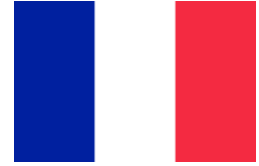




USA



USAREUR 7th US Army



FRANCE



36th Inf.Div.



45th Inf. Div.



100th Inf. Div.



103rd Inf. Div.

More Commemorative tablets and Monuments in the Vosges Mountains

On the trail of the Soldiers of the 7th US Army and the USAAF

September 2011

Part VIII : Vosges Mountains 4/4

- Housseras, in Memory of First Lieutenant Earl B. Railsback
- Raon-l'Etape, 100th Infantry Division
- Saint-Dié, 103rd Infantry Division
- Fraize, Mandray Pass
- La Croix aux Mines, Le Chipal

Eric Vandroux



October 25th, 1944



45th Infantry Division



157th Infantry Regiment

Earl B. RAILSBACK

First Lieutenant



Silver Star



7th US Army



Purple Heart



of wood situated in the northeast of the village.

“The attack by the 3rd Battalion of the 157th Infantry Regiment in the direction of HOUSSERAS started from AUTREY at 6:30 am, on October 25th, 1944. Flatware by a thick fog, the companies arrived with the aim of their objectives without meeting of resistance.

The German soldiers appeared only when the American Soldiers approached the village. The Company Love was stopped by shootings of all kinds resulting from borders

The company Item commanded by the First Lieutenant Earl B. RAILSBACK had to fight all day long to reduce the German defenses of the center of the village. The progress was made house by house, sometimes room by room under the shootings from german snipers hidden in the bell tower of the church. The Infantry men were helped by several tanks of the 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion. It was only in the twilight, that the Americans delivered totally the center of the village.

At this time the Companies Love and King led a violent attack to the bayonet to dislodge the enemy of borders and to liberate the hamlets “Les Hauts-Près” and “Les Angles”.

Lieutenant RAILSBACK was killed that October 25th, 1944, at the head of his Company, in unknown circumstances and was posthumously decorated with Silver Star and with Purple Heart. He rests in the Epinal American Cemetery.”

From “Eager for Duty, history of the 157th Infantry Regiment, June 4th, 1943 to May 8th, 1945”



100th Inf. Div.



399th Inf. Regt



Distinguished Unit Citation



November 17th, 1944

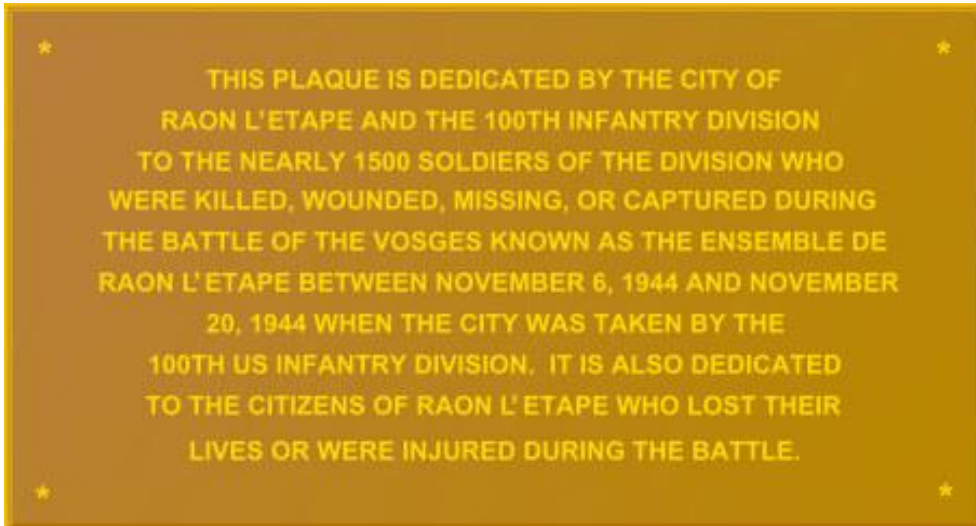
“The 100th Infantry Division made a marked contribution to the success of the VI Corps attack, first, by the capture of Raon-l'Étape, an operation which breached the hinge of the German defensive position and at the same time drew forces from the center where the main attack was to be made; and second, by the prompt capture of Schirmeck, which blocked the enemy on the left and permitted the main attack to push through without delay. Your fine division has written a bright page in the military history of our armed forces.”

General Brooks

Distinguished Unit Citation 1st Battalion, 399th Infantry Regiment

(War Department General Order 103-46)

“The 1st Battalion, 399th Infantry Regiment, is cited for outstanding performance in combat during the period 16 November 1944 to 17 November 1944, near Raon l'Étape, France. Overlooking the important Meurthe River city of Raon l'Étape, In the thickly forested foothills of the Vosges Mountains, is a hill-mass known as the Tête des Reclus. This high ground, affording perfect enemy observation, barred an assault upon the vital communications city. On the rainy morning of 16 November, the 1st Battalion launched an attack to clear the enemy from these strongly fortified hill positions. Fighting through the dense, pine forest under intense enemy artillery, mortar, machine gun and automatic-weapons fire, the 1st Battalion, after three hours of effort, drove across a trail circling the base of the hill-mass. A withering, 45 minute artillery preparation at this point proved ineffective against the deep,



concrete- and log-covered enemy bunkers built into the side of the hills, and it soon became evident that basic infantry assault was the only feasible method for driving the enemy from their positions.

In a fierce, close-in, small arms firefight, which increased in fury as they climbed the precipitous slopes, the 1st Battalion wormed its way toward the top of Hill 462.8, key to the enemy's defenses. Battling against fanatical enemy resistance, it finally reached the crest. Bitter, hand-to-hand fighting developed as the enemy hurled repeated counterattacks against the inspired infantrymen. Once, the 1st Battalion was driven from the hilltop, but rapidly regrouping, it regained its positions. At dark, the enemy finally withdrew, leaving the 1st Battalion in possession of high ground. Throughout, supplies had to be hand carried up the steep slopes under continuous enemy fire. Only the teamwork, coordination, and determination of all elements in the heroic 1st Battalion made the success of this attack possible, opening the gateway through the Vosges Mountains to the Alsatian Plains beyond.”

(General Orders 206, Headquarters, 100th Infantry Division, 23 July 1945)



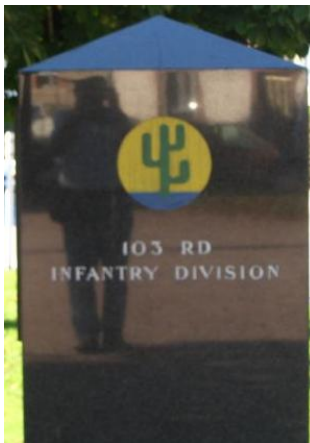
103rd Inf. Div.



November 23rd, 1944

“The 103d Infantry Division arrived at Marseilles, France, 20 October 1944. It relieved the 3d Division at Chevry on 8 November, and attacked west of St. Dié, 16 November, in its drive through the Vosges Mountains. Meeting heavy resistance all the way, it crossed the Meurthe River, took St. Dié, 23 November and captured Diefenbach on 29 November and Selestat on 4 December”.

From “Wikipedia”

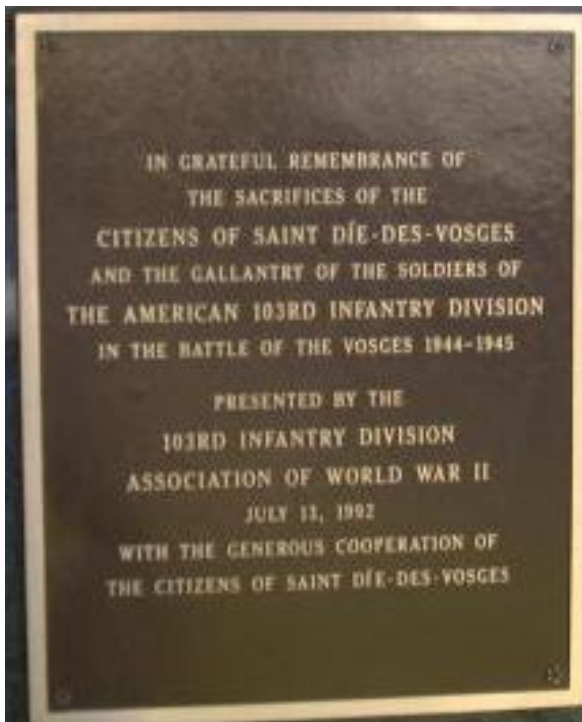


“On the right wing of the VI Corps, Brooks wanted the 103d Division to cross the Meurthe south of the 3d Division's area, seize St. Die, and then push south and southeast toward Fraize and east to Ban-de-Laveline, thus effectively securing the southern flank of the main attack. Thereafter the division was to advance to



the east and northeast abreast of the 3d Division toward the Alsatian plains. However, Brooks hoped that the 103d would be able to clear the west bank of the Meurthe River area opposite Saulcy and St. Leonard before the main attack on the 20th, and he ordered the unit to begin these preliminary operations as soon as possible.

More or less bringing up the rear, the weary 36th Division was to take over the areas vacated by the 103d Division west of the Meurthe, move forward to blocking positions along the eight miles from Anould to Gerardmer, maintain contact with de Monsabert's II Corps, and prepare to attack east and



northeast across the Vosges on order.”

From “US Army in World War II, Riviera to the Rhine”

Col de Mandray

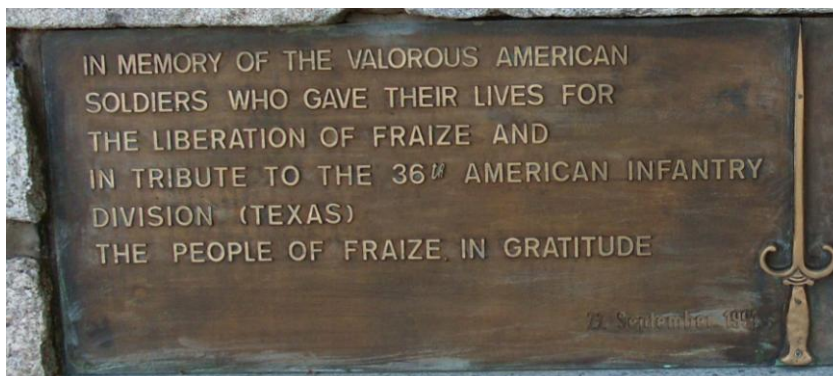
November 24th, 1944



36th Inf. Div.

“Late in the afternoon the 1st Battalion, 142nd, under Lt. Col. James L. Minor, mounted on tanks, tank destroyers and artillery vehicles, started forward. At Haute Mandray the Germans put up a last-ditch stand. Taking up the battle on foot and fighting all night, the battalion forced its way up and over a narrow, precipitous road through the villages of Le Chipal and La Croix-Aux-Mines into the town of Ban-de-Laveline, a march of eleven kilometers. The Division front, winding from a point near Gerardmer to the newly-won Ban-de-Laveline, now stretched more than thirty kilometers. The Germans that had been defeated at Haute Mandray infiltrated back into the hills and throughout daylight of the 24th succeeded in keeping the road near Le Chipal under fire, preventing further movement of vehicles or troops. The 143rd was employed all day in the tedious job of locating and destroying the enemy machine guns and mortars effecting the temporary blockade, a job extremely difficult because of the rough terrain and heavy woods. However, movement toward St. Marie Pass was not held up until the road could be cleared. The 1st Battalion, 142nd, without waiting for support pushed on and captured Wisembach at the foot of the pass. At nightfall the remainder of the 142nd pushed on into Ban de Laveline. The 143rd was ordered concentrated in La Croix-Aux-Mines and the 141st and the 36th Reconnaissance Troop, to keep contact with the First French Army whose flanking elements were still in the vicinity of Gerardmer, extended their lines to a total of twenty kilometers.”

From [“http://www.texasmilitaryforcesmuseum.org/36division/archives/vosges”](http://www.texasmilitaryforcesmuseum.org/36division/archives/vosges)



“This network of barbed wire entanglements, mines and trenches along the Meurthe River was proving a formidable barrier. Fortunately the enemy was unable to man its defenses at every point. Leaving the Clefcy sector to a reconnaissance outfit, we suddenly shifted our forces

to the north as the 1st and 2nd Battalions crossed the river next to Anould and moved eastward along the high wooded ground north of Fraize. The two battalions advanced steadily through the heavily mined woods, meeting little opposition.

Thanksgiving turkey was enjoyed by C and F Companies in Fraize. It came a day late, but nonetheless it was cause for rejoicing; we had broken through the Meurthe River line defenses, and the cost had not been nearly as great as had been feared.”

From [“141st Infantry Regiment, 36th Infantry Division, to the Fighting Infantryman”](#)

HAMEAU DU CHIPAL

November 25th, 1944

LA CROIX-AUX-MINES



36th Inf. Div.

“Many miles of the narrow mountain pass still remained before the plains of the Rhine Valley would be reached, however. There was no time to pause. Even while the 3rd Battalion was mopping up St. Marie, the 1st Battalion, 142nd, pushed on towards St. Croix, next major objective two miles beyond in the pass. The 1st had followed the 3rd over the mountain heights but continued directly on as the latter turned to attack St. Marie. For some seven kilometers its riflemen, machine-gunners and mortarmen packed their loads over the fantastically difficult mountain terrain. No armor or transport could follow them. Blankets had been discarded in order to carry extra ammunition and the battalion faced the possibility of faring on its own for some time, as, when it started, the issue at St. Marie had not been decided. It was after dark before the hills immediately overlooking St. Croix were reached. The attack was launched early the next morning but the Germans, alerted by the St. Marie incident, had rushed reinforcements up from Selestat, and capture of the town required two days. The 2nd Battalion, 142nd, moving in from the direction of St. Marie, assisted the 1st Battalion coming down from the hills, in the reduction of St. Croix.

While the advance through St. Marie Pass was under way, far to the right on the Division's drawn-out flank, the 141st kept up a steady pressure on German elements in the hills along the Meurthe River. They captured Clefey, Fraize and Scarupt and pushed toward Bonhomme Pass. The Germans were shelling Clefey and Anould at the same time Division spearheads fought into St. Croix. The 143rd, committed to clearing the ridges east of Ban de Laveline and La Croix, was brought up to St. Marie soon after the town fell, relieving advance elements there and then pushing southeast on the much-blocked road leading to Ribeauville.

From St. Marie on the 27th, with only one day's rest, the 3rd Battalion, 142nd, started out on foot again to climb the mountains, this time to the right of the road, and to bypass the opposition occupying the 1st and 2nd Battalions at St. Croix, prepared to attack Liepvre, the next large town. By ten o'clock on the morning of the 28th, however, the 2nd Battalion, after the enemy's St. Croix stand had been broken, had battered its way through Muslock and was in Liepvre.”

From <http://www.texasmilitaryforcesmuseum.org/36division/archives/vosges>”



“In Memory of the 36 American Soldiers who gave their lives for the Liberation of La Croix aux Mines in Rossberg area”