



The siege of the Hindenburg Line was a deadly victory for Allied forces.

Caswell Beach

Veterans Day events this weekend

By Lee Hinnant
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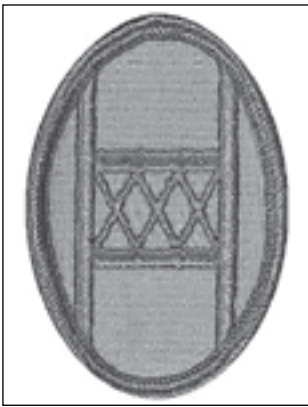
Several service groups will honor service men and women this Veterans Day weekend with meals, ceremonies and a lighter, family-oriented event with games and prizes.

The Elks Club will serve breakfast Saturday at its Oak Island lodge off East Dolphin Drive from 8 to 10:30 a.m., and the meal is free to veterans. Members will hold a ceremony by the flagpole in the courtyard at 11 a.m.

Local Elks will team with members from Calabash and Raleigh for an afternoon with food, games and prizes at Spring Lake Park in Boiling Spring Lakes from noon to 5 p.m. The public is invited to attend and offer support for residents affected by Hurricane Florence.

At Caswell Beach, the Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range will host an 11 a.m. ceremony Sunday in conjunction with Southport Historical Society and historical re-enactors who interpret the lives of soldiers.

The rifle range pit, located off Foxfire Trace in Caswell Dunes, turned 100 this year and played a significant role in training troops before they shipped off to Europe. Listed in the National Register of



The insignia of the "Old Hickory" division.

Historic Places, the range is among the best-preserved examples of its kind remaining.

Members of Southport Historical Society and Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range will dedicate a monument to the 723 men and women from Brunswick County who served in the Great War. Donors, many of whom are descendants of soldiers, made the project possible.

Rifle pit supporters have an "Honor a Brunswick County Veteran" project that highlights service members from World War I, including online profiles. Profilers have featured more than 350 veterans thus far. The project has raised more than \$6,000, enough to fund the monument next to the rifle pit.

Southport Historical Society members will fire their cannon "Thor" during the events. The public is invited to the free ceremony, and nearby parking is available.

Other participants will include residents of Caswell Dunes and The Arboretum; Caswell Beach Mayor Deborah Ahlers; Jim McKee, manager of Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site; Moore's Creek Battlefield Association president Connie Hendrix; members of Daughters of the American Revolution; Dave Lewis of Brunswick County Historical Society; Marvin Johnson of Southport Historical Society; and Carl Mauny, Great War re-enactor.

The non-profit will continue to encourage the public to honor veterans by sending a donation to Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range, 5 Foxfire Trace, Caswell Beach, NC 28465.

Rifle pit supporters are also working on a book detailing the exploits of Brunswick County veterans, which they expect to publish next year. The list of 723 veterans and other information is available at www.caswellriflerange.com.

Rifle pit supporters recently posted the story of the breaking of the Hindenburg Line, a turning point in the Great War that occurred in late September 1918.

The 30th Division—"Old Hickory"—was organized in October 1917 with men primarily from North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee. The division was the first to breach the infamous Hindenburg Line on September 29, 1918. It was not only North Carolina's deadliest day of the war, but was also Brunswick County's deadliest.

The Hindenburg Line was a defensive position in France built by the Germans in 1916. Ninety miles long, with as many as six defensive lines, it seemed impenetrable with swaths of barbed wire and vines as wide as 100 yards.

A large subterranean system of tunnels with hidden exits and entrances formed a safe method for communication and reinforcement for the Germans. Every portion was covered with machine guns.

At 5:50 a.m. on September 29, 1918, the men from the 30th Division assaulted the line, captured the whole Hindenburg system, then advanced still further and took the tunnel system with all the German troops hidden in it and next captured the towns of Bellicourt, Nouroy, Riqueval, Carriere, Etricourt, the Guillaime Ferme and Ferme de Riqueval.

The Canal Tunnel sector of the German line north of St. Quentin was tremendously fortified, with passageways running out from the main tunnel to hidden machine gun nests. The German gunners returned to the nests after the American assaulting waves had passed, and poured a destructive fire into their rear. But through everything, the men of the "Old Hickory" division forced their way until the fortified zone

was conquered in one of the most desperate single conflicts of the war.

Reported casualties from Brunswick County in the 30th Division:

Killed in action: Private Harvey T. Chadwick (Shalotte), Private Harry Langdon Pigott (Shalotte).

Died of Wounds: Private Benjamin Bante Smith (Ash), who was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and British Military Medal.

Wounded: Corporal Lawson Ballard (Supply), Corporal Calmer Thomas Clemmons (Supply), Corporal Elder Eugene Heath (Bolivia), Corporal George Harker Hewett (Supply), Private Thedford S. Lewis (Supply), Corporal Lindsey Pigott (Supply), Corporal Rufus Earl Sellers (Supply).