

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this book is to record faithfully and accurately the history of the 107th Combat Engineer Battalion, Michigan Army National Guard, from its beginnings in Calumet, Michigan in 1881 to the present.

I attempted to relate the history on the basis of available historical evidence, without any bias, and where opinion was required, to render it as a critical, impartial analysis. My point of view was at all times both that of an historian and soldier. Under no circumstances is this book an attempt to praise the 107th, as that is unnecessary since the facts speak eloquently for themselves.

The major problem encountered during the preparation of the history was that of locating hard, factual information. The loss of the Regimental Trains in World War I, and later the Battalion Trains during World War II, created a void of pre-war information for both periods. In addition, it appears that at no time was there ever a concerted effort to maintain a unit history file. The entire research procedure has therefore been of a 'catch as catch can' nature, literally building a history as each fact comes to light.

The best available source material has been used, to include the National Archives and Records Service, Michigan State Archives and the holdings of various local historical societies in the Upper Peninsula. Extensive use of area newspapers was made to help flesh in the official documents as well as relate the anecdotes and personal incidents to add the detail that brings life to the past.

The official 'home station' of the Battalion, Michigan's Upper Peninsula needs to be discussed since it plays a large role in the character of the unit. The Upper Peninsula, or simply 'U.P.' to the natives, comprises a land area of approximately 15,000 square miles, roughly a third of the landmass of Michigan. While the size of the area is impressive, the size of the population isn't, currently running at three percent of the State population. The land itself is rugged, consisting of either stark outcrops of basaltic sandstone and jasper or heavy blankets of thick forest. Traditionally the U.P. has only three major industries, mining the rich iron ore of the Marquette Iron Range or the native copper of the Keweenaw Peninsula, and harvesting the timber. Examining the Battalion's Muster Rolls from the unit's formation to the present confirms the anticipated, that a significant percentage of the troops were either hard rock miners or lumberjacks. The officers were often also miners, graduates of the Michigan School of Mines (today Michigan Technological University) in the U.P. town of Houghton. The rural nature of the U.P., together with the outdoor occupations of its people, produced very strong and hardy troopers, a characteristic that was (and still is) commented on by various Official observers.

The tradition of a strong Nation Guard - Militia from the U.P. is still true today with the area providing nearly 1,000 men towards a State strength of 10,000, all with a mere three percent of the population base. Technically, the history of the 107th is linked to Calumet's Light Guards, organized in 1881. Morally, however, the Battalion dates its strong military heritage to the Civil War, when elements of two Regiments of Infantry were raised from the Upper Peninsula. The 27th Michigan, in fact, was nicknamed the 'Lake Superior Regiment.' Both units saw heavy fighting, being credited with participation in major actions at Vicksburg, Wilderness, Spottsylvania, Cold Harbor, Petersburg, the Crater and Lost Mountain. Along the way, they also had time to join Sherman in his famous 'March to the Sea.'

Unfortunately, because the units mustered out of service following the Civil War and none of the men subsequently joined the Calumet Light Guards (or any of the other U. P. militia units), the Battalion cannot receive official credit for these historic U.P. military units. Regardless of this minor hitch, it is from these two veteran regiments that the 107th draws its morale military heritage.

Although this history is only one specific unit, it is also generally illustrative of the history and activities of many other units. As the history is presented, I will try to point out the similarities and differences. The result should be a better understanding of the proud heritage of the Battalion and the National Guard as a whole.

I have generally tended to ignore the periodic changes in command, on the justification that there are no great men, only great events. This is not to belittle the achievements of the iron-willed men that so ably led the 107th, but rather because this is a history of the unit and not individuals.

Although this history is intended to be as complete as is reasonably possible, there certainly are items omitted. For example, it is likely that in 1893 elements of Company A were activated to chase train robbers, but since this rather tantalizing tale couldn't be confirmed with factual evidence, it had to be reluctantly left out.

One other point should be mentioned. Readers will notice that I have always capitalized the words 'Company, Battalion, Regiment and Division', regardless of whether the term was used in direct reference to a specific unit as in the '107th Battalion' or in a more general reference as the 'Battalion'. This rather unorthodox capitalization is simply my way of honoring the units, and the men who served in them.

The driving reason for the publication of the history at this particular time is the occasion of the units' centennial on August 8, 1981. But this history serves a better purpose than simply honoring the achievements of a historic Battalion. It also serves to spread the knowledge of the heritage throughout the unit and this has proven to be an important facet in maintaining Battalion pride in the past and confidence in the future!