

Wilbur Atkinson's journal from his trip to France

August 1918

This has been transcribed from Nancy Jones's transcription. Nancy turned it from paper hand-written journal to typed-on-paper. And I'm turning it from typed-on-paper to digitalized.

Jesse Atkinson (Wilbur Atkinson's great grandson)

Wilbur Atkinson's diary was written in an old school note book.

I have typed

it out for all of the children, grandchildren and great grandchildren to share.

I have left the spelling and punctuation alone in almost all cases.

I only

edited the punctuation when it made it easier to understand the sequence of

events. I have also included a map of France to indicate where he

events. I have also included a map of France to indicate where he was stationed and the route he took on his trip to the mountains.

Nancy Jones (Wilbur Atkinson's granddaughter)

My Trip to France

We left Camp Beaugard at 1045 a.m. on the 14 of August. We had pullman cars for the trip. We stopped in the switch yards of Shreivesport LA. while the red cross gave us refreshments and tabacco. Our next stop was Jonesbourough Ark. where we detrained and took exercise. The next time we left the train was at Decatur Ill. where we had a good bath and sweets from the red cross again. We went through Laffette Ind. Late in the evening we crossed into Canada at Detroit Mich. About 3 o'clock in the morning I woke up cold and looked out of the window. The first thing I saw was a Canadian Solider. We traveled until day light along lake St Clair. We got off at St Thomas. We could notice the difference in the country and people and we missed the Red Cross We took a

and cross. We took a

hike over the city. We saw a company of negroes there.

Our next stop was at

Niagra where we hiked out to the falls. We crossed the

Niagra river over into

the states. We were glad to get back into the U.S. even if

we were not out of

it over 12 hours. Our next stop of any importance was at

Mauchchunk Pa. We

did not get off the train. This is a very interesting town

being a summer

resort there was a good many people there. The town is

located on two ridges

with the Le High river running between. We followed the

Le High river as it

wound its way down the mountain. The rial road was first

on one side then on

the other. We could look out of one side of the car down

upon swift running

water and out of the other side we could not see the top of

the mountain and

part of the time not even the sky. The same day we went

past the Bethelehem

steel works here we was welcomed by whistles of all

tones and they was held

down as long as we were within hearing. We arrived in

the New York Station at

THE NEW YORK STATION AT

about 3:15 p.m. on the 18th of August. Here we loaded on a small steamer which

carried us over to Long Island. We passed pretty close to the Statue of

Liberty and saw the tallest building in New York on Long Island. We were put

on steel passenger cars which had Long Island along the top in large letters.

We saw some fine country on our way to camp. We arrived at camp about 7:30

p.m. Our first night in Camp was a little cool for we had only one blanket and

it gets pretty cool at night in August on Long Island.

We were wearing campaign hats and canvas leggings while all the other

organizations were wearing over sea caps and spirral leggings. We felt a

little out of place until we were issued them. I did not get to go to rockaway

beach or New York while we were there on account of not having the money.

There was air planes in the air all day doing all kins of stunts. I saw

several hydroplanes flying over. On the evening of the 27

of August we were

On August 10 we were

given orders to roll our packs and get ready to move. It was generally thought

that we were going to Camp Merritt which is just over in New Jersey. That night

we slept on bare springs. A while before the day light we fell out with

packs was counted off given squads right and marched off down the road. We

loaded on cars at day break and taken to the same station that we come through

when we come over. We were loaded on a small steamer which started down the

Hudson. We passed the entrance of the harbor then we come in sight of the U.S.

transport piers. We knew then where we were going. Then we come in sight of a

large three funnel (a metal chimney on a steam ship) ship and we were much

surprised and pleased when we were loaded on it. It was the Levienthian of the

Fatherland the largest ship afloat. We loaded on about 1:00 p.m. About 3:00

p.m. a guard list was called off and I was one of them. I go to post on the

same deck as the battery was guarding a water tight door.

We were on 4 hours

we were on the deck

and off 8. So I got the morning on deck. We sailed at 1 p.m. on 31st of August. There were two other transports with us the Great Northern and the Northern Pacific. There were two or three bands on the pier playing as we pulled out by tugs. I was on guard while we were going out of the harbor and when I came on deck at 4 O'clock I could just see a little fringe of land off to the left. I saw my first flying fish that evening while looking over the rail at the water. There was four submarines destroyers with us that evening.

The next morning I went on deck and there was the same things just as there was the night before except the land. Then the ships begin a zigzag course. The boat began to rock and role and we began to get light headed. And sometimes it would seem as though I was walking up hill and then I would start down another.

I would start down stairs to another deck and it would seem as though the stairs were coming up to meet me. The next morning the destroyers had

destroyers had

disappeared and we were alone with the other two transports. We went on until two days out of port we were met by a convoy. I had started to climb up to my bunk when one of the destroyers dropped a depth bomb which shook the boat so that I almost lost my hold. We sighted land a little while after dinner and arrived in the harbor of Brest at about 5 pm.m on the 7th of September.

The ship was so large tht they culd not get it up to the piers and had to anchor it out in the harbor. We did not get off until about 5:30 on the evening of the 8th of Sept. Then we loaded on another little steamer and was taken ashore. We were started on our hike to the rest camp. We hadn't started until it begin to rain and it rained on us all the way to camp which was about 3 miles. We had to pitch our pup tents that night. We finally got to bed about 11:00. The next morning I was woke up by some one running over my tent

and broke the rear tent pole and stenne don my bunkies

and there the rain fell fast and stopped suddenly. The sun came out
face. It had stopped
raining but not for long. We were wondering where they
got sunny France out of
that. This was a rest camp. But we had plenty of work
buildings were houses
and unloading boats. We were sure glad to leave there
which we did on Sunday
the 15th of Sept. It happened to be a nice sunny day. We
loaded on box cars
which were marked on the side 40 hommes or 8
cheaveaux which means 40 men or 8
horses. There was 40 men in the car I was in and it filled it
full. We left
Brest about 7.p.m. for our ride across France. That night
we did not sleep
much because we could not lay down on the floor. The
next morning we unloaded
about 9 o'clock at Messac. We hiked over to Bain about 9
Kilometers (6 miles).
We were pretty well played out when we arrived there
late in the evening. we
were billeted in the lofts of barns and got a good night's
sleep. we had a cold
supper the night that we arrived in Bain but we ate like
hungry dogs. The only

time I really saw soldiers eat their corn with such an

time I really saw soldiers eat their corn with great appetite. We hadn't had anything to eat for 24 hours. I was promoted to corporal while we were here. We drilled every day and went through all kinds of setting up exercises. We had two new Lieutants and they put us in the best physical shape that we have ever been in by double timing us until we were out of breath and then putting us through all kind of movements standing until we were ready to double time some more. we stayed here until the 27th of Sept. I was sent on the 26th with a detail of 15 men to Messac for the purpose of loading supplies for the Brigade. I stayed here for 10 days. we were billeted in a barn of a large chateau. We had an easy time. We were working about half of the time. Messac is on the main rail road between Rennes and St Magaine. The French soldiers stopped here on their leaves. On the 7th of Oct. we loaded on a passenger train and went over to camp Coetquidan and I joined my organization. I started to a

signal (telephone) school We fired the first time on the

signal (telephone) school. We fired the first time on the range here on the 15th of Oct. We only fired one gun. We fired every few days until the 5th of Nov. Then we begin the Brigade problem which lasted until the evening of the 6th. I was in the telephone dugout just behind the gun. And the night of the 5th when the first shot went off, it blew out our candle and left us in the dark. While doing all the firing on the range, we had to carry our wire out there by hand which was very heavy. On the 11th when the armistice was signed we were out on the range firing but were too busy to realize what had happened. On the 16th of Nov. we started for Valdahon as a school of fire. The first Btn was the only one. We passed through Rennes and Paris and Dijon. It was so cold that one of the boys in my car got off when they stopped and got a bucket and we built a fire in it and had a pretty good fire. It was a little smoky but it helped. We arrived at Valdahon about 8p.m. on the 19th of Nov. It was cold and the ground froze but clear and the stars shining. The 140th

the ground froze but clear and the stars shining. The frost
was already here
and they hauled our equipment up to camp. We did not do
anything but a little
drilling through the rest of Nov. We had a big Christmas
dinner. Col. Owneby
and the rest of our officers ate dinner with us. Then they
had a Christmas tree
at the Y.M.C.A. We did not do but very little in Jan and on
the 10th of Jan., I
started my 7 day leave. Left Besancon at 11:15 p.m. on the
10th of Jan arrived
at Dijon at 1:30. Left Dijon at 3:22 arrived in Lyon at 8:30
a.m. Arrived in
Avignon at 1:30 p.m. arrived in Tarascon at 2:00 o'clock
left Tarascon at 3:30
p.m. arrived at Nimes about 5 o'clock went through
Montpellier arrived in
Toulouse at 3:15 a.m. Our leave call for Toulouse but it
was not a leave area
and they would not let us stay there. So they sent us down
on the Spanish
border. Left Toulouse at 5:50 p.m. arrived in Montrejeau at
11 p.m. got rooms
and went to bed. Left there at 9:30 a.m. 14 Jan. arrived in
Bagneres De Luchon

at 10:40 a.m. got lodging at the Hotel Masons Bonnette

at 10:10 a.m. got loading at the Hotel Masson Bonnet.

This is where we stayed
on our leave. Wednesday we went on a hike up the side of
the mountain to an old
church. Read at Y.M.C.A. that evening. Went on a skiing
party Thursday, Friday
Saturday and Sunday was spent in the Y. Monday evening
I hiked to the Spanish
Border Tuesday evening we spent skiing. We started back
at 7:10 Wednesday morning
passed through Montrejeau, Toulouse and stopped over
nite in Cete. Left there
at 4:50 Thursday morning. Went through Montpillier and
Nimes and changed cars
at Tarascon. Changed again at Avignon for Lyon. Changed
trains at Dijon.
Arrived in Besancon at 8:30 p.m. Left Besancon the next
evening at 5:15.
Saturday arrived in Valdahon at about 8 p.m. thus
completing getting back to
camp on the 25th of Jan.

We started the first school of fire on the 4th of Feb. This
school lasted until
25th. Our next school began on the 6th of March. One of
the French 75 blew up

during this school and killed three of the crew This school

starting the school and killed three of the crew. This school closed on the 26th. The weather was very bad through both of these schools. A quad truck could not get off the road without miring and would have to be pulled out by the tractors which would seldom mire down. They might half bury themselves in the mud but they would most generally find solid ground and pull out. April 7th the instructors calibrated the guns of "A". Battery No. 3 gun was in the repair shop. They fired 92 rounds and run out of ammunition at 10 O'clock. It was a fine day it look as if spring has come. Thursday, April 10th, the third school began today. I am recording at the battery. It is pretty cold and my hand gets so cold that I can hardly write. Walter is operating at the B.C. The officer that picked the battery position made a mistake and put the battery in the rong area. We did not fire that evening. We went out Friday morning. It was raining. We wore our steel helmets, rain coats, and rubber boots. The position was area

1 and in a mud hole The minimum elevation was 370 on

A GUN AT A TIME HERE. THE HEAVENLY CREW WAS 37 0 01

No. 3 gun and it was out most of the time. The reel cart gears hangs and they have to leave the wire out there. It was so foggy that they had to stop firing at 10 O'clock. We did not go out that evening. Everybody had to spend the evening in making a general clean up. The gun crews tractor truck and car drivers had to wash all the mud off of there vehicle. Saturday morning Capt. Willis of B battery inspected us and our equipment. While Capt. Brogdon inspected Battery B. We had the evening off and I spent it in reading the "Hertage of the Desert." Sunday Morning the reconessence car left at 5 O'clock for the front with the sergeants. At 8:30 5 trucks left loaded with men for a joy ride. They got back at 4:00 O'clock. It was cloudy all day and started misting rain at 4 O'clock. Monday morning we fired all morning it was a nice day. A Frenchman took a picture of the battery just as it fired a round. We did not fire that evening. Tuesday morning we did not fire but fired that evening Colland of Battery B was

not the same that evening. Command of Battery B was the executive all of our officers being at a trial. It took turns at raining, snowing, and clearing off all day. We did not fire at all Wednesday. I spent all morning reading it was a pretty nice day but cloudy all day.

Thursday morning, it started in snowing. we went out to the range but the officers did not come out. So we stayed till 10 O'clock. They left the guns out there and came in. In the evening the drivers went out and brought them in.

Friday was a fine day but a little cold. In the morning, they had to pull no 2 gun into Battery with a tractor. We fired 216 shots in the morning. The most we have fired in a half day with only 3 guns. In the evening we fired about 150 shots. Saturday morning the 142, 140 and 52 infantry took part in a ceremony rewarding an American soldier with the Croix de Guerre. The evening was spent in cleaning up for inspection. Sunday morning we laid out our equipment for

general inspection But the general did not come So we

general inspection. But the general did not come. So we put our equipment up about the middle of the evening. was a fine day.

Monday morning we did not fire. But we fired in the evening. It was a fine day.

Tuesday we fired all day. The sun shone all day.

Wednesday we only fired in the evening. It was clear all day but pretty cold.

Thursday morning we fired 273 rounds which is our record for a half day so far. In the evening we fired 245 which makes our record for all days firing. It snowed and mist rain all day. We had all four guns in the battery.

Friday morning we started to the range but had to come back on account of the fog and snow falling. In the evening we fired 233 rounds. It was cloudy all evening but did not rain or snow.

Saturday morning we had inspection but it was not a very hard one. Saturday evening I went to the range where the targets are. I found several 155 shell laying there that had not exploded, a few F.A. shells with 2 A.L. fuses in them, and a good many C.A. with S.R. fuses. I saw several 75 high explosives that had not exploded and picked up an

explosion and picked up an

American and French time fuse.

Sunday, it was bad all day.

Monday morning it snowed so hard that we could hardly see a hundred yards. but in

the evening we fired until 3:30 and it snowed us out. We only fired 100 shots

Tuesday it snowed so hard that we did not go to the range at all.

Wednesday we went to the range and stayed all day.

Although it snowed all the time.

They had four of the tractors mired down in the mud at one time. It took three tractors

to pull no. 1 gun into position, and we fired only 8 rounds.

About 2 O'clock, we had

good news while we were out there. The captain come out about noon and told some

of the boys tht there was a telegram in Camp notifying us to get ready to leave for the

states. This is the last day of the school and the last day of April.

May 1st we turned in all of our telephone equipment today and white washed the walls

and ceiling of our room. It has been raining all day.

May 2 they are still white washing the wall. We are

preparing to turn in all of our

preparing to turn in all of our

equipment. It is a pretty good day for France, more rain and snow.

May 3 we had an inspection in the morning but did not have anything to do in the evening. There are some about us leaving this camp next week for the port of embarkation.

More rain.

May 4 Sunday it is still raining. I have a pass and went to Valdahon this morning and got a dinner of pork chops and eggs.

May 5 we are turning in all our extra equipment including boots, our shoes one blanket and leather gloves. The talk is now we leave the last of this week.

May 6 we did not do anything but paint the halls and rooms. The cars have not come yet to load the guns and the tractors. It is a fine day.

May 8 It is still fine weather. we drilled this morning for the first time for over a month. I go on guard at 4 O'clock. Walter is on with me. It is not a hard guard only 3 corporals and 9 privates.

May 9 we had an inspection and check of our property this morning. The battery drilled

in the evening. Saturday May 10 we had a regular

in the evening. Saturday May 10 we had a regular

saturday morning inspection this

morning. It has been raining a little all day. Saturday night

they brought 1st Seargent

Bingham up to the barracks. He had been hit in the side of

the head. The doctor said

it was a shot.

Sunday May 11 it is nice today if it is a little cloudy. I come

off of guard this evening.

Wensday May 14 it has been a nice day. We have been

having inspections and

drilling every day. I was in charge of quarters today. We

haven't any of our stuff

loaded yet but expect to load it in a few days.

Thursday May 15 It has been another fine day after small

rain the night before. We

drilled about 3 hours today and drill 1 hour with packs.

The 140 F.A. left for the port of

embarcation this evening. We think they are going to

Marsailles. They had 30 cars in

the train

Sunday May 18 they finished loading our guns and

tractors today. It has been raining

a little all day.

Wensday May 21 st we have been drilling 3 hours a day

and one hour with packs. This

evening we took down our beds and scrubbed the floors

Evening we took down our beds and strapped the doors.

we are leaving at 6 O'clock in the morning. The cars are on the track now waiting for us.

Thursday May 22 we left Valdahon at 7:10 a.m. towed behind a passenger train layed over in Besancon 4 hours and left there at 12:30, We are travelling very slow. we " layed over in Dole for about 4 hours. we left there at 7:15 p.m.

Friday May 23 we are almost to Never this morning and making better time. We have an American train crew. There are 7 of us in a second class compartment. We have passed through baurges. We stopped at Villefranche and got coffee and took exercise.

We stopped at Gievers at 4:30 p.m. There are six troop trains here. The Texas and Oklahoma six division and one of casuuls and one of the wild cat div

We saw Lt. Barr here. He used to be a Sgt in Battery A.

Saturday, May 24, we passed through Angers just after day break. We are traveling faster this morning. we have our rations in the car with us. They consist of hard tack rost beef or "cornwillis" jam pork and beans and milk. We got into Nantes at 10:30 a.m

left there at

next morning at
We arrived in Camp at 3:30. we are in long wooden barracks with bunks two high. We joined the rest of the Regiment here. We are expecting to embark in a few days. The rest of the Regiment is ready to go.

Sunday, May 25, spent a good nights sleep last night. We are cleaning up our equipment this morning. We ate breakfast in a large mess hall this morning. Where they feed over 5,000 soldiers three times a day and feed them pretty good.

8 O'clock we cleaned all our equipment today and had inspection and check. Weather is very nice here very much warmer than at Valdahon. We are turning in our barracks bags to be sent to the states.

Monday May 26th we had our physical inspection this morning. We all passed alright as far as I know. Now it was not a very hard one. we are still cleaning up and getting ready for the big inspection. This is another nice day. They stealalized our blankets this evening and had an inspection or our equipment at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday May 27, we had our inspection of pack this morning by Col Owenby.

We had a show down

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inspection at 1:00 O'clock by Col. Owenby. Then we had 30 minutes of foot drill. We are to have the big final inspection tomorrow. Wednesday May 28th we stood our big final inspection this morning. There was only two loose belts in the pack inspection and one dirty cup and one sock short. We passed so good an inspection that we were not required to drill before the inspectors. They have the fellow that had the dirty cup out policing up around the barracks now. He will sure have a hard time now until he gets out. We are not doing anything this evening. I saw Carl Ford this evening he has been here in camp Guthrie for six months guarding German prisoners. It is still nice weather here.

Thursday May 29 we had 1/2 hour setting up exercises and 2 hours of good drill. I went to a ball game this evening played between 1st and 2nd battalions. The score was 3 to 4 in favor of the 2nd. The boys are all getting in a hurry to leave this camp.

when we do, we will go to camp no. 1 or aboard ship.

Friday May 30 this is decoration day and we have a

holiday We went to a sneaking

Monday. We went to a speaking

this morning. Dr Cosbern an officer in the red cross spoke to us. It is cloudy and it may begin raining any time.

Saturday May 31 We had a regular Saturday morning inspection this morning. We did not do anything in the evening.

Sunday June 1 this is another nice day. I have been reading all day. There is no place to go. There are rumors that we leave tomorrow. I certainly hope that we do. This is the worst camp I have been in yet over in France - except Breast.

Monday June 2nd This has been a fine day. We had our pack for pack inspection this morning and had a little drill. I went to a ball game this evening. Lt. Allen has just notified us that we leave this camp some time tomorrow morning.

Tuesday June 3rd We left camp at 7:30 this morning. The hauled our packs for us.

We loaded on the boat at 10:30 a.m. Our boat is the USS Amphion. They say it is a German vessel and that this is the first trip it has made with troops. We were placed in the bow. It has one funnel. The tugs started to turn us

around at 4:45 p.m. Sailed out

around at 1:15 p.m. came out

of harbor at 6:15 p.m. we are almost out of sight of land
now at 9:00 p.m.

Wednesday June 4 | had a good nights sleep last night. The
boat is rocking a good deal
and several of the boys are very sick. We have sighted
several ships today.

Friday June 6th yesterday was a fine day. We had travelled
492 miles yesterday at
noon. It is rough and terribly windy. This morning some
of the waves are coming over
the bow of the boat and getting several of the fellows wet.
We are allowed to stay on
deck all day. I haven't been sick yet but get pretty light
headed at times. The sea was
pretty rough about noon. The waves were coming over so
much that we could hardly
stay up there. Then it began raining and the sea quieted
down and now the sun is
shining.

Saturday June 7 it has been pretty rough today and
getting rougher and the ship has
started to roll now as well as pitch. We sighted another
vessel today. It was going the
other way.

Sunday June 8th the sea is calmer this morning but the
boat is still rolling Battery A

Sea is sun shining. Battery A

puts on a guard this evening.

Monday June 9th, It is cloudy today and the sea is getting quieter. At noon, we had

made 1502 miles since leaving port.

Tuesday June 10th the sea is a little rougher today. The wind is blowing from the east.

We have made 1814 miles today at noon. That is not much of a week run. we made

312 miles in the last 24 hours. The boat is rolling as much as it ever has tonight.

Wednesday June 11 the sea is still rough today but the sun is shining. we are 1249 miles

from Newport News making 300 miles in the last 24 hours. We have sighted several

other ships today going both ways.

Thursday June 12th the sea is calmer today and the sun is shining. We have passed

two boat loads of soldiers going to France. we were 980 miles from Newport News

today at noon. We had boat drill again today and have been having music every day

by our band.

Saturday June 14 we were 418 miles from port today. The sea is rough and it has been

raining all morning.

Sunday June 15th Battery A is on guard today It is clear

Sunday June 14th Battery 1110 on guard today. It is clear this morning. But is clouding up now. We have sighted several ships. We are 152 miles from port now and are looking to sight land before dark.

Monday June 16th we anchored last night at 12:30 outside the harbor give some of the boys a good scare when they lowered the anchor. They raised the anchor at 5:30 this morning. We sighted land at 7:30 am entered the harbor at 9:00 and docked at 10a.m. debarked at 10:30. We marched through the streets of Newport News. The people shure gave us a welcome. We could not help but compare our landing here with our landing in France. We hiked about 4 miles out to our camp which is the best I have been in so far.

Thursday June 19 we went to a reception in town last night given by the war camp community service. we loaded on the train at 9:30. Started at 10 a.m. We went through Richmond VA and passed through Raleigh N.C. at 7:30 p.m. We are on the Sea Board air line now.

Tuesday June 17th we went through the mill here this morning and received two cotton

morning and received two cotton

uniforms. It is awful hot here.

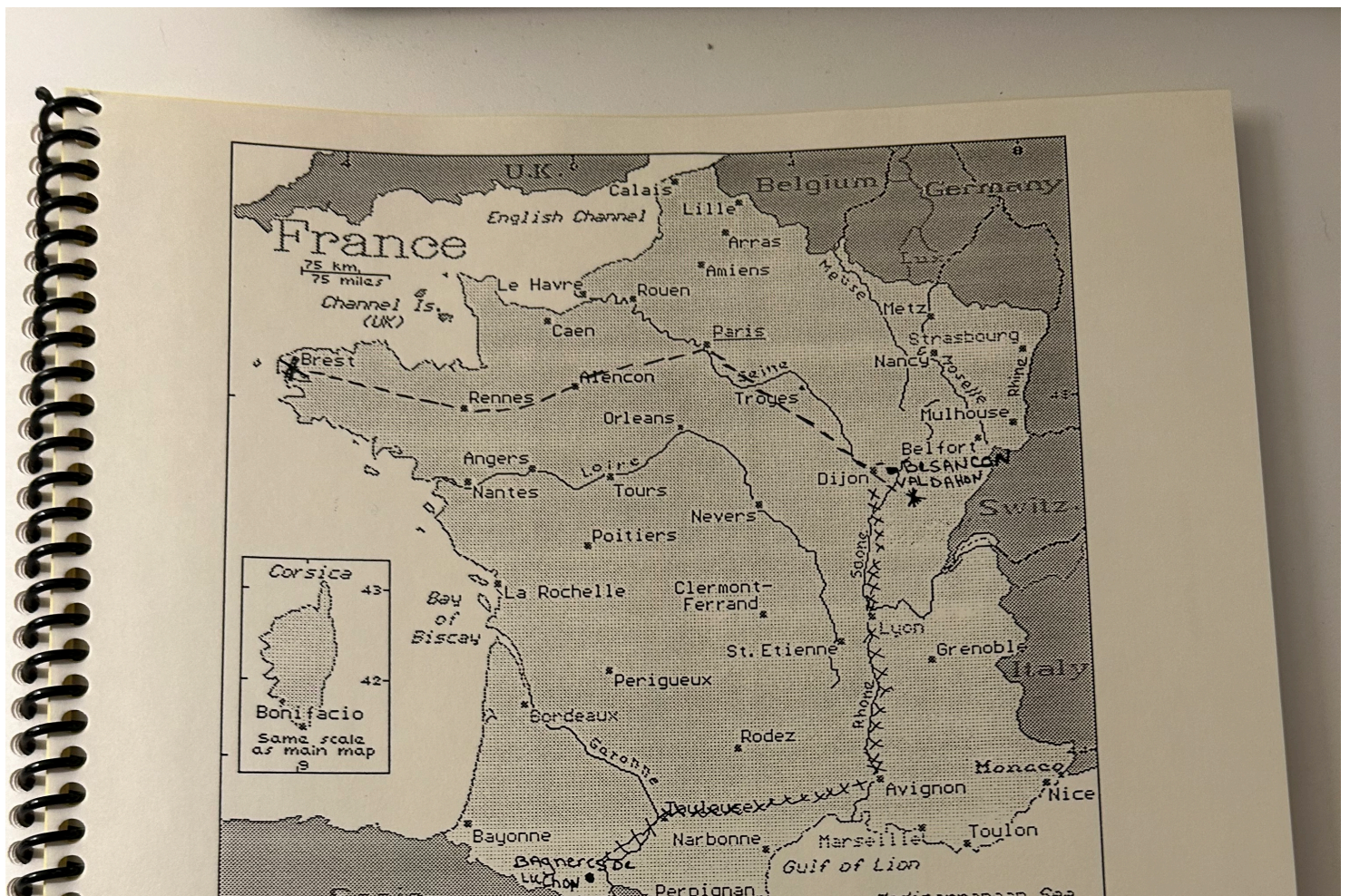
Friday June 20

I had a fine night sleep last night. This sure beats traveling in France. We passed through Monroe S.C. at sun rise. we stopped in Atlanta GA from 6 to 6:30 p.m.

Saturday June 21 st we stopped in Memphis Tenn. this evening and had a good shower bath and a swim in the Y.M.C.A. pool.

Sunday June 22nd

We arrived in Little Rock at about 5:30 a.m. They pulled us right out to Camp Pike.



X Transport Arrived at Brest and the troops took a train to VALDAHON. This is where they were stationed throughout their tour.

--- The broken line represents the route they took.

xxx The "xxx" represents the route Wilbur took when he went on leave. The town they stayed in was Bagnères de Luchon on the Spanish Boarder.

Map