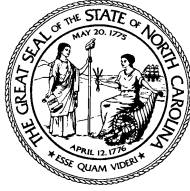


NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES  
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**Military Collection**  
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**John W. Batchelor Summary**

**MilColl OH 53**

Interviewee: John W. Batchelor  
Interviewer: Alexander McLean, Jackson Marshall  
Interview Date: December 10, 1996  
Interview Location: Unknown  
Interview Runtime: 0:46:06

**Biographical Sketch**

John Willard Batchelor (who went by “Johnnie” and more commonly “Willard”) was born in February 24, 1896, in Nash County, N.C., to Emerson Neverton and Flossie Batchelor. Emerson Batchelor was married to Mary Williford Burgess on May 3, 1883, in Nash County. It is unknown what happened to Mary Batchelor, but she either died or the couple divorced by 1893. On November 23, 1893, 30-year-old Emerson Batchelor married 17-year-old Flossey [Slone] Batchelor in Nash County. By 1900, the Batchelor family—which consisted of seven children under the age of 16—were living in the Nash County Alms House as a poor family, while Emerson Batchelor worked as a farmer.

By 1910, the Batchelor family was living on their own farm in Nash County, where John Batchelor helped his father on the farm. At the time of his federal draft registration for World War I, John Batchelor was living in Wilson, N.C., and was working at Dildy & Agnew Company. That company sold hardware, agricultural implements, and building material, and was one of the largest companies in Wilson at the time. John Batchelor was inducted for military service in WWI in the U.S. Army on May 25, 1918.

Batchelor attended basic training at Camp Jackson, S.C., where he was assigned to the 156th Depot Brigade until June 28, 1918. On that day, he was transferred to Company L, 323rd Infantry Regiment, 81st Division, where he remained until August 24, 1918. Batchelor left from the United States aboard a troop transport ship for Europe on July 31, 1918. On August 24, 1918—after arriving in France—Batchelor was transferred to the 168th Infantry Regiment, 42nd Division, which was commonly referred to as the “Rainbow Division.” Batchelor served as a

rifleman with the 168th Infantry, first seeing combat in Europe at the Battle of Saint-Mihiel in September 1918.

He later fought in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, where he contracted Spanish influenza, and was sent to a French hospital for treatment. While Batchelor was recuperating in France, he learned of the Armistice on November 11, 1918, and the war's end. He would eventually return to his unit, remaining with them on occupation duty in Europe. On January 27, 1919—in anticipation of his eventual return to the U.S.—Batchelor was transferred to the Camp Wadsworth Detachment of the 337th Infantry, 85th Division, U.S. Army. Batchelor arrived back in the United States aboard a troop transport ship from France on April 7, 1919. He was honorably discharged from the U.S. Army on April 15, 1919, with the rank of Private.

After the war, Batchelor returned to North Carolina, and worked as a farmer. He married Polly Ann Green in Nash County on December 24, 1923. By 1930, Batchelor was living in Nash County, N.C., and was farming there. By 1940, Johnnie Batchelor, his wife, and their six children were living in the small town of Stantonsburg in Wilson County, N.C., where he worked as a farmer for Lonnie Harrell.

John W. Batchelor Sr. died on July 16, 1998, in Raleigh, N.C., and was buried in Maplewood Cemetery in Wilson, N.C.

### **Interview Time Periods**

#### **Section A, 0:00:00-0:10:51:**

Batchelor discusses being drafted into the U.S. Army; the divisions he served under; the uniform he was issued at Camp Jackson; his journey to Europe; the inoculations he received during his service; the food he received upon his arrival to Europe; his memories of an air raid while serving with the 42nd Division in France; and his journey to the Western Front.

#### **Section B, 0:10:52-0:19:08:**

Batchelor discusses his arrival to the 42nd Division; the rainbow insignia on his uniform; the living conditions in the field; his knowledge of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive before it began; the journey to the Western Front; the casualties he witnessed; his combat experiences; burying soldiers in the field; the lack of food while in France; his experience with mustard gas; and the cooties, or body lice, in the trenches in the Argonne Forest.

#### **Section C, 0:19:09-0:24:54:**

Batchelor discusses his arrival to the Argonne Forest; being shelled by a German plane; his unit's interactions with U.S. marines; a friend from Wilson, N.C., who was injured in France; and his combat experiences during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.

**Section D, 0:24:55-0:29:32:**

Batchelor continues to discuss his service during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, including fighting in the trenches, shelling a German camp, and the conditions in the field. He also discusses contracting Spanish influenza; his resulting treatment in a French hospital; his memories of the German armistice; and why he was not paid and did not receive letters during his service overseas.

**Section E, 0:29:33-0:37:22:**

Batchelor continues to discuss his service with the 42nd Division, including his duties; his opinion of Douglas MacArthur; his feelings of uncertainty and isolation while in Europe; the order of the division's engagements; his perception of German troops; and contracting the Spanish Influenza. He also discusses the medical care he received in Europe; his memories of a stay in a U.S. hospital after contracting measles; his memories of soldiers suffering from shell shock; his experiences with mustard gas; and observation balloons in WWI.

**Section F, 0:37:23-0:46:06:**

Batchelor continues to discuss his service in WWI. He offers his impression of German troops; his interactions with German servicemen at a prison camp in Europe; his impression of the French and British armies; the Meuse-Argonne Offensive; his interactions with U.S. marines while in Europe; his supplies and weapons in the field; and the availability of food in France.

He also discusses not getting paid during his service in Europe; his transfer to the 42nd Division; his return to the United States; the reception the U.S. servicemen received in Hoboken, New Jersey; and his discharge from the U.S. Army.

**Subjects**

156th Depot Brigade  
168th Infantry Regiment  
323rd Infantry Regiment  
42nd Division  
81st Division  
Battle of Saint-Mihiel  
Camp Jackson, S.C.  
France  
Meuse-Argonne Offensive  
Nash County, N.C.  
Raleigh, N.C.  
Spanish Influenza  
U.S. Army  
Western Front  
Wilson County, N.C.  
World War I