

This Day in History... February 13, 1951

Battle of Chipyeong-ni Begins

On February 13, 1951, the Battle of Chipyeong-ni, sometimes called the “high-water mark” of the Chinese fighting in Korea, began.

Chinese forces first entered Korea in November 1950. UN troops were caught off guard and uncertain of their intentions or capabilities and drew back to the 38th parallel. When it became obvious that the Chinese had overstretched their supply lines, General Matthew B. Ridgeway decided to make a stand at Chipyeong-ni, a key road intersection.



This stamp image was based on a 1950 photo of US troops retreating from Chosin Reservoir.



From the Celebrate the Century: 1950s Stamp Sheet

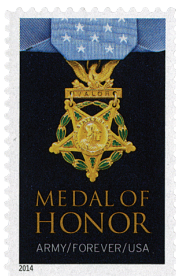
The 23rd Infantry Regiment arrived in advance of the People's Volunteer Army (PVA) and dug defenses, prepared artillery, and set up communications. Three battalions, including one from France, reinforced them. General Paul Freeman Jr. was in command of 4,500 men.

The Chinese first set up around Chipyeong-ni during the afternoon of February 13, 1951, but all their attacks were held off. As General Paul Freeman predicted, the Chinese launched their attack that night. Between 10 pm and 7:30 am, the Chinese led multiple attacks on several French and American positions.

Though some of these attacks forced the Americans to move back from their positions, they eventually regained their ground with a minimal loss of life. General Freeman was wounded in the leg during that first night of fighting. He refused to be evacuated and insisted on remaining in Chipyeong-ni until the battle was over. He was later awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his bravery and leadership there.



Freeman was one of over 800 recipients of the Distinguished Service Cross during the Korean War.



William S. Sitman received the Medal of Honor posthumously for throwing himself on a grenade to save five of his men.

The Chinese called off their attacks on the morning of the 14th, as they knew the Air Force would soon be able to strike on them with ease. Fighting was minimal during the day but resumed again that night. The Americans were dangerously low on ammunition, so the Air Force began dropping it down along with flares, so the troops could find the much-needed supplies. The battle continued through the night and into the next afternoon. With the threat of Air Force napalm bombardment, the Chinese withdrew from battle. Chipyeong-ni was a major morale booster for the Americans, who had previously seen the Chinese as unbeatable.

The Battle of Chipyeong-ni proved to be a turning point in the war as the PVA began retreating north across the 38th Parallel. The battle has been called the “Gettysburg of the Korean War” and the high water mark of the Chinese involvement in the war.

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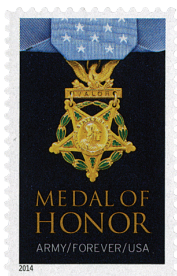
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