



Images contributed

Base Hospital 29

The World War I story of Pvt. Edward Anderson Mills

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SPECIAL TO THE BEACON

Edward Mills was born and raised in Brunswick County. His draft registration shows he was single, living at home and working on the family farm.

Edward was ordered to report for duty Sept. 19, 1917. He was initially assigned to the 322nd Infantry (81st Division). Many from the 81st Division were moved to supplement the 30th Division and this included Pvt. Mills. In April 1918, he was transferred to the 120th Infantry 30th "Old Hickory" Division. In May, they left for France.

Pvt. Edward Mills was severely wounded Sept. 1, 1918. A previous profile for Cpl. Mack Atkins of the 119th Infantry describes the activities of the 120th Infantry at the time. There was a gas attack performed by the 105th Engineers that resulted in some of the infantry being gassed. This is one possibility for Pvt. Mills' injuries. But there are also more details about the operations involving Mont Kemmel that went beyond the details in that post.

The 120th Infantry was originally to be relieved by the 117th Infantry after the gas attack, but there was increased activity on the front so it was canceled. When it appeared the Germans were withdrawing from Mont Kemmel, patrols were sent forward to confirm, and this resulted in some casualties. Then, an attack was ordered.

On the morning of September 1st an attack was made by the Second British Army. The 1st and 3rd Battalions, this Regiment, was ordered to push forward 100 to 1,000 yards, establishing a new line from Lock No. 8 on Canal, running north of Lankhof Farm to Zillebeke Lake. The principal objective was Lankhof Farm, a strongly fortified position surrounded by a moat. The fighting was very bitter, but, with the cooperation of the artillery, who maintained close liaison with the commanding officer of the 1st Battalion, the new line was taken and consolidated, for the consolidation troops were sent up from the 2nd Battalion and from the engineers. The 119th Infantry made a successful advance on the right, taking Voormezele.

Given the date he was wounded, Sept. 1, it is likely this was when Pvt. Mills was wounded. His injuries were severe and he did not return to duty.

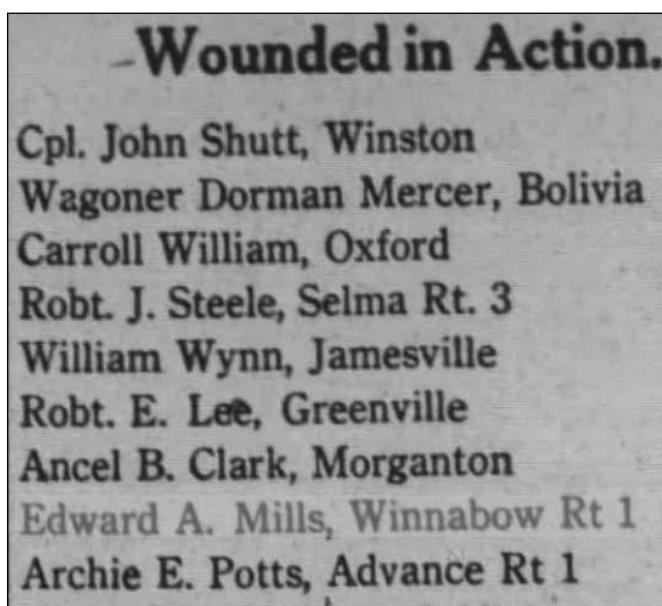
Between July 4 and Sept. 5, 1918, the following 120th Infantry casualties were reported: 34 killed in action, 216 wounded and one prisoner of war.

On Jan. 2, 1919, he was taken aboard USS DeKalb from Base Hospital No. 29 in Liverpool, England, with other sick and wounded soldiers, headed for Camp Merritt for more treatment and recovery.

Base Hospital No. 29 was organized at City and County Hospital, Denver, Colo., on April 5, 1917, and was mobilized at Camp Cody, N.M., during March 1918. The nurses (some 100) were all graduates of Colorado State University and were equipped by the Denver Red Cross Chapter.

The unit trained at Camp Cody and at Camp Crane, Allentown, Pa., until July 5, 1918, when it left for Hoboken, N. J., arriving there July 6, 1918. It embarked on the Empress of Russia, and sailed the same date for Europe. The unit arrived in England on July 17, 1918, and was assigned to duty at North Eastern Fever Hospital, London, where it arrived the night of July 19, 1918. It took over the hospital from the British on Aug. 1, 1918. The hospital cared for 3,976 cases, of which 2,351 were surgical and 1,625 were medical.

Base Hospital No. 29 ceased operating Jan. 12, 1919; sailed for the United States on the Olympic, Feb. 18, 1919; arrived in the United States on Feb. 24, 1919, and was demobilized at Fort Logan, Colo., on March 13, 1919.



This Nov. 21, 1918, clipping from the Rockingham Post-Dispatch names Pvt. Edward Mills as wounded in action.

After returning to the United States, it would be a few more weeks before Pvt. Mills completed recovery. He was honorably discharged Feb. 11, 1919, with no reported disability.

Edward returned to the family farm and married years later in 1930. The 1940 Census shows he and his wife had three daughters. The final number of children is unknown.

Tragically, Edward was killed by a falling tree in 1953. He was laid to rest in Robbins Cemetery in Town Creek. Military honors are shown.

If you would like to help us honor Brunswick County World War I veterans, go to caswellriflerange.com or email ftcaswellriflerange@gmail.com. Three hundred fifty Brunswick County World War I veterans have been honored to date.

A monument was 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, "To All Those Who Served in World War I from Brunswick County, N.C.," is to be published during 2019 containing all 724 names, as well as a historical overview of the 1918 World War I Rifle Range Target Pit Storage Room.

We would like the public to review the names of the following Brunswick County men who died during World War I to make certain they have not forgotten anyone who may have perished or missed someone while researching names that should be on this list.

Killed in action: Pvts. 1st Class Walter S. Brock and Erastus I. Nelson, Pvts. Harvey T. Chadwick, Jimmie Griffin and Harry L. Pigott, Cpl. Herbert B. Ward

Died of wounds: Pvts. William C. Hewett and Benjamin B. Smith

Died of Disease: Pvts. William F. Brooks, Carl J. Danford, Manning Hall, Claudie H. McCall, Elijah Milliken, Kendrick W. Outlaw, Cecil S. Pierce, Samuel C. Swain, Guy E. Watson, David Williams and Fred Wilson, Pvt. 1st Class John W. Carlisle, David L. Doshier (cook), Seaman James C. Edwards, Sgt. Robert G. Farmer

Norma Eckard of Caswell Beach is president of Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range Inc.