

## Horton Helped Turn the Tide

Harry Horton left Clemson College to enlist in the South Carolina Militia where he was made a sergeant. Not long thereafter, perhaps based in part on the military training he had received at Clemson, Horton was awarded a Second Lieutenant's commission in the United States Army.

Sadly, we know more about Horton's death than his brief life. A member of Clemson's Class of 1919, Horton was from Columbia. After volunteering for service in the militia, he eventually found himself assigned as a scout officer in the 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment.

U.S. President Wilson had appointed Major General John J. "Black Jack" Pershing commander of the American Expeditionary Force in May 1917, only a month after the United States declared war on Germany. Pershing insisted that American soldiers be well-trained before going to Europe. As a result, few troops arrived before 1918. In addition, Pershing insisted that the Americans would not be used to fill gaps in the French and British armies and he resisted efforts to have American troops deployed as individual replacements in decimated Allied units.



The first American troops, who were often called "Doughboys," landed in Europe in June 1917, but throughout that year, the AEF played only a minor role in front line operations. By May 1918 over one million U.S. troops were stationed in France.

American Army and Marine Corps troops played a key role in helping stop the German thrust towards Paris, during the Second Battle of the Marne in June 1918. The first major and distinctly American offensive was the reduction of the Saint Mihiel salient in September 1918. Beginning September 12, Pershing commanded the American First Army, comprising seven divisions and more than 500,000 men, in the largest offensive operation ever undertaken by United States armed forces.

According to a history of the Fifth Division, of which the 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment was a part, a German attack on the night of September 12

“penetrated slightly the northeast corner of Bois Gerard. But here the attack was overcome. Infiltration was stopped and the reinforcements enabled the Eleventh to cover the invaders with superior fire. Our steady machine gun fire at last silenced the enemy in Foret de Vencheres. The Boches withdrew, leaving five men from three different Saxon regiments prisoners in our hands and a dozen or more dead in our front line trench. The number of dead and wounded in the Bois de Bonvaux and to the north and east thereof could not be determined. By 10 o'clock the attack was completely repulsed and the Germans had all withdrawn by their routes of approach in Hanido and Bonvaux. The tanks arrived about 11 o'clock, too late to participate in the fight. Midnight saw the front almost quiet again with only an occasional exchange of shots. All our objectives were firmly held. The day had brought our regiments two hundred casualties. Second Lieutenants Robert A. Davis and Harry C. Horton of the Eleventh Infantry had lost their lives.”\*

Horton had been killed by enemy artillery fire while fighting with the advancing battalion. Perhaps a premonition had led Horton to write in a letter to his parents:

Don't worry about me; just remember what we are fighting for. One could not choose a more glorious way of closing the book of life.

Momentum developed in the Saint Mihiel offensive carried over to the Meuse-Argonne offensive, which began two weeks later and pressured the Germans into the November 11 Armistice.

Lieutenant Horton was survived by his parents and was buried at Saint Mihiel American Cemetery, Thiaucourt, France. He was later reinterred in the United States.