Army officers began to act as instructors to the National Guard; and organization, equipment, and state of training was standardized. By 1916, those who were in the National Guard for social reasons drifted away and were replaced by true soldiers. The National Guard began to be a reliable partner to the U.S. Army and play an important role in the nation's defense while at the same time filling the traditional state role as called upon by the governors.

Louis Braatz' Certificate of Service obtained from the Wisconsin Veterans Museum in February 2013 reads that he enlisted in Company M, 1st Wisconsin National Guard Infantry on June 1, 1916 and served until April 24, 1917.

On June 18, 1916, the entire National Guard, including the Oconomowoc National Guard unit of 104 men, as well as most of the other Wisconsin's National Guard units, were called up by President Wilson. They were to be sent to Camp Wilson on Fort Sam Houston near San Antonio, Texas. **The Oconomowoc Guard was mustered in on June 30, 1916 as Company M, 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry Regiment, Wisconsin Infantry Brigade, Wisconsin National Guard.**

The Oconomowoc Enterprise headline of June 23, 1916 read, "Oconomowoc Sends 104 Men to the Front. Oconomowoc has been aglow with patriotic enthusiasm since Monday forenoon when it became definitely known that President Wilson had called upon the National Guard to be in readiness for service on the Mexican border." Another article from the Enterprise read, "Two thousand people gathered at the passenger station Thursday morning to watch the soldiers entrain and to say goodbyes

for the present. There were many heart rending scenes as those near and dear parted with their loved ones, many of them mere boys. Miss Ellen White presented a carnation to each member of the company as a token of remembrance...".

For its move to Camp Wilson, the Oconomowoc's Company M was first sent to Camp Douglas in Wisconsin. On July 8th, they started on their way from Camp Douglas to Camp Wilson. The camp no longer exists, but there is a plaque on the site indicating it was a training camp for the 32nd Division in 1916. They arrived at Camp Wilson on July 11th.

More than 100,000 Guardsmen formed a line along the Mexican border, and the raids from Mexico became a thing of the past. Mexico and the U.S. worked out their differences, and the guardsmen returned home without having fired a shot in anger. The Wisconsin National Guard was on duty for service near the Mexican Border until January 1917. They were mustered out at Camp Sheridan in Illinois on January 19, 1917. **Louis Braatz' discharge papers from the National Guard read that he had been in service of the United States under call of the President from June 30, 1916 to January 19, 1917**

On 4-24-1917, **Oconomowoc's Co. M, 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry Regiment, Wisconsin Infantry Brigade composed of 74 men was transferred to Machine Gun Company (MG Co.), 1st Infantry, Wisconsin National Guard.** It responded to the call of President Wilson on 7-15-1917 and was drafted into federal service on 8-15-1917 for the World War.

Louis Braatz' draft registration card reads that he was discharged from the National Guard at Camp Douglas, Wis. on August 5, 1917 by reason of being drafted into Federal Service because of WW I. He was discharged because, by proclamation of President Wilson, every soldier in the National Guard of every state was essentially discharged from the National Guard of his respective state and immediately drafted in to the U.S. Army. This was done because of a constitutional restraint upon the use of the National Guard beyond the borders of the United States.

Louis Braatz's discharge paper from the National Guard of the United States and the State of Wisconsin dated August 5, 1917 reads that he was a Private in MG Company, 1st Wis. Infantry Regiment of the Wisconsin National Guard.

Oconomowoc's MG Company was assigned to the 32nd Division which was organized from National Guard troops from Wisconsin and Michigan on September 22, 1917 under War Department orders of July 18th, 1917. The 32nd Division was formerly the old 12th National Guard Division composed of troops from Wisconsin and Michigan (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th Regiments Wis. Infantry; 21st, 32nd, and 33rd Regiments Mich. Infantry; 1st Wis. Field Artillery and 1st Mich. Field Artillery; 1st Wis. Cavalry and 1st Mich. Cavalry; 1st Battalion Wis. Engineers and 1st Battalion Mich. Engineers; 1st Wis. Field Signal Battalion and 1st Mich. Field Signal Battalion; Wis. and Mich. Field Hospital; and Ambulance Companies 1 and 2.

The division was organized into two infantry brigades. Each brigade had two infantry regiments; a machine gun battalion; a regiment of light artillery; a regiment of heavy artillery; a trench mortar battery; a combat engineer regiment; a signal battalion; and a division train consisting of military police, ammunition train, supply train, engineer

train, and sanitary train. The division had an authorized strength of 991 officers and 27,114 men.

Below is the organization of the 32nd Division:

63rd Infantry Brigade (from Michigan)

125th Infantry Regiment

3 battalions

4 companies in each battalion

126th Infantry Regiment

3 battalions

4 companies in each battalion

120th Machine Gun Battalion

64th Infantry Brigade (formed from the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Wisconsin Infantry Regiments) (3,500 men)

127th Infantry Regiment

3 battalions

4 companies in each battalion

Machine Gun (MG) Company (from 2nd Wis. Infantry)

128th Infantry Regiment

3 battalions

4 companies in each battalion

121st Machine Gun Battalion

Companies A,C,& D

(The Oconomowoc Guard was perhaps Company A.)

Also in the 32nd Division were the 57th Field Artillery Brigade composed of the 119th, 120, and 121st Field Artillery Regiments; 107th Trench Mortar Batteries; 107th Engineer Regiment & Train; 107th Field Signal Battalion; 107th Headquarters Train & M.P.; 107th ammunition Train; 107th Supply Train; 107th Sanitary Train composed of the 125th, 126th, 127th, and 128th Ambulance Companies and Field Hospitals.

By order of Brigadier General Charles R. Boardman, commanding officer of the 64th Infantry Brigade of the 32nd Division, the Oconomowoc Machine Gun Company was assigned to the 121st Machine Gun Battalion, 128th Infantry, 64th Infantry Brigade, 32nd Division on 9-24-1917.

From August to late September 1917, the 32nd Division, having been drafted into federal service for WWI and including all the troops from Wisconsin and Michigan who had been on the Mexican border in 1916, were transported by train to Camp MacArthur near Waco, Texas for training to include trench warfare.

In January 1918, the 32nd Division left directly from Fort MacArthur for Camp Merritt, New Jersey, and then on to the port of embarkation at Hoboken, New Jersey where it departed for Brest, France. The first units of the division embarked at Hoboken on January 19, 1918. The last units arrived in France on March 12, 1918.

On February 18, 1918, the 128th Infantry Regiment sailed for France in a convoy which included the troop transports George Washington, Covington, De Kalb, Manchuria, Pastores, Susquehanna, and El Sol. The cruiser USS Huntington served as the convoy escort. The embarkation was probably at Hoboken. The debarkation was probably Brest, France. This is probably when the Oconomowoc machine gun company sailed for overseas service.

To put the entry off the 32nd Division into WWI into perspective, I include here a very brief summary of the events of the war on the "Western Front" in France before March 2018. The First World War began in 1914 between Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire (the Central Powers) fighting against Great Britain, France, Russia, Italy, Romania, Japan, and later the United States (the Allied Powers). On August 4, 1914, German troops crossed the border into Belgium in the first battle of the war. They advanced through Belgium toward France. On September 6, 1914, French and British forces confronted the invading German army in northeastern France within 30 miles of Paris in the First Battle of the Marne. The Allied troops checked the German advance, counterattacked, and drove the Germans back to north of the Aisne River. Both sides dug into trench warfare, and the Western Front became a war of attrition that would last more than three years. Costly battles were fought at Verdun from February to December 1916 and in the Battle of the Somme from July to November 1916. German and French troops suffered close to million casualties in the Battle of Verdun alone. America remained neutral until 1918, but the indiscriminate sinking of neutral ships, including those of the U.S. by German submarines changed the public opinion in the U.S. On April 2, 1918, Woodrow Wilson appeared before Congress and called for a declaration of war against Germany.

The 32nd Division, **including the 121st Machine Gun Battalion**, was designated as a replacement organization and stationed in the 10th Training Area of the American Expeditionary Forces close to the Swiss border near Prauthoy, Haute-Marne, France about 190 miles southeast of Paris and north of Geneva, Switzerland.

Reestablished as a combat unit, the 32nd Division was placed under the tactical command of the French XL Corps and moved by train to the Alsace sector on May 10, 1918. Alsace was German territory captured by the French in the opening weeks of the war in 1914 but quickly retaken by the German army. The sector had grown quiet, and armies from each side used this area to train new divisions for combat operations.

The 32nd detrained at the railway stations of Belfor, Mortzwiller, Vaurhiermont, and Montreux, France. On May 18th, it took over the front line trenches in the defensive zone in Alsace facing Altkirch and Muhlhausen. They were about 50 miles west of Zurich, Switzerland. In doing so, they were the first American troops to set foot on German soil. These trenches were not far from the Swiss border.

The 32nd was in the Haute-Alsace sector from May 18th until about July 22, 1918. **The 64th Brigade was south of the Rhone-Rhine Canal in the Suarce sector.** Intensive training was carried out. Although there were some losses, there were no engagements worthy of any note with the enemy during its time here.

Starting on July 22nd, the 32nd Division entrained at Montreux-Vieux, Vauthiermont, Morvillars, and Belfort. Beginning on July 23rd, it detrained at Ormoy, Nanteuil-le-Haudouin, LePlessis-Belleville, and Dammartin-in-Goele near the Seine River about 20 miles south of Paris. It was to be in reserve at the disposition of the French XXXVIII Corps.

On 26 July 1918, the 32nd Division proceeded to the region of Château-Thierry near the Marne River about 50 miles northeast of Paris and about 25 miles southwest of Reims. From there, it moved into the Foret de Fere near Jaulgonne, about nine miles northeast of Chateau-Thierry, as part of the 38th French Corps, 6th French Army in the tip of the famous Marne salient.

The battles fought by the 32nd Division in WWI include Grimpettes Wood, Bellevue Farm, Fismes, Argonne, and a march to the Rhine. The Aisne-Marne battle (July 29 to August 7, 1918) was the first pitched battle for the 32nd Division. As a result of this offensive, the initiative in the war passed to the Allies. It took place between Soissons and Reims and north of Chateau-Thierry during the second battle of the Marne.

After nightfall on July 29th, the 64th Brigade (127th and 128th Infantry and 121st Machine Gun Company) began to filter forward to relieve the 3rd Infantry Division in the front line on the Ourcq River in the vicinity of Ronchères about 15 miles northeast of Chateau-Thierry and about 20 miles southwest of Reims. They stormed and captured the ridge in their foreground near Roncheres.

The 32nd Division received its baptism of fire (first major offensive action) at 1430 hours on July 30, 1918 when the 127th Infantry went over the top and followed a rolling barrage into the Bois des Grimpettes. The 127th pushed through the woods until they were stopped by machine gun fire from the right flank. On this flank, from positions in the Bois de Cierges, the Germans continued to oppose every effort to advance, but the 127th Infantry gained the edge of those woods and established themselves there. During the night, the Germans launched a counter attack from the Bois de Meunier, and a bayonet melee raged for hours in the dark tangled woods until the attacking German force was finally routed.

The 63rd and 64th Brigades went into action side by side. Directly in front of them was the long open slope of the Ourcq River Valley reaching to the woods of Les Jomblettes on Hill 212 which was a spur of Hill 230. This objective constituted one of the strongest German positions on the line at the Ourcq River.

The success of the contemplated operation meant the breaking of the Kaiser's last formidable line of resistance south of the Vesle River. Les Jomblettes was not only holding up the 32nd Division, machine gun nests there and in the Bois Pelger further back flanked the open ground in front of the 42nd "Rainbow" Division and absolutely prevented any advance by the 42nd.

On the left, the 63rd Brigade promptly reached its objective, Hill 212 after some wicked fighting. The 63rd Brigade dove into Les Jomblettes, mopped it up, and then cleaned out the Bois Pelger allowing the 42nd Division to advance. On the right, the 127th Infantry pushed their attack through the village of Cierges about two miles north of Roncheres and passed beyond only to be held up by a withering hail of machine gun bullets from Bellevue Farm, which had been organized into a very strong center of resistance that the artillery had failed to smother.

The attack was renewed on the morning of August 1, 1918 with the 32nd Division in the front line advancing a mile into important positions in the new German line of resistance. The objective of the 63rd Brigade was Hill 230. **The mission of the 64th Brigade was to take Bellevue Farm which had stopped the attack the day before.**

The 32nd Division, as part of the Allied counterattack during the Second Battle of the Marne, advanced 19 kilometers before capturing the city of Fismes about 15 miles north of Cierges, 17 miles west of Reims, and midway between Soissons and Reims on the Vesle River. The Germans resisted desperately and were amply supported by machine guns and artillery, but the 32nd not to be denied. The objectives were gained,

and after dark the 32nd Division dominated Hill 230. The Germans were forced to retreat after they lost this commanding high ground.

On August 5th, the 127th gave their attention to mopping up the town. Attempts were also made to cross the river but without success. **On the night of August 5th, the 3rd Battalion of the 128th, the only strong battalion left in the 64th Brigade, was ordered into Fismes to reinforce the 127th.**

On August 6th, the 32nd Division captured Fismes. On the morning of August 6th, the 127th was relieved from Fismes. **There were still German snipers in the town, and the 128th continued to mop up the place. In the eastern half of the town, German and American patrols clashed and it was nightfall before the Americans could claim anything like control of the city.**

August 6th officially marks the termination of the Aisne-Marne offensive. This operation changed the Allied outlook from defense to offense. It exercised a greater influence upon German plans and policies than was appreciated at the moment. It ended abruptly the German Champagne-Marne offensive and prevented the capture of Reims by the enemy. It forced the German high command to postpone indefinitely its projected attack against the British armies in Flanders, Belgium. Furthermore, it made perfectly clear the fact that General Ludendorff's efforts to crush the Allies before America could put an effective force into the field had failed.

On August 7, 1918, the 32nd Division was relieved in the front by the 28th Infantry Division. In the savage fighting that occurred since July 30th, the German line was forced steadily back over difficult ground from the strongly fortified position on the Ourcq River to the Vesle River; a distance of 12 miles.

The brilliant and determined American attacks culminated in the 64th Infantry Brigade's capture of the important town of Fismes on the Vesle River on August 6th and the 63rd Brigade's capture of the important German railhead on the Vesle River in the left of the Division's sector on August 4th. During the past week, the Division captured 18 villages and fortified farms and captured four pieces of heavy artillery, five pieces of light artillery, ten trench mortars, 28 machine guns and hundreds of rifles. The Division had faced three German Divisions in this offensive; the Fourth Prussian Guards, the 200th and the 216th. One German officer and 96 soldiers were taken prisoner. The 32nd Division casualties were 4,597 losses from all causes including: killed and died of wounds 797; severely wounded 1,153; slightly wounded 2009; gassed 618; missing 12; and captured 2 officers and 6 men.

On August 10 & 11, 1918, the 64th Brigade was moved to the Bois de Reims and Bois de Vezilly at Reims in the sector of the French 164th Division (American III Army Corps) to be placed at the disposition of the French 164th Division and used only in the event of a serious attack on that division.

On August 23, 1918, the Division started movement to a new sector in the vicinity of Pierrefonds about 20 miles west of Soissons. After a few days in the Army reserve, the division was sent across the Aisne River to a position in the rear of the 127th French Infantry Division with orders to relieve that division on short notice.

On August 26th, the 32nd Division moved north of the Aisne River in conjunction with the Moroccan 2nd Division and the French 66th Division. The 32nd Division advance opened at Tartiers which is about 4 miles north of the Aisne River and about 4 miles northwest of Soissons.

By August 26th, five concentric Allied offensives were either underway or were about to be launched from left to right as follows: Ypres-Lys, Somme, Oise-Aisne, Aisne-Marne, and Meuse-Argonne. Fighting was in progress all the way from the North Sea to Switzerland.

On the opening day of the Oise-Aisne offensive (August 26 to September 6, 1918), the front involved therein extended for about ninety miles from Reims westward through Soissons to the vicinity of Ribecourt north of Compeigne.

The relief of the 127th French Infantry Division took place on the night of August 27-28 when the 63rd Brigade went into the line, and the **64th Brigade went into support of the 63rd**. The northern limit was to be the Jimgny-Leuilly Road. The southern limit was to be Nouvron Vingre, Tartiers, the crossroad of the road from Tartiers to Juvigny and the road leading to the Fenne Valprieznorth of Chavigny.

The Infantry companies were down to 50% of their authorized strength of 250 soldiers as the 32nd Division prepared to enter its second battle. The relief was completed at 0200 hrs. The first attack was set for 0700 hours which was the precise hour that command of the sector passed to the 32nd Division.

The orders were as follows: Destructive artillery fire was to be placed on the wire entanglements, trenches and important points of the enemy lines up to the limits of the range of the heavy artillery. Shots were to be commenced as soon as the present order was received and were to be continued the days of August 27 & 28 in order to disorganize as much as possible the enemy's defense as a whole. Harassing fire, both continued and irregular, was to be carried on day and night by the division artilleries; each in its respective divisional sector up to the Soissons-Coucy Road. Harassing fire was also be carried out by the heavy artillery of the XXX Corps and the heavy artillery of the army beyond this road and up to the limits of their range. They were directed to allow the enemy no respite and to harass him energetically along all his communications both upon his front line as well as upon his rear lines and as far beyond his rear lines as possible.

On August 28th, the 63rd, and 64th Brigades of the 32nd Division were in a cave near Tartiers. French General Mangin ordered a general attack by the entire 10th French Army of which the 32nd was a part of at this time. It was to take place at 0525 hours on August 29th. The objective was a complete breakthrough of the German line.

A tremendous artillery preparation had been delivered during the night followed by a rolling barrage in front of the attacking infantry in the morning, but all this seemed to have little effect on the German machine gun nests some of which took good advantage of numerous caves in the area. The Germans also laid down an effective counter barrage just as our troops jumped off. The entire 10th French Army met a determined German defense occupying well-sited and protected positions. Casualties were heavy on both sides and very little ground was gained.

Because of the heavy casualties, the **63rd Brigade was relieved by the 64th Brigade on the night of August 29-30** in preparation for the next general attack planned for August 30th. The 127th was on the right and the **128th on the left**; each with two battalions in the line and one in support.

The 32nd Division was in the front line of the French XXX Corps facing Juvigny which was about 25 miles southeast of Reims. Running south from this town is a wide

deep valley. On August 28 and 29, the enemy's main line of resistance in front of the 32d Division lay west of this valley.

During the night of August 29/30, the left flank of the German division opposing the 32nd withdrew to the east side of the valley. There it extended from the railroad northwest of Juvigny past the western edge of the town to the heights to the south where it connected with the adjacent German division on its left. Strong German outposts remained in the abandoned area, and the town itself was strongly held.

The 32nd Division front line was exposed on the hill west of Juvigny, with the troops suffering heavily. While corrective measures were being considered, word was received from the 59th French Division, on the right of the 32nd Division, that its right flank had advanced in close liaison with the division to their right which had found a weak spot in the German line and had broken through. It became apparent that this movement was going to meet with success and preparations were made for the 32nd to participate in the shove. This would give the 32nd the opportunity to attack Juvigny.

When the attack was launched, the left flank, together with the 66th French Division, on the left of the 32nd Division, was held up by heavy fire coming from the northeast. The right flank, however, moved forward, and while it encountered determined opposition in going through the woods, it succeeded in making its way through the ravine to a position to the south of Juvigny with the extreme right partially enveloping the town to the east.

One battalion of the 128th Infantry moved forward west of Juvigny and reached a position north of the town. In this way, the village was practically surrounded. The enemy was taken by surprise by the attack but recovered and delivered a counter attack on the left flank. **This attack was repulsed by the 128th** which had been reinforced on its left by a battalion of the 125th Infantry.

At 15:30 on August 30th, **the 64th Brigade advanced from its position 1 1/2 km. west of Juvigny.** Severe machine gun fire and fire from artillery were encountered. The 127th Infantry on the right entered the Bois de Couronne. **The 128th Infantry on the left, after advancing some distance, was met by such heavy machinegun fire that only the right battalion succeeded in reaching a position north of Juvigny joining up with the 127th Infantry now located on the N. and S. road just east of the town.**

The other two battalions of the 128th were located on the railroad in the northern part of the sector but were to close in on the leading battalion during the night. The gap would then be filled in by a battalion of the 125th Infantry ordered up for that purpose. Juvigny was reported as captured by the 127th Infantry at 19:15. **The 64th Infantry Brigade relieved the 63d Infantry Brigade during night of August 29/30; the 63d taking position in rear of the 64th.**

At 3:30 p.m., August 30, the 64th Brigade, being the leading brigade of the 32nd Division, received orders to attack. On the extreme right, the troops quickly overcame the enemy's advance posts and debouched into the valley. Near the village, well-placed German machine guns made progress difficult. Nevertheless, the infantry attacked the town from the west and south, repulsed a counterattack, and by dark had cleared Bois du Couronne and occupied Juvigny. That night the men of the 32nd Division dug in far in advance of the troops on their left and somewhat ahead of those on their right at a critical point on the boundary between two German army corps.

The 64th Infantry Brigade, composed of the 127th and 128th Infantry Regiments and the 121st Machine Gun Battalion, took the village of Juvigny in a brilliant attack on August 30th and pursued its advance on August 31st and September 1st. It constantly dominated the enemy. In spite of heavy losses, it sustained, without faltering, the most violent enemy counterattacks; fighting for three days without stopping, without rest, and almost without food. The French soldiers, fighting by its side, rendered its homage by calling it the "Brigade les Terribles" (The Terrible Ones). The end of operations of August 31st found the 64th Brigade, with the 128th Infantry supported by one battalion of the 125th Infantry, holding the Chateau-Thierry Road from the northern limit of its sector down to the railroad crossing just south of Raperie.

On September 1st, the 128th Infantry hung to the line of the road under cover of an embankment making frequent attempts to move forward to its objective 1 kilometer farther on but was constantly opposed by heavy machine gun fire on the high points of ground to the front and enfiladed by machine gun fire from the direction of Terny-Sorny. The artillery directly attached to the regiment was used intelligently but was unable to silence the machine guns. Just before dark, this line was exposed to additional machine gun fire from aircraft. As the dusk drew on, they made a final and successful attack; reaching the Trench de Castille and holding it from where it crosses the road to the southeast through a point which was not definitely reported. The troops were somewhat disorganized and suffered considerable losses during the operations of the last few days so that today it was necessary to reorganize the units and consolidate the ground. Contact was kept with the enemy by patrols pushed out to the front.

With Juvigny surrounded, the support battalion of the 127th Infantry entered the town from the southwest and mopped up while encountering some wicked fighting. Nearly all of the German troops holding the village were either killed or captured.

The capture of Juvigny on August 30th by the American 32nd Division breached the enemy's front and contributed greatly to the success of attacks made on August 31st by other elements of the XXX Corps and by the corps on its right. At 4 p.m. on August 31st, after an artillery preparation of four hours, the 32nd Division continued the attack with such success that by the end of that day the left and center of the division held the Bethancourt-Terny Road.

By its aggressive action during the sharp four-day battle, the 32nd Division had captured the plateau around Terny, from which Allied fire could be concentrated on Laffaux. Allied possession of Laffaux would compel the enemy to abandon miles of its main defensive line along the Vesle River.

In the foregoing operations, the American 32nd Division had been so placed that it could render outstanding service, and it had done so at every opportunity. On the night of September 1st and 2nd, it was withdrawn from the front line. It remained in the French XXX Corps second line until September 9th, when it received orders to join the American First Army.

On September 2, 1918, the objective was the Auxaillon railroad. **The 64th Brigade and 63rd Brigade were west of the line Montecouve-Juvigny. The 64th Brigade assembled in Juvigny. It was to follow the 66th Division toward the Montecouve-Vauxaillon crossroads.** That same day, the 32nd Division was relieved

on the line and went into bivouac in the rear part of the sector as the second line division.

Over 500 officers and men of the 32nd Division were awarded medals for gallantry in action while under French command. The 32nd Division casualties were 2,908 losses from all causes including: killed and died of wounds 485; severely wounded 599; slightly wounded 1,251; gassed 574; missing 14; captured 5 men. Five German Divisions were used up in an attempt to hold the position that the 32nd stormed. From these divisions, 937 prisoners were captured, 9 of them officers. The material captured included 2 pieces of heavy artillery, 2 pieces of light artillery, 16 trench mortars, 112 machine guns, 700 rifles and great quantities of ammunition and material.

On September 9th, the Division was moved to a rest area in the vicinity of Joinville about 25 miles north of Chaumont and about 60 miles southeast of Reims, on September 10 1918. About 5,000 new men arrived in the Division, but the rifle companies were still short three officers and 50 men each.

On September 17th, the 32nd Division moved from Joinville to the vicinity of Dombasle-en-Argonne and Jouy-en-Argonne where it was attached to the First Army as a reserve.

A movement by bus of about 50 miles toward the vicinity of Verdun on the Meuse-Argonne front, about 75 miles east of Reims, was begun on 22 September. It was in the Avocourt Sector in the vicinity of Autrecourt and Lavoye about 10 miles northwest of Verdun. When the Division arrived, it was assigned to the Fifth Corps as reserve. On September 25th, it moved via Brabant-en-Argonne to the Foret de Hesse where it was in reserve.

The next battle for the 32nd Division was the Meuse-Argonne offensive (September 26 to November 11, 1918). It was the American portion of a massive Allied offensive designed to end the war. Gen. John Pershing's objective was the vital German railroad hub at Sedan about 80 miles northeast of Reims near the border with Belgium. Once taken, the Germans would lose their ability to supply nearly all of their forces on the Western Front. The Germans recognized Sedan's strategic importance and had built formidable defensive positions along this portion of the Hindenburg Line.

Pershing's offensive began on Sept. 26th with the 32nd Division as the V Corps reserve. It relieved Ohio's 37th Division on Sept. 29th and commenced a drive towards the Kriemhilde Stellung at Romagne-sous-Montfaucon which was about 25 miles northwest of Verdun. It was the strongest part of the Hindenburg Line.

On September 26th, the 32nd was sent forward to occupy the original front of the Fifth Corps which that morning had gone over the top and attacked the enemy in the Argonne. As the attack progressed, the 32nd followed in support of the three divisions of the Corps that were in the front line; ready to relieve any one of them when needed.

On the cold and rainy night of September 29th, the order was received to go forward and relieve the 37th Division from Ohio. The 32nd Division made a difficult move of 11 miles on foot through the cold, dark, rainy night over shot to pieces no-man's-land strewn with deep shell holes, broken barbed wire and broken trees and brush, with 78 pound packs on their backs.

The morning of October 1st found the 63rd Brigade holding the entire front line that had been occupied by the entire 37th Division; a front of about four kilometers,

extending east and west about one-half kilometer from the village of Cierges about 20 miles northeast of Chateau-Thierry. During the day, an attack was made by the 63rd to secure better positions, and they pushed through the village to a point about one-half kilometer north of the village.

On October 3rd, in preparation for a new attack, the 32nd was ordered to relieve the 91st Division to its left. The 32nd was then relieved of part of its sector of the front on the right by the 3rd Division, which had come up the night before to take the place of the 79th Division. **By the morning of October 4th, the 64th Brigade was in the line on the left** and the 63rd was adjacent to the right.

On October 4th, the 64th Brigade, along with other units, wrested control of the village of Gesnes-en-Argonne from the Germans. Gesnes was not far from the border with Belgium. The Germans had turned Gesnes into a fortress and a subterranean network of tunnels connecting bunkers and strongpoints under the town.

To reach the tiny French hamlet, they had to cross a full mile of open ground with no cover. The battlefield was covered by German machine guns and artillery. They could not occupy Gesnes. The German garrison of the village departed during a punishing artillery barrage. After the defenders left and before the Americans could occupy it, the Germans laid down a heavy artillery barrage of their own. All the Allied forces retreated back to where they started. It was a suicide mission that resulted in horrendous loss of life.

So, the town remained part of No Man's Land and was the subject of combat patrols of both sides. Gesnes had been a rest area behind the German front line in the Argonne. So, it contained comfortable cottages, a casino with a bandstand, a beer garden and various associated places of amusement. It was said that both the Americans and Germans liked to patrol around the village because the beer garden stock had not been entirely destroyed by the avalanche of artillery from both sides.

On the morning of October 5th, the 64th Brigade attacked in a northeasterly direction toward the southeastern edge of the Bois de la Morine (Morine woods).

The Bois de la Morine bristled with well-emplaced machine gun nests which were adequately protected from the effects of the Allied artillery. For this operation, the 64th Brigade was echeloned in depth; the 127th Infantry having three battalions in the line closely supported by the **128th Infantry which followed the attack** with one battalion behind the other. On the right of the Division sector, the 63rd Brigade also attacked with the 126th in the front line and the 125th supporting. Gas and flame troops and tanks were assigned to the attacking units and were used to assist the doughboys. The Bois de la Morine was overwhelmed and its machine gun nests cleaned up. The direction of the attack was then changed to the north with the idea of reducing the Bois du Chêne Sector. Considerable and determined resistance was met with in these woods, and hand-to-hand fighting developed when the men followed the barrage into the thick undergrowth and found that the enemy had not yet had enough. The Bois du Chêne Sector was finally mopped up and remained securely in the hands of the 32nd, but further advance became impossible because of the strong position on Hill 255 and Hill 269.

During the attack on October 5th, the 127th Infantry was relieved in the front line by the 128th. On the night of October 5-6, the 126th Infantry was relieved by the 125th. Both of the retiring regiments had suffered heavily in their struggle to

advance, and the supporting troops were pushed in to give the Division the punch to carry on the attack in case a further forward movement seemed advisable.

During the next two days, the 64th Brigade strove to reduce the strong points that had halted the advance. Extra efforts were directed at obstinate German positions directly in front of the point of liaison between the 32nd and 1st Divisions. Finally, through the efforts of brave combat troops on both sides of the corps dividing line, the worst of the obstacles were removed. Meanwhile, the 125th Infantry gave its attention to small patches of woods on its immediate front, which were unusually heavily garrisoned with cunningly arranged machine gun nests that proved to be invulnerable to artillery fire. After considerable effort, these nests were cleaned up.

The 32nd Division was now directly in front of the Kriemhilde Stellung. This bristling natural fortress was known as the strongest position on the whole Hindenburg Line in the Meuse-Argonne sector. The general plan was to penetrate the wire and works at some point south of the small village of Romagne-sous-Montfaucon and then to roll up the remainder of the position by a movement to the left, taking the heights from the rear. The remainder of October 8th was devoted to positioning the soldiers of the 32nd Division for the attack.

On the morning of October 9th 1918, the assault began. Most of October 12th was spent preparing for the next push. Part of the preparation consisted of reshuffling the units in the front line. The 32nd relieved the 181st Infantry Brigade along the northern edge of the Bois de Romagne from 1/2 km northwest of Fme du Transvaal to 1/2 km south of Musarde Fme.

On the morning of October 13th, the front line of the 32nd Division from right to left was: two battalions of the 128th, one battalion of the 126th, one battalion of the 127th and the 125th in support.

It was evening on October 13th, and the 32nd Division was in the third week of its relentless attack. Capt. John McCullum, commander of the Company A, 121st Machine Gun Battalion, delivered his mission brief and pointed on a map to a small hill marked 255. The hill was a divisional boundary between the 32nd Division on the right and the 42nd Division on the left. McCullum ordered Cpl. Jerry Jerabek and his team to place their Mle 1914 Hotchkiss machine gun on that hill and defend the division's left flank while it assaulted the Kriemhilde Stellung.

The morning of October 14th was cold and drizzly. Sporadic small arms fire was heard up and down the line. The 32nd attacked north. Cpl. Jerabek and his two assistant gunners cautiously picked their way forward with their 53-pound machine gun and thousands of rounds of ammunition. They set up a firing position on Hill 255 about 500 meters ahead of the American position held by the 32nd Division's 127th Infantry Regiment.

The 64th brigade and the rest of the 32nd Division assaulted the powerful German defensive line built into the towering ridge west of the small village of Romagne-sous-Montfaucon and the present-day Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery.

The attack began at 0530 hours on October 14th. A barrage was laid down on the enemy trench system along the entire front and held there for five minutes while the troops moved forward as close to the wire as possible. When the barrage lifted, the Americans flung themselves at the German positions and sought to tear through the

tangle of wire and trench wreckage before the German Infantry could get into action.

Cpl. Jerabek's team, over the next four hours, expended 7,000 rounds of ammunition and captured 22 enemy soldiers as they provided cover for the advance of the 64th Infantry Brigade. The battalion of the 126th had the best luck. Springing forward from its position on Hill 258. It surged through the wire and closely followed the barrage as it advanced toward its first objective.

On the right, the 128th succeeded in getting through the trenches south of Romagne-sous-Montfaucon, and by skillful maneuvering, virtually surrounded the town and established a line on the northern outskirts. The 128th had been forced to avoid the town in its rush ahead. Accordingly, mopping-up parties were sent into the village from the 125th which was following in support and ready to take advantage of such a situation. About 200 prisoners were taken by the 125th in the village.

On the left, the 127th was flinging itself in vain against the impregnable defenses of the hills that flank La Cote Dame Marie. The artillery preparation had not cut up the wire, and the first wave that dashed over the top as the barrage was lifted and found itself caught in the impassable tangle. Into this wire, strong enemy groups poured withering machine gun fire and effectually halted all efforts of the 127th advance.

While La Cote Dame Marie was successfully resisting every effort at a frontal conquest, her doom was being sealed by the battalion of the 126th, which had been the first to break through the line in the morning. This battalion drove straight forward and passed the hill on the right. Its objective was north of the Cote River. **It reached it and extended its position to the right to meet the 128th.** The support battalion of the 126th sent a mopping-up party to make a turning movement to the left and attacked the defenders of the Cote River from the flank.

In the meantime, the 127th had recognized the futility of trying to take the position from the front and accordingly began to maneuver around the German right flank. This effort was successful and as a result of being outflanked on both sides, the defenders of the German stronghold were forced to give up.

During this period, it had rained almost continuously. The fields were knee deep in mud and the nights were always raw and cold. There was scarcely an hour of the day or night that they were not under fire. The struggle was over the most difficult terrain that any soldiers in the Great War were ever asked to conquer. There were commanding hills where the enemy could make his stand; deep, open ravines that he swept with machine guns and filled with gas, patches of weeds tangled with wire and covered by machine guns; and open spaces where the enemy had perfect observation and which could only be crossed with heavy losses. The enemy was well supplied with machine guns and artillery. He was familiar with every detail of the country where the fighting took place.

At 11 a.m., the 32nd Division broke through the Kriemhilde Stellung, pressing the attack against the retreating German forces. The 32nd was the first American unit to break through the line, an important step in the Allied Expeditionary Force's drive towards Sedan, France and a decisive victory in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. Sedan is about 10 miles from the Border with Belgium.

On October 15 & 16, the attack continued. The 32nd occupied the Bois de Chauvignon and the eastern part of Bois de Romagne. On October 17 to 19, the 32nd

entered the Bois de Bantheville and held a line from 1/2 km north of Romagne-sous-Montfaucon to 1/2 km north of la Tuilerie Fme.

On October 20th, the 32nd Division was relieved by the 89th Division. The 32nd remained in reserve of V Corps until November 1, 1918 when it was transferred to III Corps on the eve of the renewal of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. When the 89th, 90th and 5th Divisions jumped off in the big attack and started their successful drive up the left bank of the Meuse River at the Dun-sur-Meuse bridgehead, the 32nd followed them in close support and were ready to go to the relief of any one of them.

On the night of November 3rd and 4th, the 32nd Division moved to the Bois des Rappes and Bois de la Pultiere.

On November 4th, the 5th Division, which was fighting on the right flank of the III Corps front, forced a crossing of the Meuse River at Dun-sur-Meuse and formed a bridgehead there. Now an effort would be made to link up with the French and American divisions which had been driving up the right bank of the river but considerably behind the III Corps front. The 5th Division, however, was too widely dispersed on its front to make the contact required on its right flank. So, on the night of November 5th, the Corps ordered the 32nd Division to send a regiment to report to the 5th Division for use in support of the right flank. **The 128th was designated for this duty and crossed the Meuse River that night.**

On November 6th, the 32nd entered the line in the Bois de Fontaines and advanced forward. **The 128th was in position on the right flank of the 5th** but the desired contact was still not made. **On November 7-8, the 128th attacked, capturing the town of Brandeville which is about 20 miles northeast of Romagne-sous-Montfaucon and finally connected with the 17th French Colonial Division.**

In the approach and penetration of the Kriemhilde line, the 32nd Division met and vanquished 11 German Divisions including the 5th Prussian Guards, the 3rd Prussian Guards, the 28th Division (known as the "Kaiser's Own"), the 37th, 52nd, 115th, 39th, 123rd, 236th, 41st and 13th Divisions.

The 32nd Division had captured 28 officers and 1,067 men; 2 pieces of heavy artillery; 6 pieces of light artillery; 51 trench mortars; and 50 machine guns and rifles. The total depth of advance was 8 1/2 km.

During these three weeks, the 32nd Division had 6,046 losses from all causes, including: 1,179 killed and died of wounds, 1006 severely wounded, 3,321 slightly wounded, 554 gassed, and 149 missing.

On November 9th, the 128th Infantry was at Peuvillers and 1 1/2 km. east of Beheville about five miles southeast of Brandeville. Orders were received for the remainder of the 32nd Division to cross the Meuse River and go into the line in the sector that the 128th was holding, between the 5th Division and the 17th French Colonials. The 32nd crossed on a pontoon bridge during the night of November 9th. The 128th reverted to the 32nd and went into the line on the right of the new Division sector with the 127th on the left.

The attack from east of Beheville, which was about four miles northwest of Peuvillers, was set for 0600 hours on November 10, 1918. Information from Corps stated that the Germans were retreating. So, **the Division accordingly went into battle in pursuit formation. The 64th Brigade furnished the advance guard while the 63rd Brigade, with most of the artillery and the divisional troops, made up the main**

body. A heavy fog hid the advance. **The 1st Battalion of the 128th, which was leading the column, made rapid progress. They encountered enemy troops almost at once but fought their way through the Bois Pommepre and part way up a hill called the Cote de Mont.**

At about this time, the fog lifted, and the 128th discovered that instead of pursuing a fleeing enemy they had fought their way right into the middle of a strong German position that the enemy apparently had no intention of abandoning. The fog had prevented the Germans from effectively defending their works, and the only clashes of the early morning had occurred when the advancing doughboys happened on groups of the enemy. **As the mist cleared, the advanced guard found itself surrounded by German machine gun nests that the 128th had passed by in the thick morning fog.**

The German artillery, hearing the sudden rattle of machine guns, opened up with a barrage where the front line ought to have been, and the Americans, seeing shells bursting to their rear, thought their own artillery was falling short. It was immediately apparent that liaison had been lost on both the left and right and that neither the 127th on the left nor the French Colonials on the right **had been able to advance as rapidly as the 128th.** The men were almost completely surrounded and unable to go ahead against an opposition that was showing increasing strength. They were subjected to a galling flanking fire by machine guns and were confronted with the alternative of filtering back through a barrage that they feared was thickened by both their own and the enemy artillery. But, in a pinch, they proved themselves veterans and in good order, made their way back to a position on a line with the units on the right and left.

By nightfall, it was apparent that information of the enemy retreating was erroneous, and arrangements were immediately made to adopt different tactics. Reports coming back from divisions on the right and left indicated that they too had been able to make little progress and that they too had found that the enemy was not retreating. **The artillery, which had been coming into position all day, was informed of the conditions that the 128th had encountered** and the positions that were holding up the 127th. Fire was ordered on points of apparent enemy strength.

Plans were made for a formal attack to dislodge the enemy. The 32nd Division Commander made a personal reconnaissance of the front line to verify reports of the situation and, after conferring with the commanders of the front line troops, a plan of action for the next day was decided upon. The Corps issued instructions to continue operations on November 11th and preparations for an attack to occur at 0700 on November 11th were perfected early in the evening of November 10th. Orders were issued to the artillery to keep up a heavy barrage during the night that was to increase in volume early in the morning and gather into a barrage to precede the scheduled advance of the infantry.

Out in front, the troops were tired, cold, wet, and miserable. During the day, the 128th's casualties had been heavy and the morale had not been improved by the unfortunate foray in the fog. The 127th had spent the night before on a long hike over horrible roads to get into position, and the day had been spent in a struggle against a wicked machine gun resistance. Most of the night of November 10-11 was spent getting units into position to go over the top in another drive.

The evening of November 10th found the 128th Infantry Regiment in a line from 3/4 mi. south of Peuvillers along the road from Damvillers to Jametz, the southwestern edge of the Bois Demange, the woods west of Thinte Rau, to 2 1/4km. south of Jametz.

When daybreak came on November 11, 1918, the units of the 32nd Division were ready. They were all set to deliver one of the blows for which "Les Terribles" were becoming more and more famous. The reports that all was in readiness had been sent back to regimental and brigade headquarters. Overhead the preparatory fire of the artillery was shrieking toward the German lines. The enemy, conscious of the impending attack, was raining shells on where he thought the assault troops might be forming and on the back areas where the support troops, who were ready to follow up, were concentrated.

At 0630, officers in command of the takeoff line were issuing their last instructions. Fifteen minutes later, they were looking at their wrist watches with the calm deliberation of veterans who had a day's work ahead of them; a day's work the like of which they had done before; a disagreeable dangerous day's work, but it was all in a day's work. "C'est la Guerre!"

At five minutes to seven, the men started to stir around; getting a toehold for the takeoff, shaking their equipment into place, and gripping their guns. Seven o'clock came, and some of them were off; over the top. Others had been stopped just in the nick of time. Runners from headquarters went after the advancing skirmish lines of those who had gotten away with the magic words: "FINIS LA GUERRE!"

The war ended when the guns fell silent on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month; a day we now commemorate as Veterans' Day. The war was won; the Allies victorious but at a huge cost. Many soldiers of the 32nd Division were killed in action on November 11, 1918. At least 116 of the 32nd died after the Armistice and before the unit demobilized. Some died of wounds, some died of disease, some from accidents or suicide. The 32nd 'Red Arrow' Division suffered at least 2,682 soldiers killed-in-action (KIA) or died-of-wounds (DW). 104 soldiers were missing-in-action (MIA). 352 soldiers were non-battle casualties i.e. died of disease (DD), drowned (DR), died of accident (ACC), or other unspecified causes. 10,813 Soldiers were Wounded-in-Action (WIA).

From November 12th through the 16th, the 32nd Division bivouacked near Ecurey and Haraumont about six miles southwest of Peuvillers, enforced the terms of the armistice, trained, and prepared to march to the Rhine.

On November 17th, as one of the leading elements of the Third Army, the 32nd Division crossed what had been its front line on November 11th and started on its long march from Vilosnes-sur-Meuse to the Rhine. Behind the 32nd followed the 42nd Division; the famous "Rainbow Division", which had fought side by side with the 32nd on the Ourcq and in the Argonne. These divisions, generally considered the flower of the American Army in France, were in the III Corps. They had been through all the major offensives where American troops were employed. It was regarded as the elite corps of the Army. In this brilliant company, the men stepped off toward Germany with their heads high and the pride of good soldiers in their hearts. The Division took to the roads marching in two columns. There were no ceremonies, though the bands played the 32nd Division March and other triumphant pieces as the various regiments

got under way. Except for the bands, the march was conducted at all times as if in the presence of the enemy. The attitude of higher authority was that war conditions still prevailed. The field orders issued by III Corps prescribed advance guards; indicated outpost zones and lines of resistance to be established at the end of each day; and ordered that adequate measures be taken for the security of the command, both on the front and on the flanks. Cavalry was provided for advance scouting and maintaining liaison with the divisions on either flank of the 32nd which were going forward about the same distance each day on parallel roads.

The average distance marched daily by the foot troops was 20 km. The plan for the march to the Rhine was that the forward movement of the Americans should be by "bounds". A bound was to consist of two or three days marching followed by a couple of days of rest.

They moved via Longwy, France; Marville and Petange, and Consdorf in Luxemburg; and Welsch-billig, Daun, Mayen, Ochtendung, Bassenheim, and Sayn in Germany.

The first villages encountered were practically uninhabited. The country was desolate and shot up by the artillery fire of the last days of the war. After a couple of hours of progress, signs of life became evident in the villages. Regimental colors and standards were displayed, and the bands played as the troops marched through the towns at attention. Otherwise the movement was much like an ordinary practice march.

Longwy, a sizable manufacturing town in the iron and steel district of Lorraine, was the objective of the first bound of the 32nd, and was reached on November 18th. The town had been relinquished two weeks before by the headquarters of General von Gallwitz, commander of the Third German Army Group, whose many divisions had opposed the advance of the First American Army on the Meuse River. The entire population of the town was in attendance at a ceremony to welcome the 32nd Division.

After a one-day rest at Longwy, the march was resumed, and on November 20th, the Americans crossed the border into Luxembourg.

On November 21st, General Pershing made a triumphant entry into the City of Luxembourg with part of the 1st Division as an escort. The 32nd Division marched through the suburbs of the town to reach its billeting areas in the vicinity of the capital.

On November 23 1918, the Division reached the German border on the Saar River. It had overtaken the retiring German Army. The Corps announced that the movement would halt on the German frontier until December 1st as required by the terms of the armistice. The time intervening was to be devoted to cleaning up; the issuing of such equipment and supplies as could be secured; and the inevitable and hated training schedule.

On December 1st, the march was resumed. The Division used three bridges to cross the Saar River into German territory. The Division's second crossing of the pre-war German frontier was as unostentatious as was the first down in Alsace over six months before.

On the first day's march on German soil, the 32nd Division marched about 20 km due the hilly terrain in order to cover about 15 km as the crow flies. On December 2nd, the front advanced another 10 km as the crow flies. The troops themselves

marched almost twice that distance over extremely rugged country. The march was continued on December 3rd.

On the 4th, they rested and on the 5th started out again on a three-day hike again over some difficult terrain.

The marching on December 5th through the 7th was over the most difficult terrain the division encountered during their march to the Rhine. Good roads were scarce, and some of the grades encountered were quite steep. On some of these steep grades, the men had to help pull their transportation up after them. The transportation was mostly horse-drawn supply wagons and artillery. The march was made more difficult by the scarce supply of shoes to replace the mostly unserviceable ones the men were wearing. The rest of the march would be a little easier because the division was entering the more level terrain of the Rhine valley.

On December 11th, the 32nd Division reached the Rhine River where the Moselle River meets the Rhine opposite Coblenz. The city itself was not entered by the troops of the 32nd because it was outside the Corps sector. December 12th was a day of rest. After a march of 186 miles, the division would cross the Rhine at the Engers Bridge on December 13th.

The division began to occupy its sector of the Coblenz Bridgehead on December 14th as part of the Army of Occupation in Germany. The occupation would be completed on December 18th. The 32nd Division's sector covered a front of 30 km to a depth of 20 km. The troops were billeted in or occupied as outposts in 63 towns. **The 128th Regiment established outposts in the center of the sector.**

The 32nd Division had been under fire from May to November 1918 with but 10 days in a rest area. Its troops were the first to set foot on German soil in Alsace in May 1918. It fought on five fronts in three major offensives; the Aisne-Marne, Oise-Aisne, and Meuse-Argonne. It captured Fismes in the Marne offensive after an advance of 19 kilometers in seven days; fought in the Oise-Aisne offensive as the only American unit in General Mangin's famous Tenth French Army, breaking the German line which protected the Chemin des Dames Road; and twice in the line in the Meuse-Argonne offensive, fighting continuously for 20 days penetrating the Kriemhilde Stellung, crossing the Meuse River and starting the drive to flank Metz which was located along the Moselle and Seille Rivers about 100 miles east of Reims. It gained 38 kilometers in four attacks and repulsed every enemy counter attack. It met and vanquished 33 German Divisions from which 2,153 prisoners were taken. It suffered 2,898 battle deaths and 10,986 wounded. It marched 186 miles to the Rhine as the front line element of the Third Army and occupied for four months the center sector in the Coblenz bridgehead in the vicinity of Dierdorf and Rengesdorf.

Over 800 officers and men decorated by American, French and Belgian governments. The colors of all four infantry regiments, three artillery regiments, and three machine gun battalions were given the Ci-croix de Guerre of the Republic of France. The Croix de Guerre (Cross of War) was awarded to only 11,589 Americans for "feats of bravery" during WWI. Every flag and standard in the Division had four American battle bands

On April 8, 1919, the 32nd Division was officially relieved from duty with III Corps and the Third Army. On April 18th, it started on the first leg of its homeward journey by moving back from the Rhine and across France to Brest.

On May 1, 1919, the first troops of the division were on the Atlantic. By May 15th, all but the casualties had left France. **The 121st Machine Gun Battalion and other non-divisional units sailed aboard a transport ship called the Huron and returned to Hoboken, New Jersey.**

Louis Braatz' Certificate of Service obtained from the Wisconsin Veterans Museum states that he served overseas from March 4, 1918 to May 5, 1919. It also states that he was honorably discharged at Camp Grant, Illinois on May 17, 1919.

In Wisconsin, a Red Arrow Day was set aside, and on June 6, 1919, the returning Wisconsin warriors were given an enthusiastic formal welcome at Milwaukee. It included a parade, luncheon, free passes to theaters, ball games, and an evening ball.