

York Diary

On pages 217 – 235 of the diary, you can find York's own account of what happened on the morning of 8 October, 1918. After Sergeant Parsons sent the patrol to take out the German machine-guns on the left flank, York describes skirting the left side of the valley and moving over the hill where the machine-guns were posted. He says that they decided to get well in behind the guns, and then swing in from the rear and attack them. When they were certain that they were behind the guns, the patrol went into skirmishing formation and moved in the direction of the fire.

(They were in the bottom of the ravine moving north in the direction of the guns on the northeast slope firing into G Company 328th Infantry's left flank. The patrol did not know that there were other Germans in the ravine between them and the guns).

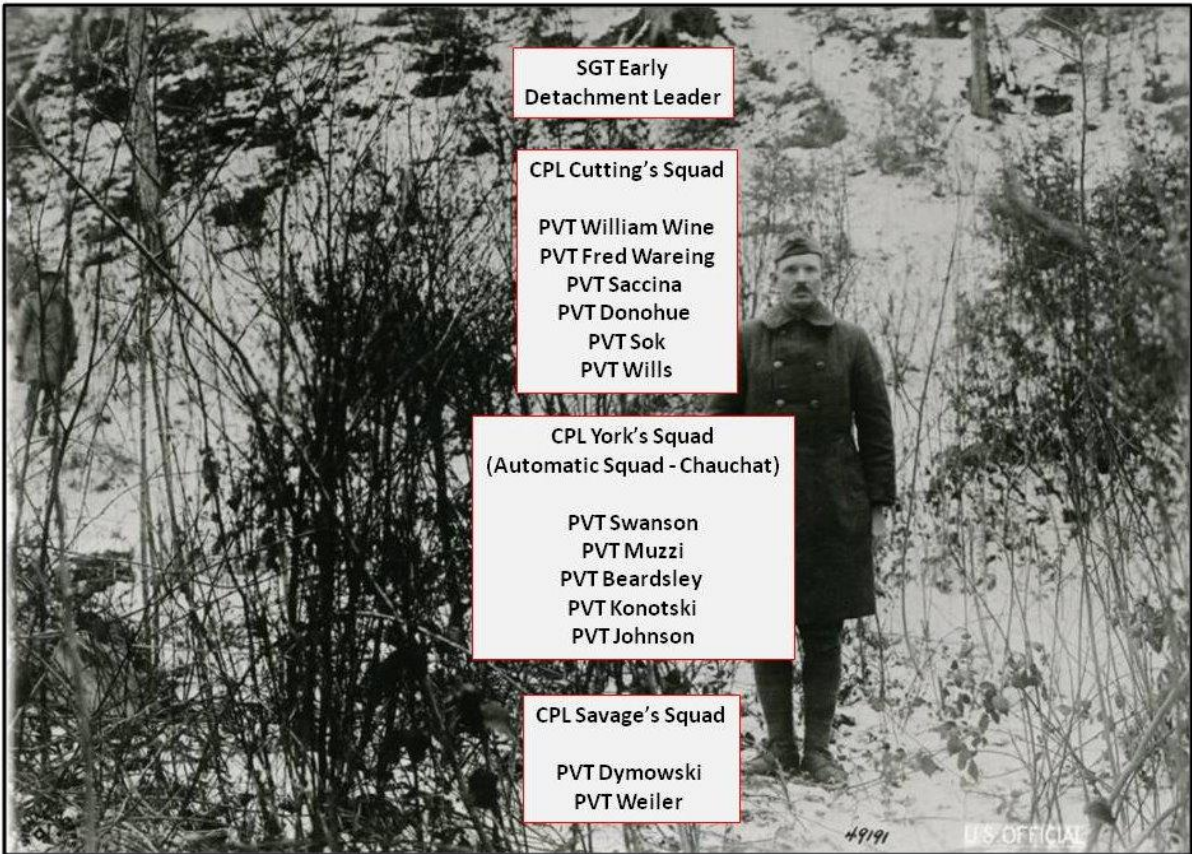
Here is a summary of what York says happened:

York -1: The patrol ran into two Germans with Red Cross arm bands. They ordered them to surrender, but they ran away to the patrol's right and some of the Americans fired at them and missed.

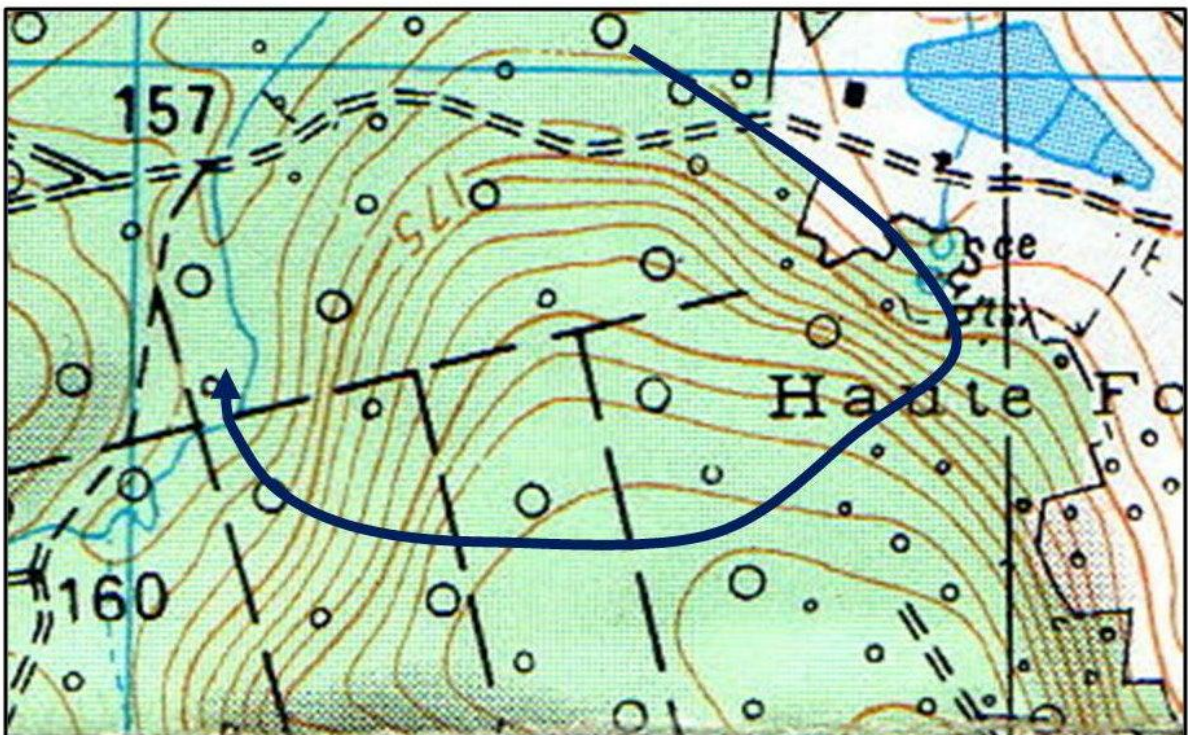
York -2: By the sound of the firing the patrol knew they were in the rear of the machine guns holding up their unit's advance in the valley.

York -3: York says Sergeant Early was in the lead with Savage's squad, the York's and Cutting's bringing up the rear.

York -4: York says they jumped across a small stream and surprised about 15 – 20 Germans who surrendered right away. The patrol was ordered not to shoot since the Germans were going to give up. York says it looked like a headquarters with a small wooden shack and the soldiers looked like they had just finished eating breakfast and were having a meeting. York says only the German Major (LT Vollmer) was armed and the rest of the men were unarmed and some not wearing their tunics. York adds that from the way they looked they had no idea that Americans were so close and probably thought the whole American Army had broken through their rear.



Here is the patrol Order of Battle.



Here is the route the patrol took according to Sergeant York

York -5: York says that a few shots were fired by the Americans to *sorter impress them*, Sergeant Early ordered the men to hold their fire and cover the Germans while they were being lined up and searched.

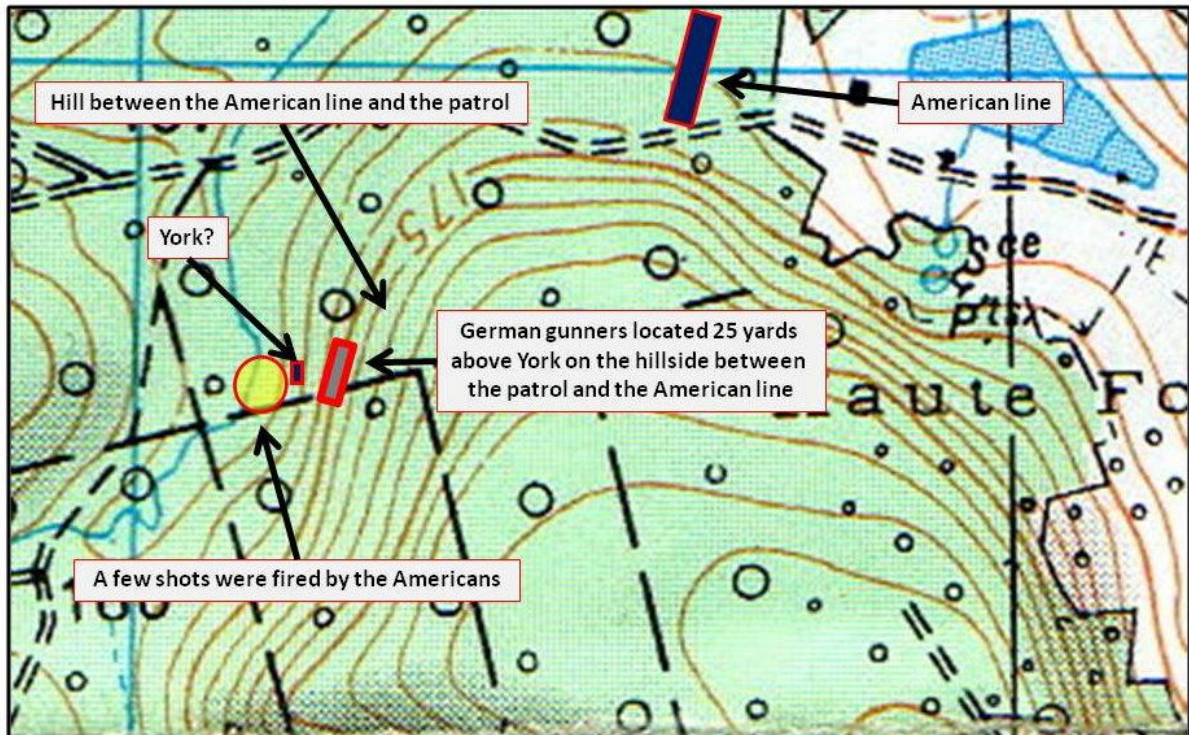
York -6: While they were preparing the prisoners for movement back to the American lines a group of German on the hillside opens fire. York says that these Germans were located on the hillside in front of them, between the patrol and the American lines. He says that Early was struck in the lower body and arm by five bullets. Corporal Savage had been killed with about a hundred bullets in his body and that his clothes had almost been shot off. (*That must be an exaggeration on York's part.*) And he says Cutting was wounded in addition to six other American wounded or killed.

York -7: York says the German fire from the hillside came all of the sudden and was unexpected. He says the German prisoners fell to the ground as soon as the firing started, as well as the Americans not hit by the initial burst of German fire. He adds that they were capturing a German headquarters and the guns on the hillside saw what was taking place below, swung their guns around and opened fire.

York -8: York states that he thought there must have been over 20 machine-guns firing at them and that thousands of bullets were kicking up the dirt around them as well as cutting down the undergrowth. He says that some of the Americans huddled up against the German prisoners for protection, and that others crawled to cover or hid behind trees.

York -9: York says that he was caught in the open and little to the LEFT in FRONT of the German prisoners about 25 yards from the German machine-guns that he says were in trenches and pits on the slope above.

(It is possible that this is an exaggerated account by York in stating that there were over 20 machine-guns. What is important is where York says he was during the fight; a little to the left and in front of the prisoners and that the Germans who were firing at them were located between the patrol and their own lines in the valley to the north.)

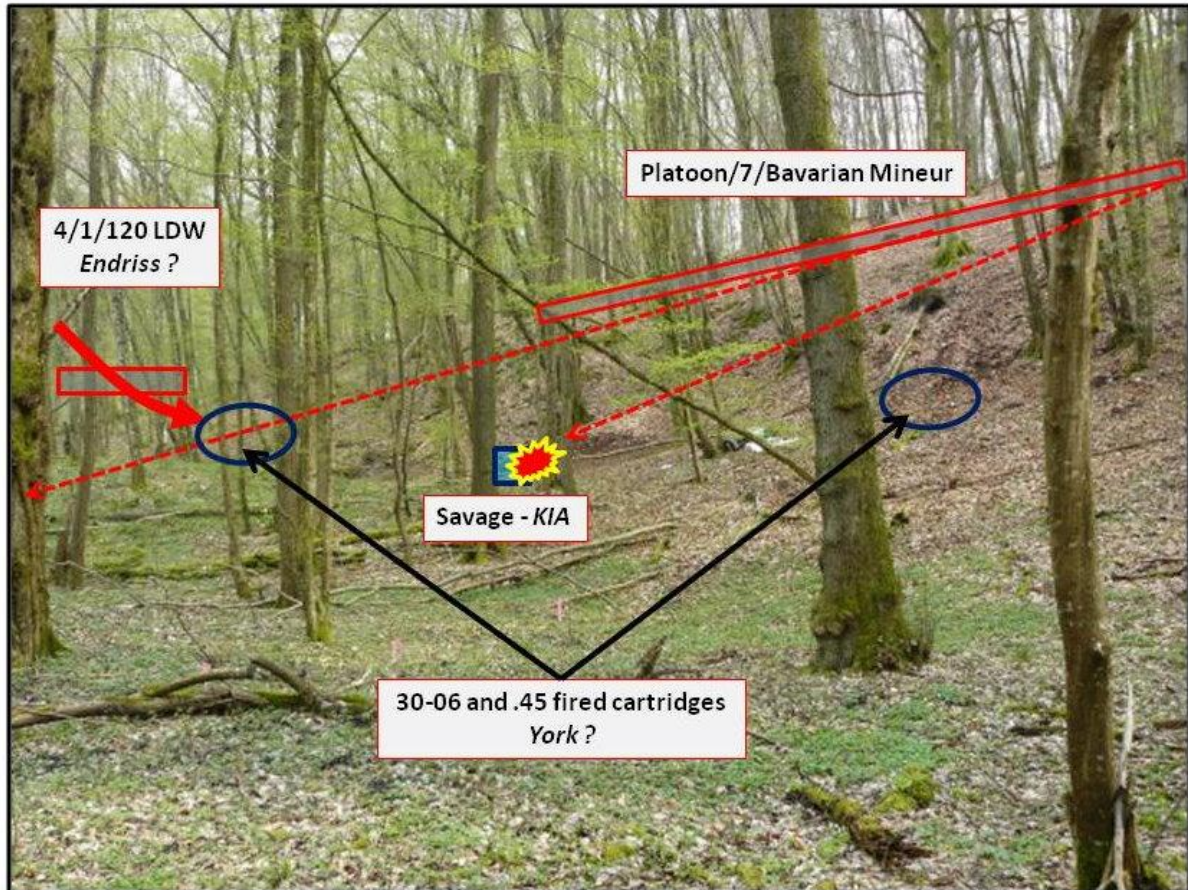


York -10: York says that he had no time to issue orders to the other men, and that the noise of the battle was so loud that they would not have been able to hear him in the first place.

York -11: York says that he started firing from the prone position – lying down – and that every time he would see a German’s head or body he would fire. At that distance he says that he could not miss and he did not. He said that by lying down, the Germans above would have to stick their head up in order to see him, at which time he would take them out.

York -12: During this time, York says that he had no idea of where the other patrol members were, what they were doing or if they were even still alive. He adds that after the fight, the other members said they did not fire a shot during the battle.

York -13: He said that all of what he previously described took place in the matter of a few minutes and when he was able to, he stood up and fired *off-hand*, his favorite position. He says that he was still using his rifle, had fired several clips, his rifle ammunition was running low and that the barrel was getting hot.



York-14: At some point during this fight York says a German officer and five men jumped out of a trench and charged him with fixed bayonets. Since he only had half of a clip in his rifle, York says he pulled out his pistol and shot every man from rear to front, so that the ones in front would not know they were being successfully engaged.

York-15: Then York says he returned to his rifle and knew that if he kept his wits and did not run out of ammunition he had them. He says during this part of the engagement he continuously yelled for them to surrender, but felt they did not understand what he was saying. He states that over 20 Germans had been killed by this time.

York-16: York says that he got a hold of the German Major who told him that if he would stop firing he would make the others surrender. The German officer blew a whistle and the Germans on the hillside stopped firing. They threw down their weapons and equipment and came down the hill to join the other prisoners. York says the officer approached him shortly after he shot the 6 man bayonet charge.

York-18: York says that as the Germans from the hillside gathered at the bottom of the hill one of them threw a small grenade at York's head, but missed wounding one of the German prisoners; York says he killed the man that threw the grenade. He estimates that about 50 men surrendered from the hill and that the total prisoner count was between 80 and 90.

York-19: York says that he called for his men and one answered from behind an oak tree; the others were lying in the bushes. He said they needed to get the Germans out of there (back to American lines) and that one of the men said it was impossible. York ordered the Germans to line up in two columns, and he placed himself at the front with the German Major (Vollmer). York said that the German Major seemed suspicious and asked how many men York had, York replied that he had *a-plenty*. He had the survivors guard the flanks and rear of the column as they moved out in direction of the American lines.