

CORPORAL GEORGE J. ENDERLIN IN WORLD WAR I

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George J. Enderlin was working at Davis, Yolo County, California, as a milk machine operator when he was called into military service during World War I. He was inducted on October 7, 1917 at Woodland, Yolo County, at the age of twenty-five, and was trained at Camp Lewis, Washington. There, he was assigned to Battery "D" of the 347th Field Artillery Regiment, 91st Division of the National Army. The 347th was one of three field artillery regiments in the Division. These regiments, together with the 316th Trench Mortar Battery, constituted the 166th Field Artillery Brigade, initially under Brigadier General Edward Burr. George's serial number was 2270626.

The 91st Division was known as the "Wild West Division," because most of the officers and enlisted men came from California, Oregon and Washington. Although George was assigned to an artillery regiment, the war demanded every available artillery piece, so training was done on wooden models of the guns they would be using at the front. It wasn't until George was deployed to France that he handled a real artillery piece!

The 91st Division troops began entraining from Camp Lewis to Camp Merritt, New Jersey, late in June of 1918, in preparation for joining the war effort in France and Germany. George was in this group, having passed training and been assigned the rank of Corporal on June 20, 1918. The trip across the continent took approximately six days by train. Practically all the Division had arrived at Camp Merritt by June 30. There, the troops remained for about a week, awaiting transports for the Atlantic passage. At Camp Merritt, they were given final physical examinations and outfitted with combat gear, ranging from steel helmets to hobnailed boots. The Division began to ship out on July 6, 1918. George's ship sailed on July 14, 1918, to begin his service as part of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF). The troop ships (converted ocean liners) were accompanied by airplanes and dirigibles acting as submarine scouts. A number of cruisers and torpedo-boat destroyers formed an escort. Each troop ship was mounted with naval medium-caliber guns, manned by American and British gunners. It appears from George's photos that the 347th Field Artillery was transported aboard the H.M.T. Aquitania, a magnificent four-funnel ocean liner converted for war service. The Aquitania was a liner of the Cunard Line, and a sister ship to the Lusitania.

The passage across the Atlantic took twelve days, along a circuitous and zigzag route selected to avoid German submarines. Twelve British destroyers met the leading troop transports on July 16 to convoy them into Liverpool and Glasgow. British dirigibles, hydroplanes and submarine chasers augmented the destroyers as the convoy entered the Irish Sea. Thanks to this formidable escort, the passage across the Atlantic took place without incident. The convoy divided as it approached the British Isles, with transports docking in Liverpool, Glasgow, Southampton and Le Havre (France). Eventually, the entire Division assembled at the "rest camp" at Le Havre, with the last units arriving on July 26, 1918. After several days to rest, the troops were entrained to the interior of France. The Division split up at this point. The artillery regiments reported to a

training camp near Clarmont Ferrand in Puy-de-Dôme, while the other regiments were shipped farther north to Haute-Marne.

On September 7, 1918, the 91st Division was deployed to the front lines to take part in the St.-Mihiel salient offensive. The 347th Field Artillery was apparently held in reserve, as George's outfit was not deployed with the other regiments. It appears that his company remained in reserve through October as well, as they did not receive orders to move to the front lines until November. When their time came to deploy, the Armistice had been signed and hostilities had ceased. The 347th Field Artillery eventually deployed to Germany to serve in the Army of Occupation following the Armistice.

Very little is recorded of George's activities in the Army of Occupation. During this period of occupation, George visited several towns in Germany, including Bekond and Hetzerath in the Rheinland-Pfalz region. It was wintertime, and snow covered the landscape. The influenza epidemic was a great concern at the time, and George recalled being fed raw onions to ward off infection! Another story that George enjoyed telling was an embarrassing moment when he tried to explain to some Germans that he needed to go to the bathroom! When they finally comprehended his need, the Germans exclaimed loudly and in an annoyed manner, "Oh, *Scheißhaus*," and gestured in the direction he needed to go. *Scheiß* (rhymes with ice) is German slang, meaning "shit." The response was crude, but at least it solved his dilemma! George also visited or was stationed at the villages of Bannoncourt, Brest, Villers, Aneemont and St.-Mihiel in France. The majority of the photographs in his collection are of Brest and Bekond, where the 347th had encampments.

In March, 1919, the 91st Division commenced its return to America. Most of the troops were transported by train from the 91st Division headquarters at La Ferte Bernard to the port at St.-Nazaire. In George's case, it appears that he sailed from another major debarkation port at Brest (north of St.-Nazaire), after being stationed there for a time. Troops were sent home on ships as quickly as vessels could be made available over the period from March 19 to April 6, 1919. George's enlistment record indicates that he arrived back in America on March 30, 1919, possibly aboard the transport ship, S.S. Leviathan (shown is one of his photographs entering the port at Brest). He, like the other troops in the 91st Division, arrived in New York harbor, where the various units were directed to either Camp Merritt, or to Camp Mills or Camp Upton in New York. From these camps, personnel received transfer orders to bases nearest their homes. In George's case, he was ordered to the Presidio of San Francisco, where he was honorably discharged on April 24, 1919.

In recognition of his service, George received a "Certificate of Gratitude" from the Board of Supervisors of Yolo County. The 347th Field Artillery also received commendations from the people of France for their efforts in the Great War.