

THE
T. N. T.

EIGHTH AMMUNITION TRAIN
PATHFINDER DIVISION

COMPANY "D"

Friends of the 8th Division
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CAMP LEE, VA.
1919

EIGHTH AMMUNITION TRAIN

Eighth Division U. S. Army

THE EIGHTH AMMUNITION TRAIN was organized April 4, 1918, as a part of the Eighth Division, and at Camp Fremont, Cal. The train was under the temporary command of Captain (afterwards Major) Lon Bond, until the arrival, on April 18th, of Lieutenant-Colonel John B. Schoeffel, who assumed command on that date. The Train at the time of its organization comprised twenty-eight assigned and four attached officers, and one hundred and sixteen enlisted men, unassigned. While waiting for the draft contingents to arrive that were to make up the body of the Train, officers' schools were started and instruction given in bayonet work, gas defense, pistol firing, truck driving and construction, equitation and care and training of animals. The enlisted men were principally employed in preparing camp and performing the usual camp duties.

Various headquarters detachments, companies and miscellaneous detachments were organized on May 6th and entered at once upon the performance of regular work. On May 11th the first draft contingent of four hundred and fifty-nine men was received, and on May 18th the second contingent, also consisting of four hundred and fifty-nine men, arrived. Both contingents were from Fort Logan, Col., and consisted principally of men from Nebraska, North Dakota and Colorado. Later contingents received included a number of men from California, Oregon and Washington. These contingents, together with transfers to the Train from various units of the Eighth Division, brought up the total strength of the Train by June 1 to twenty-five assigned and six attached officers, and eleven hundred and twenty-six assigned and thirty-two attached enlisted men. Assignments to the various companies were based upon adaptability and previous experience, the Motor Section receiving those having had automobile or mechanical experience, and the Horse Section receiving those having had experience with animals.

On June 7th, Lieutenant-Colonel Schoeffel having been promoted to Colonel and transferred, Major Ben. W. Field took command of the Train, and remained in command until the arrival of Lieutenant-Colonel William E. Persons, on July 1st, who assumed command and continued in command after that date.

Camp Fremont in many respects was an ideal training place for the Train. Aside from the headquarters, mess halls, baths and stables, the camp was almost entirely under canvas, the pyramidal sixteen four square tents being used for the men and the small tents for officers. The numerous large oak trees in the camp added considerable to the comfort as well as appearance of the camp. The moderate climate, the varied character of the terrain in the immediate neighbor-

hood, the proximity to good markets, good water supply and the attractions of San Francisco, a live city and within convenient reach, were all conducive to good results. The principal difficulties connected with the camp were the lack of adequate drill grounds—a lack that would have been most serious to the Train if it had been in possession of its regular equipment—and the considerable distances between the main camp and its base hospital, remount station and target ranges.

The Ammunition Train was composed almost entirely of men new to the military service, at least 90 per cent of the entire train having had no previous military training, or at most less than two months, prior to assignment to the Train. The commissioned officers, with the exception of the field officers, were all commissioned through the Officers' Training Camps, especially the Second Camp.

Furthermore, owing to the exceptionally pressing needs of the armies at the front, it was found impossible to provide the Train with the equipment as set forth in the Tables of Organization. Each of the four companies, "A," "B," "C," and "D," of the Motor Section was entitled to a total of thirty-four motor vehicles, in addition to four motorcycles with side cars. Instead of this complete equipment, each company received five trucks with which to give special training to over one hundred and forty men, and, owing to the great demands for transportation in the Train, and also in the Division, this number, as far as being available for instruction purposes, frequently was reduced to nil. Then, too, this number of trucks, limited as it was, was available only during the months of May, June, July, and August. Considerable credit must, therefore, be given to the various companies of the Motor Section for utilizing to the limit every opportunity for giving practical training in the handling of their special means of ammunition transportation.

Conditions were slightly, if any, better in the Horse Section. Company "G," the wagon company, at the latter part of the stay at Camp Fremont, did receive its full complement of combat wagons, mules and horses, and developed great proficiency in the driving and handling of combat trains. Companies "E" and "F," the two caisson companies, received cavalry horses sufficient to mount the officers, non-commissioned officers and special-duty men, but only six artillery horses and no caissons or artillery harness. By means of ambulance harness, cavalry saddles, rope and snaps, and two combat wagons borrowed from "G" Company, the two companies by uniting were able to turn out one caisson section and, squad by squad, each company gave at least some training in caisson movements to all of its men. Each man was also given as thorough training as possible in equitation.

The miscellaneous detachments were as badly handicapped as the Motor and the Horse Sections, but each made the most out of the situation that it confronted.

The lack in the practical experience in all branches was compensated for as far as possible by as complete instruction in the theoretical as could be given.

To this was added all that could be gained through physical exercise, close and extended order drill, practice marches, interior guard work, musketry and athletic exercises. An ideal was ever before the Train as companies and as a whole, and an earnest effort was made to realize that ideal in every respect. Particular and heavy stress was continuously laid upon the questions of military courtesy, personal appearance and soldierly bearing, the condition of mess halls, kitchens and company area and promptness in execution of orders. It was trying and galling to the spirits of many, especially to those who had come from the free life of the open prairies, but it accomplished its ends, and it produced and refined a wonderful spirit of loyalty to and pride in the Eighth Ammunition Train and made it an organization that became favorably known throughout the Division and wherever it went.

The Eighth Ammunition Train, while not strictly a combatant organization, received good training in the care and use of the rifle. From July 15th to July 26th it was on the range, and while its record at target practice was somewhat above the average, the Train was especially commended by the range officers for its excellent discipline. In the Divisional review held in September before Major-General Helmick, in spite of the fact that the Train passed in review as infantry, artillery and cavalry, the General was pleased to give the first honors to the Train in every particular. It was also a source of gratification during the quarantine necessitated by influenza epidemic that the general health of the Train was such as to again place it in a foremost position in the Division, a condition due to the hearty co-operation on the part of the men and the skill and devotion to duty of the medical detachment.

The same feeling of regimental pride led the Train while at Camp Fremont to undertake the organization of an excellent band of twenty-eight pieces, the entire cost of the band instruments and music being raised by the Train. To this was added the distinction of having dedicated to it the "Eighth Ammunition Train March" and other music composed especially for its use. The Train also organized baseball, football and basketball teams, all of which gave an excellent account of themselves and helped to increase the morale of the organization.

In October the Train, as a part of the Eighth Division, received its orders for overseas service, and, after making such preparations respecting equipment as could be made at Camp Fremont, it entrained in three sections on October 21, 1918. The trip across the Continent was made during the height of the influenza epidemic, but, due largely to the excellent physical condition of the men and the skill and faithfulness of the surgeons, of which too much cannot be said, only two men were lost through disease out of a total of eleven hundred and fifty-four. The Headquarters Train, Ordnance Detachment, Medical Detachment, less two officers and fifteen men; Headquarters Motor Section, Companies "A," "B," and "C," which composed the first section, arrived in Camp Mills, Long Island, N. Y., at 2 A. M. October 28th. The second section, which consisted of the Headquarters Horse Section, Company "D," less forty men, and the Medical Detachment, less two officers and fifteen men, and Companies "E" and

"F," arrived at Camp Mills at 6:30 P. M. the same day. Company "G," together with forty men from Company "D," comprising the third section of the Train, arrived at Camp Mills at 4 P. M. also on the same day. The approximate distance traveled from Camp Fremont was 3,000 miles. The trip across the Continent was one of great interest to the men, and wherever practicable, such as at Niagara Falls, the men were taken from the train and given brisk physical exercises, and also allowed to enjoy such features of the trip as were possible. A word should also be spoken for the Y. M. C. A. secretaries who accompanied the troops and rendered such aid as lay in their power to make the trip more comfortable and pleasant for the men. The American Red Cross deserves special remembrance for their many kindnesses and acts of thoughtfulness as experienced by the men during the trip. The people themselves along the entire line of the trip across the Continent, in that portion of Canada which we crossed, as well as in the larger portion which lay in the United States, displayed a wonderful amount of good feeling and supporting interest in the men, waving and cheering to them from their homes or crowding the windows of factories or stores in response to some whistle that announced the passing of a troop train. The conclusion of the trip found the men well but weary and inspired by what they had seen and felt. The morale of the organization was practically perfect.

At Camp Mills the barracks were in an incompleated condition, and the Train was obliged to go into camp under canvas, and to experience many inconveniences connected with a camp intended solely as a point of embarkation. The first attention was given to the preparation of passenger lists, eleven in number, which were completed and accepted by the evening of the day following the arrival of the Train in Camp. The following days were devoted to equipping the entire train with overseas equipment and taking up all formerly issued articles not found in that equipment. Several medical examinations were held of the entire command, and the Train was highly complimented by the surgeons in charge of the examination upon the excellent physical condition in which it was found. Orders for embarkation were received for November 3d, entraining to be at 9:30 A. M. The company and officers' baggage was collected and sent to the transport. Orders for sandwiches and early breakfast and camp policing were given. Later an order was received delaying the time of departure twenty-four hours. This was followed by a second order, again delaying twenty-four hours, and the third order made the time of embarkation indefinite. The baggage was brought back to camp, the armistice was signed, and the hope of overseas service died.

It is doubtful if any organization in the army experienced a deeper disappointment than did the Eighth Ammunition Train in their failure to go across. They had trained hard, they knew themselves that they were well prepared for service, and they were fired with a spirit that was not only thoroughly patriotic, but intensely humanitarian as well. The noise of the celebration in New York twenty miles away failed to find a responding cheer in the entire Train. They were not sorry that war was over, but they felt that all of their efforts and

sacrifices had come to nothing, and that they had been denied the opportunity of their lives to share in the greatest work ever given any army or nation to perform.

The camp quarantine was lifted on the 14th of November and liberal pass privileges were given to the men, enabling them to visit New York City and neighboring points of interest, a privilege they took advantage of to the limit. On the 22d the final review of the Division was held before Brigadier-General Johnson, and on the 25th the orders were received to embark for Camp Lee, Va.

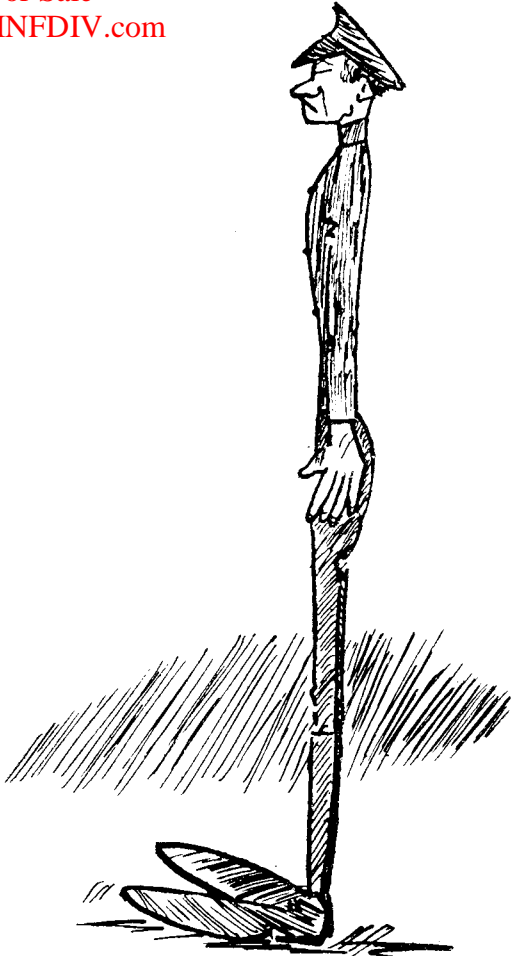
The Train left Camp Mills at 9 A. M. November 25th, and proceeded to Hoboken, N. J., and boarded the transport U. S. S. President Grant at 11 A. M., leaving Hoboken that afternoon at 4 o'clock for Newport News, Va. The experience on the transport, with the regular discipline, the constant wearing of life preservers and the look-out for possible undiscovered floating mines, was interesting and revived a faint thrill in the hearts of the men. The transport arrived at Norfolk, Va., at 6 P. M. November 26th. The Train Headquarters and Company "A" boarded the river steamer "Brandon" at Norfolk at 10:30 P. M., arrived at City Point, Va., at 4 o'clock the next morning. Ninety-six men of Company "D" boarded the train at Norfolk at 12:30 A. M. November 27th and arrived at Camp Lee at 4:30 A. M. the same morning. Companies "B," "C," forty-five men of Company "D," and Companies "E," "F," "G," Headquarters Motor Section, Headquarters Horse Section, the Medical Detachment, the Veterinarian Detachment and the Ordnance Detachment and Mobile Ordnance Repair Shop boarded the river steamer "Pocahontas" at Norfolk at 5:00 P. M. November 27th, arriving at City Point, Va., at 2:00 A. M., and marched to Camp Lee, Va., arriving there at 6:00 A. M. November 28—Thanksgiving Day—the approximate distance traveled from Camp Mills being 400 miles.

During the month of December the usual camp duties were performed, but were enlivened by a splendid entertainment on Christmas Eve and a fine ball on December 28th.

After Camp Mills, with its cold and wind and its tents, dirt floors and lack of mess halls, Camp Lee, with its barracks, comfortable beds, roomy mess halls and splendid bathing facilities, seemed the height of perfection. But the great incentive had been taken out of the life of the Train, and while the forms of military courtesy remained intact and there was still much snap and precision in the drill, the spirit was gone, and the one thought of the men was expressed in the popular call, "I want to go home," and now the orders for demobilization have come. The Eighth Ammunition Train has done its part, and while it did not get into active service as it longed to do, it has left an indelible impress upon the men who compose it, and is returning those men to civilian life better men physically, mentally, morally and spiritually. There are no records of engagements to set down, there are no lists of those killed, wounded or missing in action to compile. In the nine months of its existence, and in spite of prevalence of a great epidemic, it has lost but six men through disease and all other causes. It has maintained a high standard of ideals and striven earnestly

to attain them, and if the nation ever again stands where it needs the strength of its young manhood the old-time spirit will burn again with the same fervor and with those that excel in devotion to their flag will be found the men of the Eighth Ammunition Train.

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H. CALLENDER "CONDG" Co. D"
A piece of straight Cux
6-5"

