

## **Extracted from the 82nd Division History:**

As previously intimated, this history, painstakingly gathered at the end of the war by General Duncan, has to be the starting point for any serious study. Before the fight on 8 October 1918, Corporal Alvin Cullum York was engaged in the fight for the village of Chatel-Chehery and the heights beyond. On the morning of 8 October, he was one of a detail of 17 men given instructions to make their way behind German guns that were holding up the attack and to destroy them. The following passage is extracted from the division history. York was in the 328th Infantry, Company G.

*The 2nd Battalion had moved west across the Aire River with orders to pass the lines of the 1st Battalion on Hill 223 and jump off at 6 hours, October 8, 1918, with a compass direction ten degrees north of west. Their objective was the Decauville railroad, two kilometres away.*

*The 328th Infantry Machine Gun Company and the one-pounder and trench mortar platoons, also of the 328th Infantry, were moved to Hill 223 and Chatel-Chehery for the purpose of supporting the attack. The 2nd Battalion of the 328th Infantry assaulted with E Company on the right and G Company on the left, and with F and H Companies in support respectively at six hundred meters.*

*The record of this battalion on that day constitutes a very splendid page in the history of the division. Under steady and intense machine gun fire from the northwest and southwest, this battalion manoeuvred down the long western slope of Hill 223, crossed the five hundred yards of open valley, fought its way through a kilometre of heavy woods which covered the precipitous spur protruding into the center of the valley from the west and dug in along the Corps objective, the Decauville Railroad, at 17 hours that afternoon.*

*It had no liaison with the troops attacking to the north of Hill 180, over a kilometer away. For most of the day it was without contact with units of the 28th Division, also attacking in a westerly direction from Chatel-Chehery. By nightfall this battalion had taken some 270 prisoners and left more than one hundred dead Germans on the ground. It had captured the astonishing total of 123 machine guns, a battery of four field pieces, two trench mortars, a set of electrical field signal equipment complete, four anti-tank guns and a quantity of German small arms and ammunition of several varieties.*

*As the result of a day spent in charging and outflanking machine gun nests and crawling across an exposed valley, the battalion had suffered about 350 casualties, of whom forty-five were killed. Among the dead was 2nd Lt. K. P. Stewart, G Company, who, when shot in the leg, continued to pull himself along, waving encouragement to his men until a second bullet crashed through his head and robbed his platoon of a very gallant leader.*

*One exploit in this day's work will always be retold in the military tradition*

*of our country. It is entitled to a place among the famous deeds in arms of legendary or modern warfare. Early in the attack of this battalion, the progress of G Company on the left was seriously impeded by heavy machine gun fire from a hill directly south west across the valley from Hill 223. Although this territory was south of the zone of action assigned the 82nd Division, it was necessary to reduce this fire or suffer disastrous consequences.*

*A force of four non-commissioned officers and thirteen privates was sent from the left support platoon of G Company to encircle the hill and silence the enemy guns. This detachment, under Acting Sergeant Early, encircled the hill from the southeast and by a very skilful reconnaissance passed through the heavy woods on the east crest and descended to the wooded ravine on the west side of the hill.*

*The detachment in working through the underbrush came upon a German battalion estimated to contain about 250 men, a considerable number of whom were machine gunners. Orders taken later from the pocket of the German battalion commander proved that the mission of this battalion was to launch a counter-attack against the left flank of our attack at 10 hours 30 minutes. About seventy-five Germans were crowded around their battalion commander, apparently engaged in receiving final instructions. A force of machine gunners and infantrymen, however, were lying in fox holes fifty yards away on the western slope of the hill. Other machine gun detachments were located on the north and northeast slopes of this same wooded hill.*

*The handful of Americans, led by Corporal Early, appeared as a complete surprise to this German battalion. The large body of Germans surrounding the German battalion commander began surrendering to our men, whom the enemy supposed to be the leading element of a large American force which had enveloped their position.*

*German machine gunners on the hillside, however, quickly reversed their guns and poured a hail of bullets into the bottom of the ravine, killing six and wounding three of the American detachment. All of the non-commissioned officers were killed or seriously wounded except Corp. Alvin C. York of Pall Mall, Tenn. With Corporal York were seven privates, four of whom were mostly occupied in covering with their rifles the large group of German infantrymen who had thrown down their arms at the first surprise. A few shots were fired by the remaining three Americans, but the chief burden of initiative and achievement fell upon Corporal York.*

*Crouching close to the huddle of German prisoners, he engaged in a rapid fire action with the machine gunners and infantrymen on the hillside. The return fire struck just behind him, due to the fact that careful shooting from the hillside was necessary by the Germans to avoid injuring their own men a few feet in front of Corporal York.*

*The American fired all the rifle ammunition clips on the front of his belt and then three complete clips from his automatic pistol. In days past, he had won many a turkey shoot with the rifle and pistol in the Tennessee mountains, and it is believed that he wasted no ammunition on this day.*

*Once a lieutenant on the hillside led a counter-attack of a dozen gunners and infantrymen against this extraordinary marksman, who shot the lieutenant through the stomach and killed others before the survivors took cover. German morale gave way entirely and the battalion commander surrendered his command.*

*Corporal York placed himself between two German officers at the head of the column and distributed the seven Americans on guard along the flanks and in rear of the hastily formed column of prisoners. On his way back over the hill he picked up a considerable number of additional prisoners from the north and northeast slopes of the hill.*

*When he reported at the Battalion P. C, Lieutenant Woods, the Battalion Adjutant, 2nd Battalion, 328th Infantry, counted the prisoners and found that they totalled three officers and 129 enlisted men.*

*The prisoners proved to be part of the 45th Reserve Division. The three wounded Americans were brought in with the column. The six dead Americans were buried later where they had fallen. During the forenoon Lieutenant Cox passed the scene of this fight with a portion of F Company. He estimates that approximately twenty dead Germans lay on the hillside.*

*After the armistice, Corporal York received the personal thanks of Major General Duncan, the Division Commander, Major General Summerall, Commanding 5th Corps, and General Pershing, the Commander-in-Chief. He also was given the Congressional Medal of Honor and the Croix de Guerre.<sup>1</sup>*

Many of the maps that will be shown in this document have been annotated by Dr. Tom Nolan & Brad Posey using relevant information over-layered onto modern IGN maps. Other maps, as shown, have been annotated by Dr. Nolan.

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<sup>1</sup> Official History of 82<sup>nd</sup> Division, American Expeditionary Forces, 1917 – 1919. p.58 -62