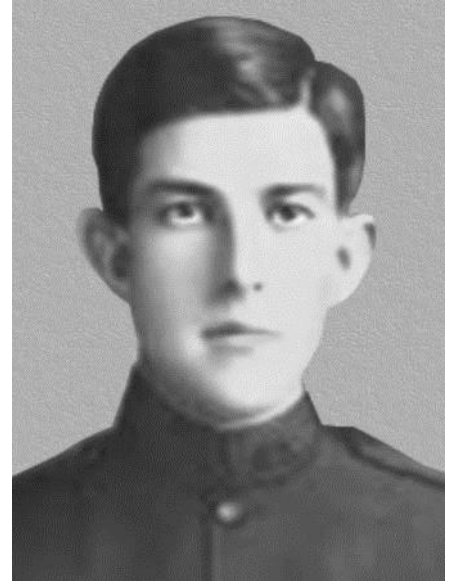


Medal of Honor Winner James Davison Heriot

[Editor's Note: This Saturday as the Tigers host Wake Forest, Clemson University will celebrate Military Appreciation Day. This year's emphasis is on the First World War.]

James Davison Heriot probably arrived at Clemson in the late summer of 1908. Perhaps he rode the train to Cherry's Crossing and then hiked the mile or so to campus while his suitcase or trunk followed on a horse-drawn wagon. As a member of the 256-man Class of 1912, Heriot was beginning an academic journey that less than 40% of these young men would complete by earning their degrees. Many, like young Heriot, would make their marks in other ways.



Heriot was from the farming community of Providence, South Carolina and enrolled as an agriculture major at a time when the Clemson campus boasted unpaved roads and relatively few buildings. Heriot stayed at Clemson for two years and was a member of the Palmetto Society, one of the young college's literary organizations.

After leaving Clemson, Heriot returned to Providence where he supplemented his income from farming by working as an assistant mail carrier for the Post Office. In June 1917, following the United States' April declaration of war on Germany, Heriot registered for the draft.

By the following spring, Heriot, assigned to the 118th Infantry Regiment of the 30th Infantry Division, found himself in France as a member of the American Expeditionary Force. After a few months of in-theater training and non-combat duties, the 30th Division was ordered to the front lines in September to relieve the 1st Australian Division. From September 23 through the 28, the 118 Infantry Regiment worked to strengthen its trenches and shelters and shore up its defensive line. Opposite the 30th Division's lines was the German Hindenburg Line, a vaunted series of defensive positions composed of heavy wire, mutually supporting trenches and machine guns positioned to provide interlocking fire.

At 9:30 pm on September 25, the 118th Regiment climbed "over the top" and began its first full-scale attack on the Germans. The regiment achieved its objectives, advancing Allied positions but stopping short of penetrating the Hindenburg Line. Heavy fighting continued in the sector and as September came to a close, the 30th Division was withdrawn from the line for three days of rest and refitting near the village of Herbecourt, some 25 kilometers to the west.

On October 5, the division was bussed back to the front, this time to relieve the 5th Australian Division. The Aussies had achieved considerable success pushing forward, so much so that their salient around the town of Montbrehain left them far ahead of the neighboring division. The 118th Infantry Regiment's history recalled that "So deep was this salient that the Hun fired on us from east, south and north, thus making it one of the most unhealthy positions imaginable." Early on October 8, the 118th was back on the attack. Corporal Heriot's I Company of 3rd Battalion took heavy casualties in its advance. Still, by noon, the regiment's

objectives had been reached and the weary troops dug in to new positions to rest. A follow-up attack the next day was also successful. By the end of October 10, the 118th had captured 11 square miles of territory which had been in German hands for four years. In the process, the regiment had taken 960 prisoners. That night, the 118th was pulled back into division reserve. The respite was brief.

On October 11, the 118th was ordered to pass through the 120th Infantry Regiment to maintain the momentum of the attack. Heriot and I Company were advancing on the regiment's right.

Historian Brock Lusk, in his paper, *Tigers In the Trenches*, wrote:

Third Battalion, on the right of the advance had encountered a nest of machine guns. Corporal James Heriot rallied four other soldiers in Company I and attacked a machine gun nest which was inflicting heavy casualties on his company. The five soldiers quickly came under heavy cross fire from several machine gun positions. Two of the soldiers with Corporal Heriot were killed and the other two took cover refusing to move. Corporal Heriot fixed his bayonet on his British issued Lee-Enfield rifle and attacked. His Medal of Honor Citation reads, "Unmindful of the hazard attached to his mission, Corporal Heriot, with fixed bayonet, alone charged the machine gun, making his way through the fire for a distance of 30 yards and forcing the enemy to surrender." Despite machine gun wounds to his arm, he continued forward, but would be fatally wounded charging a second machine gun nest, dying on the battlefield of Vaux-Andigny.



On a battlefield where progress was often measured in yards, the 30th Division had penetrated to a depth of over 10 miles, nearly 8 of these with the 118th leading the attack. The regiment captured 48 heavy machine guns, 166 light machine guns, 25 field guns, 72 trench mortars, 2,850 rifles and more than 1,400 prisoners. Lusk's research revealed that the "October operations" of the 30th Division yielded the greatest number of awards for valor for Clemson men in history, including the Medal of Honor for Corporal Heriot. Heriot's mother, Carrie, would receive this decoration from Major General Henry Sharpe on February 22, 1919.

While Corporal Heriot's sacrifice helped pressure the Germans and bring about the armistice the following month, the "war to end all wars" sadly was not.

