

December 13, 1919: p. 1

## **COBLANCE ENTERED; MEN OF THIRD ARMY NOW ALONG RHINE**

### **Americans March Into Ancient Citadel "Sort of Casual Like"**

### **GOAL REACHED BY TRAIN**

### **Yanks Attract No More Attention Than if They Were Passing Through Blois**

On the afternoon of December 8, 1918, the troops of the Third American Army entered Coblenz. This was the goal of the occupation. The Yankee had reached the Rhine.

Coblenz, the city which the Romans built there where the waters of the Rhine and the Moselle flow together, is the capital and focal point of the American Army of Occupation. As Mayence with the French and Cologne with the British, so Coblenz was, by the terms of the armistice, set aside as our bridgehead on the Rhine. For 35 kilometers on either side of it and for 30 kilometers ahead of it, we will patrol and guard its highways and by-ways until further notice—"until the completion of this duty."

Ever since that day in April of last year when America declared war, a good many of us have cheered ourselves along by little day-dreams in which we looked ahead and pictured to ourselves the arrival at the Rhine of victorious troops in olive drab. But it is pretty certain that none of us, even in our most prophetic visions, ever foresaw that that arrival would be made by train and that that train would be driven by Germans.

### **Double Time—by Request**

The troops went forward by train because the fair Rhineland citadel lay many weary miles ahead of the plodding line of march, and the city was calling them. The city was calling them because the German forces had receded far beyond the Rhine, and it dreaded any interregnum in that police power which spells law and order. So by Sunday evening, young Americans with guns stood guard over the Rhine bridges and paced their posts at the busy street corners of Coblenz.

For it was on Sunday that they set forth from Trier. It always is Sunday when the Third American Army begins anything. It was on a Sunday that it began its historic march to Germany. It was on a Sunday that it crossed the frontier. It was on a Sunday that it reached the Rhine.

The West-station in Trier was abustle with activity. Shortly after dawn, the heavy packed doughboys filing along the tracks to the considerable curiosity of the local American garrison.

"What outfit, buddy?" the men of the Sixth Infantry called out.

"The best battalion in the American Army," was the answer, given with conviction.



## COBLENCE

### The Old Fourth Division

To be more precise, it was the second—Major Fred W. Hackett's—battalion of the 39th Infantry, which was in the 4th Division and is therefore honorably scarred from the bitter fighting below and above Montfaucon.

The German troop train, from the windows of which the doughboys were soon bulging in true American fashion, was not exactly a "40 männer, 8 pferde" transport. It was a string of fourth class coaches, each with eight sitzeplätze and 12 stehplätze, and it was manned by engineers, firemen and conductors who finally persuaded the train to totter forth from Trier a little before 10 o'clock.

The ride across Rhenish Prussia to Coblenz is a journey of unforgettable beauty, so lovely is the winding Moselle, so towering the vine-clad hills between which it coils its way to the Rhine. There was the four-kilometer Kaiser Wilhelm tunnel to go through, and high on the hills on either side the bare ruined castles of the twelfth century, still marked with battles of a by-gone day, and still formidable in defense, the passing doughboys opined, if a good bunch could hold them with a few machine guns.

All along the way the villagers ran out to see the Americans go by, some just to stand and stare incredulously, some to wave hospitably as if in promise of the welcome ahead.

At one time or another in ages past a good many hostile forces have taken Coblenz. The French have captured it once or twice and once the Swedes descended on it in full force.

### Into the Garrison

Probably never in all its stressful history did enemy troops enter it in quite the matter-of-fact manner which marked the American entry last Sunday. There was no band. There were no colors. "We're just going in sort of casual like," one of our generals had said the day before, and he was right. The Third American Army eased its way into the Rhine citadel. There is no other word for it.

By 3:30 they were piling out of the train on the edge of the city, and ten minutes later they were swinging through the gate into their garrison. They had attracted about as much attention as an American battalion would attract by marching through the streets of Blois or St. Nazaire.

Of course, these were not the first Americans to enter Coblenz. Small detachments — feelers, pathfinders, outposts—always precede the Infantry, but a town is never really entered till the Infantry get there.

For some days staff officers had been on the prowl in Coblenz, and as long ago as a week ago Thursday the 38th Engineers arrived in force to establish the railroad. By the time the doughboys trundled into the station, American locomotives were whizzing in and out of the train yard as if the success of the occupation depended entirely on their getting somewhere immediately.

Washington announces additional troops for occupying Luxemburg. The troops in that country include the 2nd, 7th, 28th, 33rd and 79th Divisions.