



The ASC History Newsletter

100th Anniversary of World War I: Rock of the Marne

This
MONTH in
military
history ...

- 1620: Peregrine White born
- 1817: 1st Seminole War began
- 1823: Monroe Doctrine proclaimed
- 1863: Gettysburg Address
- 1864: March to the Sea began
- 1899: Battle of Tirad Pass
- 1924: USS Langley, 1st US aircraft carrier sailed
- 1941: 7 Dec. Attack on Pearl Harbor, next day President Roosevelt delivered the "date that will live in infamy" address to congress
- 1943: US attack on Makin and Tarawa
- 1945: Nuremberg Trial began
- 1950: First Marine Division near the Chosin Reservoir
- 1963: President Kennedy was assassinated
- 1969: SALT talks began
- 2004: VBIED killed over 100 Iraqi National Guard queuing outside recruiting station at FOB Headhunter, Baghdad

In October of 1917, the 38th Infantry Regiment was assigned to the 3rd Infantry Division at Camp Greene, North Carolina under the command of MG Joseph T. Dickman. The 3rd Division deployed to France in March of 1918 and was positioned around Chateau-Thierry. During this deployment, the 38th Infantry was led by COL Ulysses G. McAlexander.

By the middle July of 1918, the 38th Infantry would see its first battle along the Paris-Metz Railroad in what would be known as the Second Battle of Marne. The Germans had mounted a considerable offensive against allied forces stationed in the Chateau-Thierry region. The stagnating line in large part was in place due to the failed Schlieffen Plan used by German war planners at the onset of the war. This latest and last offensive was a means to secure supply routes for the German forces at the front, as well as to drive the allies back to the last defenses protecting Paris.

By the early morning hours of July 15, 1918, the Germans had already forced the French 125th Division to withdraw, abandoning the Americans and leaving the 38th's right flank open to attack. The 30th Infantry remained positioned until the battle was well underway to the left of the 38th Infantry. By the time that the Americans were able to begin repelling the advancing army, the Germans had already driven 2 miles into the defensive line. McAlexander

ordered his men to move towards the River Marne, where they would pinch the German forces and cut them off from the main force. This left three sides of the regiment exposed to enemy fire. In spite of this, McAlexander's men continued to chip away at the Germans with artillery and machine gun fire. By late evening, the German Army had withdrawn to the other side of the River Marne, having failed to open up the Allied lines. The 38th Infantry had made good on Dickman's declaration during the attack: "*nous resterons la*" (we shall remain here).

Between the 30th and the 38th Infantries, six German regiments from two divisions had been repelled and all but destroyed. One German regiment of almost 2,000 men could not account for even ten percent of its men by the morning of July 16. The repelling of the German advancement also allowed time for an Allied counterattack under the advisement of General Foch and marked the end of the advance of the German army.

The 3rd Division would participate in the counterattacks launched by the allies on July 18, 1918, and remain under the command of MG Dickman until August of 1918. This counterattack had been planned since June by General Foch, but it was only due to the opening given to the allies by the 38th Infantry that would allow it to come to fruition. The success of the allied counterattack also marked the beginning of the retreat of the Ger-

man forces from France. From this point, the French and American forces continued to attack German lines of communication and transportation routes in France. This included campaigns in Aisne, including Marne and Ourcq. 3rd Division would support the advancing French Ninth Army during this time, and contribute to the success of campaigns from Chateau-Thierry and points north and east. In fact, the mainstay of the eastern line was largely composed of soldiers from the 3rd Division.

With the staving off of the German army at the River Marne single handedly, the 38th Regiment was given the title of "Rock of the Marne", and the 3rd Division was also renamed the "Marne Division." For the steadfastness exhibited by the 38th Infantry at the River Marne, General Pershing said it was "one of the most brilliant pages in our military annals." The 38th Infantry also was given a Croix de Guerre for its stand at Marne. Both of these monikers remain attached today. The "Rock of the Marne" is now stationed at Fort Carson, Colorado, while "Marne Division" is stationed at Fort Stewart, Georgia. 3rd Infantry Division and the 38th Infantry Regiment have seen battles as recently as Operation Enduring Freedom. The "Rock of the Marne" continues a legacy of excellence in the U.S. Army after 100 years.

