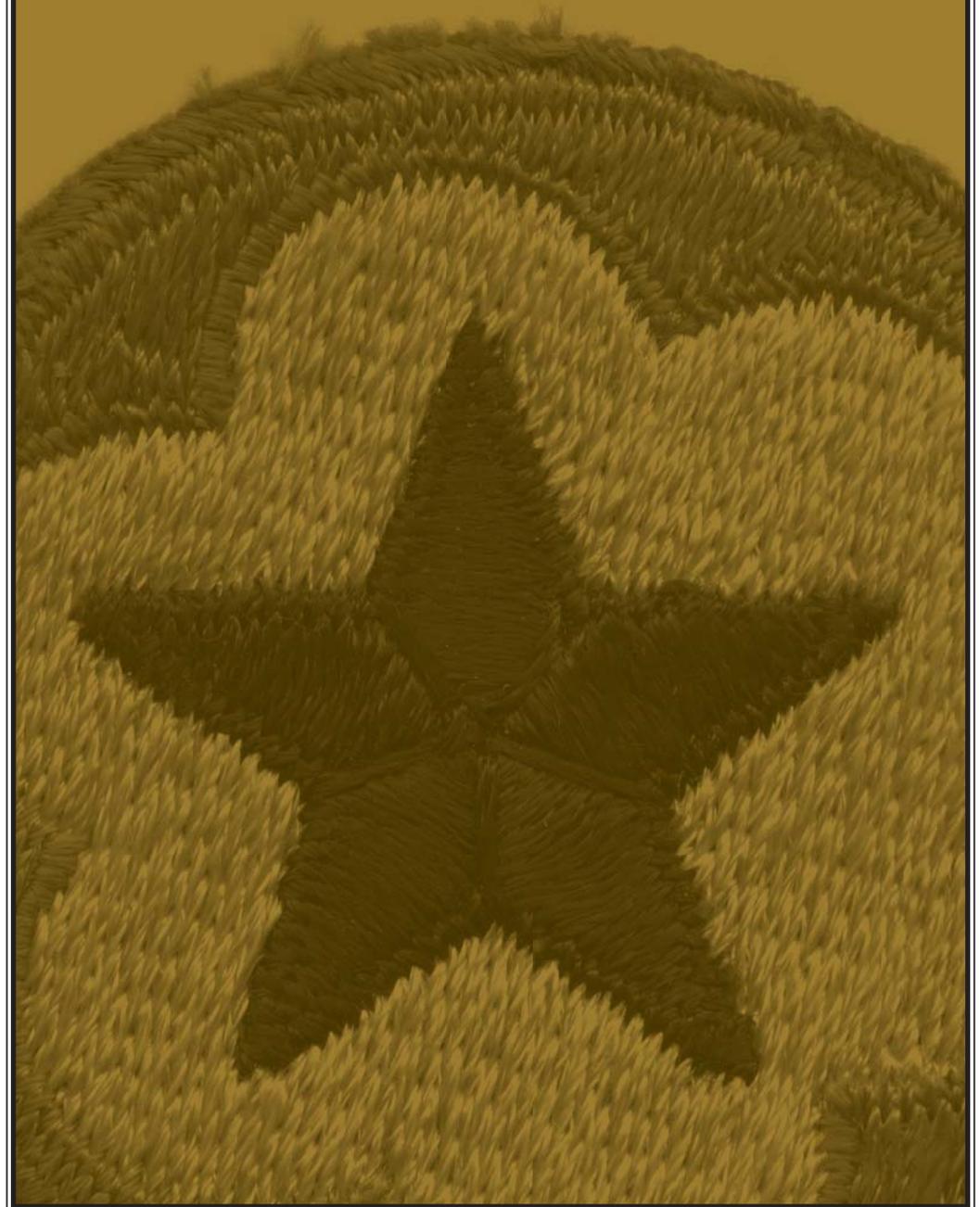
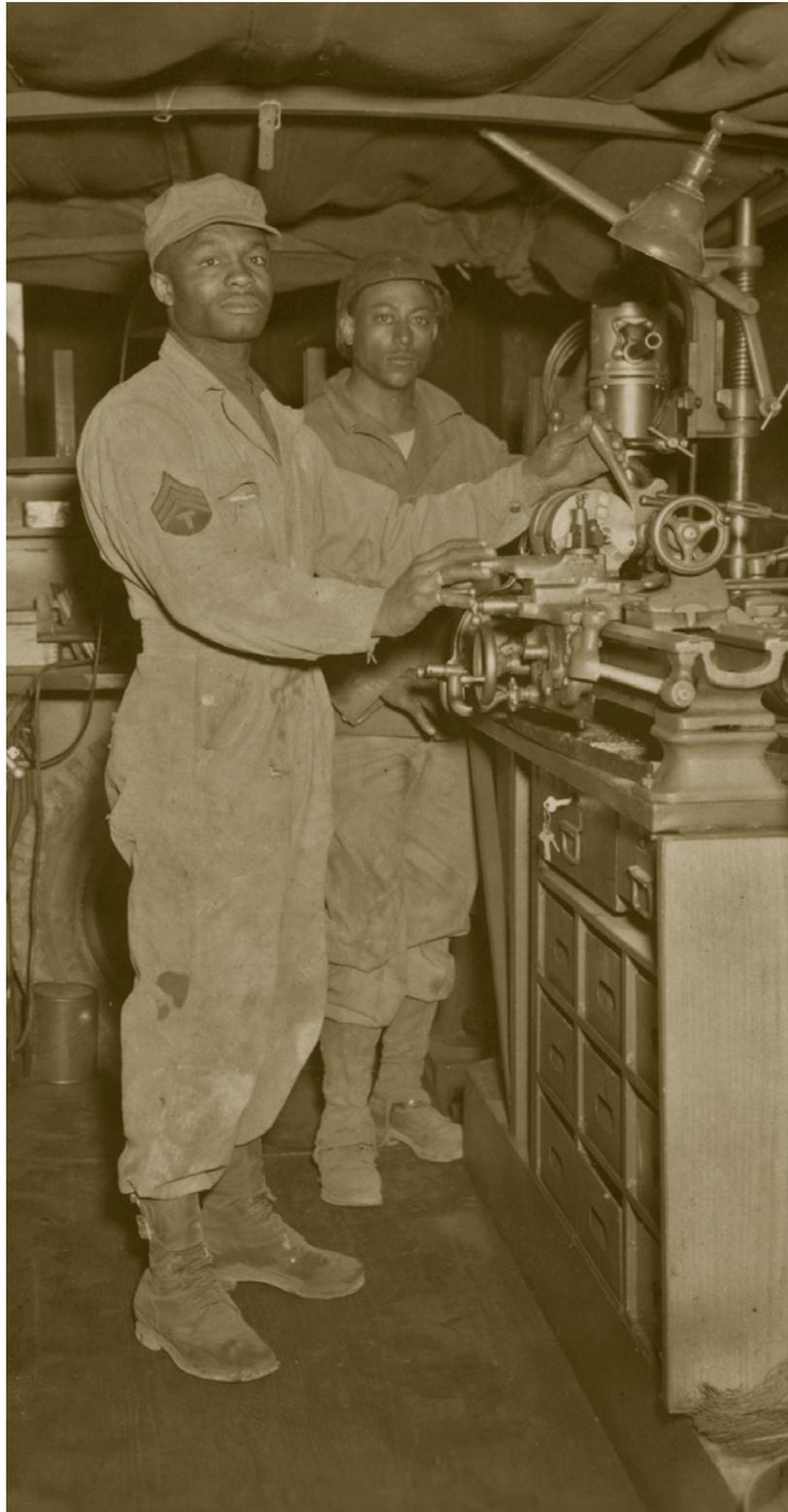


# **The History of the 1321st Engineers**





Engineers of the 1321st working in a mobile machine shop.

2

### Beginnings

The Thirteen Twenty-First Engineer General Service Regiment was activated at Camp Sutton, North Carolina, on 16 August 1943.<sup>1</sup> Our first commanding officer was Lt. Col. Paul J. B. Murphy. To say that our first days were trying days would be expressing it too mildly. They were hectic days. There were a great many factors which contributed to a bad start. First of all, we did not have a full complement of officers, and among those we had there were several who lacked the experience with troops so necessary during the initial days. Our cadre was furnished by the 1310th Engineer General Service Regiment of Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, and like our officers, they lacked the necessary experience. Among them were good and bad ones. We knew that the 1310th had not sent us all of their good men; units do not operate that way, at least not to the extent that it would weaken their own outfits.

Our fillers, too, which came in three different groups, were not of the caliber that would make a crack outfit immediately. They came from practically every other branch of the service, being from deactivated units that were no longer considered essential. Few, if any, had had any previous engineer experience. The first group, which arrived on 16 August 1943, came from the 533d Quartermaster Service Battalion of Camp Gordon, Georgia, and from various air base security battalions of Camp Rucker, Alabama, and Camp Butner, North Carolina.<sup>2</sup> There were approximately six hundred in this first group, which, despite its lack of engineer experience, produced some of the best soldiers in the regiment, such as Technical Sergeant Herbert of Headquarters and Service (H & S) Company, First Sergeant Hall of Company E, and Staff Sergeant Bufford of Company F.<sup>3</sup> The second group, like the first, was made up of men from various branches of the service. By 1 September we received the last group, approximately four hundred, which made the regiment 15 percent over strength. We were not proud of that last group. In an all-out effort to obtain

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- 1 Located near Monroe in Union County, Camp Sutton was established 7 March 1942 as an engineer training center. The War Dept. declared the reservation surplus property on 1 October 1945. Robert B. Roberts, *Encyclopedia of Historic Forts: The Military, Pioneer, and Trading Posts of the United States* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1988), 624.
  - 2 "Unit History, 1321st Engineer General Service Regiment," Box 19697, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, RG 407, National Archives, College Park, Md. (hereafter cited as "Unit History," National Archives).
  - 3 S. Sgt. Clarence Bufford of Calvert, Texas, received the Bronze Star Medal on 13 May 1945. By "his outstanding display of leadership and willingness to work as hard and long as any of the men in his platoon he inspired his men to accomplish a remarkable amount of loading of captured enemy material threatened to be recaptured by the enemy." "Unit History," National Archives.

the men we needed, Fourth Service Command had emptied many of its stockades and hospitals.<sup>4</sup> Our efforts to develop them into good engineer soldiers were not to be successful. So much of the officers' and noncommissioned officers' time was occupied with matters of discipline and administration in connection with these men that the training program suffered. Our foster parents, the Engineer Unit Training Center (EUTC), did little to pour oil on our troubled waters. Indeed, they also were inexperienced and refused stubbornly to understand our problems, and with this background they wielded a big stick that saddled the units in training with additional difficulties.

### Training in the Carolinas

Despite the problems of the first days, basic training got under way on 3 September 1943. The period from 3 September to 3 October was spent on basic fundamentals such as close-order drill, care and cleaning of equipment, military courtesy, and discipline. We found it necessary to conduct night schools for officers and noncommissioned officers who lacked the experience required to conduct the training properly. Because of the shortage of officers, it was often necessary for one officer to conduct the training of a company of 200 to 250 men.

It was really a sad story when we began our rifle marksmanship training. Only seven M-1 rifles were available for the entire regiment, and it was not until 2 October, the day before we began our march to the firing range, that we received our full complement of rifles. At approximately 1730 hours, 3 October, we started our trip to the rifle range, which was adjacent to Pageland, South Carolina, and was approximately seventeen miles from Camp Sutton.<sup>5</sup> The move, a tactical march, was part of our basic training. After about three hours of marching, we went into a tactical bivouac with outposts and all of the trimmings. We did not get much sleep, for by the time we had our bivouac in shape, it was time to break camp and be on our way.

We arrived at the Pageland Range at about 1100 hours, 4 October. After getting ourselves as comfortably situated as we could with the existing facilities, we settled down to earning marksmanship medals for ourselves. Our two-week stay was pretty routine, highlighted only by long hours of work, firing and cleaning our



Faces of the 132nd Engineer General Service Regiment.

weapons, night classes for officers and noncommissioned officers, and inspections by members of the training center staff. The return trip was a forced march, also under tactical conditions. We left Pageland at 1600 hours on 17 October 1943. As part of the training, planes and tanks simulated strafing our columns. We used the training we had received and deployed off the road to take cover. Six and a half hours later, those of us who could stand the pace were back in Camp Sutton.

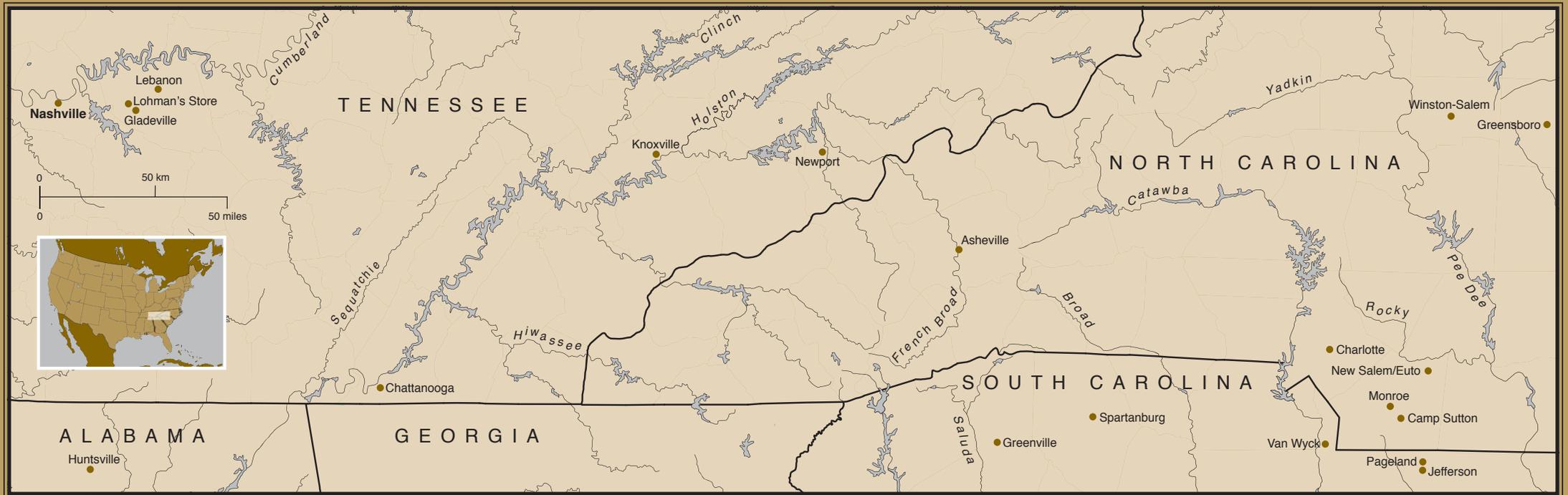
Immediately after our return to Camp Sutton, we resumed basic training. According to the time schedule of Military Training Program 5-1, we required only one more week to complete basic training. It was decided, however, to add another week to correct deficiencies. Then we began the second phase of our training, that phase known as technical

<sup>4</sup> Service Commands were the field agencies of the Army Service Forces. Blanche D. Coll, Jean E. Keith, and Herbert H. Rosenthal, *The Corps of Engineers: Troops and Equipment* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, 1958), 219. Maj. Gen. Edward H. Brooks directed the Fourth Service Command.

<sup>5</sup> The Pageland Combat Training Area was situated west of the town of Pageland, Chesterfield County, and consisted of 6,904 acres. Real Estate Records, Box 10, Folder 5, Office of History, Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alexandria, Va. (hereafter cited as CEHO).



# 1321st Engineer Training



**Activated on 16 August 1943, the 1321st Engineer General Service Regiment began basic training at Camp Sutton, North Carolina. There and in the surrounding areas they learned how to be both soldiers and Army engineers. In early 1944 their training took them to Nashville, where they repaired roads**

**and bridges damaged during war games in the Tennessee Maneuver Area. By the end of summer 1944, the 1321st was a well-trained engineer unit ready for deployment to Europe.**

6

training, to make us, finally, into engineering soldiers. We began to learn about bridge building, demolitions, construction of roads, mines and mine fields—in fact, just about all of those things that an engineer soldier has to know in order to keep up his end of the battle.

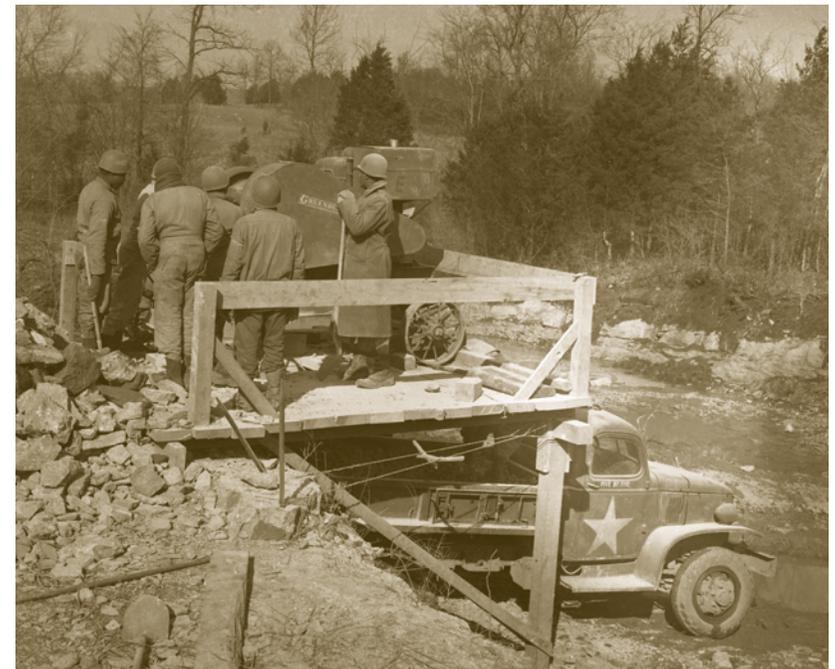
During this period Lt. Col. (later Col.) Aldo H. Bagnulo took over the regiment as commanding officer. He assumed command on 21 November 1943.

On 28 November we left Camp Sutton again, this time for Van Wyck, South Carolina, on the Catawba River, for training in floating bridges.<sup>6</sup> We found we were to get more training like we received going to and from Pageland—this time longer and tougher marches. To reach the floating bridge area required a 28-mile motor march. The move down was uneventful except that we wondered many times whether our vehicles would continue to carry us with all the equipment we had piled on them. Upon arrival we assumed a tactical situation, bivouacked in pup tents, and immediately began to play like the enemy were just on the other side of the river. Our tents had to be camouflaged



<sup>6</sup> Floating bridges included ponton, treadway, and footbridges.

7



**Learning to operate a rock crusher, soldiers of the 1321st make gravel for road repairs.**



An engineer learning to operate a bulldozer, which would become one of their most effective tools in Europe.

Soldiers training on dragline power shovels, used primarily by the 1321st for quarrying and excavation.



perfectly, no lights of any kind were allowed at night, and our outposts were foolproof. A man could go to sleep with the assurance that no Japanese or German was going to slip up and put a knife through him while he was sleeping—and besides, it was South Carolina. We learned a lot at Van Wyck. For the next six days we put up footbridges and floating bridges of all types, constructed barges, and actually made a crossing of the river under conditions that we thought we might encounter if and when we were to start playing the game for keeps.

Our return trip was one of the highlights of the training period—another tactical foot march. We broke camp two hours before dawn in a downpour of rain, rolled our packs in the mud, and for the first hour slogged through sticky mud slightly more than ankle deep. If the Carolinas had any bad roads, we certainly succeeded in finding them. Our spirits were not high when we started, but during the morning the weather cleared, and with the thought in mind that we would be sleeping again in dry beds and enjoying the luxury of hot showers at the end of the jaunt, our bodies held out. We covered the twenty-eight miles in six hours and forty-five minutes. Any unit would be proud of that record.

After our return to Camp Sutton on 5 December, we continued our technical training. The training proceeded without interruption until the day before Christmas when we received the most demoralizing news we had yet received. We were ordered to move to the Pageland Range to undertake some rush work. The news was bad from several viewpoints, but mainly because we had expected furloughs or, at least, passes at Christmas time. All Christmas Day we prepared for the move—that is, those of us who were left. Many of the men on their own accord decided to take Christmas Day off as well as the several days following.

On the morning of the 26th the unit started out on its new mission. The move to the range was made by using the only available vehicles and shuttling them until the move was completed. We did not have to hike this time. Upon arrival we bivouacked in pup tents, except for a few who found shelter in nearby old, dilapidated buildings. The weather was extremely cold with occasional snow, and under these conditions we were miserable and uncomfortable most of the time. The work consisted of constructing a combat village (sixty-six structures) and logging operations.<sup>7</sup> The 1st Battalion,

<sup>7</sup> In March 1944, the Camp Sutton newspaper reported on the regiment's work at Pageland: "The handiwork of the 1321st is seen in the 'Combat' village at Pageland where the unit built houses, churches, sheds, barns, wells and a graveyard with white crosses. The village, which took a fortnight to build, is used for training purposes. It gave the men their first construction experience in this type of work and their unofficial opinion is that [it] is the favorite job of their training." *The Carryall* [Camp Sutton newspaper], 24 March 1944, Military Files V-23A-2, CEHO.

then commanded by Maj. W. T. “Bill” Myers, constructed the combat village; the 2d Battalion, then commanded by Maj. G. W. “Bull of the Woods” Trindal, engaged in the logging operations.<sup>8</sup> Skills heretofore unknown were discovered and we began to realize that, regardless of what we had done in civilian life, we could contribute to the Army as engineers. We worked long and hard hours. Up before dawn, we were on the job by daylight, and we were eating supper long after the sun had gone to rest. This job, which had been started by the 1316th Engineer General Service Regiment, was completed by us in good time. We returned to Camp Sutton on 5 January in a new year, 1944.

*Tout de suite* (a phrase we picked up in France, which means “right away”) we started school again. This time a number of the men attended schools conducted by the training center for the purpose of developing specialists and technicians, those men who hold the key positions in any engineer unit. Men who were formerly barbers, tailors, general handymen, and students were to become bulldozer operators, shovel operators, truck drivers, demolition experts, bridge carpenters, and a score of other specialized workers. Schooling did not last long, just a week to be exact, for orders were received to move the regiment to the Tennessee Maneuver Area.<sup>9</sup>

### Training in Tennessee

On 12 January, after only a few hours’ notice, an advance party consisting of Maj. William Jaques, Capt. Don Nichols, and Lt. Cloyce Campbell, commanding a platoon of Company B, started for the Tennessee Maneuver Area.<sup>10</sup> During a confused three-day period and by a process known only to Houdini, approximately fifty trucks were assembled from Fort Jackson, South Carolina, and Camp Sutton. Some of the vehicles hit on three cylinders, some fared better, but all were

10



- 8 Glen W. Trindal served in the Army during World War I and with the National Guard, Army Reserve, and Regular Army in the interwar years. He retired from active duty in 1955 as a lieutenant colonel and died in 1980. “Glen W. Trindal, 85, Dies, Officer in Army Engineers,” *Washington Post*, 5 December 1980.
- 9 From September 1942 to March 1944 nearly one million soldiers participated in large-scale war games in the Nashville vicinity in preparation for combat in Europe. Frank Burns, “Second Army (Tennessee) Maneuvers,” *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, Tennessee Historical Society, <http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/imagegallery.php?EntryID=S015>.
- 10 William H. Jaques, Akron, Ohio, regimental S-3 (Operations Section); Don L. Nichols, Mandan, N.Dak., 2d Battalion adjutant; Cloyce Campbell, commander 2d Platoon, Company B. Unless otherwise indicated, information about personnel mentioned in the text was found in “1321st EGS Regt. List of Officers, with civilian addresses, 1945” and “Officers of the 1321st Engineer General Service Regiment While in Europe,” Aldo H. Bagnulo Papers, Box 1, Folders 26 and 27, CEHO (hereafter cited as Bagnulo Papers).



Soldiers of the 2d Battalion preparing hogs for the “Collis Pig Fry.”

held together by baling wire. Two officers and a few men per company, with the organization’s equipment loaded in the vehicles, started out on a trip that turned out to be far from pleasant. Under normal conditions, with vehicles in good mechanical condition, it would have been difficult to travel over the steep, winding mountain roads leading to the maneuver area, but additional hazards were imposed by the sleet that formed on the roads as the rain fell and froze. The main body of approximately eight hundred officers and men traveled to the maneuver area by rail.

11

Our mission in the Tennessee Maneuver Area was to repair damage done by maneuvering troops—mainly repair of bridges, roads, and fences. It was here that we received our first view of combat troops in action. Tactical convoys, driving blackout, used the roads that we were maintaining. At times they got in our way or we in theirs, whichever the case may be. Their guards were always halting us and asking for the password. The 1st Battalion set up west of Lebanon between Highway 70 and the Cumberland River and the 2d Battalion between Highway 10 and the maneuver boundary south of Highway 70. The things we remembered most clearly about our stay in Tennessee were the fairly warm days and cold nights, the incessant rain, the mud normally knee deep, Lohman’s Store, and Nashville.<sup>11</sup> The mud was the stickiest we had ever seen, unless it was the mud we encountered later on Okinawa. We lived in pyramidal tents, which had beds and stoves—this part of our stay was not bad. Major Trindal tried to build a

11 Lohman’s Store was formerly a populated community in Wilson County, Tennessee, so called because it was the site of a family business established by Louis Lohman. Dixon Merrit, ed., *The History of Wilson County* (Lebanon, Tenn.: County Court of Wilson County and Tennessee Historical Commission, 1961), 234–35.

## TRAINING IN TENNESSEE

road into the 2d Battalion's camp. It was reverently referred to as "Trindal Boulevard." Rock was hauled onto this road throughout most of our stay, and at the end it was still found better to detour it if we could. We operated two quarries, one at Gladeville and the other at Lebanon.

One of the highlights for the 2d Battalion was what was referred to afterwards as the "Collis Pig Fry." Lt. (later Capt.) L. F. "Spike" Collis, then company commander of H & S Company, procured some well-fed 250-pound hogs and proceeded to produce for us a real old-fashioned barbecue.<sup>12</sup> The men went into Nashville on Saturday nights via company convoys. Invariably it was necessary for the officers to make more trips than the men, for they would have to go in on Sunday morning to bring back a few who had declared some sort of war on the local police. We received some officer replacements, some of whom remained with the regiment to the bitter end—Lieutenants Samuel Benzing, Douglas Gunter, Gerald Trail, and James Bramlet.<sup>13</sup> It was good to begin receiving a sufficient number of officers to occupy the positions. Then, when February was almost over and almost as abruptly as we had departed from Camp Sutton, we began the long trip back to North Carolina. That trip is a story in itself, because during our return occurred the famous "Tennessee Fire."

The night before we departed for Camp Sutton was one of those wild, messed up affairs further dampened by a heavy rain. At midnight—we were to leave in the morning—we still did not have sufficient trucks to carry all of our personnel and equipment. Shortly after midnight some boxcars were obtained and much of our equipment was hurriedly loaded on them. At 0500 hours, with all personnel loaded on trucks, we were ready for the first leg of the two-day trip. What had been a bad day at the beginning turned out to be a lovely one. During the day the weather was the best that we had had during our whole time in Tennessee. The convoy proceeded along



Smoldering remnants of Army vehicles following the fire in Newport, Tenn.



Although vehicles sustained extensive damage, the 1321st reported no injuries during the "Tennessee Fire."

without interruption, except for the few vehicles that broke down or ran out of gas, and arrived at Newport on schedule. The first serial arrived at 1600 hours and the last at 1730 hours.<sup>14</sup>

Our bivouac site at the completion of the first leg of the return trip was the Municipal Park, Newport, Tennessee. Vehicles were parked on both sides of the race track, a circular road within the park, leaving a lane for traffic through the center. H & S Company vehicles were in the lead; Company F vehicles were in the rear. Kitchens were set up, and the men found sleeping accommodations in their pup

<sup>12</sup> L. F. Collis, later commander of Company C.

<sup>13</sup> Samuel G. Benzing, Grand Rapids, Mich., commander 2d Platoon, Company C; Douglas L. Gunter, Santa Ana, Calif., heavy equipment officer, H & S Company; Gerald T. Trail, Oakland, Calif., commander 3d Platoon, Company A; James B. Bramlet, Harrisburg, Ill., commander 3d Platoon, Company B.

<sup>14</sup> "Serial" is the military term for a subdivision of a military force in movement, such as by marching, by air, or over water.



Training on road graders, which the 1321st would put to heavy use on muddy European roads.

tents or in the grandstand. Some of the men were granted permission to go into town. Arrangements had been made previously to have a commercial tank truck refuel the vehicles by proceeding along the lane of parked vehicles. While this was being done, all hell broke loose. It was difficult to discover definitely what happened, but a very thorough investigation by Major Trindal indicated that it started when one of the civilian employees of the oil company lit his cigarette and threw the still lighted match on some gasoline that had spilled onto the road. The gasoline burst into flames. The driver of the tank truck became alarmed and jumped into his truck to drive away from the danger. In his haste he failed to turn off the gasoline then flowing into the tank of an Army vehicle. When he drove forward, the nozzle was jerked out of the tank and the stream of gasoline also caught fire. The tank truck proceeded down the line of vehicles, pouring flaming gasoline under the remaining vehicles of H & S Company—indeed, a very efficient way to spread fire, for the trucks quickly became consumed by flames that shot up forty to fifty feet. The entire sky assumed a frightening red color. To the confusion of moving the unharmed trucks away and the attempts by the local fire departments to put out the fire was added the din of exploding tanks and tires. Twenty trucks and trailers were completely burned, along with a great deal of equipment and valuable records. At first it was thought that all of the service records were lost, an irreparable blow to any unit, but fortunately they had been loaded on a truck that had developed engine trouble and had straggled into the bivouac area too late to take part in the “Tennessee Fire.”<sup>15</sup>

15 Exercising wartime self-censorship, the *Newport Plain Talk and Tribune* of 28 February 1944 gave a brief account of the incident but did not mention the name of the regiment and its route. The story does note that local firemen were able to do little to extinguish the blaze because of low water pressure. The newspaper estimated the damage at nearly \$50,000 and reported that some members of the regiment remained in town “for a few days to salvage whatever was possible of the vehicles.”

After the fire was under control, the officers assembled to appraise the extent of the damage. We reorganized and redistributed the vehicles, and the regiment turned in for the night. The fire was not all that happened that night. Some of the men who had gone into town expended their excess energy by breaking into splinters a “joint” that apparently had attempted some unfair practices. Lt. (later Capt.) William Pahl stayed behind with forty men of Company F to clear the park of the debris.<sup>16</sup> Major Trindal and Capt. Percy Guthrie remained to conduct the investigation into the demolition incident, the report on which constituted a volume worthy of any vacant spot in the Congressional Library.<sup>17</sup>

### Return to North Carolina

On 28 February 1944 we were back at Camp Sutton. For the next three weeks we continued with the technical phase of our training. Then on 20 March the regiment was reorganized and redesignated the 1321st Engineer Construction Battalion.<sup>18</sup> We spent 20, 21, and 22 March reorganizing troops and rearranging the area. This reorganization cut the number of companies from seven to four and gave us an excess of about three hundred personnel, which provided the opportunity to rid ourselves of most of the “undesirables” whom we had not been able to convert and who were the source of most of our problems—the turning point for the unit. For the next nine weeks we were able to devote our entire time to the technical training of personnel and to the improvement of discipline and esprit de corps within the unit. Things began to take shape. Capable noncommissioned officer material was discovered, and the officers were beginning to see the fruits of their labors, so when we were again reorganized into a general service regiment on 25 May, we had a good nucleus on which to build.



16 William C. Pahl, La Porte, Ind., commander Company F.

17 Percy L. Guthrie, Birmingham, Ala., 1st Battalion adjutant.

18 According to Camp Sutton’s post commander, “The new Construction Battalion, although reduced in strength, is equipped with more and heavier engineering equipment. As a result, the percentage of specialists has been materially increased. In fact, the number of Basic Privates in the company has been reduced to about 10 per cent.” *The Carryall*, 24 March 1944, Military Files V-23A-2, CEHO.

The decision to convert general service regiments to construction battalions aroused much controversy. An Army Service Forces memorandum of January 1944 maintained that “the construction battalion was comparable to the engineer aviation battalion in earth-moving capacity and to the Seabees [naval construction battalions] in equipment and grades for skilled personnel.” The Office of the Chief of Engineers strongly disputed this reasoning, asserting that the general service regiments had been performing at a higher skill level than the Seabees and aviation battalions. A few months later the construction battalions were redesignated general service regiments. Coll, Keith, and Rosenthal, *Troops and Equipment*, 236.



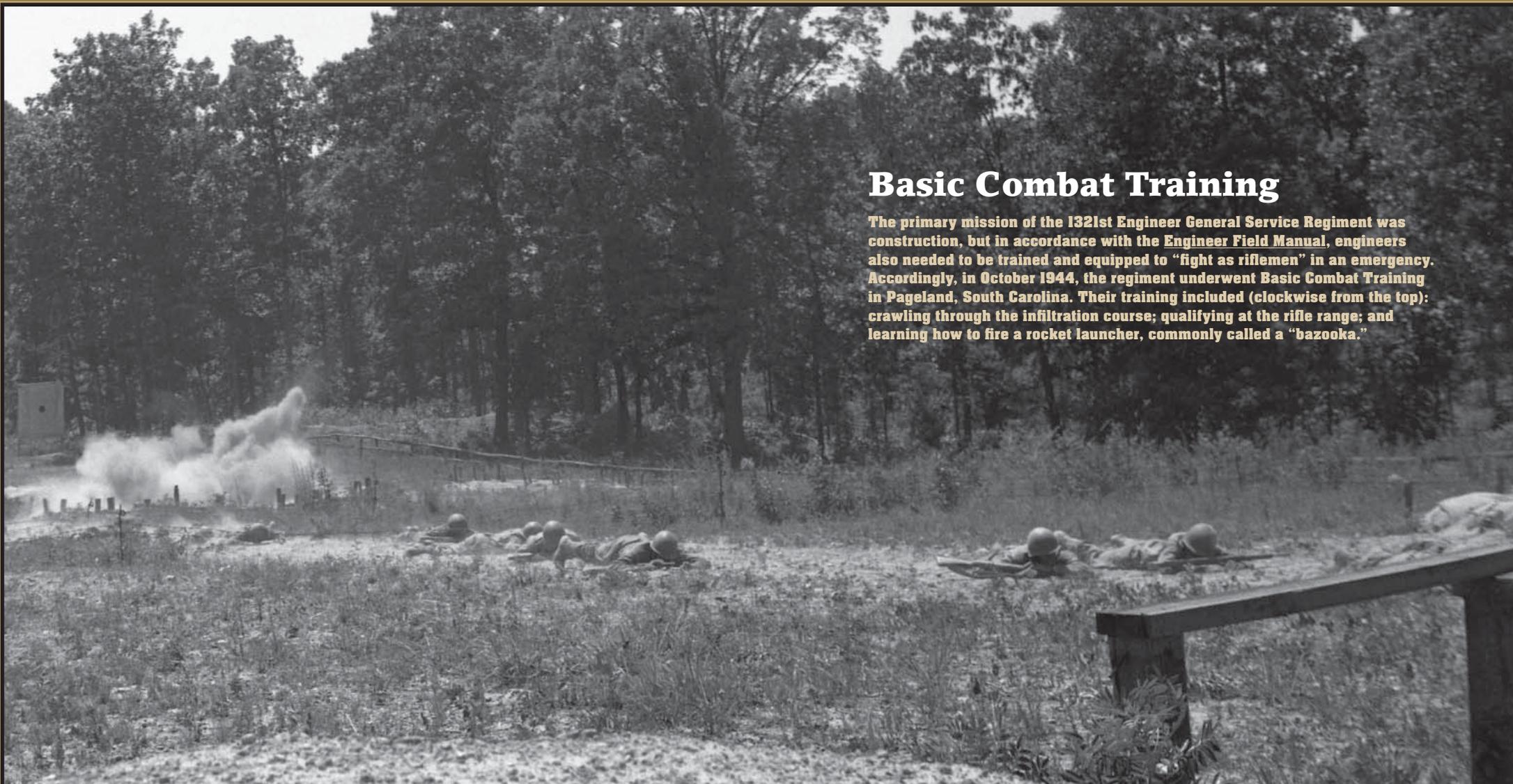
## Bridge Construction and Repair

During their training in the U.S., the soldiers of the 1321st built and repaired numerous bridges in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Some examples of their bridge work include (clockwise from left): construction of a masonry abutment; placement of steel stringers to simulate construction of a bridge; and a completed timber trestle bridge. Engineers often used timber for bridge construction because it was readily available from supply depots or could be harvested on site or salvaged from nearby buildings.



## Basic Combat Training

The primary mission of the 1321st Engineer General Service Regiment was construction, but in accordance with the Engineer Field Manual, engineers also needed to be trained and equipped to “fight as riflemen” in an emergency. Accordingly, in October 1944, the regiment underwent Basic Combat Training in Pageland, South Carolina. Their training included (clockwise from the top): crawling through the infiltration course; qualifying at the rifle range; and learning how to fire a rocket launcher, commonly called a “bazooka.”





Soldiers of the 1321st Engineer General Service Regiment.

20

Soon after our reorganization, on 1 June, training tests were given to all men. By this time we were beginning to know the answers and we did pretty well on the tests. On 3 June we received 260 recruits as fillers to bring us back to regimental strength. These men had received no previous military training, and 42 percent of them could neither read nor write, but they turned out to be the backbone of the regiment. We proceeded to give them their basic training, which was very successful, for they were hindered by no bad habits or distorted ideas acquired in previous units. They were ours to mold into good soldiers, and we undertook the task with a full realization of our responsibility.

While the recruits were getting on with their basic training, we started a review of basic training for the "old timers." On 6 June a one-week school started for all company motor officers and sergeants. On 12 June we began field training for the unit, less the recruits who

were engaged in basic training. The 1st Battalion, now commanded by Maj. Stewart Worley, moved out into bivouac to rebuild the road leading into Euto.<sup>19</sup> The 2d Battalion, then commanded by Capt. Harold Lee, moved out by companies.<sup>20</sup> Company D moved to the Pageland Range to do some construction and to provide messing facilities for our recruits who were firing there. Company E moved to the floating bridge area on the Catawba River for the purpose of dismantling and moving all of the equipment back to Camp Sutton. Company F went to Jefferson, South Carolina, to rebuild a stretch of road and a bridge. In performance of these tasks, previous training began to make itself evident. While the 1st Battalion bivouacked on the Euto Road, they were inspected by a team from the Office of the Chief of Engineers (OCE). They found our men building bridges and operating dozers, pans, shovels, and graders. They claimed that the water point set up by Technical Sergeant Williams and his men could be considered an example for any unit to follow.<sup>21</sup> They found all of the bivouac areas in excellent shape, but especially the bivouac of Company A, which they declared was the best one they had ever seen. The OCE team inspected the other regiments stationed at Camp Sutton and in their final report rated us the best trained and prepared for service overseas, which was good news. In just a few months the 1321st had pulled itself out of the cellar position to first place.

While we were engaged in field training, a number of officers were assigned to the regiment to bring it closer to full strength. Maj. Franklin Mohler joined us and was assigned the command of the 2d Battalion.<sup>22</sup> Capt. Glenn Pickrel took command of Company D.<sup>23</sup> From the EUTC came Capt. George Rogers, Lt. Horace Smith, and Lt. (later Capt.) "Pop" Cross, who assumed command of Companies B, E, and H & S respectively.<sup>24</sup> Lt. (later Capt.) Norman Kellogg came to us from the 1315th Engineers.<sup>25</sup> Also from the Camp Sutton staff came Lt. Robert Cowie, who was assigned as regimental supply officer, and

21



19 Stewart E. Worley, Forest Hill, La. Euto is the former name of a community in northeast Union County now known as New Salem. William S. Powell, *The North Carolina Gazetteer* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968): 350.

20 Harold D. Lee, later regimental S-2 (Intelligence Section).

21 Probably Johnnie Williams, H & S Company. See *You Name It* [regimental newsletter], 14 January 1945, Bagnulo Papers, Box 1, Folder 25.

22 Franklin C. Mohler, Des Moines, Iowa, commander 2d Battalion.

23 Glenn E. Pickrel, Nelson, Nebr., commander Company D.

24 George H. Rogers, Elm Grove, W.Va.; Horace C. Smith, Hedrick, Okla.; and probably Robert Cross. Bagnulo's diary entry for 25 January 1945 refers to "Bob Cross."

25 Norman P. Kellogg, Adams Center, N.Y., a Company F officer, later commander of H & S Company.

## RETURN TO NORTH CAROLINA

Lieutenants John Bayliss, Charles Hurme, and Daniel Geller, who were assigned to various companies as platoon leaders.<sup>26</sup>

Several men, exclusive of the recruits, had not fulfilled all of the preparation for overseas movement (POM) requirements in firing. Accordingly, the regiment assembled once again at the Pageland Range on 1 July. Firing was completed and we returned to Camp Sutton on 8 July. The next few weeks were spent in review of all the training we had ever had. On 20, 24, 25, and 26 July we took training tests conducted by the EUTC. Meanwhile, the rumor became persistent that the unit would soon be moving overseas. With that in mind, we took our final leaves and furloughs. On 17 July the fillers started their technical training. We strove earnestly to train them to fill the table of organization shortages, for by this time training had become a bore and we were all anxious to eliminate any deficiencies that might prevent our being sent overseas and that would require our remaining at Camp Sutton, the latter being our chief concern.

On 7 August we started a heavy equipment school for the officers and motor sergeants, which provided them with the basic fundamentals in operation and maintenance of engineer heavy equipment. On 18 August a school started for company mess officers in the H & S Company kitchen. This school was conducted by Major (later Lieutenant Colonel) Wetzel, who had joined the regiment two weeks previously as executive officer. In the school, which lasted a week, the officers actually performed the various functions of mess personnel, down through KP duties.<sup>27</sup> Although they could not be considered expert cooks, they learned, by actual experience, the problems confronting a mess sergeant.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, Fourth Service Command conducted a school of one-week duration for company motor officers. EUTC gave us another training test on 19 August, and

22



26 Robert A. Cowie, Pasadena, Calif., later regimental S-1 (Personnel Section); John R. Bayliss, Charlotte, N.C., administrative officer, Company B; Charles H. Hurme, Brooklyn, N.Y., commander 1st Platoon, Company B; Daniel Geller, Long Beach, N.Y., regimental S-4 (Supply Section).

27 Kitchen Police, a practice in which enlisted men were detailed to assist the cooks of a mess.

28 The next month, Camp Sutton's newspaper reported on the KP experience: "To familiarize the Company Mess Officers of the Regiment with the various duties, means and methods of preparing meals, they took over the job of cooks and K.P.s in the H & S Company Mess Hall. On one of these days they prepared and served dehydrated foods. Some valuable information was gathered on how the meals are prepared and served in a Company Mess." "The officers learned that close supervision in every respect is necessary to keep the organization running smoothly and successfully. They learned some of the causes of wastage and shortage of servings. Some of the officers, at the end of the day, emerged with dishwasher hands." *The Carryall*, 2 September 1944, Military Files V-23A-3, CEHO.



Officers of the 1321st in camp during field training.

Engineers of the 1321st during a vehicle inspection.





Engineers of the 1321st parading at Camp Sutton before deployment to Europe.



During off-duty hours, sports like baseball helped soldiers of the 1321st pass the time.

the results were the best up to that time, indicating two things. First, our training had been thorough and effective; second, an esprit de corps had developed among the troops which made them want to make the regiment look good.<sup>29</sup>

On 3 September 1944 we started a hike that had been ordered by camp headquarters as a conditioning march and was intended to last ten days. As an endurance march or a method of physical training, it was unparalleled. The weather was hot—typical Carolina weather for that season with no rain. We traveled mainly on dusty county roads. The dust, it seemed, was not only on us but inside us. The first three days were the hardest. For the first half-day everybody stayed up

in good shape, but by afternoon some began to fall out. The 1st Battalion was leading at the start, and by mid-afternoon it was rather mixed up. At one time we found 1st Sgt. Albert Pettis of Company A down beside Company D.<sup>30</sup> He claimed to be gathering up some stragglers, but he had a hard time convincing us. Blisters developed on our feet, and it seemed as though everyone had from one to a dozen scattered from toe to ankle. After a night in pup tents and a hardy breakfast, we would begin again on feet that felt like they were made of raw beefsteak. The ten-day hike was cut short, and we returned to Camp Sutton on 11 September after eight days. We were never so glad to see anything as we were our area. Beds and showers are the greatest medicine in the world for tired bodies.

We did not have much time to rest up, however, for on 12 September the Fourth Service Command gave us some more tests. We certainly were not in any condition for them, either physically or mentally, but we passed apparently, for the next day we began preparations for movement overseas.

<sup>29</sup> In addition to their rigorous training, the men of the 1321st attended church, dances, and parties and participated in baseball games, track and field competitions, boxing matches, war bond drives, and musical affairs. Company C sponsored a pin-up contest. *The Carryall*, 1 April, 29 April, 6 May, 1 July, 22 July, 19 August, 26 August, 2 September 1944, Military Files V-23A-2 and V-23A-3, CEHO.

<sup>30</sup> Albert A. Pettis, First Sergeant, Company A. *You Name It*, 28 January 1945, Bagnulo Papers, Box 1, Folder 25.



## Road Maintenance and Repair

Road maintenance and repair constituted a large part of the regiment's training in the United States. Using earthmoving equipment and hand tools, the engineers improved local roads and repaired the damage caused by military training exercises. The bottom image depicts engineers using a bulldozer and scraper to grade a road. The photographs at the top reveal the striking improvement brought to a muddy country lane after the 1321st dug drainage ditches and surfaced it with crushed rock.



### Preparing to Deploy

There is a great deal of work involved in preparing for movement overseas. All kinds of showdown inspections were in store for us, which resulted in great lists of clothing and equipment to be requisitioned and issued. Boxes and crates had to be made, but, fortunately, not in great numbers, for our travel orders specified minimum essential equipment only. On the night of 23 September 1944 Service Club No. 3 gave a farewell party for us. It had been the custom with units getting ready for departure to stir up some sort of commotion, and we were not to be outdone, but we certainly picked the wrong time to do it, for it so happened that Brig. Gen. Lehman W. Miller was there.<sup>31</sup> A few men who had worked themselves up into a frenzy showed disrespect toward him. It was certainly a black mark on the regiment's record. We had always been able to conduct ourselves as soldiers before—and have since. General Miller was very unhappy—maybe angry—and as a disciplinary measure made us take a ten-mile hike the night of the 24th. Hiking by this time had become our forte and we breezed through this one, singing all the way. We were, however, truly repentant. The next day we continued our preparations for movement, and on 28 September we departed from Camp Sutton for the port of embarkation.

We left Sutton on three separate trains. The first train had Companies C and D plus part of H & S, and the third train had Companies E and F and the remainder of H & S. During the trip the only thing that caused us any concern at all was the stretch over the RF & P (the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac) Railroad. It took us longer to cover that “slightly over hundred mile of rail” than it did for the remainder of the trip. We arrived at Camp Myles Standish, the marshalling area for the Boston Port of Embarkation, about twenty-eight hours after we had left Camp Sutton.<sup>32</sup>

We found Myles Standish one of the best coordinated and supervised camps we had yet encountered. Our final inspections of clothing and equipment and records were received there. The hard work spent in preparation bore good results, for the regiment was found in excellent condition. We all managed to get passes into Boston and Providence, our last passes in the States for many months.



U.S. Army photo, SC-174384

Aviation engineers building Nissen huts, similar to those that housed the 1321st during their time in Britain.

### From Boston to Britain

On 7 October 1944 we moved up to the Boston Port of Embarkation by rail and boarded the USS *Mount Vernon*. Late that afternoon we sailed from the United States and headed east across the Atlantic.

Before the war the USS *Mount Vernon* had been one of America's three largest luxury liners, and although she was converted to a troop carrier, she lost little of her dignity.<sup>33</sup> The crossing was pleasant except for one day of rough weather. On the fifth day out, the ship pitched and tossed in heavy seas typical of the Atlantic in October. Some sick men leaned over the rail; some never reached it. The entrance to Liverpool Harbor on 15 October was very interesting because, for most of us, this was our first view of the “old” world. Results of the German blitz could be seen in the damaged docks, buildings, and sunken ships whose masts stuck above the water. We were promptly disembarked, and by

<sup>31</sup> Brig. Gen. Lehman W. Miller, commandant of Camp Sutton. Coll, Keith, and Rosenthal, *Troops and Equipment*, 311.

<sup>32</sup> Established in 1900, Camp (later Fort) Myles Standish was situated on Lovell's Island, Boston Harbor. It served as a staging area for the Boston Port of Embarkation until its inactivation on 7 January 1946. Roberts, *Encyclopedia of Historic Forts*, 411. The 1321st arrived at Myles Standish on 29 September 1944. Shelby L. Stanton, *Order of Battle, U.S. Army, World War II* (Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1984), 563.

<sup>33</sup> The New York Shipbuilding Co. built the SS *Washington* in 1933. The Navy acquired it in 1941, renamed it *Mount Vernon*, and converted it to naval use at Philadelphia. After several voyages transporting troops to the Pacific, it began sailing from Britain to the Mediterranean in 1944. Decommissioned in 1946, it was delivered to the Maritime Commission and became the *Washington* again. James A. Moody, ed., *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, 8 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Navy Dept., Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Naval History Division, 1959–81), 4:449.



Officers of the 1321st relaxing at an engineer depot.

midnight of the 15th most of us had boarded trains and were headed for Camp Stapley, south of Taunton in Somerset County.

Traveling at night in a strange land gave us an eerie feeling, but when daylight came, our eyes and minds were absorbed in the scenery of the passing English countryside. A lush green even at this time of the year, neat and giving the impression of antiquity, the landscape was beautiful. The ride on an English train with its individual compartments was an experience in itself. The train moved along at a good clip, and by noon of the 16th we had reached Wellington Station where we detrained and climbed aboard trucks for the ride to our bivouac. Heavy rains usually accompanied our truck movements, and they did not fail us on this ride to Camp Stapley. The trip to the camp over narrow, winding roads gave us a better view of the English countryside, and we had our first glimpse of a custom to which we would soon have to adjust ourselves—that of driving on the wrong side of the road. Stapley, a small camp of Nissen huts,

was about eleven miles out of Taunton and was just large enough to house our regiment.<sup>34</sup> We settled down to comfortable living, struck up acquaintances with the neighboring Englishmen, dropped our *Hs*, and picked up new words for our vocabulary. We found the Englishmen to be friendly people with little or no imagination, hearty fellows with strong patriotism, a thirst for “ile,” and a hunger for crumpets, and hard workers who had sacrificed much that England might survive.

Our main objective while at Camp Stapley was to obtain the equipment and supplies required to bring us up to full strength in accordance with the Tables of Equipment for our regiment. The task was accomplished during the next six weeks by drawing from depots scattered all over England and Wales, and doing so provided an opportunity for those engaged in the task to see much of the country. At the same time, we conducted refresher courses on those phases of training that we thought would concern us most directly, even sending several of the officers and enlisted men to a three-day mine school near Salisbury. Company C improved and added to some of the facilities at the 23d General Hospital in Taunton, and bivouac areas were prepared for other units arriving from the States. The officers were granted leaves in London, and their stories indicated that they enjoyed the sojourn immensely. The Buzz Bombs were bad around London at the time, interfering especially with Captain Lee’s and Captain Harris’s program to the extent of forcing them out of bed prematurely.<sup>35</sup>

The procurement of equipment was a complicated and difficult task not only because the depots were widely scattered but also because priorities were involved. Our priority was not high, but our colonel made it his personal mission to convince the staff sections of the United Kingdom Base Headquarters, who controlled the issue of equipment, that we were urgently needed in France to help finish the war.<sup>36</sup> He was successful in obtaining necessary releases, and the procurement task was completed earlier than expected.



<sup>34</sup> Designed in World War I by British Royal Engineer Lt. Col. Peter N. Nissen, the huts served as cheap but functional structures for a variety of purposes, including offices and housing for military personnel. They were the forerunners of the American Quonset hut. Julie Decker and Chris Chieie, eds., *Quonset Hut: Metal Living for a Modern Age* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005), 4–6.

<sup>35</sup> The term “buzz bomb” refers to Germany’s V-1 flying bomb, used extensively in the aerial attack on Britain, 1944–45. Captain Harris was Robert E. Harris, Albany, N.Y., 1st Battalion dental officer.

<sup>36</sup> Perhaps the author means the United Kingdom Base Section. Alfred M. Beck, Abe Bortz, Charles W. Lynch, Lida Mayo, and Ralph F. Weld, *The Corps of Engineers: The War Against Germany* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1988), 351.

# The 1321st in Europe

The 1321st arrived in Liverpool, England, on 15 October 1944 and in Le Havre, France, on 6 December 1944. The regiment went to work repairing roads and bridges, establishing depots, and constructing facilities in the northeastern Vosges area of France to support the Seventh Army's advance towards Germany.

The 1321st crossed the Rhine on 24 April 1945 and rebuilt damaged roads and bridges along the autobahn. Fifteen soldiers from the regiment received bronze stars for their service in Germany. Following the Allied victory in Europe, the 1321st redeployed to the Pacific Theater, where they served in Korea.





Office of History

**Soldiers of the 373d Engineers catch their first glimpse of France at the heavily damaged port of Le Havre.**

### Across the Channel

Accordingly, we were alerted for movement to the Seventh Army sector in eastern France in lieu of the regiment originally scheduled for that assignment. On 30 November we moved to the Romsey Marshalling Area near Southampton.<sup>37</sup> Vehicles and equipment went over the roads; the majority of the troops made the trip by rail. Our stay at the marshalling area was characterized by

<sup>37</sup> The Romsey Marshalling Area was one of several camps in southern England used as staging areas for the Normandy invasion of June 1944.

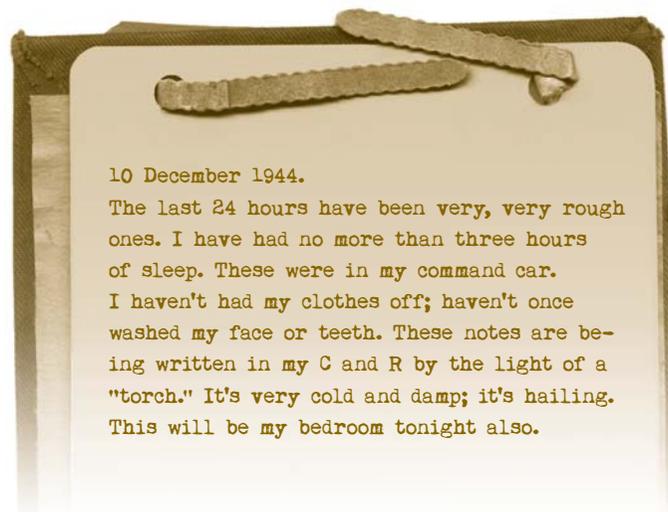
more rain and mud, but it was brief, for on 1 December we started loading on various vessels at the Southampton docks. The vehicles and equipment of H & S Company were loaded on two LSTs (landing ship, tank), and all of the vehicles and equipment of the lettered companies, plus approximately 280 officers and men, were loaded on the *Nicholas Herkimer*, a Liberty Ship. The main body of troops boarded the *Leopoldville*, a Belgian cargo line vessel operated by the English. (At the end of the war we learned with interest that two weeks after discharging our troops, the *Leopoldville* had been sunk, resulting in the second greatest loss of life during the entire war.)<sup>38</sup>

The crossing on the *Herkimer*, as we tenderly called her, was anything but a pleasure cruise, for it took longer in crossing the Channel than the USS *Mount Vernon* had taken in crossing the Atlantic, and under much less comfortable conditions. On the first two attempts it was necessary to turn back to safe anchorage because of the high winds and heavy seas. Some of the cargo was damaged during these attempts when it tore loose

from the lashings and shifted. The third attempt, on 6 December, was successful and the crossing was made on water smooth as glass, but after the crossing the *Herkimer* had to wait four days off Le Havre for a pilot to guide her over the sandbar to a berth.

<sup>38</sup> The Southeastern Shipping Corp. built the Liberty Ship *Nicholas Herkimer* in 1943; it was scrapped in 1967. Walter W. Jaffee, *The Liberty Ships from A (A. B. Hammond) to Z (Zona Gale)* (Palo Alto: Glencannon Press, 2004), 264. A German U-boat sank the *Leopoldville* in the English Channel on 24 December 1944 near Cherbourg, France. Eight hundred and two American soldiers, most from the 66th Division, died. Allan Andrade, *S. S. Leopoldville Disaster, December 24, 1944* (New York: Tern Book Co., 1997).

The entrance into the harbor at Le Havre had a profound effect on us, for it brought us in close contact, for the first time, with the ravages of war. The dock facilities and the city were in shambles—piles of rubble and twisted steel.<sup>39</sup> The damage we had seen in England did not begin to compare with Le Havre. The LCTs (landing craft, tank) landed us on the beach for our first amphibious operation. Two days were required to unload the vehicles and equipment and assemble them along the side of a road in Transit Area B. The troops traveling on the *Leopoldville* had arrived three days earlier than those on the *Herkimer*, but their three-day bivouac in pup tents in the rain and cold and mud was a miserable episode. Several men caught bad colds, and a few were left behind with pneumonia. Meanwhile, the vehicles and equipment loaded on LSTs went up the Seine River to Rouen to be discharged there.



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### Eastern France

Our instructions for movement from the Channel ports directed us to Dijon, which is located in the eastern section of France, but gave us no clue as to our specific assignment. Duly impressed at the time with the necessity of secrecy and having a naïve faith that "they" knew what "they" were doing ("they" being a mystical body who guided our destiny), we started on the cross-country jaunt. The movement was made in different groups, over different routes, and by different modes of transportation, but in general it started on 10 December and, except for stragglers, was completed on the 15th—not

<sup>39</sup> The Allies subjected German-held Le Havre to heavy bombardment by air, sea, and land, destroying nearly two-thirds of the city. Before the Germans surrendered Le Havre they inflicted further damage, especially to the port facilities. Beck, et al., *War Against Germany*, 360.



Members of the 1321st on one of the "forty and eights," inscribed with "Golden Gate in Forty-Eight with Aldo's Boys."

at Dijon but approximately 120 miles north of there at Les Forges. Those who crossed the Channel on the *Leopoldville* started at the Le Havre station and traveled on "forty and eights," French boxcars which bore the inscription "40 hommes ou 8 chevaux."<sup>40</sup> Pop Cross started at Rouen and arrived safely at the destination with all vehicles intact. The vehicles unloaded from the *Herkimer* started from Transit Area B in three serials but filtered across into Les Forges in dribbles. For all of us the movement afforded the opportunity to see the effects of Allied might as evidenced by the wrecked German equipment strewn alongside the roads and the destruction wrought on France. We received our first intimate glimpse of Frenchmen and heard our first French as children surrounded us at halts and asked, "Avez-vous des bonbons?"—somewhat of a change from the familiar, "Any gum, chum?"<sup>41</sup> Each group can claim many features of interest, but there can be no question that those who traveled on the "forty and eights" are entitled to the spotlight.

Not until we arrived in Dijon did we learn that we were assigned to the Continental Advance Section (CAS), a base section whose mission was the direct support of the United States Seventh Army and the French First Army, and that Col. Chauncey K. Smullen,

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<sup>40</sup> "40 hommes ou 8 chevaux" is French for "40 men or 8 horses," which indicated the capacity of the railcar. American soldiers became acquainted with these cars in the First World War, when they were used extensively to transport troops to the front.

<sup>41</sup> "Avez-vous des bonbons?" is French for "Do you have any candy?"



Snow and cold weather dominated the regiment's experiences in France during the winter of 1944-45.

A view of Epinal, one of the first locations of regimental headquarters for the 1321st in France.



Maj. W. H. Jaques' regimental operations office, 29 January 1945.

CAS Engineer, was our new boss.<sup>42</sup> We were introduced to officers with whom we would have many contacts in the future and who would prove good friends—Maj. Bill Alsyn, roads section; Major Addis, design section; Major Impson, supply officer; Captain McKenna, operations officer, and Major O'Toole, chief of engineering, who gave us the impression initially of being a sourpuss but who, as we learned later, was a sound engineer with a delightful sense of humor.<sup>43</sup> During this first visit to Dijon we were assigned the responsibility of maintaining certain roads and bridges on main supply routes, which linked base and army depots, and we were advised that our initial location would be Les Forges, a town north of Dijon roughly in the direction from which we had just come.

Les Forges, three miles west of Epinal, was a typical small French village of tiled roof houses, manure piles, poultry, cattle, and French peasants all intimately intermingled. A brick and tile factory provided housing for a short time but proved inadequate, and on

<sup>42</sup> The Continental Advance Section was originally the Coastal Base Section; on 10 September 1944 it became the Continental Base Section and was renamed the Continental Advance Section on 26 September 1944. CONAD, not CAS, was the accepted acronym. Beck, et al., *War Against Germany*, 449. CONAD was the advance section of the southern assault on the Continent. *Final Report of the Chief Engineer, European Theater of Operations, 1942-1945*, vol. 1 (n.p., n.d.), iii, CEHO.

<sup>43</sup> Impson (first name not known) was the engineer supply officer of CONAD. See Bagnulo's diary entry for 23 January 1945.



A curious child peers through the window as members of the regiment take a break from their work in France.

French barracks which had suffered very little damage in the war. Reconnaissance of buildings to be used for the rest center had already been accomplished by officers of CAS headquarters and our Captain Lee, so upon arrival the troops went to work immediately rehabilitating the Casernes Gareson, Stainville, Pallestiere, Busarine, and the Château Stanislas.<sup>46</sup> We were impressed particularly by the grand Château Stanislas, which had been damaged considerably by German and then American troops (who had used it for billets) but which still gave testimony of a glorious past in the remnants of its spacious mirrored ballrooms, marble stairs, luxurious living rooms, exquisite chandeliers, and large courtyards whose soft lawns had been deeply scarred by the wheels of military vehicles.<sup>47</sup> The companies of the 2d Battalion worked furiously, for all were keenly interested in providing as much as possible for the combat troops, but after seven days the project was abandoned suddenly. The Germans had started their winter offensive, denying the troops any hope of rest.<sup>48</sup>

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15 December 1944, regimental headquarters and the 1st Battalion (Companies A, B, and C) moved into French military barracks, Caserne de Courcy Annex, in nearby Epinal.<sup>44</sup>

The solution to inadequate housing for the 2d Battalion came when orders were received on a Saturday night, 16 December, to create a division rest center at Lunéville, approximately thirty miles north of Epinal. Lt. Gen. Alexander M. Patch of the Seventh Army wanted this rest center for his divisions, some of which had seen long, continuous frontline service, like the veteran 3d, 36th, and 45th Divisions.<sup>45</sup> The following day, Sunday, the 2d Battalion moved to Lunéville to undertake the project and occupied the Caserne Stainville, a fine old

<sup>44</sup> "Caserne" is French for "barracks" or "garrison." For more details on the movements and whereabouts of the regiment's battalions and companies in France and Germany, see "Unit History," National Archives.

<sup>45</sup> Lt. Gen. Alexander M. Patch was named commander of the U.S. Seventh Army on 2 March 1944.



<sup>46</sup> The Caserne Stainville is in Lunéville; the other three mentioned could not be identified.

<sup>47</sup> Stanislas I Leszczyński was elected king of Poland in 1704 but was deposed by the Russian army. Stanislas fled to France, where his daughter married Louis XV. After Stanislas was again elected king of Poland and again deposed, France granted him the Duchy of Lorraine in 1737. The duke often held court in the Château de Lunéville. It is unclear if Bagnulo is referring to this château or one in Commercy known as the Château Stanislas. James Breck Perkins, *France Under Louis XV*, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1897) 1:113-23, 155-58, 160, 168.

<sup>48</sup> The Germans launched a surprise offensive in the Ardennes region on 16 December 1944. They succeeded in creating a huge salient in the Allied lines in Belgium and Luxembourg, and the fighting that ensued is known in English as the Battle of the Bulge. The Allies blunted the German advance on 24 December and began pushing the enemy back into Germany. Several general service regiments, but not the 1321st, fought as infantry in the combat area. *Final Report of the Chief Engineer*, vol. 1, 143.



## Repairing Roads in France

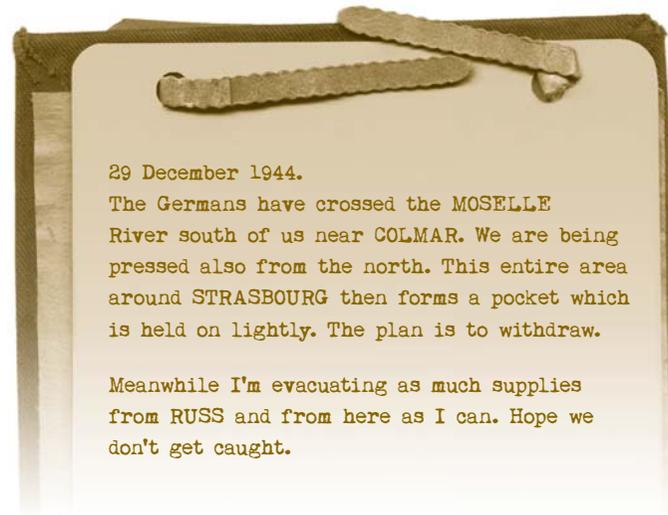
In Europe, road maintenance was one of the 1321st's most important tasks because the Allied advance depended on the steady flow of men and supplies toward the front. The regiment maintained hundreds of miles of roads, largely by improving drainage and reinforcing surfaces with crushed rock. In mid-February 1945, the 1321st was working on roads between Epinal and Lunéville, France. Clockwise from upper left: engineers using logs, later to be covered with dirt and crushed rock, to repair a heavily damaged roadbed; struggling to free a bulldozer caught in a road collapse; and working to reinforce a failing roadbed as Colonel Bagnulo supervises.

## GERMAN ADVANCES

### German Advances

Yes, the picture changed abruptly. All units were alerted against the dangers of enemy paratroopers and the activities of enemy agents disguised as American soldiers.<sup>49</sup> Security measures were increased, and plans for withdrawal were prepared in all echelons of command in the event the enemy were successful in their offensive. The Germans had crossed the Rhine River south of Strasbourg near Colmar in French First Army territory and were pressing the U.S. Seventh Army north of Strasbourg at Haguenau. The entire area around Strasbourg was held only lightly by Seventh Army troops and was a potential pocket. The plan was to withdraw from this area, to evacuate valuable materials, and to demolish any installations that might be of value to the enemy. On 27 December 1944 the regiment received instructions to evacuate captured enemy engineer materials from depots in Strasbourg, Obernai, and Russ and also to organize ten demolition squads to be readily available to demolish bridges and valuable installations. As the combat troops withdrew to more favorable positions, men of Companies E and F moved forward to undertake these tasks and established efficient loading organizations at the captured enemy depots for the convoy of trucks assembled from the 46th Quartermaster Truck Group, the 28th Quartermaster Truck Group, the 791st Engineer Dump Truck Company, and our own regiment. We made our first contact with "Jerry," having our convoys en route to and from the depots strafed and being in several patrol clashes near the depots.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> As part of the German offensive, Operation *GREIF* involved sending German soldiers (about 150 of whom could speak English) to infiltrate American-held areas wearing American uniforms. The infiltrators had some success in creating confusion among the Allies, but the airborne phase proved largely a failure. Hugh M. Cole, *The Ardennes: Battle of the Bulge* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, 1965), 269–71.

<sup>50</sup> "Jerry" is a slang term for Germans, commonly used by the Allies during the war.



132nd regimental staff, 22 March 1945.

Back at Epinal, a distance of 150 miles, the 1st Battalion unloaded the cargo of the returning convoys in their bivouac area and before it was over found themselves literally buried under pipe, nails, wire, skis, commodes, sinks, and electrical fixtures, all of which had to be sorted and shipped to the rear by rail to our own depots. Under different conditions the trip between the two points would be most enjoyable, for the route is through the picturesque Vosges Mountains, but the lieutenants who commanded the convoys had little opportunity to absorb the beauties because of the difficulties encountered in traveling over the winding mountain roads with heavily loaded trucks. On one of the trips, Lieutenant Ellner was seriously injured when his weapons carrier skidded on the icy road and crashed into a tree. On 1 January 1945 our troops were ordered out of Strasbourg and Obernai (a platoon of Company E under Lieutenant Wilburn remained at Russ because this was farther to the rear) after having evacuated approximately twelve hundred tons of valuable engineer materials.<sup>51</sup>

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### Work Near Epinal

During the period that the 2d Battalion was engaged in the activities in Lunéville, Strasbourg, and Obernai, the 1st Battalion commenced a number of additional projects at Epinal. The first of these tasks, which was assigned to Company C, was the rehabilitation of a French military prep school to provide facilities for the 236th

<sup>51</sup> J. Wilburn, commander 3d Platoon, Company E.



**Hospital construction using prefabricated components in Lunéville, France, 30 January 1945.**

**Bridge over the Moselle River, rebuilt by Company B of the 1321st in Epinal, France, 27 January 1945.**



General Hospital. They started the job on 22 December 1944 and continued for approximately one month. Skills heretofore untried were called upon to accomplish the work, for major electrical, plumbing, and sewer installations were required along with work involving difficult carpentry. Wounded men were received at this hospital shortly after we started work. Not only were the people actually working on the project busy but also those responsible for the procurement of supplies. Supply personnel were faced with a job entirely new—the procurement of construction supplies from depots in Dijon approximately 120 miles to the rear. As the captured enemy materials that were being evacuated became available, this problem was greatly simplified. As part of our principal mission of road and bridge maintenance, Lieutenant Bayliss and his platoon of Company B rebuilt a bridge across the Moselle River under the most severe conditions. The 1st Battalion became involved in many lesser jobs like installing an office in the Seventh Army post exchange warehouse and painting directional signs for our friends in the Quartermaster Trucking units, who were not good map readers like the engineers. Lieutenant Meyers of Company A was assigned the task of guarding and operating a lumber dump at Vincey, north of Epinal.<sup>52</sup>

The many and varied tasks which were assigned to us were sufficient to keep the average regiment busy, but in our case they were in addition to our primary mission of maintaining three hundred miles of roads and bridges. During the month of January 1945 we encountered our coldest and most severe weather conditions, and all companies of the regiment locked horns with a stubborn snow removal problem. The few snow plows that were available were drawn from the depots along with additional graders and bulldozers, and more plows were procured in nearby villages from the *Ponts et Chaussées*, the highway department of the French government, in an all-out “get the supplies through” effort.<sup>53</sup> Rail transportation had become completely congested, and supply trucks rolled day and night up to the front. We labored night and day to keep the roads open. One night while answering a call with his platoon to spread sand on an icy slope, Lieutenant Price’s weapons carrier skidded and crashed into a tree, resulting in his permanent disability, our second officer loss.<sup>54</sup> The heavy work during January took its toll on two other officers, Lieutenant Colonel Wetzel and Captain Cross, both of whom had to be sent to the hospital and eventually back to the States.<sup>55</sup> Capt.

<sup>52</sup> E. E. Meyers, administrative officer, Company A.

<sup>53</sup> The *Ponts et Chaussées* is the French government’s bridges and roads administration.

<sup>54</sup> A. E. Price, commander 3d Platoon, Company D.

<sup>55</sup> See Bagnulo’s diary entry for 25 January 1945.



When heavy snows gave way to spring rains, the engineers' mission changed from snow removal to road repair.



Shin deep in rain and mud, an engineer inspects road damage from spring thawing and heavy vehicle use.

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John Dabbs was moved up to the position of executive officer and Lieutenant Kellogg was transferred from Company F to replace Cross as commanding officer of Headquarters and Service Company.<sup>56</sup>

It was in January also that we undertook a job that required only a few men and a small amount of equipment but that made an indelible impression on those of us who came in contact with it. The Quartermaster Graves Registration Company was falling behind in digging graves in the solidly frozen ground for the soldiers, American and German, who had been sacrificed in the winter offensive. The company commander came to us with his problem, and we responded with all of the air compressors and dirt-digging tools that could be made available. We saw the corpses as they were removed from the mattress covers in which they had been transported by the truckloads to the "bull pen"—paled in death, bloody, and frozen stiff in the various grotesque positions in which they had died. Normally the men sang, joked, and indulged in a certain amount of horseplay as they worked, but they undertook this job with a grim determination and with the thought in their minds, "but for the Grace of God, there go I."

Early in February the rains came and the snow disappeared. We had looked forward hopefully for a period of rest when the snow and ice would disappear, as the men and equipment had worked



<sup>56</sup> John N. Dabbs, of Bessemer, Ala., executive officer of the 1321st, was later promoted to major.

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relentlessly through December and January, but such was not to be the case. Following closely on the heels of the retreating snow came the early spring thaws, and with the thaws came our most trying and difficult problems. All Frenchmen know that certain sections of their roads will fail completely during the thaws if subjected to any traffic, and our friends at the *Ponts et Chaussées* advised us of this, emphasizing their point by referring to what had happened to their roads during World War I. The German winter offensive had been stopped and preparations for our spring offensive were underway, which meant hauling mountains of supplies forward over these roads in spite of the warnings of the Frenchmen. Certain stretches, true to their prediction, very quickly, almost suddenly, became quagmires under the constant, heavy pounding of the supply vehicles that streamed forward in an endless chain. As we tackled our new problems, we looked back to the period of snow and ice and sighed, "At least we had roads then."

Covering three hundred miles of road, we were spread out thinly, and each section of road that failed presented a difficult task requiring feet, not inches, of solid fill to replace the mud or the construction of corduroy road.<sup>57</sup> All of the men and equipment, assisted somewhat by the *Ponts et Chaussées* and German prisoners



<sup>57</sup> A corduroy road is one constructed with logs usually laid crosswise. Solid fill is generally crushed rock and is essential to any horizontal construction project.



**Soldiers unloading timber at the lumber yard in Vincey, France, 9 February 1945.**

of war (PWs), were thrown into the battle, and even Captain Harris, our dental officer, put aside his dental drills temporarily to supervise the repair of a bad stretch of road north of Epinal. By ditching and draining and hauling in rock, by constructing by-passes, by laying corduroy, and by pulling the trucks through the mud with bulldozers, we kept the supplies moving up to the front.

50

While our immediate objective during the early part of February 1945 was to keep the roads open, our eyes were pointed generally north toward Nancy and Metz as future sites from which to provide support for the Seventh Army, whose spring thrust was expected to be north and beyond these points. The area to which we were looking had already been taken by the Third Army, but it was planned that this area would be turned over to the Seventh Army because the effort of the Third Army would be farther north and slightly to the west. Colonel Bagnulo, Major Jaques, and Captain Lee reconnoitered for depot and billet sites in the vicinity of Nancy and Toul, and Major Jaques and Captain Dabbs made one wild sortie north beyond Metz in which they tangled with Third Army MPs (military police), artillery, and anti-aircraft batteries and were grateful that they managed to return unscathed. An extensive military installation in Toul, the Caserne Bautzen, was selected as the site of billets for engineer troops and also for covered storage and shop space for engineer depot operations. South of Toul at Domgermain—a triangular area formed by railroad tracks, two legs of which could not be used for through traffic because of a demolished bridge beyond the point where these two legs joined to form the apex of the triangle—was selected to be developed for open storage. Captain Lee established the advanced regimental command post at Caserne Bautzen and Company C, reinforced, was moved to this location to undertake the



**Engineers of the 1321st in late March as they supported Allied advances toward Germany.**

51

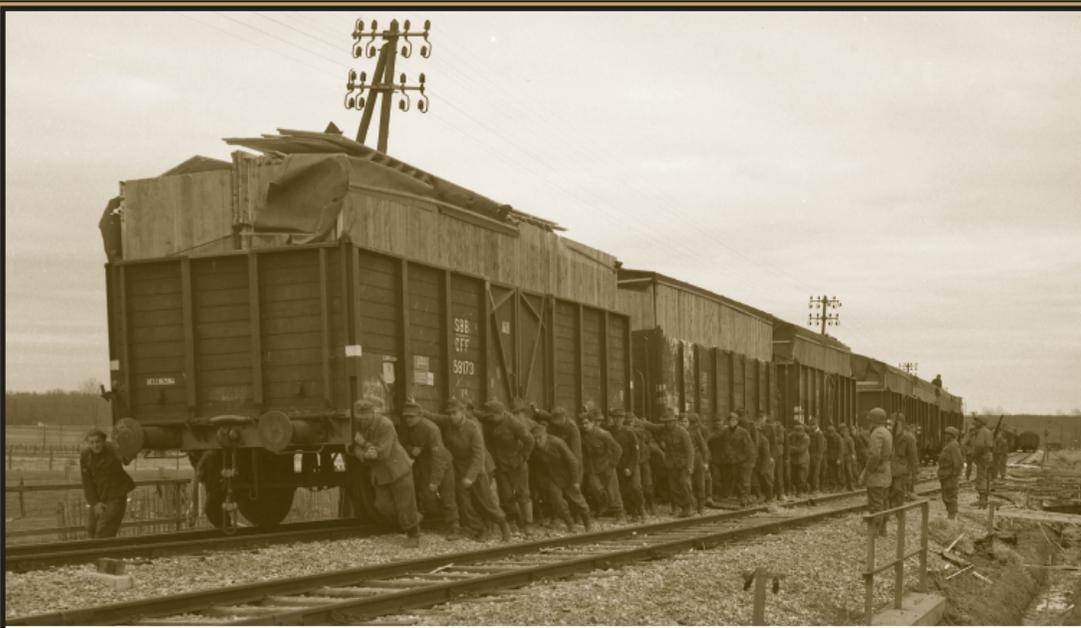
development of the two depot sites as well as rehabilitating the Hotel Europa and doing some carpentry work at the MP station in Nancy.

In February our lumber enterprise at Vincey blossomed into a thriving business. The 1392d Engineer Forestry Company was attached to the regiment with the mission of hauling lumber from the mills scattered throughout the Vosges Mountains to our yard at Vincey, where we provided for all the operations, including the hiring of our first steam locomotive to shift cars. To the Seventh Army alone we shipped fifty thousand board feet of tactical timber daily for a period of approximately one month, and by the time we completed this assignment in March, we had handled 3.4 million board feet of lumber.<sup>58</sup>

Early in March Company E was detached from the regiment to help form a team whose mission was to lay pipe for the supply of gasoline to the advancing divisions of the Seventh Army. This



<sup>58</sup> In the original manuscript, Bagnulo writes that the unit handled “three million four hundred board feet of lumber.” While it is possible that he was being extremely precise (3.0004 million), it is likely that by accident he omitted the word “thousand” from the phrase “four hundred thousand” (3.4 million).



## Engineer Depot at Domgermain

Beginning in February 1945, the 1321st spent several months building an engineer supply depot at Domgermain, France. With the help of four companies of German prisoners of war, the regiment prepared the site, operated rock quarries that produced thousands of yards of crushed stone, and built access roads and hard stands for open storage. Activities at the depot included (clockwise from the bottom): depot site preparation and road construction; prisoners pushing railcars loaded with construction supplies; and operation of a rock crusher by the 1321st.



Soldiers of the 132nd repairing one of the regiment's many vehicles.

assignment carried Company E right into the battle zone, laying pipe as fast as mine sweepers could clear a path. On 15 March Company D moved north of Metz to Woippy to take over from the Third Army a captured enemy engineer depot.

### Spring Offensive into Germany

By the end of March 1945 the spring offensive was well underway. It appeared that Lt. Gen. (later General) George S. Patton and his Third Army would reach the Rhine in a few days. The direction of General Patton's thrust, however, shifted in an easterly direction more than initially contemplated, causing General Patch and his Seventh Army to advance in an easterly instead of a northerly direction. General Patch called on CAS to relieve some of his engineer combat battalions of road responsibilities so that they could prepare for the Rhine River crossing, and CAS in turn called on us, marking the beginning of a period characterized by many movements, more rush jobs, and our first achievement medals. We started off by moving into the area that Seventh Army had captured, lost, and recaptured and where they subsequently spent the winter of 1944–45. Regimental headquarters, 1st Battalion headquarters, H & S Company, and the 791st Engineer Dump Truck Company, which was attached to



German prisoners of war on kitchen duty with the 132nd, 8 April 1945. The regiment also used hundreds of German prisoners for maintenance and construction jobs.

the regiment for this mission, moved to Sarrebourg. Company A moved to Baccarat, Company B to Château de Ketzling, Company C to Château-Salins, Company D to Hofmuhl near Saverne, and Company F to Haguenau, where for a period they were subjected nightly to enemy air raids. Company E was farther north, spread out over a large area and still engaged in pipeline operations. At this time the regiment had two companies of German PWs, totaling five hundred men, one of which was attached to Company B and the other to Company D.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>59</sup> To alleviate the shortage of American engineer soldiers, German prisoners of war were pressed into service. American labor supervision units oversaw the work of the prisoners, who were organized into 250-man construction, depot, maintenance, and forestry companies. *Final Report of the Chief Engineer*, vol. 1, 144–45.

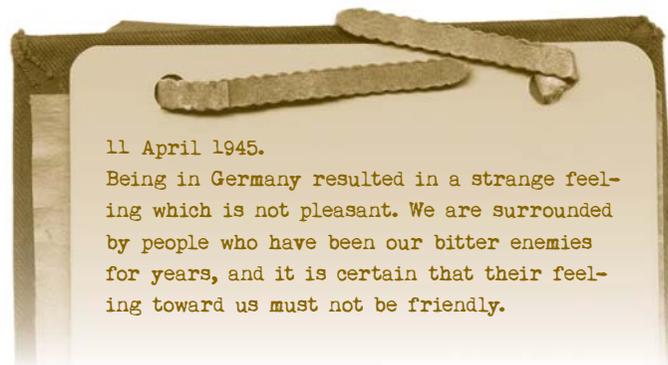
## SPRING OFFENSIVE INTO GERMANY

Road conditions were such that any repairs short of complete reconstruction were inadequate. Rock was shipped by rail to various distribution centers located throughout our area of responsibility, from where it was hauled to the roads as needed. Along with road maintenance, the regiment was engaged in operating water points at Blâmont, Sarrebourg, and Saverne and in pipeline construction. The main supply route (MSR) from Sarreguemines through Homburg and Kaiserslautern to Mannheim suddenly loomed in importance and required considerable work. Company C moved near Kaiserslautern with one of its platoons under Lt. John Collins at Bad Durkheim.<sup>60</sup> Company A moved to Sarreguemines and Company B to Homburg with the company of German PWs attached. Advance regimental command post moved to Bad Durkheim also.



Engineers of the 1321st and a newly completed water point, which purified and distributed potable water, 8 April 1945.

56



On 23 April 1945 the regiment was given its largest single assignment yet—that of opening an MSR from Karlsruhe to Stuttgart for the final drive of Seventh Army into Munich. Our first companies, Companies F and D, crossed the Rhine on 24 April. The 2d Battalion

<sup>60</sup> John E. Collins, Philadelphia, Pa., commander 1st Platoon, Company C.

headquarters and Company D, with its attached company of German PWs, moved to Singen, Germany; advance regimental command post and Company F moved into position at Leonberg, Germany. Company E was pulled off pipeline construction and moved into Heimsheim roughly halfway between Companies D and F. The task was to reopen an MSR by rebuilding stretches of road and bridges that had been demolished by the retreating Germans along a route which consisted of sections of the autobahn (famed German superhighway) and a parallel highway with connecting roads located so as to bypass those obstacles that could not be removed in the time allotted. Specifically, the jobs involved were as follows:

- Fill and surface bomb craters north of Karlsruhe.
- Fill and surface a crater two kilometers northwest of Singen.
- Provide support for the partially destroyed concrete stringers by cribbing and repair the hole in the concrete floor of the bridge in Singen.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Stringers are the longitudinal members that support the bridge flooring. For the bridge at Singen the engineers built crib piers, frameworks of logs filled with rubble, to support the damaged stringers.

57



Brig. Gen. Ralph M. Immell presenting Bronze Star medals to members of the 1321st with Colonel Bagnulo looking on, 13 May 1945.

58

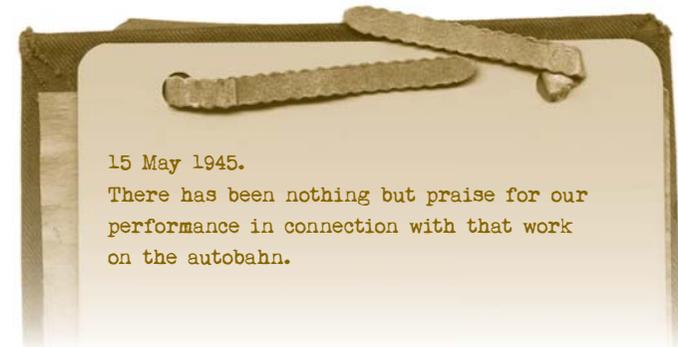
- Widen by six feet approximately a mile of road and a masonry bridge at Wilferdingen.
- Construct a masonry abutment to support eighty-foot concrete beams at the east end of a bridge where they had been sheared by demolition. This bridge on the autobahn provided an overpass for German Highway 10 about three kilometers northwest of Pforzheim.
- Construct approaches to provide for one-way traffic entering and leaving the autobahn north of Pforzheim.
- Fill two gaps, each eighty feet, the result of demolished overpasses, on the autobahn, one at Neubärental and one at Wimsheim.
- Clear the block created by dropping a built-up, steel girder overpass on the autobahn near Rutesheim.
- Fill three more gaps similar to the ones listed previously at Heimsheim, Perouse, and Rutesheim.
- Construct a two-lane bridge, 150-foot span, over a double line railroad track south of Leonberg. For this job, I-beams and hardware were found at Stuttgart, timber for cribs were cut from adjacent forests, and lumber was collected from nearby hills.
- Prepare and post signs along the entire route for the proper guidance of traffic.

Sunday, 6 May, was given as the completion date. At first glance, the job looked big; closer scrutiny indicated that it was impossible, but the companies of the 2d Battalion wasted no time in getting to work, setting that date for our target. We hit it; we still shot expert.

Meanwhile, the 1st Battalion was relieved of its road responsibility near Kaiserslautern and crossed the Rhine to repair an MSR generally parallel to the one being opened by the 2d Battalion but considerably north. The 1st Battalion headquarters and Companies A and C moved to Mühlacker. Company B moved to Heilbronn with one platoon at Heidelberg. Later all of the company, including the attached German PWs, moved to a huge castle at Fürfeld. Company A, supervised by Lt. James Gray, built a bridge which spanned a two-line railroad bridge at Bruchsal and maintained the road west of that bridge to Mannheim.<sup>62</sup> Company C constructed a transfer point at a railroad siding in Mühlacker, maintained by building one approach to the autobahn just beyond Wilferdingen. Company B maintained highways 37 and 38 between Heidelberg and Heilbronn and developed a system of roads for a prisoner of war enclosure at Heilbronn.

On Sunday, 13 May 1945, Brig. Gen. Ralph M. Immell, commanding general of CAS, inspected our achievements on the autobahn and made on-the-spot awards of the Bronze Star Medal to six officers and nine enlisted men of the regiment.<sup>63</sup> We were proud that day.<sup>64</sup>

59



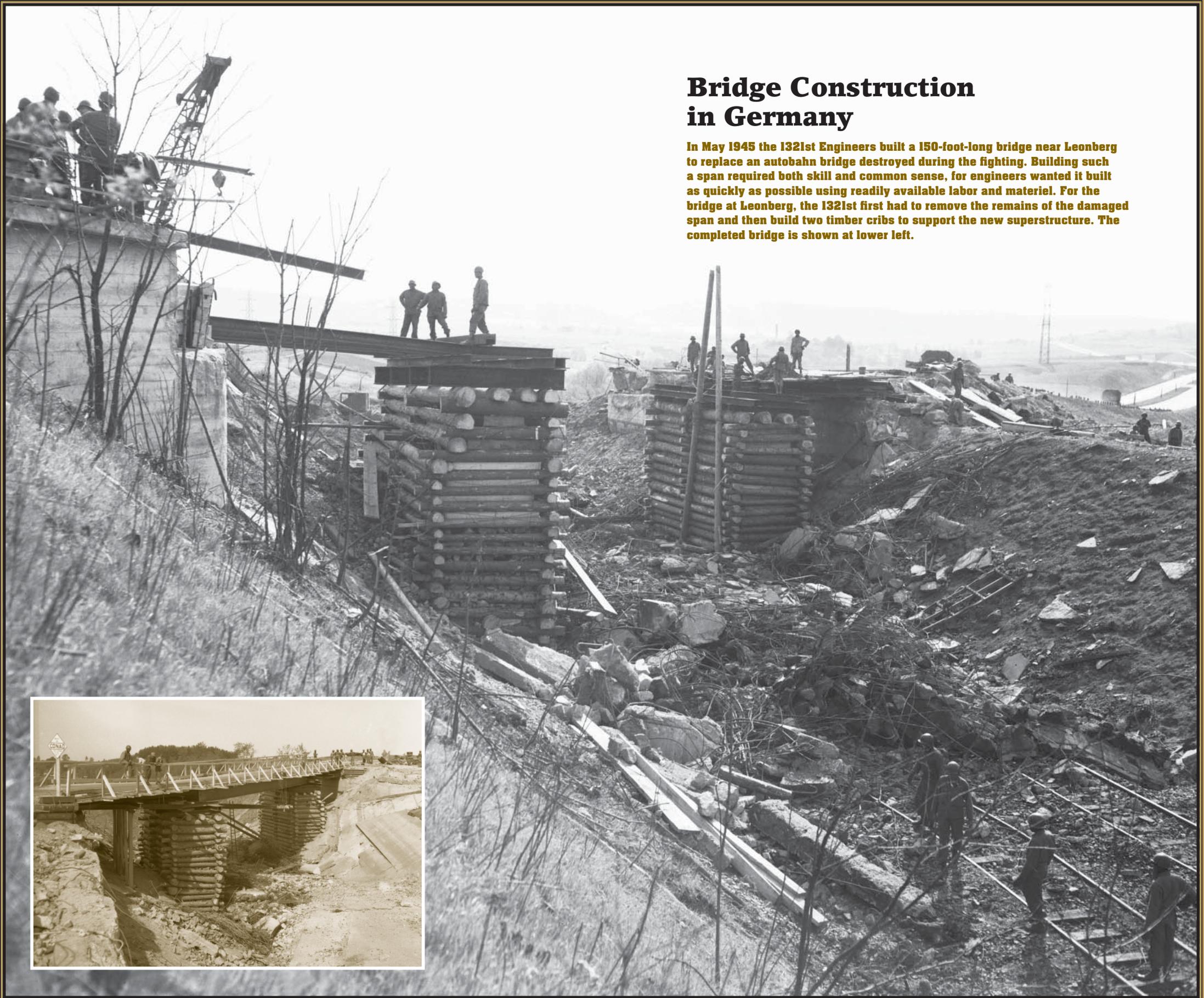
<sup>62</sup> James R. Gray, commander 1st Platoon, Company A.

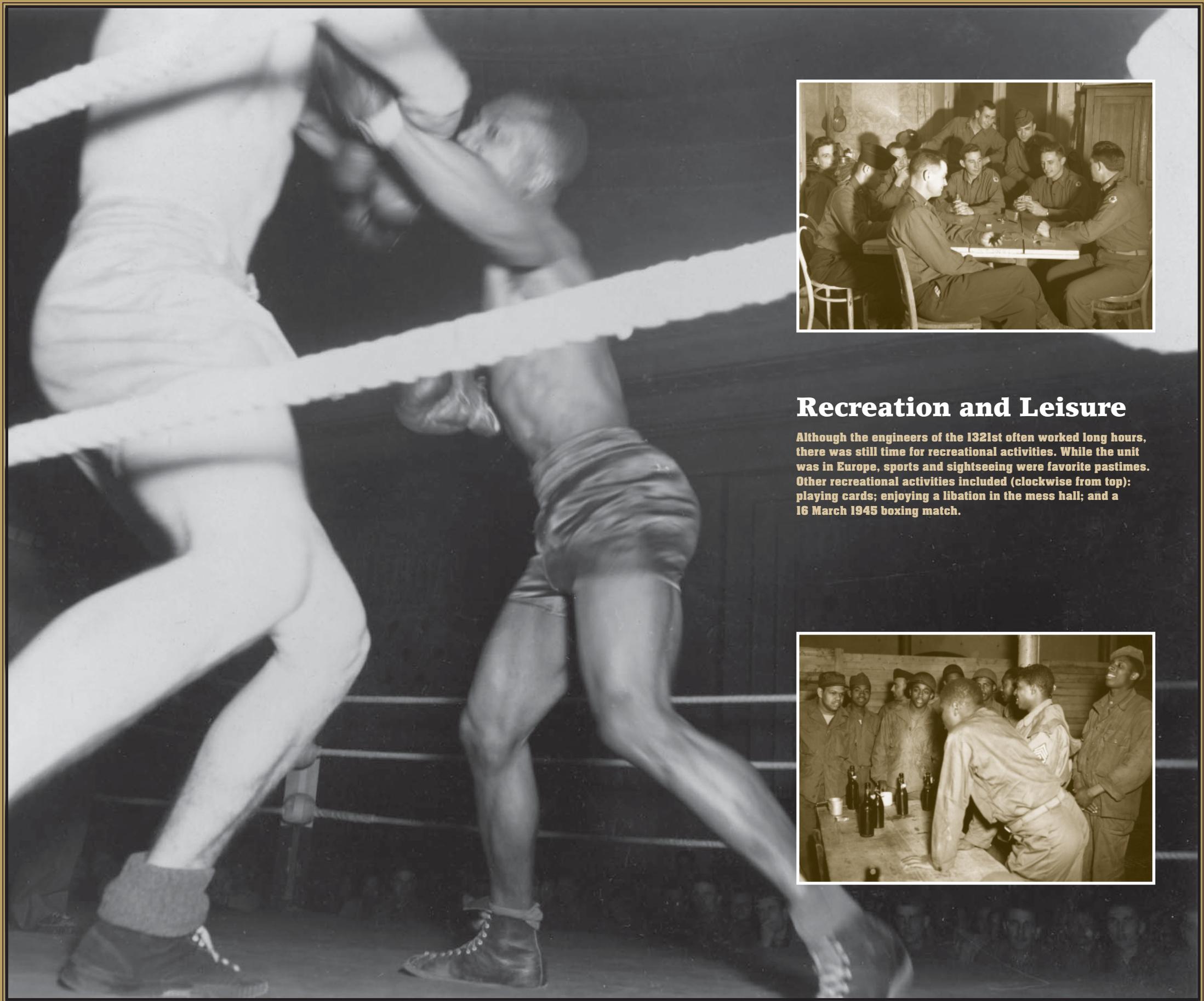
<sup>63</sup> Ralph M. Immell served as an infantry officer in World War I. Between the wars he became a brigadier general in the Wisconsin National Guard and the state's adjutant general. On active duty in World War II he performed in various capacities with the Services of Supply/Army Service Forces in North Africa and Europe. Frank R. Shirer, Chief, Historical Resources Branch, U.S. Army Center of Military History, personal communication, 23 May 2008.

<sup>64</sup> The recipients were Capt. William C. Pahl; Capt. Glenn E. Pickrel; 1st Lt. Carl J. Hopper; 1st Lt. Cecil C. Levister; 1st Lt. Vincent Ream; 2d Lt. Robert S. Parker; S. Sgt. Clarence Bufford; S. Sgt. Philip M. Bagley; S. Sgt. J. D. Cox; S. Sgt. Fred D. Dickey; S. Sgt. Louis Tanniehill; S. Sgt. Paul Triplett; S. Sgt. Isaac S. Wynn; Sgt. Franklin E. Duncan; and T/4 (Technician Fourth Grade) Dossie Hammond. In addition, S. Sgt. Aaron L. Smith was awarded the Soldier's Medal for "rescuing a fellow soldier from drowning in a stream near Singen, Germany, 13 May 1945.... The heroism displayed by Sergeant Smith on this occasion reflects great credit upon him and is in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service." "Unit History," National Archives.

## Bridge Construction in Germany

In May 1945 the 1321st Engineers built a 150-foot-long bridge near Leonberg to replace an autobahn bridge destroyed during the fighting. Building such a span required both skill and common sense, for engineers wanted it built as quickly as possible using readily available labor and materiel. For the bridge at Leonberg, the 1321st first had to remove the remains of the damaged span and then build two timber cribs to support the new superstructure. The completed bridge is shown at lower left.





## Recreation and Leisure

Although the engineers of the 1321st often worked long hours, there was still time for recreational activities. While the unit was in Europe, sports and sightseeing were favorite pastimes. Other recreational activities included (clockwise from top): playing cards; enjoying a libation in the mess hall; and a 16 March 1945 boxing match.



### Leaving France

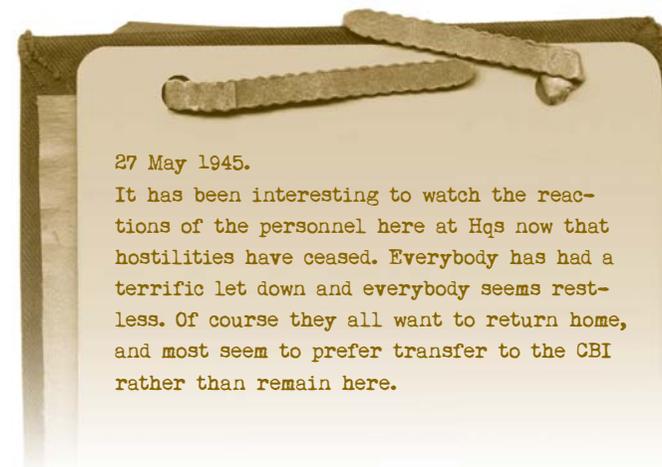
On the afternoon of General Immell's inspection we learned that the regiment was selected for direct redeployment to the Pacific Theater.

On 4 May regimental headquarters and H & S Company had moved to the Caserne Hindenburg at Kornwestheim. This caserne, which consisted of five large barracks, each with capacity for seven hundred men; two battalion sized mess halls; extensive garage and shop space; parking areas; and recreational facilities, had been completed in 1938 and was left in excellent condition by the Germans only a few days before we arrived. We decided to use it as an assembly point for the regiment prior to movement to the staging area. As the companies cleaned up the various jobs on which they had been working, they moved into Caserne Hindenburg, and for the first time since we left Camp Stapley in England, the regiment was assembled in one place again. For approximately one week we worked on our vehicles and equipment, exchanged some which were beyond repair, and received some enlisted and officer replacements. Lieutenants Edwards, Puckett, Shaffett, and Stevenson joined us at Kornwestheim to fill some of the officer shortages which had developed since arrival

Following V.E. Day, the 1321st enjoyed a respite while mobilizing to move to the Pacific Theater.



in Europe.<sup>65</sup> On 20 May vehicles and equipment of the 1st Battalion moved out for the staging area; the 2d Battalion and H & S Company convoy left the following day; and the main body of personnel plus heavy engineer equipment departed by rail on 23 May, our last trip on our beloved "forty and eights."



The staging area to which we moved was at Calas, about ten miles northwest of Marseille, France, and was still in the initial phase of construction when we arrived. Our transportation was taken from us for processing and none substituted, the chow was poor, the dust was plentiful, and the staging personnel were still in the process of being organized. Confusion, however, was not something new to us. Our readiness date was set as 3 June, so we worked furiously to procure clothing and equipment. Lt. Vincent Ream, the officer who had supervised the construction of our boxes and crates way back at Camp Sutton, went to work again to make bigger and better boxes and in much greater quantities.<sup>66</sup> It was satisfying to observe the ease with which the men constructed the boxes and crates in comparison with their performance in the same task upon starting our journey at Camp Sutton. This simple operation was indicative of our improvement—we had developed into a seasoned outfit.

We processed as quickly as the facilities at the staging area would permit, and by 10 June 1945 all personnel and equipment were ready. Our equipment was loaded on the USS *White Squall*, along with Lt. Horace Smith as ship's transport quartermaster, and the ship set

<sup>65</sup> Edwards is probably William T. Edwards, Rotan, Tex.; James A. Puckett, Kaufman, Tex.; Alvin B. Shaffett, Port Arthur, Tex.; and Carl A. Stevenson, Dawson Springs, Ky.

<sup>66</sup> Vincent A. Ream, Paxton, Ill.

sail for the Pacific on 28 June.<sup>67</sup> We picked up additional enlisted men and officers to fill shortages resulting from losses that occurred as the result of readjustment. The officers who joined at this time were Capt. David Curtis and Capt. Robert Marquardt, Chaplain James Stewart, Lt. Thomas Brinkley, and Warrant Officer Gerard Dore.<sup>68</sup> Although the personnel had completed processing by 10 June, we had to kill time for a little more than a month in sporadic review of training, assorted athletics, and hoping that the war would end, resulting in our being sent home. Finally, after almost two months at the staging area, we were alerted, but personnel of the regiment were split into two groups for the movement. The 1st Battalion headquarters and Companies A and B loaded on the USAT *Fred C. Ainsworth* on 13 July and set sail the following day.<sup>69</sup> The balance of the regiment boarded the USS *Admiral R. E. Coontz* and set sail on 21 July 1945.<sup>70</sup> Thus on three different ships the personnel and equipment of the 1321st were en route to the Pacific to put an end to hostilities there also.

### To the Pacific

Our first stop was at Cristobal, the Atlantic end of the Panama Canal. The ship took on fresh provisions and ice and refueled. It was here in Panama that we had our first taste of bananas since we had left the States—incidentally our last. Being restricted to a fenced-in area on the docks, we did not do much sightseeing in Cristobal, but inside the stockade the Red Cross did wonders to provide for our recreation. Everything from ice cold Coca-Colas to a USO show was



67 The North Carolina Ship Building Co. launched the *White Squall* in 1943. After its war service it sailed for the Matson Navigation Co. under the name *Sonoma*. *Lloyd's Register of Shipping, Register Book, 1950-51*, 2 vols. (London: Lloyd's Register of Shipping, 1950), 2:76946.

68 David T. Curtis, Toledo, Ohio; Robert B. Marquardt, Binghamton, N.Y.; James E. W. Stewart, Boston, Mass; Thomas M. Brinkley, Los Angeles, Calif.; and Gerard V. Dore, Adams, Mass.

69 The *Fred C. Ainsworth* was a War Department troopship built by the Ingalls Shipping Corp. in 1943. Initially, it carried soldiers from San Francisco and Seattle to the Pacific. In June 1945 it sailed to Marseille and from there transported troops of the 1321st to Ulithi and Okinawa. Roland W. Charles, *Troopships of World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Army Transportation Association, 1947), 26.

70 The Bethlehem Steel Corporation built the troopship *Admiral R. E. Coontz* in 1944. The ship transported troops from San Francisco to Pearl Harbor and Ulithi until mid-1945 when it sailed to Europe. It cleared Marseille 21 July 1945 with soldiers of the 1321st aboard and arrived at Okinawa in September 1945. The *Coontz* was decommissioned in March 1946, turned over to the War Department, and renamed the *General Alexander M. Patch*. Moody, *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, 1:12.



A view from their ship as the 1321st prepared to sail from Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, to Okinawa, Japan, 14 August 1945.

made available.<sup>71</sup> There were sandwiches, doughnuts, coffee, and movies, and a post exchange, a souvenir stand, and a post office.

The trip through the Panama Canal highlighted our journey. We were fascinated by the strange country which bordered the canal and were inspired by the canal itself, which is a tribute to American engineering, tenacity, and ability to do big things.

We entered the Pacific on 3 August 1945 and headed for Pearl Harbor. It was during our three-day stopover at Pearl Harbor that the false pre-surrender celebrations occurred and President Harry Truman made the official announcement of the Japanese surrender. To be at the very site where the war started on the day it ended was a thrill. Many theories were advanced on the cause for the Japanese surrender—the atomic bomb, our aerial might, the blockade, and others—but we knew that the Japanese had learned of our coming and that was the real reason for the surrender.

To the seas again on the 15th. We stopped for a short time at Eniwetok, then proceeded to Saipan, where some of the small units

71 The USO (United Service Organizations) is a private, nonprofit organization that supports troop morale by providing entertainment, welfare services, and recreational activities.

travelling on the *Admiral Coontz* unloaded. From Saipan we sailed to Guam, where the 1325th Engineer General Service Regiment was put ashore. We then sailed to Ulithi, a naval anchorage approximately four hundred miles south of Guam, where we were to wait for two weeks until called for by the port authorities at Okinawa.<sup>72</sup> It was here that we caught up with the USS *Ainsworth*, which was carrying 1st Battalion headquarters, Companies A and B, and the USS *White Squall*, which had our equipment aboard. While at Ulithi we were permitted to go ashore to the tropical enchanted isle named Mog Mog. Some recreational facilities were available, as were plenty of beverages, hard and soft. The “Battle of Mog Mog,” as it was designated, was a unique experience for all of us.<sup>73</sup> After almost two weeks, the *Ainsworth* set sail for Okinawa, and the personnel aboard landed in time to experience the first minor typhoon, while the *Coontz* left Ulithi a few days later and caught this typhoon on the high seas.

### Okinawa, Korea, and the Last Days of the 1321st

By 20 September 1945 all personnel had been unloaded at Okinawa and we started in earnest to develop our tent camp.<sup>74</sup> Our camp site was located on cultivated fields, bordered on the west by the beach that had been the scene of considerable fighting, and the bones and decomposed bodies of Japanese soldiers were strewn along the length of it. In spite of the lack of materials and equipment (our regimental equipment was still on the *White Squall*) and the rains, which converted our area into a sea of mud, we developed a credible camp by 7 October. On that day, Saturday, an inspection was made of the entire area. The colonel was very well pleased, as what we had developed would compare favorably with any other camp on the island.<sup>75</sup>

The credible camp was not to last long, however, for the typhoon of the afternoon and night of 10 October changed all that. In the worst storm that the island had suffered in twenty years, the wind



Office of History

A storm-ravaged camp in Okinawa after the typhoon of 10 October 1945.

having attained a velocity of 120 miles per hour, the camp was reduced to a total wreck without one tent escaping the fury of the driving wind, rain, and sand. We had had no warning of the storm, but as the wind increased we scattered to find protection behind stone walls, in the cellars of ruined houses in the nearby villages, and in caves. Those who took refuge in some of the caves had to dispose of Japanese skeletons before moving in. The morning of the 11th found us looking out on a dismal setting, a ghost town. There was little material with which to rebuild, but within a few days our camp had again taken shape. Where we had squad tents before, however, we now lived in pup tents; where once we had some sort of bed, we now slept on the ground.

On 13 October we drew some equipment for the purpose of maintaining the roads throughout the south end of the island, developing a water point, and doing odd jobs like constructing an amphitheater with a capacity of five thousand for the troops bivouacked in our general area. During October we lost many of our key enlisted personnel and some officers by readjustment, and when the regiment loaded on LSTs early in November for movement to Korea, it left many more enlisted men and officers to be readjusted.<sup>76</sup>



<sup>72</sup> Ulithi is an atoll in the western Caroline Islands that was occupied by American forces in September 1944. It became a major base for the offensive against Japan.

<sup>73</sup> The “Battle of Mog Mog” is likely a reference to an alcohol-induced brawl on the island between Navy pilots of the USS *Bunker Hill* and those of the USS *Essex* in March 1945. Arthur L. Kelly, *BattleFire! Combat Stories from World War II* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 42.

<sup>74</sup> Before arriving at Okinawa, the regiment, on 12 August 1945, landed at Ie Shima, a small island about two miles off the west coast of Okinawa. Stanton, *Order of Battle*, 563.

<sup>75</sup> At Okinawa the regiment was consolidated and assigned to XXIV Corps, Tenth Army, in anticipation of movement to Korea. “Unit History,” National Archives.

<sup>76</sup> Prior to the war, Japan controlled the Korean Peninsula completely. After Japan’s defeat, the U.S. and the USSR agreed to a joint trusteeship of Korea, and both nations sent troops to the country. The Soviets occupied the area north of the 38th parallel; the Americans were in the south. In 1948 the two areas officially separated into the Democratic Peoples’ Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea.



A Korean man in traditional hanbok clothing as photographed by a member of the 1321st Engineers, ca. 1946.

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When the regiment landed at Inch'on, Korea, it consisted of thirty-six officers and less than nine hundred enlisted men.<sup>77</sup>

Korea was the strangest of all countries in which we had served. Here we encountered people whose dress, customs, and civilization were different from anything we had known before, and here we saw the rice paddies, which were new to our eyes although centuries had been required for their development. Regimental headquarters was set up in building F-6, a former Japanese factory for the manufacture of small arms ammunition, and the personnel were billeted in Area Q, former workers' quarters, both located in ASCOM City. ASCOM City, a derivative of Army Service Command, was the name given by the XXIV Corps Service Command to the huge industrial center that had



<sup>77</sup> Companies C, D, E, and F, H & S Company, and the Medical Detachment departed from Okinawa on 31 October 1945 and arrived at Inch'on on 6 November. Companies A and B and "remaining rear echelon troops" sailed from Okinawa on 5 November 1945 and arrived at Inch'on on 11 November. "Unit History," National Archives.



Staff Sergeant Billing, 1321st Engineers.

been developed in the broad valley east of Inch'on as an arsenal for the production of small arms and small arms ammunition.

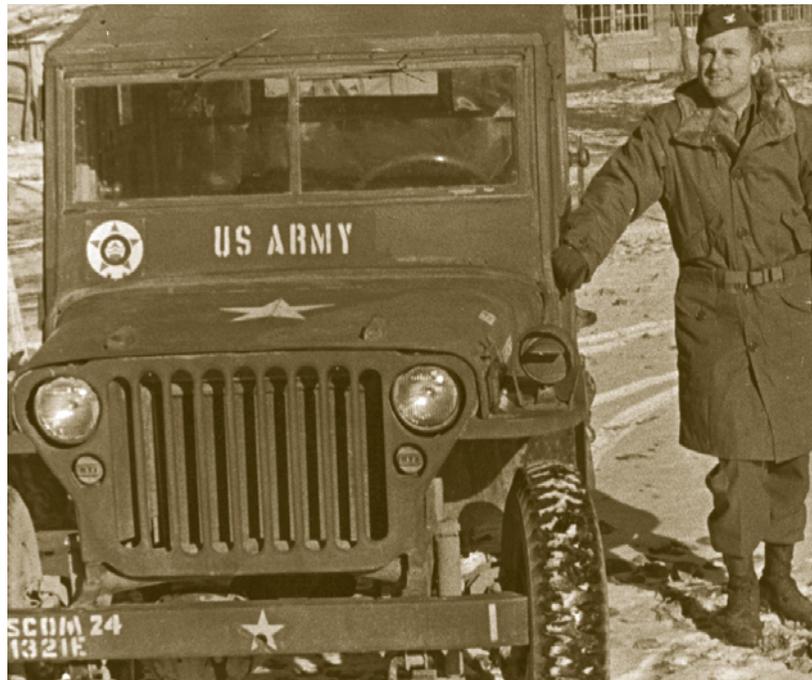
Upon arrival, a number of engineer units, including a construction battalion, two light equipment companies, a combat battalion, two maintenance companies, a dump truck company, and a utilities detachment, were attached to the regiment. With these units attached, the regiment was assigned the responsibility for all construction in the general area, which included ASCOM City and Inch'on, and regimental headquarters assumed the additional designation of Headquarters, Inch'on Engineer Area. In this capacity the regiment performed its last service for the Army—the development of troop housing, road and bridge maintenance, construction of two station hospitals, development of depot facilities and ammunition storage areas, and the construction of Quonset Hut barracks and the installation of a water distribution system in Area A at Kimpo Airdrome.<sup>78</sup> The regiment processed all administrative matters in connection with the readjustment of large numbers of personnel, the inactivation of a number of its attached units, and the consolidation of remaining personnel to achieve maximum efficiency. During the severe winter months and during a period when personnel were being changed frequently, the regiment

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<sup>78</sup> For further details see "Semi-Monthly Construction Reports for Inch'on Area Engineer," Military Files X-63-7, CEHO.

## OKINAWA, KOREA, AND THE LAST DAYS OF THE 1321ST



**Colonel Bagnulo and his jeep on New Year's Day, 1946, near ASCOM City, Korea.**

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performed this service in a manner that heaped additional credit on a record of which we were already proud.<sup>79</sup>

Losses in personnel by the readjustment continued so that by February only a handful of men of the original regiment remained. New life was injected into the unit by the transfer of personnel and equipment from the 1331st Engineer General Service Regiment, but the story of the 1321st Engineer General Service Regiment that had activated at Camp Sutton; trained, worked, sweated, and erred in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee; fought mud, snow, and ice in England and France; rebuilt roads and bridges for the Seventh Army in Germany; traveled to the far Pacific to do its last bit there in Korea; and throughout its career made up for lack of experience and skills by a desire to do its best in any assigned task, big or small—the story of that regiment ended in February of 1946.



<sup>79</sup> The 1321st served in Korea through the end of 1946. It received credit for service in the Rhineland and Central European campaigns and the Pacific Theater. Stanton, Order of Battle, 563. Bagnulo did not command the regiment during its last months in Korea. His successors, and the dates when they assumed command, were Joseph J. Mackey (20 September 1946); Hugo T. Shogren (temporary, 1 October 1946); Herbert H. Glidden (5 October 1946); Neil S. Edmond (16 November 1946). "General Orders—1321st Engineer General Service Regiment," ENGR 1321-1.13, Box 19697, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, RG 407, National Archives.