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105th Engineers, Camp Sevier, S.C., March 1918. Trenches, tunnels and bunkers built by the engineers can be seen in the foreground.

Photos contributed

Profiles of World War I military from Brunswick County — 105th Engineers

In 1917 when the United States entered World War I, the country faced the task of creating a modern army and transporting it overseas. New divisions were created using existing National Guard units. The former 9th Division, which included the N.C. National Guard, became the 30th, nicknamed "Old Hickory" after Andrew Jackson because of his historic connection between the three states (North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee) furnishing the majority of the personnel.

In all, eight Brunswick County men were identified as serving with the engineers:

Pvt. Carl Jefferson Danford, Southport, 1893-1917; served Sept. 18 to Dec. 8, 1917; died of disease Dec. 8, 1917.

Pvt. Henry W. Cannon, Town Creek, 1892-1972; served Oct. 7, 1917 to March 15, 1918; honorably discharged due to dependent relatives.

Pvt. Harvey T. Chadwick, Shalotte, 1893-1918; served March 21 to Sept. 29, 1918; KIA Sept. 29, 1918.

Cpl. Lawson Devaun Ballard, Suburb 1896-1981; served Aug. 24, 1916 to April 16, 1919; severely gassed Sept. 29, 1918.

Cpl. George Harker Hewett, Supply, 1897-1956; served Aug. 15, 1916 to April 16, 1919; severely gassed Sept. 29, 1918.

Pvt. Thedford S. Lewis, Supply, 1896-1938; served March 21, 1918 to March 24, 1919; severely gassed

Sept. 29, 1918.

Cpl. Vander L. Simmons, New Berlin, 1893-1987; served Oct. 13, 1916 to March 10, 1919.

Pvt. Samuel Peter Cox, Bolivia, 1895-1997; served March 21, 1918 to April 16, 1919.

The 30th Division began training at Camp Sevier in South Carolina in November 1917. The engineers were required to learn both infantry and engineering skills such as the construction and maintenance/repair of trenches, barbed wire, shell- and splinter-proof shelters, roads, bridges, railroads, buildings, finding and testing water sources/wells for both men and horses, performing gas attacks, removing booby traps and mines, and testing for gas in buildings and trenches.

The month they arrived, a measles epidemic was declared at Camp Sevier. The camp was quarantined. A total of 60 deaths occurred, which included Danford.

On May 26, 1918, the six remaining men from Brunswick County boarded Talthybius to France. The engineers served in the British Army, requiring them to use British equipment. Their defining battle was the Hindenburg Line assault.

Hindenburg Line

The Hindenburg Line, built in 1916, was near the border of France and Belgium. It was 90 miles long, 6,000 yards deep and heavily fortified with barbed wire and machine-gun emplacements. The Germans

occupied the higher ground, giving them machine gun fire on all approaches. A large subterranean system of tunnels with hidden exits and entrances formed a safe method for communication and reinforcement for the Germans.

From the N.C. State Archives, Cpl. James E. Gregory, Company M, 119th Infantry, 30th Division, from Elizabeth City, shared these memories:

"For four long hours, the barrage continued without one minute of let up from both sides. It looked to me as if the destruction of the world had begun. I couldn't hear myself think, shells were falling everywhere, and shrapnel filling the air with their horrible whistles, and men were moaning and groaning at every side, pleading for someone to help them. We spent the night in a German dugout 70 feet under ground, where the night before Hindenburg's men never dreamed of having to give up. On the morning of the 30th, we began to gather up the remainder of the dead and wounded. Horrible sights were to be seen."

When the 56-hour-long assault had ended, the entire Hindenburg system and beyond was captured, including numerous surrounding cities and trenches. The Brunswick County men had suffered several casualties. Chadwick was killed in action. Ballard, Hewett and Lewis were severely gassed.

The Hindenburg Line was the last line of German defenses on the



This is a 30th Division Hindenburg Line cartoon

western front and led to a sudden end to the war.

The nonprofit Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range is leading the project to raise funds for a memorial honoring Brunswick County World War I veterans at the site of the 1918

Fort Caswell Rifle Range in Caswell Beach.

Anyone who wants to honor a Brunswick County veteran from World War I can go to caswellriferange.com or email ftcaswellriferange@gmail.com.