



Photo contributed by Gwen Causey, granddaughter of Henry Lindon Clemmons.

Henry Lindon Clemmons is in the picture (center) and is shown with the six other men from Brunswick County ordered to report for duty on October 15, 1917. Beside him (order unknown) are Luther J. Inman, Owen R. Mintz, Willie H. Hewett, Robert W. Holden, Mack Leonard and Isaac Fred Edge.



Photos contributed

5th Division Foret de Hesse camp



5th Division Bois des Rappes shell holes



5th Division Bois des Rappes burials

## WWI Profile: Pvt. Owen Ransom Mintz, 1886-1963

By NORMA ECKARD

*Pvt. Owen Ransom Mintz  
Ash, Brunswick County,  
NC*

*US Army  
Private  
Served: October 15, 1917-  
July 26, 1919  
Overseas: April 24, 1918-  
July 22, 1919  
Wounded: October 21,  
1918*

Owen Ransom Mintz was born and raised in Brunswick County, NC. He was the eldest of four brothers, all serving in WWI.

Forney Boston Mintz was the first to enlist in the US Army in 1913 at age 21. Half brother Samuel Leob Mintz enlisted in 1916; Martin Newman Mintz and Owen were drafted.

All four brothers served overseas. Like Martin, Forney and Owen were wounded.

Leob and Forney made a career in the Army.

Owen's WWI Draft Registration shows he was living in Mill Branch, Brunswick County, single and working on his own farm. He was described as medium height, weight, with brown eyes and black hair. (If anyone can identify each man in the photo based on their physical descriptions, please contact Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range.)

He was ordered to report for duty on Oct. 15, 1917, with the other six men shown in the above photograph. All were sent to Camp Jackson, SC, and officially accepted on October 26. [Source: ancestry.com], then assigned to Company F, 322nd Infantry, 81st Wildcat Division, but as previously included in the 81st Division history, many soldiers were transferred to other needed divisions.

On Feb. 5, 1918, Pvt Mintz was assigned to Com-

pany C, 11th Infantry, 5th Division.

The previous posts describe the creation of the division and activities up to the taking of Frapelle, and finally the operation at St. Mihiel, the first all-American operation of the war, which was a success.

The 5th Division had lost many men, which meant green recruits were added to their ranks and required training. Their camp was in Foret de Hesse, 15 kilometers west of Verdun and 20 kilometers below the current front.

They would soon be called upon for the first phase of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.

The sector on which the Division was embarking had been the scene of terrific fighting since the launching of the assault on September 26. American bombardments and German counterfire had converted the open ridges, ravines and slopes into stretches of churned and shell-torn earth. The wooded areas, dense with the tangled underbrush, looked as though they had been struck by fierce cyclones. The villages of the areas were wrecked and ruined.

[On October 11] The front was reported to be from the neighborhood of Cunel eastward along the road to Briulle.

From the very first entrance of our troops into the area they were subjected to harassing shell-fire. Inasmuch as the sector was only a few kilometers west of the Meuse and throughout its entire length was visible from the eastern heights still in the hands of the enemy, his artillery sheltered in those hills could constantly deluge the whole region with gas, shrapnel and high-explosive.

The Division had suffered severely from its exposure to

a day and a half of continuous shelling. Their first attack was set for October 14 at 8:30am. The Tenth Brigade (6th and 11th Infantries) were selected as the assault brigade. The operation from the start promised to be a hard one.

At dusk, the troops moved up toward their positions for the operation and took their assault formation. Assault battalions found that the jumping-off line at the front was three quarters of a kilometer south of the one specified in the attack order. Then it was discovered that the 32 Division, which was to protect their left flank had orders to begin at 11:30am, thereby exposing the 5th Division on that side. Furthermore, an American deserter had informed the enemy of the attack.

[Before the attack had started], the Germans put down the strongest counterfire the men had ever seen. For two hours, the positions of the assault battalions were raked with high explosives.

At 8:30am the assault was launched with vigor and courage, despite the punishment that had just been undergone. The men still remembered the victorious rush at St. Mihiel and dashed forward impetuously. But it was a different enemy here, one who was sticking till the last and fighting for every foot of ground.

[Due to the confusion earlier of the jumping-off point] our own artillery barrage had not been close enough to our lines to be effective and our battalions looked down into Ravin des Perrieres and at the Romangne-Cunel road, thickly populated with German machine gun nests.

After many feats of courage and gallantry and many losses, the only possible action was to dig in.

The afternoon was spent in organizing the dearly won

lines, in connecting shell-hole to shell-hole by shallow scooped-out-trenches.

Our men lay in the shell-holes scattered over the entire area of advance. The intense shell-fire and barrages had inflicted casualties that for the day fighting surpassed the thousand mark.

The attack on Bois des Rappes was ordered to be continued at 7:30am of the 15th.

After another confusing day with erroneous reports such as one that all officers were killed, no new attack was ordered for October 16th. Time was spent organizing and planning. October 17th was spent solidifying the front. The Divisions Command was relieved and replaced. Small combat troops were employed on the 18th and 19th, and an attempt at a direct attack was made on the 20th.

Six days of fighting had failed to conquer Bois des Rappes. It was evident that only a surprise attack could force the enemy to give up the place.

New command for the 11th Infantry planned the surprise attack on the 21st. The battalions were stealthily filtered up to the attack line, the artillery shelled the front lines for only 5 minutes.

At 11:30am the assault plunged forward and literally overwhelmed the Germans on the front lines. The surprise was a success.

Finally, the enemy was routed. Bois des Rappes was won for good.

Casualties of the Tenth Brigade (6th and 11th Infantries) were over two thousand. The 11th Infantry, which included Pvt Mintz, had suffered more than any other regiment:

12 Officers KIA  
210 Men KIA  
952 Wounded

Command of the sector passed to the 90th Division. The 6th and 11th Infantries withdrew to the zone south of Montfaucon and buried their dead.

Bois des Rappes had turned into a glorious victory, after a withdrawal due to misunderstanding of circumstances. The casualty list of the Division was 20 percent, 4,449 men. Fifty-one officers and 728 men had given their lives.

During those eleven days men and officers alike had existed under the most trying and wearing conditions. Throughout almost all the period there had been rain, which kept clothing wet and rendered battlefields seas of mud.

The chill of autumn was in the air and the warmth of a fire was never possible in the open under the observation of the enemy. A shelter tent stretched over a shell-hole half filled with water was all the protection that could be had against both artillery and weather. Food reached the front lines cold and in insufficient quantities. Water was very scarce and often contaminated. Practically every officer and man was suffering from diarrhea and exposure.

Three thousand replacements were received on the 24th. Most were untrained but time was short. The next battle of the 5th Division was their most famous and the one which earned them the nickname Meuse Division. Their crossing of the Meuse and establishing a bridgehead while clinging to the banks for several days is an exciting read in the Division history source below. General Pershing declared it one of the most brilliant military feats in the history of the American Army in France.

Pvt. Mintz was slightly wounded on the surprise

battle detailed above. He would remain in France and return with his Company on July 11, 1919, presumably serving in the Army of Occupation with the 5th Division.

He was honorably discharged on July 26, 1919, with a 10 percent disability. No details were found describing his wound, recovery, or the source of his disability.

The 1920 Census shows him living at home along with his brothers Martin Newman, Forney Boston, and his sister Mary. He would continue to work on the farm and never marry.

On April 26, 1963, Owen ran off the road and was crushed by his truck. He was 76.

Owen Ransom Mintz was laid to rest in Mintz Cemetery. A military headstone was installed.

If you would like to help honor Owen Ransom Mintz or another Brunswick County WWI veteran, please email the Friends of Ft Caswell Rifle Range at [fcaswellriflerange@gmail.com](mailto:fcaswellriflerange@gmail.com) or go to [caswellriflerange.com](http://caswellriflerange.com).

A future fundraiser, Oktoberfest is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, October 12 at the Caswell Beach Town Public Service Facility Building (Fire Station) from 5:00pm to 8:00pm to raise funds for publishing the book of Brunswick County men and women that served in WWI; to continue historic preservation of the rifle range memorial & to Honor Brunswick County WWI Veterans. There will be a dinner and dance with music by The Back Porch Rockers. More information will follow.

Another Roll Call is planned for Monday, Nov. 11, Veterans Day at 11 a.m. beside the 1918 Fort Caswell Rifle Range Memorial.