



First Battalion, 119th Infantry, Thirteenth Division enters trenches in Watou area in Belgium, July 9, 1918, in this photo from NC Digital Archives. The First Battalion includes Pvt. Luther Marvin Benton's Company A.

COMPANY "A" 119TH INFANTRY.
List of officers and men present who sailed May 11th, 1918.

NAME	RANK	RESIDENCY ADDRESS
Centwell, Paul E.	Capt.	Sara O. Centwell (wife) Wilmington, N.C.
Abbott, John R.	Pvt. Col.	J. R. Abbott (father) Henderson, N.C.
Alexander, Jesse M.	Sgt.	Jacob H. Alexander (father) 224 Norfolk Ave. Asheville, N.C.
Austin, Robert J.	Pvt.	T. F. Austin (father) Hatteras, N.C.
Austin, William H.	Pvt.	Wm. Austin (brother) Oklawaha, N.C.
Bachelor, Olinde O.	Pvt. Col.	W. W. Bachelor (father) Chippewa, N.C.
Bailey, David W.	Sgt.	N. A. Galt (father) Rocky Mount, N.C.
Baker, Robert J.	Cpl.	T. S. Baker (brother) Troy, N.C.
Barrus, David R.	Sgt.	R. S. Barrus (father) 107 N. Gordon St. Winston, N.C.
Bass, Tommie W.	Col.	Samuel Bass (father) Rocky Mount, N.C. Route #2
Battisti, Frank R.	Col.	Harry Battisti (father) Statesville, Ind.
Benton, Luther M.	Pvt.	M. D. Benton (father) Troy, N.C.
Beattie, William S.	Sgt.	William Harvey (uncle) Summerville, S.C.
Beck, Lawrence J.	Pvt. Col.	John J. Beck (father) Salem, Ind.
Berthow, Cornelius	Pvt.	John Berthow (father) Newton, Ill.
Blochard, Jesse H.	Col.	J. B. Blochard (father) New Hill, N.C.
Brandie, Lester	Col.	Mrs. Brandie (wife) Jamaica, N.C.
Britt, Robert R.	Pvt. Col.	Hilary C. Britt (brother) Henderson, N.C.
Brown, George F.	Pvt.	Jacob Brown (father) Merville, N.C.
Brown, John T.	Pvt.	John S. Brown (wife) 1223 S. Cherry St., Greer, S.C.
Bowen, James S.	Pvt.	Stewart P. Bowen (father) Whiteville, N.C.
Buck, Robert	Pvt. Col.	Matilda Buck (wife) Goldsboro, N.C.
Butters, Thomas W.	Pvt. Col.	Fred Butters (father) Tracy, Ind.

Company A, 119th Division Sailing Record, May 1918

The World War I story of Army Pvt. Luther Benton

By AMY ECKARD
SPECIAL TO THE BEACON

Luther Marvin Benton was born and raised in Brunswick County. He was ordered to report to duty March 22, 1918. His World War I draft card shows he was single and a farmer. He was sent to Camp Jackson, S.C., and then joined the 119th Infantry, 30th Old Hickory Division at Camp Sevier, S.C., on April 24, 1918.

The 119th Infantry had been training since the fall of 1917. "A system of trenches were constructed by the 105th Engineers and these used extensively by the regiment, in order that the men might become somewhat familiar with trench life, and their tactical use. A large target range was also constructed and on this the men were trained in the art of shooting accurately and rapidly, in order that they might protect their own lines in time to come."

Pvt. Benton had little time for training before boarding the British Steamship Ascania in May with the rest of Company A.

In May 1918 when they left for France, the 119th Infantry included 1,800 men from the state of North Carolina, 900 from Tennessee and 700 from the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin. The following Brunswick County men were located in the roster, which includes the date returned to service after injury:

Pvt. 1st Class Perry G. Carlisle is listed as sick from Oct. 31-Dec. 22, 1918. His North Carolina Service Card does not indicate he was wounded or gassed, and no reports were found in newspapers that list the wounded. The assumption is he was actually ill, likely from the influenza pandemic of 1918.

Three British transports — Ascania, Haverford and Laomaddon — met in the Harbor at Halifax, Nova Scotia, formed a convoy with nine others, and sailed for England. The convoy was escorted by the British Cruiser Cornwall. On Friday, May 24, the convoy reached the "danger zone" and held numerous "abandon ship" drills. Many accounts and diaries of this time express gratitude for the Navy. The following two excerpts are from the 119th Infantry document referenced above:

"At daylight of the 25th, several United States submarine destroyers were seen chasing all around our convoy, and re-

mained as our best friends until the convoy landed. About 11:30 p.m., May 26, a German submarine was sighted within very close range, but it immediately submerged and was not seen again. The crafty destroyers were on their job and dropped several "depth bombs" at the spot where the submarine had been seen. No disorder or confusion among the troops was caused during these crucial moments."

After reaching England, it took several days before the regiment arrived in France.

About 9:30 a.m., May 27, 1918, the convoy filed through the Irish Sea and in a few minutes docked at Liverpool, England. All troops remained on board until 5 o'clock that afternoon when the regiment debarked, and marched a short distance to the train that left at 10 p.m. for Dover, England's chief channel port for the exportation of troops. The train passed through London about midnight and arrived at Dover about 8 o'clock on the morning of the 28th.

"Beginning at 11 a.m. on the same date, the regiment moved by small detachments from Dover, England, across the English Channel to Calais, France, and by the afternoon of May 29 the entire regiment was once more assembled in camp, located about one and one-half kilometers from Calais."

The 119th Infantry received their gas respirators, ammunition, and swapped their American rifles for British rifles, because they were to serve with the British. The first night of arrival, the regiment experienced their first air attack. Colonel Pratt, whose diary has been used in previous veteran profiles, wrote about the experience of an air attack.

"You know you are perfectly helpless and if he can make a direct hit on your hut or tent, you are a 'goner' as you lie in bed listening (if you are awake) to the air planes coming nearer, you and your tent or hut begin to grow larger and larger until it seems to you as though you were bigger than anything else out doors, and that you stand out so distinctly that you just know the air plane is going to drop its bomb on you. It is a very disagreeable feeling. It is a helpless feeling. There is nothing you can do to further protect yourself and you lie awake expecting the bomb to hit your tent or hut. It is not only one night, but night after night."

The 119th Infantry was the first American unit to enter Belgium. After endless marching, they finally settled in a camp

two kilometers southeast of Watou, Belgium.

Pvt. Benton's first injury occurred Aug. 17, 1918. At that time, during the night, the 119th Infantry was relieving the 98th British Brigade. During this period of time, spanning the remainder of the month, 64 enlisted men were killed, 208 wounded, 12 died of wounds, and two were missing.

Pvt. Benton's injury was not severe enough to be sent home, as he resumed serving and was wounded a second time Oct. 17, 1918. Activities during that time will be covered in a future post. Pvt. Samuel Fulford was wounded on that date.) He recovered from the injury received in October and returned to service on Dec. 2, 1918.

Pvt. Benton returned home with Company A in March 1919. He married and raised his family in the area. Luther Marvin Benton was laid to rest in 1966. Military honors are shown.

If you would like to help us honor Benton or another Brunswick County World I veteran, go to caswellriflerange.com or email fcaswellriflerange@gmail.com.

A monument will be placed at the site of the rifle range in Caswell Beach Veterans' Day 2018 in honor of the men and women from Brunswick County who served their country. A book is to be published during 2019 containing all 725 names, as well as a historical overview of the 1918 World War I Rifle Range Target Pit Storage Room.

Amy Eckard of Caswell Beach is webmaster/researcher of Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range Inc.