

OVER THERE, OVER HERE
2011 Montana History Conference
Friday September 23
3:15 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Missoula, MT

SLIDE ONE – Jusqu’ au Bout [YOU SKAW BOO]: To The Bitter End

The 10th & 20th Engineers (Forest)

(newspaper masthead of Company A and C 1st Battalion 20th Engineers)

I. Introduction

a. New kind of soldier

- i. “For centuries, armies had included among their fighting units bodies of men, often called ‘pioneers,’ who cleared roads, prepared camps, provided firewood, and saw to many other aspects of campaigning (p. 182).”**

SLIDE 2: CANADIAN LUMBERJACKS

- ii. The Timberman – a Portland based trade journal for the industry reported extensively on the war and how it impacted the lumber industry of the Pacific Northwest**

- 1. “Lumbermen to the Front. Our correspondent at Winnipeg, Manitoba, reports that the 230th and 243rd Forestry and Lumbermen’s Battalions are now full up and ready to go overseas. Each battalion takes with them from Canada six portable sawmills and a complete logging outfit.” (*The Timberman* January 1917 p. 47)**

- 2. Need of timber and lumber for the war effort for the following**

- a. Duckboards for the bottom of the trenches to get the infantry out of the muck and fight trench foot as well as pneumonia**
- b. Revetment to reinforce trench walls – planks or fascines**

- c. **Firing step**
- d. **Wire entanglement stakes**
- e. **Railroad ties**
- f. **Firewood**
- g. **Construction material (p. 180)**
- b. ***Lumberjack Battalions of Canada* by L.C. Hooper, Winnipeg, Manitoba (*The Timberman* May 1917 p. 41)**
 - i. **10,000 plus Canadian woodsmen, lumberjacks, and mill men already in England and France.**
 - ii. **“Eight thousand with over 100 portable mills are now at work ‘behind the lines.’”**
 - iii. **Show the Europeans how to utilize timber resources “...of their historic old forests....”**
 - iv. **Non combatant units “...to back up the fighting man who is working the big guns or doing his bit in the trench.”**

II. America Goes to War

- a. **President Woodrow Wilson asks Congress to declare war on Germany and its allies**

SLIDE 3: LUMBER ENLISTS FOR DEFENSE

- b. **“Hoist Old Glory. ‘Lest we forget,’ the United States is entering perhaps into the maelstrom of the world’s carnival of death and strife. ... The country is entitled to the fullest measure of unselfish, patriotic service from all its citizens. ... No industry is better fitted to render real service to its country than the lumber industry. The woodsmen are initiative, fearless and energetic. They are accustomed to act quickly and are ready for any emergency. No men have given a better account of themselves than the regiments of Canadian and British**

Columbia loggers on European war-scarred battle fronts. Let us sincerely hope and pray that if the United States becomes an active participant in this terrible war, that the duration of service may be short, and as a result of the baptism of blood, this nation may be drawn closer together, its ideals ennobled and its self-respect maintained at any cost (*Timberman* April 1917, p. 1)."

SLIDE 4: HERE COMES THE KNOCKOUT!

- c. One of first things General John Pershing asked for after arriving in France – lumberjacks and foresters p. 1137)
 - i. Asked for forestry troops before combat troops (p. 1137)
 - 1. Pershing appointed Chief Forester Henry S. Graves to “...to take charge of lumber operations (no page #).”**
 - 2. Assistant Chief William B. Greeley soon followed both going to France in an attempt to negotiate for timber to supply American troops (ibid).
 - a. “The French seem to be meeting us in a bargaining, shrewd spirit rather than one of earnest cooperation in an emergency (ibid).”******
 - ii. Estimated 25 million board feet needed per month to feed American Expeditionary Force – less than a year later that was raised to 75 million board feet (no page number).****
- d. French would have liked imported U.S. timber but not enough shipping to handle (p. 182)**

III. Forestry Regiments

- a. Laying the ground work
 - i. Recruitment****

1. **“Experience with Small Timbers Desired.” (The Timberman June 1917 p. 32)**
 - a. **Small wood in France conducive to recruitment from “short-log country” of eastern Washington, north Idaho, and western Montana.**
 - b. **“Once in France they will be employed at the back of the firing line, but not necessarily at all times outside the danger zone.”**
 - c. **Only accepting “trained woodsmen” although have to do same physical tests as regular army recruits.**

SLIDE 5: 10TH ENGINEERS FORESTRY & CAPTAIN DORR

SKEELS

- b. **10th Engineers (Carpathians)**
 - i. **“When the 10th Engineers was formed it was the first time a U.S. army had organized and equipped troops for systematic forest engineering (p. 1138).”**
 - ii. **Dorr Skeels – (Daily Missoulian June 10, 1917)**
 1. **Dean of Forestry School University of Montana since 1915**
 2. **“Skeels will be Captain in First Division to France”**
 3. **“The Forest School of the University of Montana has the honor of furnishing the largest number of men for the first Forestry Regiment (Tenth Engineers, U.S.A.) of any forest school in the United States (*The Timberman* December 1917, p. 50).”**

iii. Basic military drill at Camp American University

Washington D.C. for “...administrative and disciplinary purposes (p. 1140).”

1. “In Camp with the Forestry Regiment.” By Noel A Dew, Staff Interpreter. Camp American University Washington, DC. “”The ‘Husky Tenth’ is the name given to this regiment by the various other units located here and approval shows in the eyes of the drill masters when the boys fall in for drill.” (*The Timberman* August 1917, p. 45)
2. Shipping out for France converted British passenger liner as troop carrier

SLIDE 6: SS CARPATHIA

- iv. One of the recruits told Colonel Graves after landing in France, “We’re not much on drill, but we’re hell on cutting down trees.” (p. 4)
- v. No sooner did they arrive when stateside recruitment kicked in for a second forest regiment.
- vi. First board cut by Americans in France November 26, 1917; first American mill up and running on November 29, 1917; by the end of the war the 20th was operating 81 sawmills in France. (ibid).

SLIDE 7: LARGEST REGIMENT IN THE WORLD

c. 20th Engineers

i. “Second Forestry Regiment Now Recruiting.”

1. 20th Engineers two battalions consisting of three companies each of 250 men “...all of whom should be

experienced loggers or mill men (*The Timberman* October 1917, p. 43)."

- 2. "The local Forest office has received instructions from the War Department to recruit as fast as possible practical lumbermen, millmen and woodsmen for the 20th Engineers (Forest) Regiment (*The Western News* September 27, 1917)."**
 - 3. Age limit 18-40 (*The Timberman* October 1917, p. 43)**
 - 4. "Service in these units will give such men a chance to take part in the war in the line which their life training and experience has particularly fitted them.**
 - a. For logging crews there are needed skilled axmen, wood sawyers, filers, tie hewers, skidders, teamsters and blacksmiths.**
 - b. For mill crews, millwrights, mill sawyers, circular saw filers, mill engineers and experienced mill hands (*The Timberman* October 1917, p. 43)."**
- ii. A letter from G.W. Basye 20th Engineers 4 Battalion Company D Camp American University Washington D.C. to his sister Ruth Howard (*The Western News* December 20, 1917).**
- 1. "We drill about seven hours a day. Yesterday I stepped out with sore feet and they put me on the wood pile for three hours, today I stepped out with tight shoes and the[y] marched us through two creeks, got our shoes soaked up then they marched**

us till the shoes dried so I guess that will hold me for a while.”

2. As soon as they were trained they shipped

iii. French sawmills

1. American lumberjacks did not think much of French sawmills to the point where “...a millwright from the northwest offered to eat its [the French mill] daily cut.

2. The French mills were aggravations of the flesh and promoters of profanity (ibid).”

SLIDE 8: S.S. TUSCANIA – CUNARD LINE

d. S.S. Tuscania

i. 2179 American soldiers aboard when the Tuscania was torpedoed off the coast of Ireland on February 5

ii. Tuscania first troop ship carrying American soldiers sent to Europe to be sunk by German submarine. (*Daily Missoulian* February 7 & 8, 1917 – i and ii)

SLIDE 9: U.S. TRANSPORT SUNK (MISSOULIAN)

1. Many of the American soldiers hit the water and had to wait for pick-up by life boats and rescue boats from the other convoy ships.

2. SIDE NOTE from LINCOLN COUNTY BOOK: George Upham (Cook 6th Battalion Company F 20th Engineers) of Troy, MT managed to swim to shore but carried the scars of the attack and surf landing for the rest of his life. (*Daily Missoulian* February 8, 1917)

SLIDE 10: SAMEES' BODIES WASHED ASHORE (MISSOULIAN)

3. **Survivors who did not make it to life boats were pulled off by British destroyers – “During the long wait, one of the companies of the 20th, after seeing comrades drowned in front of them, and not knowing what was in store for themselves, stood in line in perfect order and sang ‘Where do we go from here, boys? Where do we go from here (p. 1108)?’”**

SLIDE 11: DEPTH BOMB TO FOLLOW!

4. **Missoulian delivered tragic news to its readers as the names of the survivors trickled in and the death toll rose**
5. **As a number of those on board were Montanans, the Missoulian reported every scrap of news it could on the tragedy**

SLIDE 12: S.S. TUSCANIA – TUSCANIA FUNERAL SERVICE 1918

iii. Casualties

1. **Few injured men mostly suffering broken arms and legs from getting caught between the rescue boats.**
2. **However large number of sick men on board the ship due to mumps, measles, and pneumonia**
3. **SIDE NOTE from LINCOLN COUNTY BOOK: Private Romeo Garrison on board but pulled off because of measles.**

SLIDE 13: IN MEMORIAM OF THE SEVEN

iv. In Memoriam

1. **210 people lost their lives on the Tuscania**
2. **91 of them members of the 20th Engineers**
3. **7 of those men were from Montana**

SLIDE 14: THE FOREST REGIMENTS IN FRANCE**IV. Largest Regiment in the World**

- a. **American braggadocio – “We are going to plank a road for the American Army, if need be, to the River Rhine, and then build a bridge across it.”**
 - i. **Total strength 10th & 20th 360 officers and 18,183 enlisted men**
 - ii. **Military discipline in the forestry camps overseas reverted to the typical logging camp hierarchy back home (p. 184)**

SLIDE 15: THE FOREST REGIMENTS IN FRANCE

- iii. **“French Logging Methods Described” by Charles V. Wingett, Montana School of Forestry 10th Engineers (*The Timberman* March 1918, p. 107-109)**
 1. **“It is a peculiar sight to see the French people log. Many are the days I have sat in Professor Drake’s class and listened to his profound expostulations of French and German logging methods. All the time I was thinking to myself, ‘now look here, professor, there ain’t no country where they’ve got to save all the small twigs for firewood and let the tree down soft like so the undergrowth won’t get injured! You can’t spring that old stuff on us and expect us to write it down for future reference.’ Nevertheless it’s all there, for I have seen it with my own eyes right here in France. In order for an American lumberjack to become a French logger it will be necessary for him to drink squirrel whisky so he can shinny up these trees. The first thing that is done according to**

the French 'Hoyle' is to climb the tree and cut every limb off clear to the top. This is to save the reproduction from injury. The tree is then under cut as close to the ground as possible, then by using a little business something on the order of a square to sight with, they can fall the tree to within a gnat's _ _ _ well, within a few inches of where they want it."

- 2. "Seriously, however, they have this forestry down to a fine point and waste nothing which is suitable for lumber. They have to be, for France is not a heavily timbered country like the Western states where we live. Lucky will the day be when the states get down to such a basis. Not until one has been in this country and has seen with his own eyes the care with which this lumber industry is carried on, can he realize the useless and extravagant waste in our American lumber industries and operations."**

SLIDE 16: MAP SHOWING AMERICAN FORESTRY UNITS

- b. Nine thousand American lumbermen working in France at time of article by Lieutenant Colonel Henry S. Graves aka as Chief Forester of the USFS.**
 - i. "If the war keeps on long enough the forests of France will be depleted."**
 - ii. "We use even the tops of the trees. ... The twigs are gathered into bundles about six or eight feet long and eight or 10 inches thick and bound tightly with wire. Fascines, they call them. They are a staple in military road work. A bad hole or mud hole—a shell crater—is**

filled with these fascines and the hauling of supplies or transportation of wounded goes on without a pause (*The Timberman* April 1918, p. 36).”

SLIDE 17: U.S. LUMBERJACKS AT WORK IN FRANCE

- c. “...The French...regard us as wasteful in our use of wood...they are taking no chances on exhausting their forests and being put to it for an adequate supply of wood after the war (ibid).”
 - i. William B. Greeley: “We had many arguments with the French foresters over cutting requirements and I found myself on the other side of the table from similar controversies with loggers back home.” (p. 182)
 - ii. “Certain trees are designated to be cut when necessity demands it, but talk as you will, you can not take what you will.”

SLIDE 18: RECORD 10 HOUR DAY

- iii. Americans eager to make production clashed on occasion with their French Allies especially when it came to cutting French forests
- iv. Captain George Slack (lumberman from Kalispell, MT) confronted one such complaint: “You damned Frogs! What do you want us to do—win the war for you or save your forests?” (p. 13)
- d. 10,000 foot capacity mills cranked out 25-30,000 per day (p. 1141)
- e. With no horses, the men hauled the logs to the mill by hand; with no harness equipment they made do with burlap, bagging, rope, and nails (p. 1141).

- f. Several “flying squadrons” of lumberjacks worked portable mills within shouting distance of the front lines to ensure rapid delivery of bridge timbers, mine sets, and bomb proofing; eventually they had 13 of these rapid response units (p. 1104)
- g. “...the Army could not have moved forward or maintained itself without the endless streams of lumber which were turned out. It is almost impossible to exaggerate the value of wood supplies as a factor in military operations.” (p. 4)

SLIDE 19: THE AMERICAN LUMBERJACK IN FRANCE

V. Conclusion – 20th Engineers Past & Present

a. “Lumberjack Captures Boche Airman”

- i. Peavy wielding lumberjack approached downed German airman and although the German had an automatic pistol “He became alarmed that it [the peavey] was some new deadly Yankee weapon, threw up his hands and surrendered to the peavey handler (*The Timberman* April 1919, p. 41).”

SLIDE 20: CONDITE ET PUGNATE

b. “A.E.F. Forest Units All Out of France”

- i. A number of 20th Engineer units remained behind after the armistice to repair and rebuild French infrastructure.
- ii. The last of them came home September 1919 almost a year after the war ended (*The Timberman* September 1919 p. 70)

- c. De-mobilized as the last lumberjacks came home but they would be back

SLIDE 21: 20TH ENGINEERS CAMPAIGN RIBBONS

- d. Greeley summed it up best writing, “They came straight from [American] forests and sawmills, trained in [American] woodcraft, with all of the physical vigor, the adaptability to life in the open, and rough and ready mechanical skill of the American woodsman (ibid).”**
- e. CONDITE ET PUGNATE – Build and Fight!**

SLIDE 22: IMAGES COURTESY OF THE FOLLOWING