



Devil Dogs Chronicle: Voices of the 4th Marine Brigade in World War I

Edited by George B. Clark

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The transition of the Marine Corps from its 19th century role as a naval landing force and auxiliary ship crew to a viable second land army occurred in a few short months from 1917 to 1918. In the wheat fields surrounding Belleau Wood in northern France, that change occurred as the Marines of the 4th Marine Brigade, part of U.S. Army's 2nd Division, fought the entrenched German army. However, that battle, now part of Marine Corps lore, almost never occurred due to inter-service rivalry. "The U.S. Army initially saw neither reason nor need to include the Marines in the continental fighting," wrote George B. Clark. It was only after the Commandant of the Marine Corps persuaded the Secretary of War that the Marines could solve the manpower crisis brought about by the war that they were included. From there, the Marine Corps never looked back.

Clark has compiled and edited *Devil Dogs Chronicle* almost exclusively from primary source material written during or shortly after World War I. It is a thematically and chronologically organized work drawing that uses a significant number of unpublished or limited edition works by the Marines and Soldiers of the 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade. These hard-to-find sources are often contemporary to the conflict, offering an immediacy to the account. Furthermore, Clark's selection of primary source material reduces the influence of hindsight on memory.

The book starts with initial recruitment, selection, and training of the Marines. While much has changed in the intervening century, modern-day Marines will find their experiences similar to that of their predecessors, including the emphasis on marksmanship. Today, as then, the pride in earning the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor remains a symbolic and emotion-laden event that marks the transition from civilian to Marine. Marines like Pvt Levi Hemrick and Lt James McBrayer Sellers express the deep pride they felt in the exhausting work of earning the title of Marine and preparing for combat in France.

Clark's chapter on combat at Belleau Wood, where the Marines assisted in halting the German Spring Offensive of 1918, is his strongest. Clark's sources describe hidden German machine-gun nests and snipers, and of capturing one position only to be attacked from an unseen position on their flank. In one day, more Marines fell at Belleau Wood than had died in the history of the Marine Corps to date. Further chapters on combat at St.-Mihiel, Soissons, Blanc Mont, and the Meuse-Argonne take Marines from the critical summer of 1918 to the Armistice. These later battles proved Belleau Wood was far from an isolated example of Marine bravery and skill.

Short chapters on occupation duty in Germany and the return home complete the book. Throughout, Clark allows his sources to express the chaos and savagery they experienced, as well as the lighter moments, in their own words. By weaving various authors throughout the text, he creates a holistic picture of the Marine experience in France from induction through demobilization.

Devil Dogs Chronicle puts the Marine transition from an auxiliary naval force to a second land army in the words of its participants. In doing so, Clark has given voice to the men who gave rise to the modern day Marine Corps. While the story is about the 4th Marine Brigade, the experiences of the participants in joint warfare (the brigade was commanded by an Army brigadier general and had platoons led by Army officers), frontline combat, the emotional burdens of command, the fog of war, and shell shock have applicability to the combat arms Soldier outside of the book's historical context. Clark provides a view of Americans in combat in World War I that buttresses official and macro-level histories with the contemporary impressions and reflections of its participants.