

FOREWORD

This is the history of a regiment—the 398th Infantry—born under a Carolina sun in December 1942. Actually, it is only a partial history of the unit, for the text does not describe the early life of the Regiment. It is only in combat that a regiment achieves the full maturity and complete expression that gives it everlasting distinction, and we have accordingly limited our narrative to the combat life of the 398th.

To cover the birth of the Regiment, we must go back to 24 June 1921, when the 398th Infantry was first activated as a Reserve regiment assigned to the 199th Infantry Brigade with headquarters at Charleston, West Virginia. The crest that was given the new regiment was a blue shield crossed diagonally by a wavy silver band, representing the Kanawha River which flows through West Virginia, the Regiment's birthplace. Below and parallel to the silver band is a diamond-backed rattlesnake, symbol of many of the early West Virginia military organizations. The Regimental motto is "On the Alert."

The 398th was actually mobilized for war on 15 December 1942 at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, as a regiment of the 100th Infantry Division. Its first commanding officer was Col. Robinson E. Duff. After months of training, it took part in the Tennessee Maneuvers, after which it returned with the division to garrison at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. While the unit was at Fort Bragg, Colonel Duff was promoted and transferred to the 10th Mountain Division as assistant division commander. Col. Nelson I. Fooks assumed command and took the Regiment overseas.

On 25 September 1944 the 398th packed up and moved to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, where it was readied for overseas shipment. On 6 October it embarked on the USS *General William H. Gordon*; after fourteen days on the high seas, in which the convoy was buffeted by a hurricane and generally strong winds, the weary troops were put ashore at Marseille, France.

From there on, the history which appears in these pages is the rich contribution of every soldier who helped mould the Regiment in its youth and who helped shape its course in battle. To these men, the world is forever indebted.

For the printed expression of that story the Regiment extends its appreciation to the following persons: Col. Robert M. Williams, Regimental Commander; Cpl. Herbert Lanza, for the writing; Cpl. Gene Belden and Cpl. Albert A. Vidmar for the art work; M/Sgt. Nicholas Kislak and T/5 Clarence Langer for the research. Capt. Bernard Boston was the officer in charge of publication.

HISTORY OF THE 398TH INFANTRY REGIMENT



RHINELAND

15 September 1944 - - 21 March 1945



CENTRAL EUROPE

22 March - - 11 May 1945



MAJ. GEN. WITHERS A. BURRESS
Commanding General, 100th Infantry Division

Maj. Gen. Withers A. Burress is one of the few general officers of World War II who commanded his division from activation to inactivation. He was born in Richmond, Virginia, on 24 November 1894. He graduated from Virginia Military Institute with the degree of Bachelor of Science in 1914. On 30 November 1916 he accepted a commission as second lieutenant of Infantry in the Regular Army. As a captain he went to France with the 23d Infantry (2d Division) in 1917 and took part in actions at Chateau-Thierry, the Aisne-Marne Offensive and the St. Mihiel Offensive. Returning to the United States in 1919, he became instructor at the Infantry School, and in 1922 Professor of Military Science and Tactics at his Alma Mater, VMI. He graduated from the Infantry School's Basic Course in 1925 and from the Advanced Course in 1928. He was promoted to major on 7 July 1929.

General Burress graduated from the Command and General Staff School in 1931, and remained there as an instructor. After graduating from the Army War College in 1935 he returned to VMI as PMS&T. He was promoted to lieutenant colonel on 18 March 1939. Following his promotion to colonel in 1941 he became Assistant Commandant of the Infantry School. In 1942 he was assigned to headquarters of the Puerto Rican Department and while there was promoted to brigadier general. On 9 August 1942 he was promoted to major general, and assumed command of the 100th Infantry Division upon its activation, 15 November 1942.

General Burress was decorated with the Distinguished Service Medal and the Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster. From the Republic of Panama he received the Order of La Solidaridad.



COLONEL ROBERT M. WILLIAMS
Commanding Officer, 398th Infantry

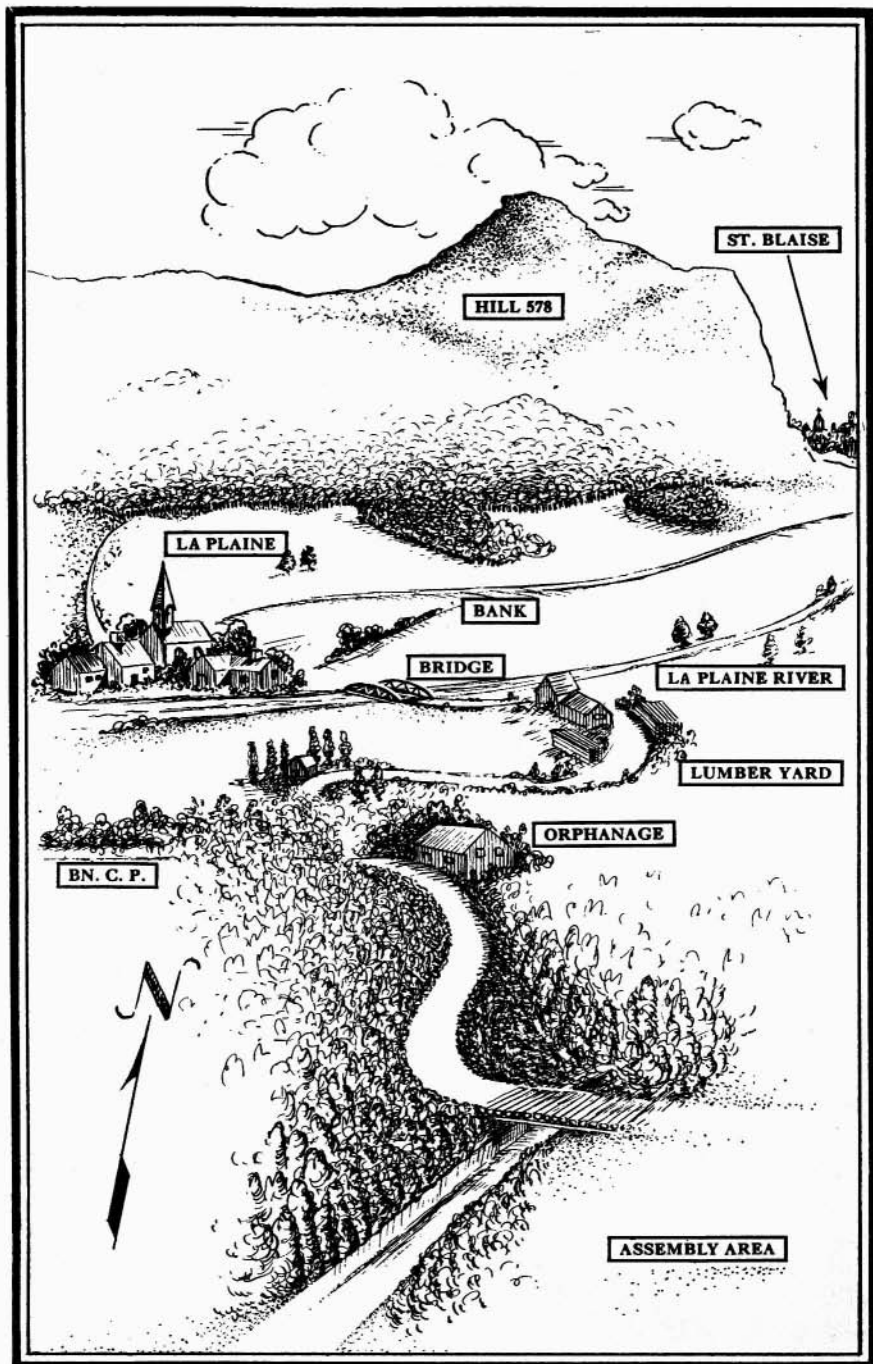
Col. Robert M. Williams was born in Greenville, Texas, on 29 November 1916. He graduated from Texas A&M College in 1938, and on 1 July 1939 was commissioned second lieutenant in the Regular Army and assigned to the 20th Infantry at Fort Francis E. Warren, Wyoming. In August 1940 he was ordered to the Panama Canal Department and assigned to the 5th Infantry at Camp Paraiso. While serving there he was promoted to first lieutenant and captain.

Returning to the United States in the summer of 1942, he took the New Division Course at the Command & General Staff School, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and upon graduation was ordered to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, as Headquarters Commandant of the 100th Infantry Division, soon to be activated. His promotion to major followed.

In early 1943 he was again ordered to Leavenworth, and upon graduation was assigned to the 399th Infantry, whose 3d Battalion he took over in August of that year. During January-March 1944 he attended the Canadian School of Infantry at Vernon, British Columbia. In March 1944 he was promoted to lieutenant colonel.

In October 1944 Colonel Williams sailed to France with the 100th Division. His battalion relieved a battalion of the 45th Division near Raon-l'Etape on 1 November 1944. On 17 December he was transferred to the 398th Infantry, and assumed command of the Regiment on that date. On 12 June 1945 he was promoted to colonel, and remained in command of the 398th until December 1945, the month the 100th Division left Germany for return to the United States for inactivation.

Colonel Williams' decorations include the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, and the Combat Infantryman Badge.



Crossing the La Plaine