"Getting Our Equipment Soon—I Hope So Anyway": Camp Doniphan, Fort Sill, and American Artillery in World War I

By Justin Prince[*]

In the summer of 1917, in a letter written to his beloved girlfriend, a young first lieutenant wrote what was doubtless on the minds of many Americans. The United States had just declared war against Germany, and now began the process of turning millions of men into soldiers. "I hope Russia saves us the trip," wrote a then unknown future president, Harry S. Truman, "although I'd like to be present when Berlin falls."[1] Truman, along with men from all over the United States, boarded trains to head to a place many of them probably could not even find on a map. At the Fort Sill Military Reservation near Lawton, Oklahoma, many began training to become soldiers equal to the task of beating the Kaiser's army.

It was a chilly Oklahoma evening in September 1917 when the men of the 129th Field Artillery Regiment, attached to the Sixtieth Field Artillery Brigade of the Thirty-Fifth Division, arrived at the newly established Camp Doniphan on the Fort Sill Reservation. When the

first of the men began to arrive at 5 p.m. on the evening of September 27, 1917, the camp still was not organized fully. The rest of the regiment would arrive still later in the night, thoroughly unprepared for what awaited them. "What man who was there will forget that night" wrote Lieutenant Jay M. Lee, later the regimental historian of the 129th Field Artillery (FA). The men wore light summer clothing, had no blankets, and had few tents in which to sleep. Despite the chill, Lee found it "quiet and serene."[2] In one of his many letters to his future wife, Lieutenant Truman described Camp Doniphan as a bustling place. "Batteries and flying machines, balloons and doughboys are thick as girls in petticoat lane," he recounted.[3] With such an auspicious start, he and his comrades began what was, for many thousands of American troops, artillerymen especially, a seven-month journey to learn and perfect the art of war.

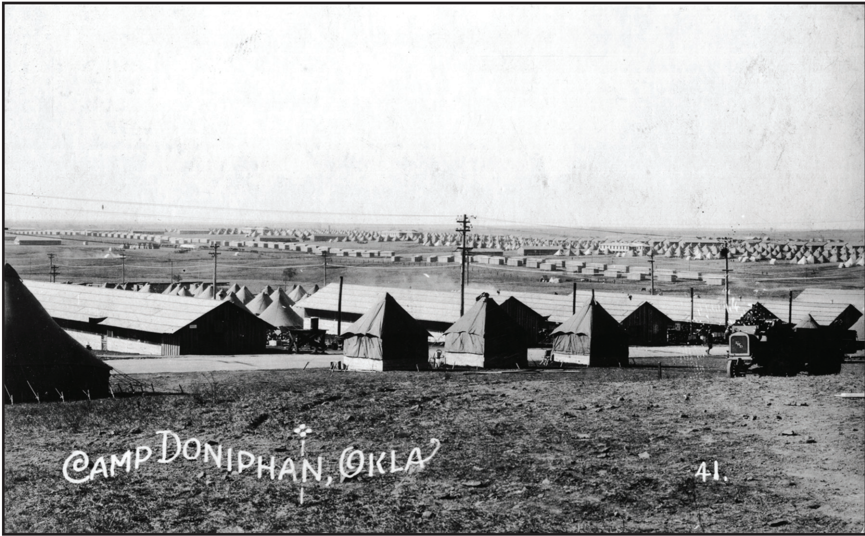
As the United States entered the Great War, the army organized camps across the nation to train recruits for a new four-million-strong army.[4] This would prove to be something of a herculean task. In April 1917 the regular army totaled 5,791 officers and 131,797 enlisted men, with 181,620 officers and men in the National Guard.[5] The facilities to train so many men, and in such a short amount of time, simply did not exist. Fort Sill had already been established as the main Field Artillery School for the US Army, and the one-hundred-square-mile reservation seemed an obvious choice for new facilities to train infantrymen and aviators in addition to the throngs of artillerymen that now descended on Oklahoma. Problematically, Fort Sill's School of Fire had been closed because of General John J. Pershing's 1916 Punitive Expedition to Mexico. When the post reopened in June 1917, Colonel William Snow, the new commandant, found it in a sorry state. It had no artillery pieces of its own, no instructors, and was not in the position to begin the instruction of new personnel.[6]

That fall the army established Camp Doniphan, named for Colonel A. W. Doniphan of the Mexican War, on the Fort Sill Military Reservation. The naming was not coincidental, as many of the troops under Doniphan's command in the 1840s had been Missourians, and most of the men of the Thirty-Fifth Division would hail from Missouri and Kansas.[7] Doniphan would be one of four brigade firing centers established to train field artillery personnel throughout the United States, the others being Camp Jackson in South Carolina, Camp McClellan in Alabama, and Camp Knox in Kentucky. Doniphan was the largest of the camps, comprising some fifty-two thousand acres for the artillery training ranges. Snow, later promoted to general and the chief of artillery, argued that these four firing centers created the only

Postcard photo of Harry S. Truman wearing his uniform, taken in France during World War I, c. 1918 (77-4, Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, Independence, Missouri).

soldiers "properly trained and organized upon their departure from this country for France."[8] Indeed, Snow had nothing but praise for Camp Doniphan's organizer, Colonel Edmund L. Gruber, and called it a "model" for the other camps. "His cheerful willingness to assist the other centers in their development and training courses," Snow remarked, "showed a wonderful spirit of cooperation."[9] Camp Doniphan would lead the way in establishing how the army would train its field artillery personnel for the war.

Unfortunately, the US Army was ill-prepared for the size of the conflict upon which it was about to embark. There was the basic issue of housing the men now mustered into service. The serenity of the first nights at Camp Doniphan quickly gave way to misery. "Wind, wind, and still more wind," bemoaned Lieutenant Lee, who complained of the blinding dust storms and chaotic fall weather in Oklahoma. Although the mountains, plains, and other varied physical features made the Fort Sill Reservation an "excellent training ground," Oklahoma's "meteorological conditions seriously interfered with the effective training of the army." Out of desperation some commanders even tried to spin the weather as "'making the men used to it.'" Further still, there was a shortage of accommodations. Men had to bunk twelve to a tent initially, and the water supply from Medicine Lake was tainted



Camp Doniphan, c. 1917 (22325.48, David D. Beaman Collection, OHS).

with moss and sported a truly army "O. D. [olive drab] color," and was "uninviting to look at and not pleasant to taste."[10] It "can scarcely be called a picnic," recalls the history of Ambulance Company 139, "*If* there had been floors in the tents, and *if* you could have turned a switch instead of having to light a candle in order to have light, and *if* there had been an adequate supply of good water, and *if* 'DUST,' in vast quantities, had not been a 'regular issue'—well, such was life at Doniphan."[11] Indeed, dust storms with sixty mile per hour winds were a common annoyance.[12] Not until nearly Thanksgiving was the water potable, floorboards added to the Sibley tents, and electric lights installed.[13] Camp Doniphan, along with the rest of the American Army, was woefully unprepared for the realities of modern war.

As winter approached, the weather in Oklahoma was even more of a hardship than normal. When training began in earnest on October 15, 1917, the army also began to issue winter clothes to the men at Camp Doniphan. The men at the camp also had procured stoves for the tents, although Colonel Karl Klemm, the regimental commander of the 129th FA, refused to let them be installed until the weather soured.[14] By the first of the year, thanks in large part to the Red Cross providing sweaters, the regiment and the other units of Camp Doniphan were well equipped with winter clothing.[15] They arrived just in time, for on January 10 a "terrific blizzard" hit the camp. "You can't see ten feet from you now and the wind is blowing about sixty miles an hour," Truman

Medicine Creek at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, c. 1915 (22325.61, David D. Beaman Collection, OHS).

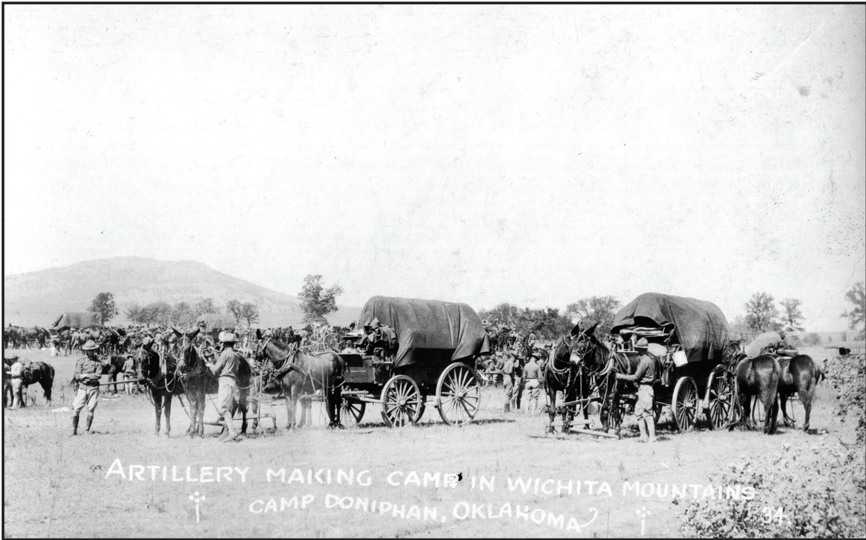
wrote, "This must be one of the kind I've heard my grandfather speak of when he crossed the plains."[16] He was not alone in his assertion. "The 'natives,'" recalled the history of an ambulance company of the Thirty-Fifth Division, argued it "was the worst in Oklahoma for fifteen years, and those reports will never be questioned by the men who were at Doniphan that winter."[17] Still another one struck later in the month. Although the army worked around the weather, it and other problems led to a delay in the Thirty-Fifth Division being able to ship out to France when expected.[18]

Training would be hampered not only by the difficulties of dealing with such a large body of men, but also by equipment shortages and the lack of artillery pieces, rifles, machine guns, and other implements of modern warfare. In 1917, for this monumental undertaking of creating an army that could stand against a German army already with four years' experience in war, the United States could only muster 930 artillery pieces, 760,000 rifles, and 1,300 machine guns. There were six different types of field artillery, with none of them fit for combat conditions on the Western Front. The army's machine guns were in just as sorry a state, and 160,000 of the rifles were obsolete Krag-Jorgensen rifles of Spanish-American War vintage. While the army had, in 1916, planned on focusing efforts for one million men in uniform, the reality was such a force could only challenge two German field armies. The

Military road at Camp Doniphan (22325.62, David D. Beaman Collection, OHS).

American Army would need to be much larger, and such an expansion would overwhelm the industrial capabilities of the United States.[19]

Camp Doniphan was no stranger to these problems. After two weeks of working to set up the camp, instructors began to teach methods of artillery fire. The problem was that they still did not have equipment. "I think we are going to get our equipment very soon," wrote Lieutenant Truman. But, possibly sarcastically, he summed up what many in the army felt: "I hope we are anyway."[20] Truman hoped for equipment in October 1917, but it would take many more months for the shortages to be addressed. In early 1918 General William M. Wright, the commanding officer of Camp Doniphan, testified to a Senate committee about the shortages his command faced. Although there were nearly twenty-five thousand officers and men at Camp Doniphan, the post was short "5,000 rifles, 10,000 automatic pistols, 9,000 bayonets, 160,000 bayonet scabbards, 16,000 haversacks, 12,000 cartridge belts, 56 batteries of artillery, and 234 machine guns." The *New York Sun* quoted a retired colonel on why this deficit presented so much of a problem: "Let me tell you. An infantryman's rifle is to him what his favorite bat is to a baseball player. And then some. . . . Why, a recruit is not a soldier until he has lived a year with a rifle, and will fight for her reputation."[21] Artillery might have been the most visible shortcoming in the army, but the problems were even more fundamental.



Above: "Artillery making camp in Wichita Mountains," at Camp Doniphan (22325.53, David D. Beaman Collection, OHS).

Below: "Charge!"—soldiers at Fort Sill, c. 1917 (22325.54, David D. Beaman Collection, OHS).

"Washing their mess kits" at Camp Doniphan (22325.52, David D. Beaman Collection, OHS).

Six months later, in June 1918, Fort Sill was still critically short of artillery pieces. The Eleventh Field Artillery Regiment, undergoing training at the school, had only five serviceable 4.7-inch guns to conduct live fire exercises, with seven more awaiting repair. The School of Fire's commandant asked for seventy-two additional weapons to better facilitate training. Even Camp Doniphan only received additional guns in the summer of 1918. This was but one symptom of a problem that meant that only 37 of 106 field artillery regiments mustered into service had enough equipment for actual combat duty.[22] To further highlight the problems of training, Snow considered only those units trained by centers like Camp Doniphan to be trained adequately and fit for combat service. In total, these centers could train just over one-third of all American artillery units raised for participation in the war.[23]

The equipment shortage led to creativity on the part of officers and men in the US Army, but unfortunately it was an obstacle that the army could not hurdle. A popular concept was that of the "Bryan howitzer," named after Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan, who many believed was responsible for the United States's lack of preparation for the conflict. One example was an Indiana National Guard battery, hoping for quick federalization into the army, that spent thirty-five dollars and "obtained wheels from the Gentry Brothers' Circus, scrounged around junk yards for seats and axles, purchased lumber

Sibley tents at Camp Doniphan (22325.49, David D. Beaman Collection, OHS).

to fashion the gun trail, and utilized a 'porch column' to make a barrel closely resembling a five-inch gun."[24] General Snow commended these efforts, but in the end called them "pathetic." Too few serviceable guns, too many broken ones, and too many fake ones all contributed to an undertrained artillery force. Whereas the Sixtieth FA Brigade spent some six months of training at Camp Doniphan, the Sixth FA Brigade that followed them had to make do with two.[25]

Despite these shortcomings, General Snow was pleased with the performance of the brigade firing centers. Although short of equipment, the lack of proficiency meant that much time had to be devoted to basic training, as the men were not yet proficient enough to begin live firing exercises and drill. By 1918 these drill times were cut down to anywhere from one to five weeks of remedial instruction, followed by an intense course of instruction in field artillery matters. Near the end of the war, these firing centers taught basic soldier drill, artillery drills, and lessons on how to survive gas attacks. The inspector general was pleased with the performance of the firing center method of training, and despite the equipment shortages these firing centers did manage to receive the majority of the equipment necessary by the end of the war. Camp Doniphan, by the end of the war, boasted twenty-four 75-mm guns, forty-eight 3-inch guns, and twenty-four 4.7-inch guns, and had arrangements with the School of Fire at Fort Sill to use two French-made 155-mm howitzers for firing drills every afternoon, plus

"Company Inspection" at Camp Doniphan (22325.50, David D. Beaman Collection, OHS).

some mornings. However, the 3-inch and 4.7-inch weapons were old, obsolete, and thoroughly worn out, only eight of the latter weapons being serviceable.[26]

At various times from May to November 1918, twelve officers and forty-three enlisted men of the French Army were attached to Camp Doniphan and the School of Fire to teach American soldiers the French way of war. Here, advisors began to teach the triangulation system whereby American artillery officers learned to "fire by the map," hitting targets without direct spotting of shellfire by using precise mathematical calculations.[27] For practical instruction, the officers and men of the School of Fire and Camp Doniphan donated telephones, lumber, and all the components necessary for the Thirty-Fifth Division to build an extensive network of trenches for practicing firing, as well as positions to site twenty-two batteries of artillery around the reservation.[28] In addition, the School of Fire also trained aerial observers to spot artillery fire, with 310 officers completing the course between May and September 1918.[29] This training regimen often was ignored due to divisive opinions in the army. For example, the Sixtieth Field Artillery Brigade's commander, General Lucien G. Berry, believed that spotting was unnecessary and dismissed airplanes as "no damn good." The army clearly suffered a disconnect between its training officers and its commanders.[30]

Once enough equipment was furnished, the training regimen was intensive. In addition to the normal drill and school activities, the batteries of the field artillery regiments marched out to the corrals and watered and cared for the horses three times a day at 6 a.m., 11:30 a.m., and 3:30 p.m.[31] Although the French mission would not arrive until May 1918, from the middle of October 1917 American artillerists began learning the British and French methods of artillery fire.[32] In December all of the colonels and lieutenant colonels of the Thirty-Fifth Division went to Fort Sam Houston in Texas for instruction at the Brigade and Field Officers School. Temporarily replacing Colonel Klemm was Lieutenant Colonel Robert M. Danford, author of the standard textbook on American artillery tactics then in use by all of the training institutions in the United States. Now the training became more focused, broken up into fifty minute work periods, with ten minute breaks in between. Topics included gunlaying, signaling, reading the contemporary editions of *Drill Regulations* and *Field Service Regulations*, and the care and maintenance of equipment and animals. "Daily tasks became a pleasure," wrote Lieutenant Lee, "all the irksomeness and monotony of training disappeared, and the day's work was over before you realized it had begun."[33] This zeal was a far cry from what Lieutenant Truman considered a monotonous lecture on shoes given in November 1917. Although important, covering the making of shoes and pushing soldiers to march more than they thought possible did not impress Lieutenant Truman, as he admitted, "I nearly went to sleep but I guess I got something out of it."[34] In contrast, he found the training under Danford intense, especially the examinations. In addition to their other duties, officers also taught courses for the noncommissioned officers at night. On the frantic pace of the work, Truman remarked, "If I won't be a go-getter when I get out of this place, there's no one that will."[35]

The regiment's renewed spirit in approaching its training was thanks to Danford. He took a personal interest in the men, sought better results, and wanted to avoid the harsh and gruff discipline that before had been the norm. He sought to fix problems within the command structure, rather than simply reprimand junior officers. Indeed, in February 1918 when Danford was promoted to brigadier general and transferred to Washington, many in the regiment expressed sadness, with each battery voluntarily forming up to pay a personal farewell.[36]

For day to day life at Camp Doniphan, the average soldier worked from five in the morning to ten at night, and had precious little to do in off hours. For commodities, the army did not provide much in the way of amenities. Instead of a central post exchange where soldiers could

buy goods, each individual unit had to organize “canteens” to provide soldiers with basic articles. These usually failed or were financially insolvent, but one at Camp Doniphan, run by the 129th FA was actually so successful that it earned special mention it its regimental history. The regimental officer in charge was none other than Harry Truman. In the first few days of training, all the men could buy was tobacco and apples, so little did the army furnish for the men to purchase.[37] Beyond amenities at the canteen, there were buildings set up by the YMCA, the Knights of Columbus, and even a library furnished by the American Library Association. Although the facilities were extensive, many men chafed at the perceived lack of amenities, hearing rumors that other camps in the United States had sports teams and athletic programs.[38] Nonetheless, the YMCA provided boxing matches, concerts, and movies twice a week for the men to enjoy. Most important of all, it provided a steady stream of pen and paper for the men to write loved ones.[39]

Unfortunately, the people of Lawton, Oklahoma, nearby to Fort Sill and Camp Doniphan, were unsympathetic to the plight of American soldiers. Truman could not find nearly enough soda pop in Lawton for his regimental canteen, necessitating trips to Oklahoma City to try to obtain it. He also tried to organize a local laundry to wash the men’s clothes—the townspeople responded by raising the price nearly 40 percent, charging fifty-four cents to wash a shirt, pair of pants, and a pair of socks per soldier.[40] Such a price in 2017 currency would amount to about ten dollars for a scant few items of clothing.[41] So outraged was Colonel Klemm that he threatened to have the whole regiment’s laundry shipped back to Kansas City, the unit’s home location. Truman chafed over the price gouging. “It seems,” he wrote Bess Wallace, “that the whole country is organized to sell [to] the soldiers at a fair profit plus all the traffic will bear from 40 to 100 percent.” Even the Coca-Cola Company of Oklahoma City refused to assist, selling Truman only fifty cases of pop instead of the vast carloads he needed. In response, he wired a Kansas City bottling company, hoping to play on Missouri loyalties; instead he was referred back to the local company in Oklahoma City.[42]

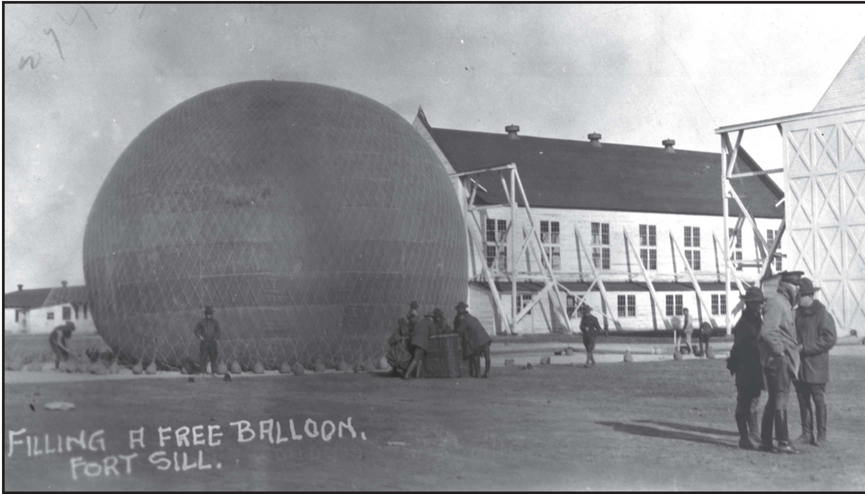
Despite the hardship, Truman was able to stock his regimental canteen, and of all of the ones on the reservation he cheerfully boasted in a letter home that many considered his “the best.”[43] All told, it earned some $15,000 in a six-month time frame, or a dividend rate of 666 percent. The profits went back to the regiment, creating funds for each of the batteries and the supply and headquarters company of the unit. Most canteens failed, or otherwise ran at a loss, and Truman’s stood in

First Lieutenant Harry Truman (fourteenth from left) enjoying a soft drink with fellow officers, 1917. "A jolly bunch at the 129 Field Artillery Canteen, Camp Doniphan, Oklahoma." Those who can be identified are (standing); Morris Sterns, Buck Davis, Ed Harper (first, second, and third from left), Sergeant Edward Jacobson (seventh from left), First Lieutenant Walter G. Slagle (tenth from left), Second Lieutenant Clyde C. Clark (eleventh from left), First Lieutenant William Hubbard (twelfth from left), First Lieutenant Harry Truman (fourteenth from left), Second Lieutenant Herbert J. Hale (fifteenth from left), and First Lieutenant Medical Corps Dr. James Terrill Brown (third from right) (2005-227, Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, Independence, Missouri).

marked contrast to the norm. His canteen was so successful that even the well-respected Lieutenant Colonel Danford praised its operation during his tenure as commander.[44]

In the end, for all the hardships in training, American artillery performance in the Great War was something of a mixed affair. The training was largely delayed; Snow himself acknowledged that even as late as February 1918, some nine months before the armistice, there was still no "comprehensive" training plan for American artillerists. Units headed to France needed qualified instructors for active duty, and of the brigades that did not go through firing centers their readiness was best described as "deplorable." Other trained officers, with no combat experience, would need to remain stateside in order to help facilitate the training of new units.[45]

The delays might have been even more of a handicap than realized. Colonel Carl L. Ristine of the Seventieth Infantry Brigade of the Thirty-Fifth Division, argued that the training had been much too long. Six days a week, up to ten hours a day, in his estimation, only made for "wit, stale troops." Further, the long delays many of the units faced in getting equipment, such as the division's nearly half-year-long stay at



"Filling a Free Balloon" at Fort Sill, 1916 (22243.27430, W. P. Campbell Collection, OHS).

Doniphan, only served to deprive the troops of whatever eagerness they had for going overseas. They were smart, but not enthusiastic, and this lack of zeal and teamwork ability would prove to be a detriment when they actually entered combat.[46]

Snow's successor at the School of Fire, Colonel A. S. Fleming, attempted to tailor the instruction to what he perceived the situation on the Western Front would actually look like. Anticipating a breakthrough, he mandated that the school teach the various methods of open warfare. This concept, clinging to the age-old notions of a mobile battle, called for the accurate spotting of artillery fire, and new twelve-week courses stressed aerial observation, the use of balloons, and forward observation posts.[47] Fleming preached in his classes the necessity of open warfare tactics, and stated in his goals for the school that "none can say when trench fighting will give place to open warfare, and, when it does, the army that is not skilled in the latter is a beaten army."[48] Although listening to and attempting to interpret the lessons of British and French artillerists, the army still wanted to cling to its older, prewar interpretations of warmaking, and the result was a clash of training and actual combat experience.

In contrast to all of the spotting techniques learned at Fort Sill and Camp Doniphan, the artillerists instead preferred to fire by the map in actual combat, disregarding real-time observation in favor of blind firing using map coordinates and arithmetic. In offensives, such as during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive of September–November 1918,

Students observing fire, Field Artillery School, Fort Sill, c. 1917 (151, W. P. Campbell Collection, OHS).

American artillery typically fired blind barrages, blasting a fixed point on the map for four minutes, then adjusting the range by one hundred meters and beginning again. The idea was to provide a rolling barrage to clear the way for advancing infantry, but it took no account of the terrain, enemy defenses, or actual progression of the infantry advance. The result was that in many cases, to quote General W. S. McNair, barrages simply "ran away" from the infantry, leaving American doughboys vulnerable to dedicated German machinegunners.[49] Certainly the Meuse-Argonne was a hellish nightmare that could prove daunting to even the best troops, but such a departure indicates a fundamental lack of adhering to doctrines learned in camps in the United States.

Even the Thirty-Fifth Division, the original tenants of Camp Doniphan, could not escape the lack of focus of their training. On September 28, 1918, only two days into the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, the lack of coordination became readily apparent. In an attempted advance, one of the four regiments failed to leave their trenches, while the other three attacked more than an hour after the artillery had fired its barrage. The Germans threw in what reserves they could, and machine guns, gas, and their own artillery broke up the American attack.[50]

The next day fared no better. The 137th Infantry began an advance at 5:30 in the morning, but had to withdraw by 8 a.m. because of lack of support. The 140th and 139th Infantry Regiments assaulted the town

American soldiers in the Argonne Forest during World War I, c. 1918 (65-4072, Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, Independence, Missouri).

of Exermont, France, beginning at 6:30 a.m., and despite numerous losses succeeded in capturing the town. They had no reinforcements, no protection on their flanks, and the Germans began a series of frontal assaults to drive them out. By noon, the infantry had no choice but to withdraw, taking a "toll of dead and wounded which only emphasized the audacious courage to do well what they were there to do, into whatever danger it might lead them, which was the animating spirit of our men."[51] In reality, the Thirty-Fifth Division suffered about seven thousand casualties in the first few days of the offensive, and the 129th FA had 23 killed and 106 wounded and gassed, 10 percent of its total strength and 20 percent of the strength in the actual batteries.[52]

These attacks, and the subsequent German counteroffensive, reduced the overall cohesion of the division. Numerous officers, including senior ones, had been killed or wounded, and many units had to "act on their own." As units fell back and men became separated from their regiments, the French 219th Artillery Regiment, detailed to support the division, chose to withdraw in what Lieutenant Lee called a "pardonable uncertainty as to what American troops would eventually do when they were apparently under a severe strain."[53] Although the infantry broke around them and French allies chose to withdraw, the batteries of the Thirty-Fifth Division stayed where they were. Major John Miles, commander of the First Battalion of the 129th FA, told his men "get ready and we'll give 'em direct fire." Thankfully for American gunners, the situation never arose—the German counteroffensive, having succeeded in its objective of pushing the Thirty-Fifth Division out of Exermont, dissipated.[54] The regimental chaplain of the 140th Infantry, Evan Edwards, wrote a message to Lieutenant Lee complimenting the 129th on its performance in the offensive. "The guns were fired as

steadily as if they were on the range back at Fort Sill. Of course I am not competent to judge of artillery fire, but I do know men, and they surely had men at those guns on September 29th."[55] The artillerymen had done their job, but the division had been shattered. By October 3 they were headed to the rear for relief and re-equipment—not until the end of the month would they be ready for action again.[56] Indeed, even after the war the Thirty-Fifth Division's collapse would prove to be a sore point for an army struggling to learn the lessons of the war.[57]

Part of the answer for the Thirty-Fifth Division's failure may have been because of the specialization of its training. Colonel Ristine argued that the force had been "schooled to death at the expense of cooperation and teamwork." He admitted the various schools created an army of specialists, but claimed that in combat, they did not perform nearly as well as expected. In the Meuse-Argonne, a battle that would prove to be the deadliest multiday campaign in American military history, the army's specialists proved to be "worthless." In being trained as specialists, he argued, "they had lost the art of being soldiers." Ammunition supply was always a problem, and the artillery had difficulty in moving with the terrain to support the infantry. In his estimation the forces were overtrained, overworked, and too specialized in nothing approaching true combat conditions.[58] Ristine's critique was not only aimed at the schools in the United States, but also those in France where American units spent additional time training. In many cases artillery and infantry units trained separately, with the result that they had almost no experience actually working together as a cohesive formation before being sent to frontline trenches.[59] Indeed, the 129th FA, for example, spent the last week of August 1918 on the front lines before being relieved on September 1. This experience was their first actual taste of combat, nearly a year after they gathered at Camp Doniphan. The war was still a "novelty" to the men. When they went into action again some three weeks later, it was in the largest—and deadliest—American offensive of the war.[60]

For all of the faults of the US Army in the war, they still performed well considering the lack of time and the technological problems they faced. Although General Ernest J. Hinds, the chief of artillery of the American Expeditionary Forces, lamented the training woes and admitted that "we had to pay for our unpreparedness," the artillery did do its job.[61] The army's problems began well before units mustered into the training camps and facilities. The problem extended to outdated, prewar ideologies. The desire to remain neutral was an idea that existed not just among the people but the government as well. As late as 1916 the War Department suggested that any expansion of the artillery

branch, to say nothing of the rest of the army, did not need to be done with haste, possibly taking until 1924. From a planning standpoint, the idea that the United States would get involved in the First World War seems to have escaped the administration of President Woodrow Wilson.[62]

The realities of trench warfare, and entering the conflict in 1917, overwhelmed the army and the various stateside camps. The training was insufficient. The force was unprepared. General Snow called Camp Doniphan the best of the brigade firing centers. That it had so many problems, and that units trained by it failed, demonstrate the hardships the army had to endure in the Great War. But it nonetheless played an integral part in breaking the back of the German army and ensuring the war would end in 1918. By the final assaults in November 1918, American artillery proved to be quite up to the task of combatting the German army, and the units had finally begun to learn cooperation. Sadly, it was slow progress bought with human lives and experience as opposed to specialist training.[63] The army learned, and was much more prepared at the outset of the Second World War. Perhaps Harry Truman best summed up the army's experience in the war. "The whole thing was a terrific experience and I'm glad I had it," he wrote, "but I'm also [glad] that it's over with."[64]

Endnotes

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[1] Harry Truman to Bess Wallace, July 14, 1917, in Robert Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess: The Letters from Harry to Bess Truman, 1910–1959* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1983), 224 (hereafter cited as *Dear Bess*).

[2] Jay M. Lee, *The Artilleryman: The Experiences and Impressions of an American Artillery Regiment in The World War. 129th FA, 1917–1919* (Kansas City, MO: Spencer Printing Company, 1920), 19.

[3] Harry Truman to Bess Wallace, September 29, 1917, in *Dear Bess*, 226–27.

[4] William J. Snow, "Report of the Chief of Field Artillery," in *War Department Annual Reports*, 1919, Volume 1, Part 4 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1919), 5056.

[5] Robert H. Ferrell, *Collapse at Meuse-Argonne: The Failure of the Missouri-Kansas Division* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 3.

[6] William J. Snow, *Signposts of Experience: The World War Memoirs of Major General William J. Snow* (Washington: United States Field Artillery Association, 1941), 143, 150.

[7] Lee, *The Artilleryman*, 19–22, 32.

[8] Snow, "Report of the Chief of Field Artillery," 5054.

[9] Ibid., 5169.

[10] Lee, *The Artilleryman*, 19, 22–23. The author refers to the water source as "Medicine Lake." He describes it as having adequate water to supply the camp, and locates it "some miles to the northwest" of the camp. The author may have conflated the names of Lake Lawtonka and Medicine Creek, or he may have just referred to the lake by the name of a nearby town, Medicine Park.

[11] *History of Ambulance Company Number 139* (Kansas City, KS: E. R. Callender Printing Co., 1919), 9.

[12] Harry Truman to Bess Wallace, October 18, 1917, in *Dear Bess*, 231.

[13] *History of Ambulance Company Number 139*, 9. Sibley tents were large, conical tents originally designed just prior to the American Civil War, and used by the army until the early twentieth century. The rather archaic design was no small irony given the army's unpreparedness for war.

[14] Harry Truman to Bess Wallace, October 18, 1917, in *Dear Bess*, 231.

[15] Lee, *The Artilleryman*, 28.

[16] Harry Truman to Bess Wallace, January 10, 1918, in *Dear Bess*, 239–40.

[17] *History of Ambulance Company Number 139*, 10.

[18] Harry Truman to Bess Wallace, January 28, 1918, in *Dear Bess*, 240.

[19] Justin G. Prince, "They Surely Had Men at Those Guns: The Development of United States Field Artillery 1907–1923" (PhD diss., Oklahoma State University, 2014), 87–91.

[20] Harry Truman to Bess Wallace, October 15, 1917, in *Dear Bess*, 231.

[21] "Making Bricks without Straw: What the Congressional Investigation Into the Conduct of the War is Discovering," *Outlook*, January 9, 1918, 47.

[22] Snow, "Report of the Chief of Field Artillery," 5194–96

[23] Ibid., 5054.

[24] Earl C. Moore, "Wooden Guns in War Time," *Field Artillery Journal* 7 (July–September 1917): 316–17

[25] Snow, "Report of the Chief of Field Artillery," 5194.

[26] Ibid., 5159–62

[27] Ibid., 5164
[28] Ibid., 5165
[29] Ibid., 5173
[30] Ferrell, *Collapse at Meuse-Argonne*, 7.
[31] Lee, *The Artilleryman*, 25.
[32] Harry Truman to Bess Wallace, October 15, 1918, in *Dear Bess*, 231.
[33] Lee, *The Artilleryman*, 29–30.
[34] Harry Truman to Bess Wallace, November 17, 1917, in *Dear Bess*, 235.
[35] Harry Truman to Bess Wallace, January 27, 1918, in *Dear Bess*, 240–41.
[36] Lee, *The Artilleryman*, 31–33.
[37] Harry Truman to Bess Wallace, September 30, 1917, in *Dear Bess*, 227–28.
[38] Lee, *The Artilleryman*, 24.
[39] *History of Ambulance Company Number 139*, 11.
[40] Harry Truman to Bess Wallace, October 3, 1917, in *Dear Bess*, 228–29.
[41] "Consumer Price Index Inflation Calculator," US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, accessed January 10, 2017, data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl.
[42] Harry Truman to Bess Wallace, October 5, 1917, in *Dear Bess*, 229–30.
[43] Harry Truman to Bess Wallace, December 14, 1917, in *Dear Bess*, 238.
[44] Lee, *The Artilleryman*, 29, 32.
[45] Prince, "They Surely Had Men at Those Guns," 132–33.
[46] Ferrell, *Collapse at Meuse-Argonne*, 131–32.
[47] Prince, "They Surely Had Men at Those Guns," 136–37.
[48] A. S. Fleming, "The Mission of the School of Fire for Field Artillery," *Field Artillery Journal* 7 (October–December 1917): 386.
[49] Prince, "They Surely Had Men at Those Guns," 197–98.
[50] Lee, *The Artilleryman*, 155–58.
[51] Ibid., 156–58.
[52] Ibid., 190.
[53] Ibid., 166–67.
[54] Ibid., 167.
[55] Quoted in Lee, *The Artilleryman*, 170.
[56] Lee, *The Artilleryman*, 196, 216.
[57] Ferrell, *Collapse at Meuse-Argonne*, 126–27.
[58] Quoted in Ferrell, *Collapse at Meuse-Argonne*, 132.
[59] Prince, "They Surely Had Men at Those Guns," 146–48.
[60] Lee, *The Artilleryman*, 65, 94.
[61] Ernest Hinds, "The Training of Artillery in France," *Field Artillery Journal* 9 (September–October 1919): 383.
[62] Prince, "They Surely Had Men at Those Guns," 91.
[63] Ferrell, *Collapse at Meuse-Argonne*, 29.
[64] Harry Truman to Bess Wallace, October 8, 1918, in *Dear Bess*, 274.