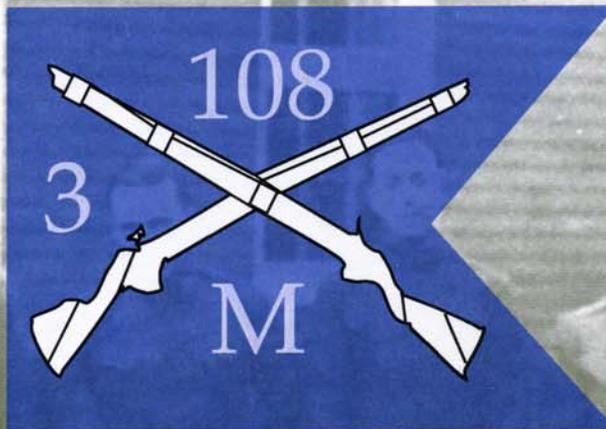


"AUBURN'S OWN"

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Company M



108th Infantry Regiment



27th Division NYSG

American Expeditionary Force (AEF) World War I 1917-1919

By: Raymond E. Keefe

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the following for their help and encouragement:

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The Cayuga County Historian's Office.

Cayuga County Community College Library.

Marcia Greenwood. Mary Kenney and Donald Santee for editing assistance.

Lt.Col. Kevin Forney and SFC John Sincebaugh of the 1st Battalion, 27th Brigade, NYARNG, Auburn, NY.

DEDICATION

To my father, Raymond E. Keefe Sr. my uncle Leo J. Keefe, the men of Company M and all the deceased veterans of World War 1

REST IN PEACE

Raymond E. Keefe, Jr.
2002

ILLUSTRATIONS: The photographs, maps and lists are taken from "The Story of the 27th Division" by General John O'Ryan, 1920, unless otherwise noted.

INTRODUCTION

This is a brief chronicle of Company M, from Auburn and Cayuga County, New York during the period of its service with the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) in the "Great War," World War I.

The generation that served in World War I is barely remembered today. They would not experience a period of nostalgia that today's Veterans do. A short twenty-three years after the end of World War I their sons and daughters were called to serve in yet another world war even more terrible and deadly that spanned the globe.

Eighty-five years after they were called to federal service, I've assembled as much information as possible and placed it in this chronicle in the hope that Company M's part in the cataclysm, that was the first world war, will be preserved and appreciated.

Company M was the successor to a local militia company, the second separate company also known as the "Wheeler Rifles," formed in 1881. It later became part of the 3rd Regiment (New York State) and, later after war was declared, the 108th Regiment, one of four infantry regiments that made up the 27th Division New York State National Guard. The 108th was composed of several such infantry companies from communities in central and western New York.

Six months after the 3rd Regiment returned from Mexico, having been called to federal service and sent to the border with Mexico to keep an eye on Poncho Villa, they were again called to federal service within days after war was declared on Germany on April 2, 1917.

After the call-up, Company M recruited to get up to strength, trained and performed guard duty at various locations. On August 16, 1917, as the company left Auburn, a large crowd saw them off. The newspapers, the *Citizen* and the *Advertiser-Journal* named them "Auburn's Own."

I've used several sources in assembling this chronicle, which are listed in the bibliography. The principal sources were the two Auburn newspapers: "*The Citizen*" and the "*Advertiser-Journal*". These sources provided me with the stories of individual experiences which reduced the panorama of the war to a local and personal level.

Company M, of the 108th Regiment was not Auburn and Cayuga County's only contribution of men to war service. Approximately fourteen hundred men were drafted and served. In all, one hundred twenty-eight died in the service. Not all of Company M's men were local, however, most of them were. Also, eight men from Auburn and Cayuga County, all killed in action, were members of other companies of the 108th Regiment. Company M's story can be said to be a story of all those who served.

World War I was a seminal event in world history. Barbara Tuschman, noted historian and author of the "Guns of August, 1914" says of the war "I always thought in my acquaintance with history up to that point (August 1914) was the hour the clock struck the date that the nineteenth century ended and our own age began." The narrator of the Public Broadcasting Series "The Great War" states in the introduction "The war ushered in history's most violent century; it colored everything before and cast a shadow on everything that came after."

The war's casualty statistics are staggering: nine million combatants were killed, twenty million were wounded during the four plus years of war. They were called "The Lost Generation." Author D.H. Lawrence said of them, "All the great words were canceled out for that generation." The civilian population was involved as never before. New and more deadly ways of killing were invented and perfected.

Though over-shadowed by the war news, the early twentieth century also experienced the devastating tragedy of a world-wide flu virus pandemic during the spring, summer and fall of 1918 which silently and quickly killed 20.6 million people around the world. Five hundred million persons were infected to some degree. The death toll was more than twice the total of combat deaths in the war. Its reach didn't spare the servicemen. In fact they were even more susceptible to the highly infectious disease than the general population since they lived in close quarters. Fifty-five thousand servicemen died from the flu nearly as many as died in combat. The flu epidemic hit the Auburn area. Schools and businesses closed; quarantines were common. Sixty-two people from the Auburn area died of the flu. Of the 128 men from the Auburn area who died in service during World War I, nearly 40 died of the flu.

Indeed it was a "Lost Generation".

The reader will note when comparing rosters of names that they change from list to list for various reasons but principally because of transfers, illness, discharge, and new recruits added.



By September, 1918, Allied counteroffensives (white arrows) had erased most of Germany's spring gains (broken black lines). The Franco-American offensive of July 18 in the south pushed Germany back from the Marne to the Vesle River, while to the north the Franco-British drive launched on August 8 eliminated the deep German salient on the Somme.

Source: American Heritage History WWI 1964

AUBURN'S OWN
COMPANY M
108th INFANTRY REGIMENT
27th DIVISION
NEW YORK NATIONAL GUARD

Source: The History of the 108th Regiment, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa.

Photos probably taken just prior to embarkation for France, May, 1918

Officers Company M, 108th Infantry



Captain CHARLES J. TAGGART



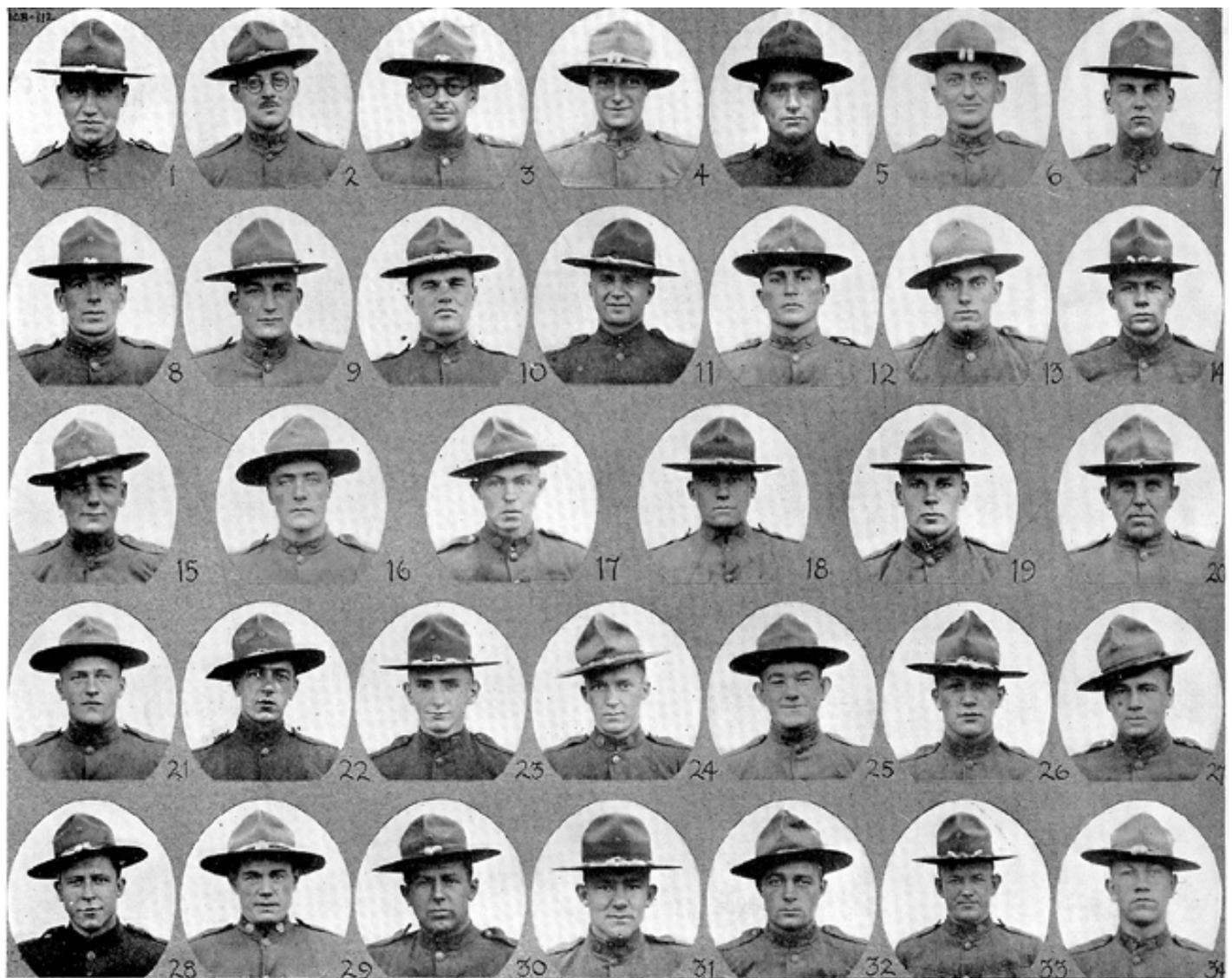
First Lieutenant WILLIAM L. HODDER



First Lieutenant F. G. SPAWTON

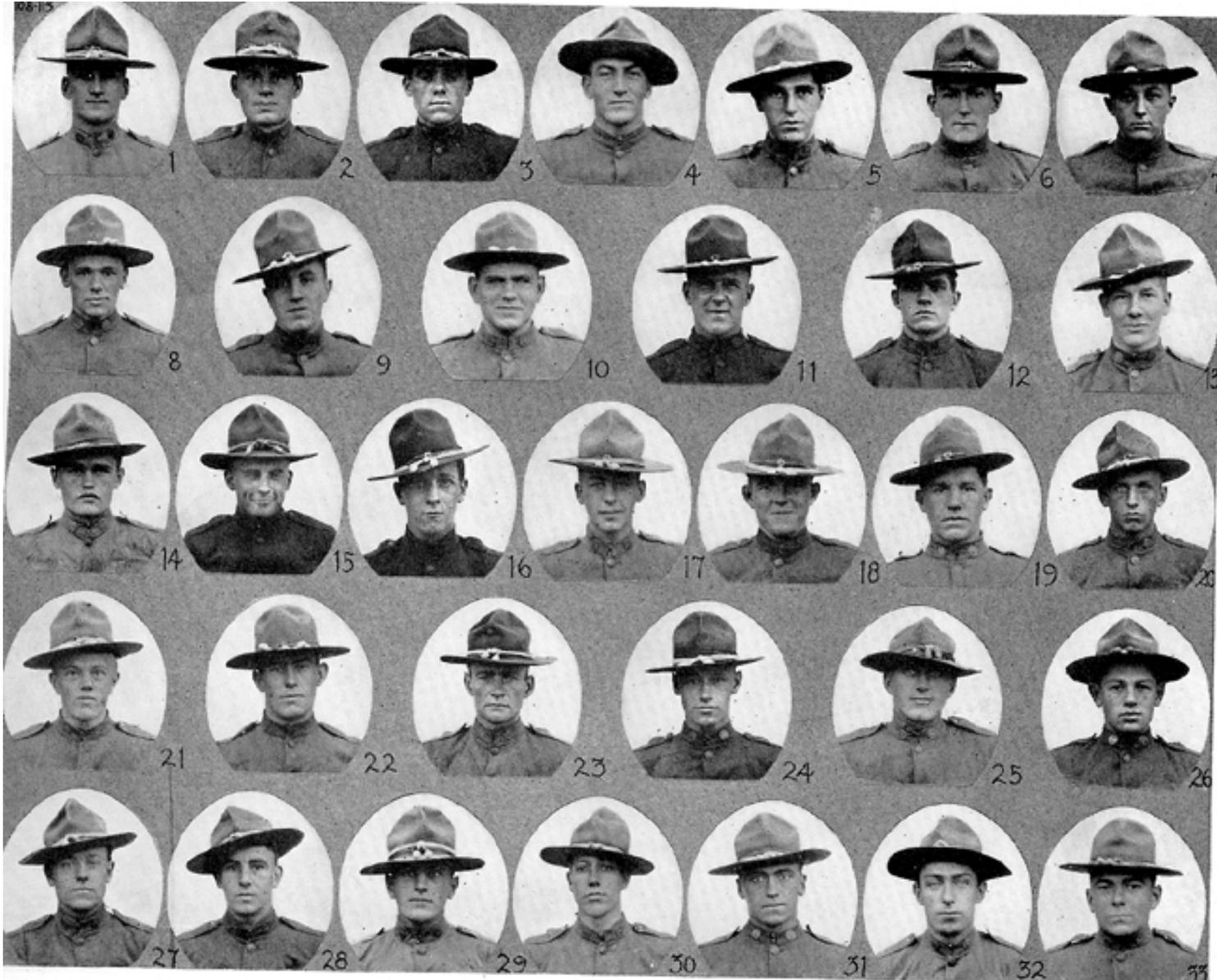


First Lieutenant EDWIN M. ROBERTS



Company M, 108th Infantry

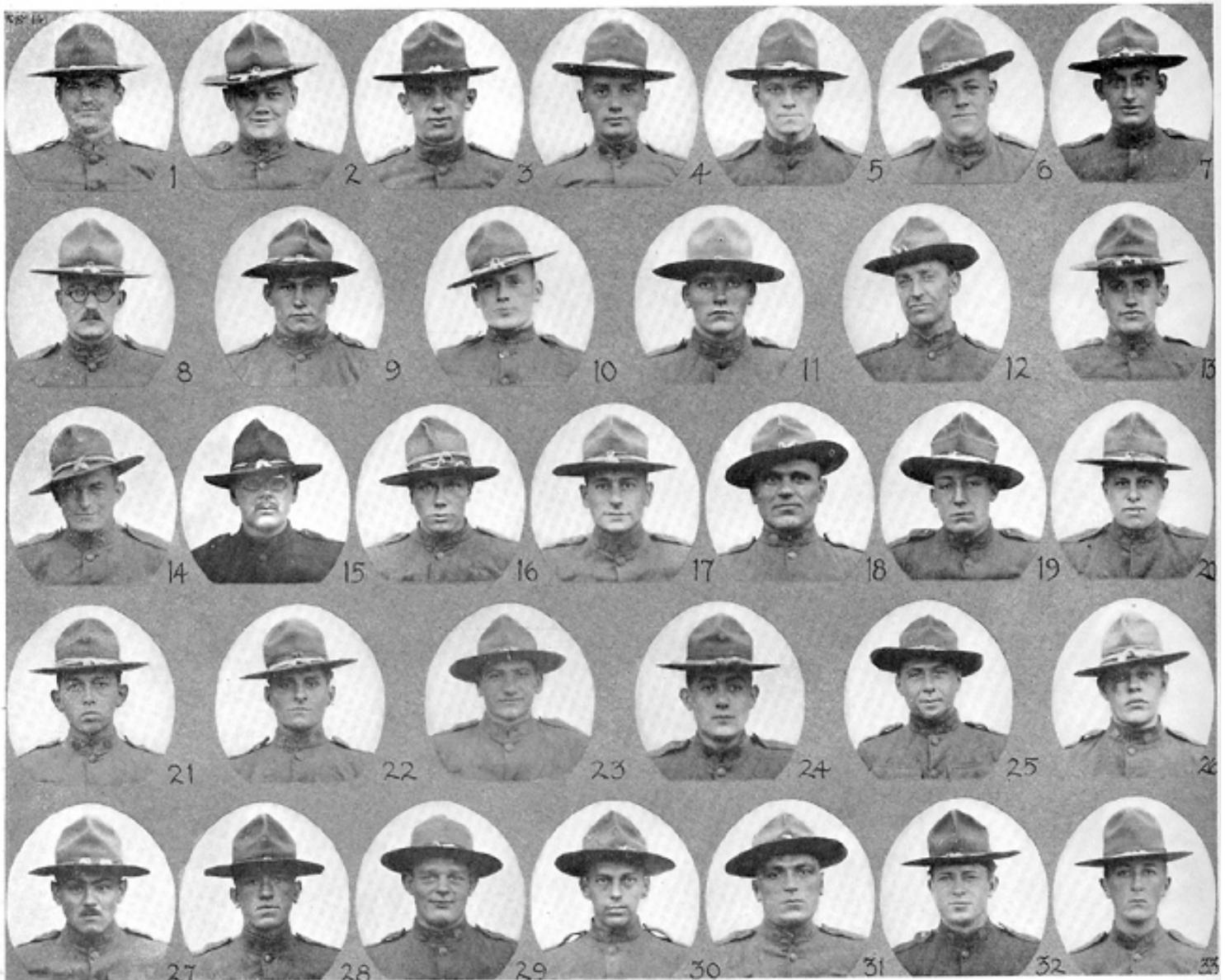
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| 1. First Sergeant J. BARNHART | 18. Corporal E. JACOT |
| 2. Mess Sergeant S. G. BARR | 19. Corporal W. E. MOSHER |
| 3. Supply Sergeant L. J. DEAN | 20. Corporal L. J. HOPPER |
| 4. Sergeant G. H. MOORE | 21. Corporal A. J. ROSS |
| 5. Sergeant G. ROWNEY | 22. Corporal C. SPROULE |
| 6. Sergeant P. F. BASZYNSKI | 23. Corporal E. SCHREINER |
| 7. Sergeant W. H. WARD | 24. Corporal J. L. DOURIS |
| 8. Sergeant M. DUNFORD | 25. Corporal J. F. BERGER |
| 9. Sergeant E. C. HUDSON | 26. Corporal H. ZAHN |
| 10. Sergeant W. H. BURKE | 27. Corporal J. SAGE |
| 11. Corporal A. J. RAESLER | 28. Corporal M. J. PEEL |
| 12. Corporal L. CLARK | 29. Corporal G. JARVIS |
| 13. Corporal C. R. ALBRING | 30. Corporal W. H. LATIMER |
| 14. Corporal M. A. RAESLER | 31. Corporal W. E. MORRISSEY |
| 15. Corporal E. P. JONES | 32. Corporal W. HYDE |
| 16. Corporal C. S. MEAD | 33. Corporal W. H. WILLIAMSON |
| 17. Corporal R. McCLEMENTS | 34. Corporal R. K. BARNEY |



Company M, 108th Infantry

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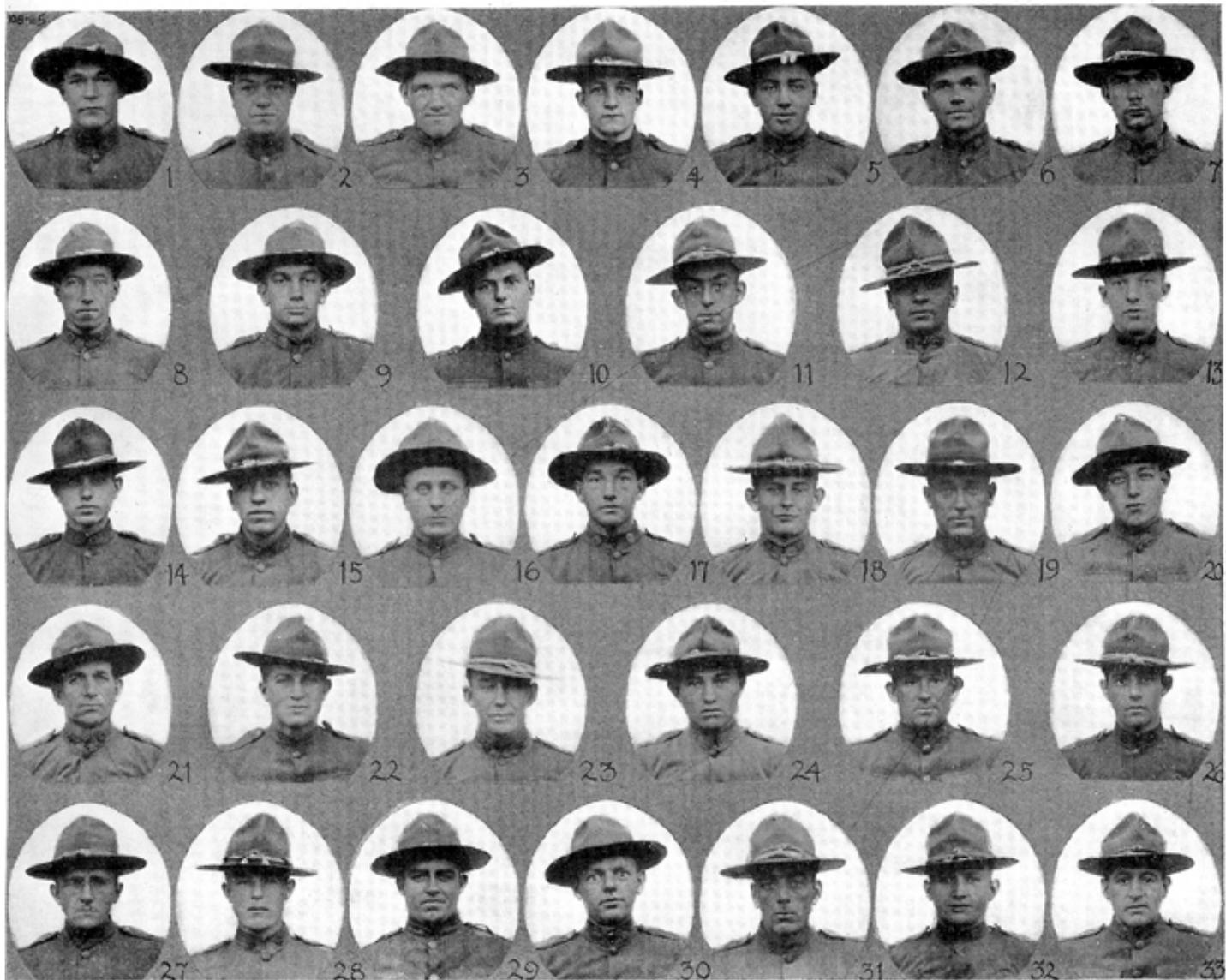
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| 1. Corporal W. E. RYAN | 18. First-class Private J. J. CORKERY |
| 2. Corporal J. T. WATERS | 19. First-class Private E. A. CRAVER |
| 3. Corporal P. LITTLE | 20. First-class Private W. X. DALEY |
| 4. Corporal J. McDONALD | 21. First-class Private D. B. DEHASS |
| 5. Corporal R. LEWIS | 22. First-class Private T. J. DORAN |
| 6. Corporal F. G. WHALEY | 23. First-class Private J. DWOJACKI |
| 7. Corporal F. W. HOLZHAUER | 24. First-class Private H. P. EGELING |
| 8. Cook H. C. HARTER | 25. First-class Private E. R. FELS |
| 9. Cook E. CAYPLESS | 26. First-class Private J. FONTAINE |
| 10. Cook E. J. RAMSAY | 27. First-class Private J. J. GALLAGHER |
| 11. Cook L. BARRELL | 28. First-class Private J. P. GRIFFIN |
| 12. Bugler D. OLSON | 29. First-class Private R. L. HAILE |
| 13. Bugler W. HICKEY | 30. First-class Private C. E. HARRIS |
| 14. First-class Private S. BASAK | 31. First-class Private H. D. HARTER |
| 15. First-class Private H. G. BROWN | 32. First-class Private G. HOFFMAN |
| 16. First-class Private A. CAVANAUGH | 33. First-class Private C. W. HUDSON |
| 17. First-class Private R. E. COREY | |



Company M, 108th Infantry

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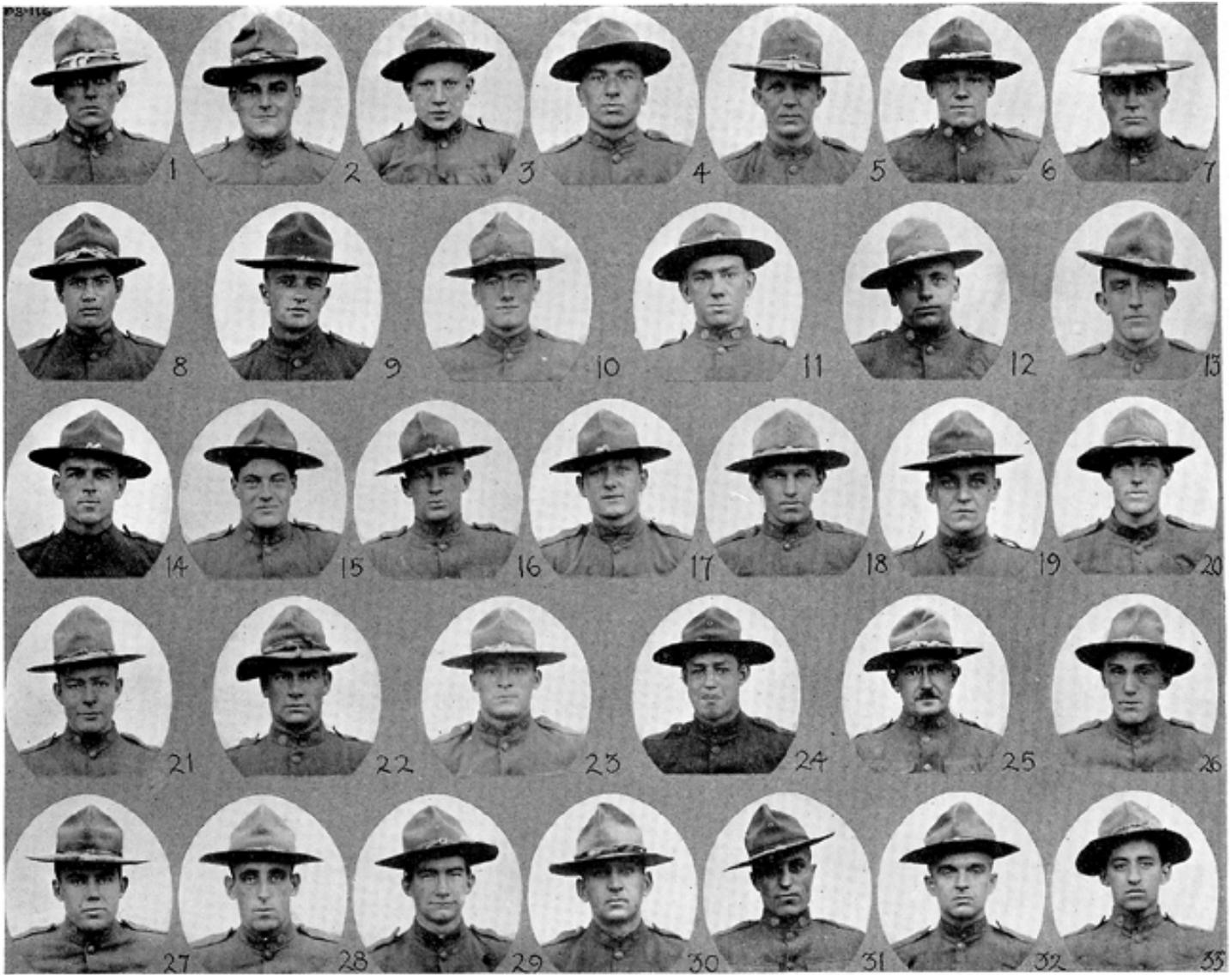
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| 1. First-class Private J. O. HUTCHINSON | 18. First-class Private G. PETROFF |
| 2. First-class Private B. F. JASNEISKI | 19. First-class Private L. F. RADCLIFF |
| 3. First-class Private LEO J. KEEFE | 20. First-class Private J. A. RAEDER |
| 4. First-class Private RAY E. KEEFE | 21. First-class Private G. A. RAPPLEYE |
| 5. First-class Private C. L. KELLAND | 22. First-class Private A. RAYMOND |
| 6. First-class Private P. A. LANE | 23. First-class Private J. V. SANTANGELO |
| 7. First-class Private A. LASHER | 24. First-class Private T. A. SCULLY |
| 8. First-class Private L. F. MEAD | 25. First-class Private G. C. SCHILLING |
| 9. First-class Private J. LEHRER | 26. First-class Private F. F. SEMPET |
| 10. First-class Private G. W. LEE | 27. First-class Private C. L. SIBUS |
| 11. First-class Private P. M. MANKE | 28. First-class Private E. C. SITZER |
| 12. First-class Private T. MARKS | 29. First-class Private H. L. SMITH |
| 13. First-class Private R. M. MASON | 30. First-class Private N. D. STONE |
| 14. First-class Private P. A. McCOLGAN | 31. First-class Private W. TAMA |
| 15. First-class Private N. MORROW | 32. First-class Private A. L. TREASURE |
| 16. First-class Private E. MEYER | 33. First-class Private E. P. VANDERBOSCH |
| 17. First-class Private W. F. MOSES | |



Company M, 108th Infantry

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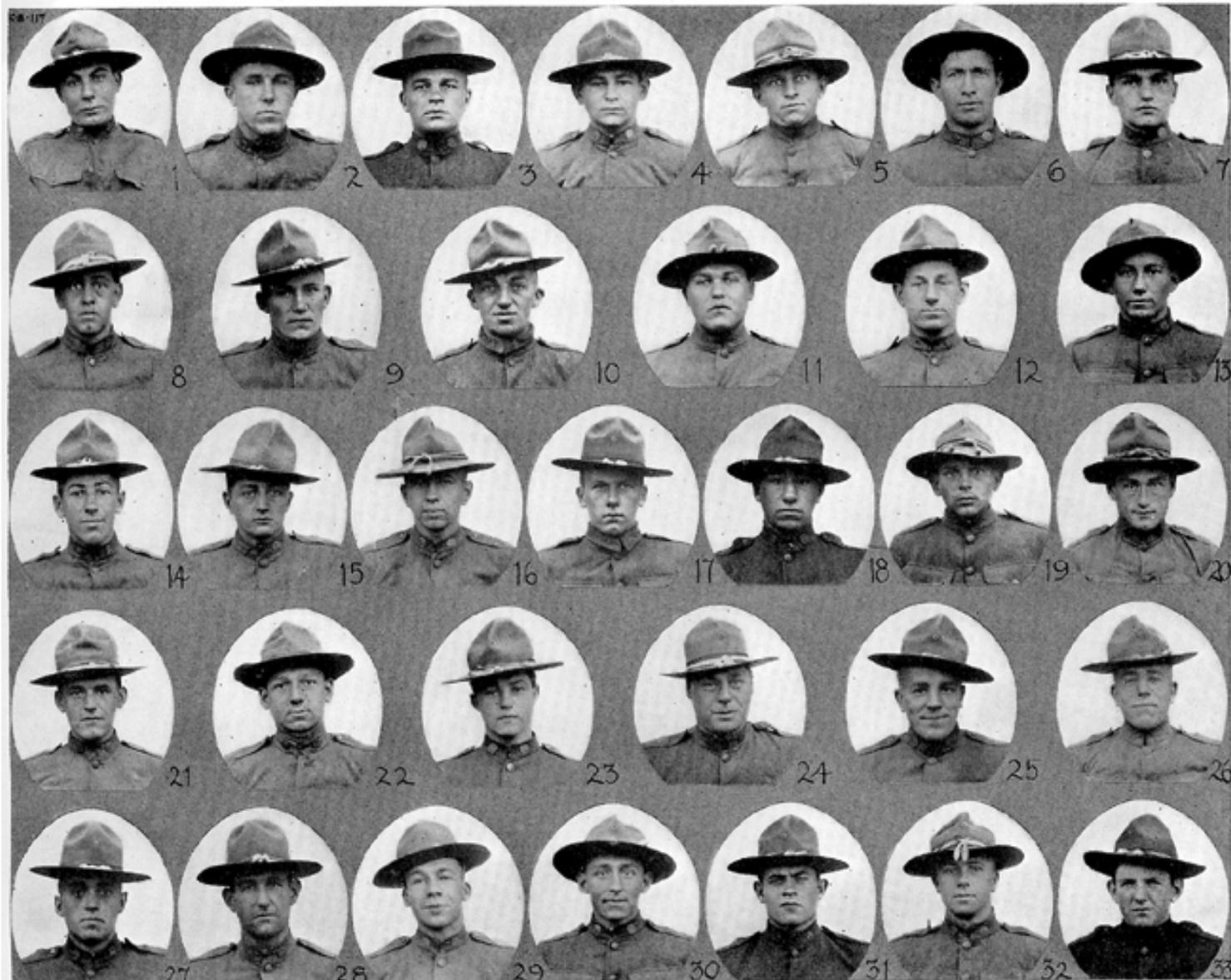
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| 1. First-class Private J. L. WENRICK | 18. Private F. J. COLE |
| 2. First-class Private J. G. WILLS | 19. Private E. COURTNEY |
| 3. First-class Private H. J. ZECKER | 20. Private J. H. CULLEN |
| 4. Private C. M. BAYNES | 21. Private C. E. CURTIS |
| 5. Private R. V. BEACH | 22. Private R. T. DONOVAN |
| 6. Private J. W. BEDNARCZYK | 23. Private W. DRAKE |
| 7. Private A. B. BENNETT | 24. Private J. A. DUNHAM |
| 8. Private V. M. BUDKA | 25. Private D. DUNN |
| 9. Private F. E. BURNS | 26. Private J. EIKENBROD |
| 10. Private C. E. CADY | 27. Private C. A. ESS |
| 11. Private C. E. BURY | 28. Private A. EVANS |
| 12. Private F. CALIMERI | 29. Private F. FESSLER |
| 13. Private K. J. CANTWELL | 30. Private H. A. FLARITY |
| 14. Private A. J. CARDINAL | 31. Private W. C. FRANK |
| 15. Private H. C. CASLER | 32. Private M. J. GAWRONSKI |
| 16. Private J. K. CASLER | 33. Private A. GHUZZI |
| 17. Private M. J. COLBY | |



Company M, 108th Infantry

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| 1. Private H. E. GREENE | 18. Private J. KLAIA |
| 2. Private C. H. GREENFIELD | 19. Private J. F. KLEISTER |
| 3. Private J. J. GRIBBIN | 20. Private W. KNIGHT |
| 4. Private J. GUTOWSKI | 21. Private R. LEACH |
| 5. Private C. R. GYLFE | 22. Private K. MACKEY |
| 6. Private A. C. HABERLY | 23. Private I. L. MACKIE |
| 7. Private A. F. HALL | 24. Private E. MADDEN |
| 8. Private H. HAMM | 25. Private S. MARENSTEIN |
| 9. Private T. P. HARRINGTON | 26. Private E. B. MARTIN |
| 10. Private H. M. HARVEY | 27. Private H. J. McCABE |
| 11. Private P. A. HOLOHAN | 28. Private W. McCARTHY |
| 12. Private F. G. JAKOB | 29. Private R. McLEAN |
| 13. Private J. KANE | 30. Private H. MILLER |
| 14. Private J. A. KELLER | 31. Private F. MINEO |
| 15. Private P. A. KELLEY | 32. Private R. E. MINER |
| 16. Private H. KENT | 33. Private W. MINTZ |
| 17. Private R. KICK | |



Company M, 108th Infantry

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| 1. Private J. P. MITCHELL | 18. Private N. RIZZO |
| 2. Private J. H. MORGAN | 19. Private J. R. RUSKIN |
| 3. Private F. MYERS | 20. Private E. T. RYDER |
| 4. Private F. A. NEUGEBAUER | 21. Private F. J. SCHELL |
| 5. Private H. E. NYHART | 22. Private H. S. SMITH |
| 6. Private D. O'CONNELL | 23. Private H. STOTT |
| 7. Private W. ODYMALA | 24. Private E. G. THOMPSON |
| 8. Private E. F. OTTO | 25. Private MARION TITUS, No. 1 |
| 9. Private L. K. PELTON | 26. Private MYRNICE TITUS, No. 2 |
| 10. Private E. F. PERONNE | 27. Private J. J. TOOLE |
| 11. Private M. J. PETERSON | 28. Private L. F. WHITNEY |
| 12. Private O. A. PFEIFER | 29. Private J. H. WILSON |
| 13. Private S. F. PIONTEK | 30. Private C. WINSOR |
| 14. Private P. POVLOCK | 31. Private F. WOODS |
| 15. Private C. A. RANCIER | 32. Private J. J. YUDE |
| 16. Private O. RANF | 33. Private E. MAYL |
| 17. Private W. H. REEVE | |

Here's the Complete List of Boys Who Left Today

16 Aug 1917

COMPANY M. ROSTER

COLONEL
Edgar S. Jennings.

CAPTAIN

B. C. Mead.

FIRST LIEUTENANT.

William L. Hodder.

SECOND LIEUTENANT

E. M. Roberts.

FIRST SERGEANT

William L. Duckett.

MESS SERGEANT.

Stanley D. Barr.

SUPPLY SERGEANT

Lewis J. Dean.

SERGEANTS

George W. Rowney

Edwin A. Roberts

Thomas J. Bannon

Claude H. Spicer

Bryan E. Brigham

Edwin M. Pendleton

William H. Ward

Michael A. Danford

CORPORALS

John A. Barnhart Jr.

Archie J. Raesler

William H. Burko

James P. Sweeting

Francis E. Burns

Levi P. Clark

Charles R. Albring

Clarence E. Cady

Joseph B. O'Brien

Myron A. Raesler

Frederick G. Whaley

Emory P. Jones

Clyde S. Mead

William R. McClements

Edward Jacot

Walter E. Mosher

Robert P. Lewis

MECHANICS

George T. Isham

COOKS

Ralph A. Hungerford

William C. Mechan

Harry C. Harter

MUSICIANS

Harry J. Hawkins

Frank Henry

FIRST CLASS PRIVATES

James M. Barrett

Stanley Basak

Homer G. Brown

Herbert J. Bush

Edward F. Caypleas

Raymond Donovan

James L. Fedigan

John J. Gallagher

Clyde E. Harris

Charles A. Harvey

Spencer I. Harvey

Looman J. Hopper

James O. Hutchinson

Bernard F. Jasnieski

Gerald L. Kiely

Leo E. LeChance

Paul A. Lane

Thomas Marks

George W. Morgan

Hubert C. Norris

Earl B. Pratt

George A. Rappleye

Karl Schillawski

Thomas A. Scully

Myrnicce Titus

Walter R. White

PRIVATES.

Richard K. Barney

LeGrand J. Barrell

Robert V. Beach

Charles W. Beagle

Roland J. Brown

Vincent M. Budka

Frank Sailmeri

Jacob M. Case

H. C. Casler

John K. Casler.

Harry Caton

Russel E. Cory

William A. Daley

Llewellyn H. Davis

Thomas J. Doran

Walter Drake

Elbert Evans

Harry A. Flarity

Charles A. Franke

William A. Fulton

Harland E. Greene

Clifford H. Greenfield

Leroy Hamilton

Frank J. Hawelka

William H. Hickey Jr.

Howard D. Harter

Frederick W. Holzhauser

Frank Hopko

Charles W. Hudson

Stuart F. Hunter

James C. Jacobs Jr.

Leo J. Keefe

Raymond Keefe

Clifford L. Kelland

Paul A. Kelley

Raymond J. Kick

Allen P. Lasher

William Lattimer

Charles D. Lawler

Russell E. Leach

John C. Lohrer

Howard L. Lutesinger

Robert W. Mason

Harry J. McCabe

Joseph McDonald

Richard J. McLean

Francis J. Mee

John Morgan

William Morrissey

William F. Moses

William J. O'Brien.

Daniel J. O'Connell

Timothy O'Connor.

Louis E. Pelton

Myron J. Peterson

Lloyd J. Radcliff

Edward J. Ramsay

Charles A. Rancier

Oliver O. Ranf

William H. Reeve

William E. Ryan

Frank J. Schell, Jr.

Audley Shaw

Kenneth P. Sheldon

Charles S. Short

Charles L. Sibus

Esley C. Sitzler

Howard R. Spooner

Albert A. Stanton

Norman D. Stone

William F. Smith

William Tame

Nell C. Tice

Marion Titus

James J. Teele *Tooie*

Arthur L. Treasure

Edward P. Vanderbosch

Kenneth J. West

Howard W. Wheaton

Roy Whitney

Francis P. White

William H. Williamson

Ernest F. Willis

James G. Willis

James H. Wilson

Walter B. Winnie

Frederic H. Woods

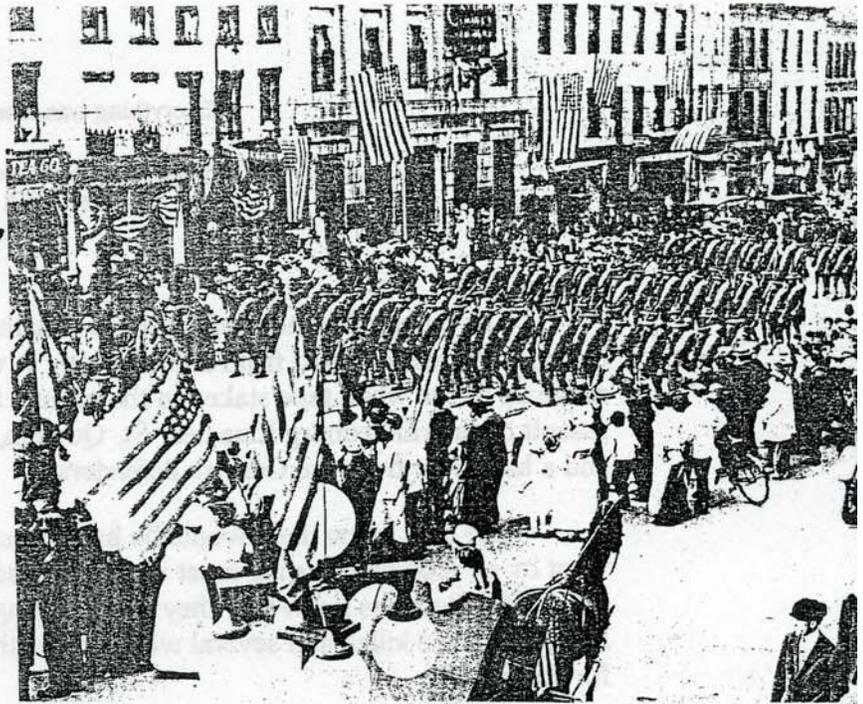
John Corcoran

A. Bennett

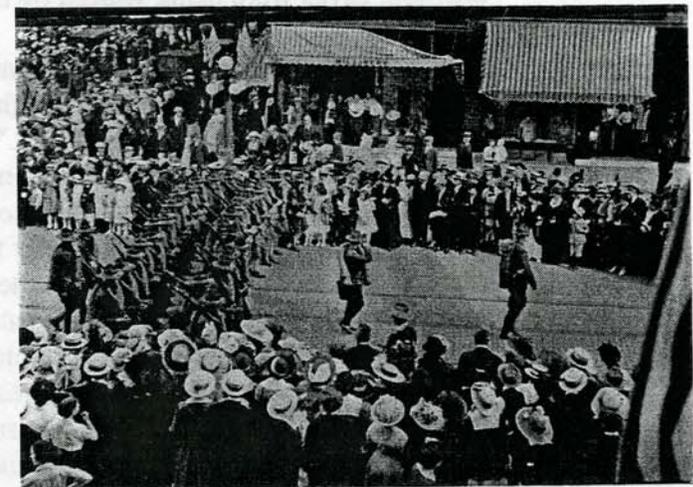
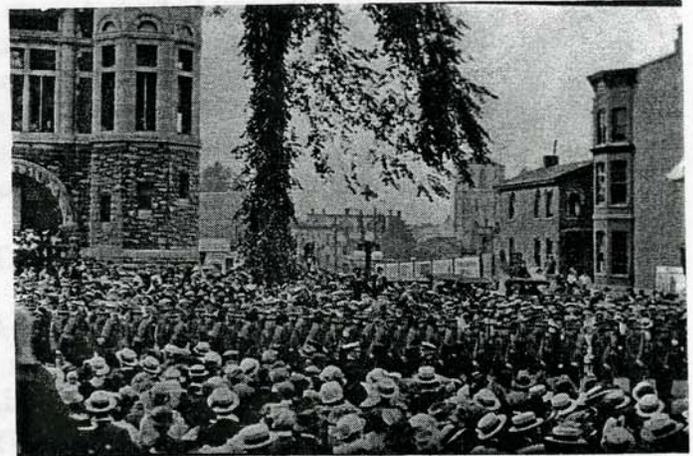
Elmer Edwards

Howard Harvey

Joseph Waters



Company M leaves Auburn 1917



Company M leaves Auburn
August 16, 1917

Source: The Citizen newspaper.

Source: Community Preservation
Committee Inc. Auburn, NY

"Everything was inhuman"

Corporal Norman Stone, Company M
October, 1918

The dawn of September 29, 1918 was three hours away. The men of Company M were stirred from a fitful sleep. It was time for the attack, and to move up to the white tape staked in the ground from which they would begin their assault of the Hindenburg Line near St. Quentin, France. The tape was just a mile and a half away from the German defenders.

The men knew there would be heavy casualties. They would be attacking what by all accounts was the most well-defended part of the entire Hindenburg Line. The Germans knew that they were coming and were confident and ready. Four men were killed and several wounded on the 28th while moving into position for the assault.

What then seemed to them like an eternity ago, on August 16, 1917, the 188 men of Company M from Auburn and Cayuga County, N.Y. had left their homes and families four months after the Company was called to federal service to fight in World War I in Europe. They were volunteers in the New York National Guard as their grandfather's generation volunteered when they fought during the Civil War. Citizens crowded the streets and the railroad station, estimated at 20,000. Some cheered, some sobbed, all were apprehensive as they bid them farewell.

BACKGROUND

The war which began in early August, 1914, had been raging for three years to the month, and little progress towards victory had been made by either the Allies (principally France, England, Russia and Italy) or the Central Powers (principally Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey). It had become a war of attrition. Lives were being wasted by the tens of thousands.

Isolation was the prevalent sentiment of the American people. President Woodrow Wilson abhorred the thought of war. His 1916 presidential campaign slogan was "He Kept Us Out Of War." Many newly arrived immigrants, who came to the United States to shed themselves of imperial and oppressive governments, wanted no part of the conflict. However, others felt that the United States had a moral obligation to enter the war and who were of the opinion, as a rising world power, involvement in the conflict was unavoidable, if not necessary. Yet, as late as January, 1917, President Wilson addressed Congress and called for a "peace without victory." It was a plea applauded by many who saw only futility in carrying on the war but the idea was scorned by the Allied European leaders as totally absurd. The flower of their manhood, a whole generation, had been killed or wounded. In their view the war must be conclusive; the Germans must be beaten and punished.

As 1917 begins, Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare and was sinking American merchant ships regularly. The sinking of the passenger ship Lusitania in May, 1915, with Americans aboard was still a bitter memory. German atrocities committed in Belgium were the stuff of much war mongering propaganda. An amateurish German diplomatic attempt to ally with Mexico by offering to help them regain their former territories in the Southwest United States if America entered the war outraged everyone.

Wilson, the reluctant warrior, could take no more. Appearing before Congress on April 2, 1917 proclaiming the United States must make the "world safe for democracy," asked Congress for a declaration of war. As the final words left his mouth Congress was on its feet, clapping and cheering its agreement. After leaving the chambers, he turned to his aide and said "Think what they are applauding. My message today was a message of death for our young men. How strange it is to applaud that." And he wept. (3)

On April 6, 1917 President Wilson signed Congress' war resolution. War Secretary Josephus Daniel's aide, Lt. Byron McCandless, went out to the White House lawn and semaphored a signal to an officer waiting at a window in the Navy Department across the street. Simultaneously, a signal was flashed to every ship and shore installation: "W....A....R". (3)

INTO BATTLE

After training at Camp Wadworth, South Carolina for nine months, on May 30, 1918 (Decoration Day now called Memorial Day) Company M disembarked at the Port of Brest, France. Prior to their arrival, the Germans with General Eric Von Ludendorf in command had launched a great spring offensive all along the western front. The word blitzkrieg was born. It threw the Allies back nearly fifty miles in places. The British feared the loss of the channel port Dunkirk on the west coast of France opposite the straits of Dover, England. There was retreat in the French sector. Shells from a huge German railroad gun fell on the outskirts of Paris. Panic set in and the French government started packing for Bordeaux in the south of France. The British after yielding held the line. In early June 1918 the American 2nd Division's Marine Brigade stopped the German drive toward Paris along the Marne River at Chateau Thierry. As these Marine's were digging in for the defense of Paris, French troops wholly demoralized, passed through their lines muttering *le guerre c'est fini* (the war is finished).

American troops were arriving in France by the hundreds of thousands in the spring of 1918. Six American divisions were initially assigned to the British Army but only two were to remain: the 27th Division from New York commanded by Major General John O'Ryan of which Company M was a part, and the 30th Division from Tennessee, North Carolina and South Carolina. Twenty-eight American divisions became the American Army commanded by General John (Black Jack) Pershing.

The 27th and 30th Divisions were trained by the British, equipped with British rifles, mortars, machine guns, given British rations, and even replacement clothing. Also, the 27th Division's artillery was removed from division control and assigned to fight with the 33rd and 79th American Army Divisions under General Pershing. The British and Australian armies supplied the 27th's artillery support.

American histories of the war make little or no mention of the soldiers who fought with the British. Even the British and Australians with whom they fought took little note. Yet the soldiers of the 27th Division's contribution, in the fall of the 1918 offensive (1,829 were killed and 6,505 were wounded) were as mighty as any division with Pershing's Army.

American soldiers in the summer of 1918 were beginning to make their presence felt. Company M was rotated with the British units in the front lines for training in late July, 1918. It was essentially a defensive posture as German attacks still threatened. The 27th and 30th Divisions teamed with the British and steadily advanced the front in Flanders area South of Ypres, Belgium where it became Company M's first taste of the shooting war. In August, 1918 Company M again rotated in the trenches with the British units where they came under shell fire. Company M moved to the main line of resistance in mid-August. Here, Company M sustained its first wounded casualty, Corporal Charles Sibus. Pvt. Paul Lane was taken prisoner during a trench raid by the Germans, but he quickly escaped.

On the Flander's front during the last days of August and early September, the 105th and 106th Regiments of the 27th Division, along with the British, kept the pressure on the Germans during their gradual withdrawal. These two regiments sustained 349 casualties in the Dickenbush Lake area during the attack on a place called Vierstraat Ridge. The Germans then withdrew to a defensive position at Mt. Kemmel. Then they withdrew from there and continued to withdraw to prepared lines of defense all along the western front from the English Channel near Dunkirk, southerly, to the Swiss border near Basel, Switzerland. The 27th Division was often under shell-fire during their pursuit of the Germans. It was in these strong defensive positions Germany planned to win the war or at least obtain favorable peace terms.

The commander of the French army, Marshall Ferdinand Foch, was now placed in command of all Allied forces. Up to this point, four years into the war, the British and French high commands acted semi-independently. Foch's taking the reins was long overdue.

Marshall Foch devised a grand strategy of a coordinated attack along the entire western front denying the Germans the ability to resist area assaults on their front as they had been able to do previously. Foch's offensive began on September 26. The American army under General Pershing would attack in the Argonne Forest and the Muese River Valley. On September 27, the British 1st and 3rd Army would attack along the front at Cambrai, France.