

Repeat of December 15, 1985:

GENERAL JAMES C. DOZIER - ROCK HILL HERO

James C. Dozier, 1885-1974, joined Company H, 1st Infantry Regiment, S. C. National Guard in Rock Hill when he was 19 years old. The step by the young private became the first in a long and distinguished military career.

Jim Dozier's first federal service came in 1916, when the 1st Infantry was mobilized and sent to the Mexican border. The Mexican Revolution had spilled over into southern Arizona and New Mexico. The U. S. Army, under Gen. John J. Pershing, was sent to maintain order and protect the property of American citizens. Dozier came back to Rock Hill as a sergeant.

When the U. S. entered World War I, Dozier's unit was one of the first called and was assigned to the 118th Infantry, 30th Division. It became the Army's most decorated division.

Dozier was soon commissioned a first lieutenant and transferred to Company G, made up primarily of Fort Mill men under the leadership of Col. Thomas B. Spratt. Out of 70 World War I soldiers who won the Congressional Medal of Honor, six were South Carolinians, and two of those were from the Fort Mill company — Sgt. Thomas Lee Hall and Lt. James C. Dozier.

Company G was on the Hindenburg Line near the village of Montbrehain, France, on Oct. 8, 1918. Capt. S. W. Parks of Fort Mill was in charge when the orders came at 5 a.m. to "go over the top." When the men had moved about a mile, Parks was wounded, and Lt. Dozier was in charge.

Dozier's action that day won him the Congressional Medal of Honor awarded to him by Gen. John J. Pershing who read the citation, ". . . in command of two platoons (Dozier) was painfully wounded in the shoulder during the attack, but continued to lead his men When his command was held up by machine gun fire, he dispersed his men in the best cover available. With a soldier, he moved forward to attack the machine gun nest. Creeping up in the face of intense fire, he killed the entire crew with grenades and pistol fire. Later he captured Germans who sought refuge in a dugout nearby."

Dozier's companion that day was Pvt. Callie Smith, another Rock Hillian from the Manchester Mill village. Dozier later said Smith was "as fearless a boy as ever lived" and credited him with downing a German who was ready to shoot Dozier with a pistol. When the two soldiers knocked out a squad of seven German machine gunners it made it possible for their pinned-down company to capture 470 German prisoners. Smith received the Distinguished Service Cross and the British Distinguished Conduct medal.

A week after the war ended November 11, 1918 Colonel Spratt reported that his regiment of 3,200 men had 1,900 killed or wounded. Thomas Lee Hall, the other Congressional Medal of Honor winner, was killed in action. James C. Dozier returned to Rock Hill.

In 1920, Dozier married a Winthrop graduate from Laurens, Tallulah Little. Rock Hill admirers gave the couple a handsome four-piece solid silver tea

service as a wedding present. Dozier's Fort Mill comrades added a matching silver tray.

Dozier, working as an insurance agent at the time, organized Company I, 118th Infantry, S. C. National Guard, and became its first captain.

In 1926, Dozier became adjutant general of South Carolina. Before long the War Department asked Dozier to take over custody of Camp Jackson (now Fort Jackson) near Columbia.

Dozier's excellent service won him promotion to major general in 1950. When he retired in 1959 the S. C. General Assembly promoted him to lieutenant general.

York County's most decorated soldier died in 1974 at the age of 89.

By Louise Pettus