



Photo contributed

Albert Warren Williams, 1894-1985, and Henry David Williams 1892-1972

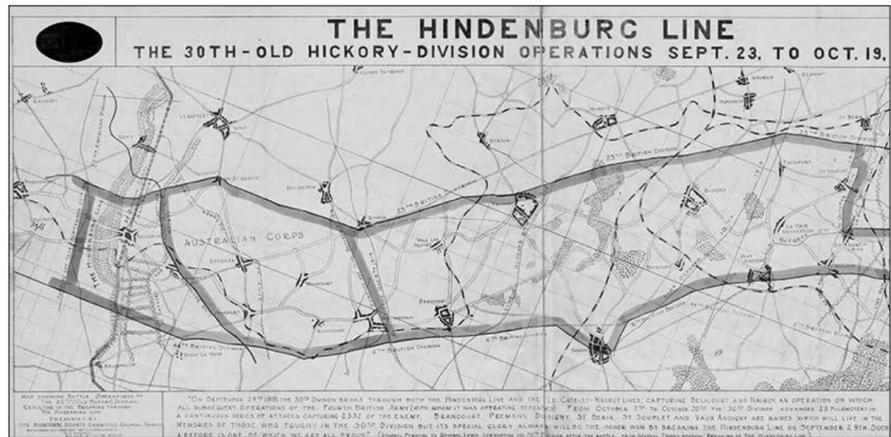


Image contributed

Map of the battle at the Hindenburg Line

## World War I Profile: the Williams brothers of Shallotte

The 1918 Fort Caswell Rifle Range was once part of Fort Caswell during World War I. The Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range is a nonprofit with volunteers working to stabilize and preserve the rifle range. Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range is periodically publishing short biographies of Brunswick County World War I veterans as part of their "Honor a Brunswick County World War I Veteran" project to raise funds for a World War I Memorial at the site of the 1918 Fort Caswell Rifle Range.

Albert and Henry Williams were brothers born and raised in Shallotte. A partial family tree is located in FamilySearch. Albert was 22 in 1917 when the country entered World War I. Henry was 25. Albert's Draft Registration form shows he was single and a farmer. Henry was a widower, having lost his wife and infant a year earlier. He was also a farmer.

After receiving orders to report to the military board (Albert received orders for Sept. 18, 1917, Henry for Oct. 5, 1917), Albert and Henry were assigned to Company M, 119th Infantry, 30th "Old Hickory" Division. Refer to the Fort Caswell Rifle Range website, caswellriflerange.com, outlining the history of the division and their famous Hindenburg Line assault.

Henry was not injured during his service. He was promoted to private first class June 1, 1918, and then to corporal Oct. 15, 1918.

Albert Williams was wounded in the push after the Sept. 29 Hindenburg assault by the 30th Division as the Allies continued their advance, capturing French cities and liberating the citizens. Using the map and description of the advance during Oct. 8-10, it is possible to pinpoint the approximate location where Albert was severely wounded Oct. 10, 1918.

The 119th Infantry began advancing at 3:30 a.m. Oct. 8. They formed at Premont [see map]. They began capturing material and liberating French citizens who had been under German control for four years.

Upon the entrance of the Americans into the village and before the Germans had been driven entirely out, the civilians were in the streets offering the soldiers hot coffee. They could not be too kind to their liberators. It seemed to surprise them greatly that the troops occupying their town then were friendly Americans. They thought that the British had freed them and it was sometime before they could believe the truth.

They arrived close to Busigny, then waited until the following morning to resume their advance. Regimental HQ had moved to Premont and a runner was used for communications. Wires had been nearly impossible to maintain throughout the barrage, so pigeons and dogs were also often used for communications.

The advance continued without meeting very strong resistance until the town of St. Souplet on the west bank of the LaSalle River was reached, about 3 p.m. Here, the enemy apparently had time to make some preparation and to bring up a few reserves, as the heights immediately east of the River were well protected. Heavy machine gun and artillery fire was received from the entire ridge covering the regimental front. It was practically impossible to advance up this open incline without the sacrifice of a great number of lives.

Repeated efforts were made to cross the river, and at a few points were successful but due to the nature of the terrain and the terrific machine gun fire, it was deemed necessary to dig in and hold the line along the west bank of the River, as a counter-attack was anticipated, but never materialized. The left flank of the Regiment at this time was connected with the 25th British Division but the right flank was exposed as the 120th Infantry had not kept up, causing the line to bend back in front of several fortified machine gun posts.

Confronting these conditions, the line was ordered to halt and make good a general line along the west bank of the LaSalle River and gain contact with the 120th Infantry, which

was done later that night. During the day's operation, the regiment advanced to a distance of 4,000 yards and captured the towns of Escaufort, St. Souplet and St. Benin, liberating 706 French civilians. A large number of machine guns and several field pieces were captured with a large supply of ammunition.

That day about 2:30 p.m., Regimental Headquarters moved from Premont to Busigny. The night of Oct 9 was spent in consolidating the captured position and to gain contact with the unit on the right that had been held up by machine gun fire. It was the plan that as soon as this connection had been made an artillery barrage was to be laid down on the whole front thus enabling the entire line to advance. The German position could not be taken without this preliminary preparation by the artillery, so strongly was it defended.

During this period of time when Albert was wounded, the 119th Infantry reported 56 KIA, six died of wounds, 66 severely wounded, 110 slightly wounded, 31 gassed, one taken prisoner and seven undetermined wounds. No sources were found that describe his injury. Albert Williams returned to duty Nov. 11, 1918. The war ended that day.

Albert was promoted to private first class Jan. 1, 1918.

When Albert and Henry returned aboard the USS Huron on March 21, 1919, the passenger list described all as "Class A," which means fully fit. Both Albert and Henry Williams were honorably discharged from the Army on April 7, 1919.

The 1920 census for Henry showed a familiar name. Henry was in New Hanover County, boarding with Harry Chadwick and his wife. (Harry Chadwick was the twin brother of Harvey Chadwick, who was killed in action in 1918.) Henry and Harry were working together as ship carpenters. (Henry's first wife was the sister of Harry's wife.) A 1920 census for Albert was not found, but he was married around the time of the census.

Albert married in March 1920. Henry was married in November. Both raised families in the area.

Henry passed away Dec. 8, 1972, at 80. He was laid to rest in Gurganus Cemetery. No military honors are shown and no obituary is available.

Albert passed away Aug. 2, 1985, at 90. His obituary was published in the Aug. 8, 1985, edition of the Beacon:

Albert W. Williams

Albert Warren Williams, 90, of Hubert and formerly of Shallotte Point, died Friday in the Veterans Hospital in Fayetteville.

The funeral was held Monday at Village Point United Methodist Church, with burial in the Gurganus Cemetery, Shallotte Point.

Williams was a veteran of World War I, serving in the U.S. Army. He was a member of the American Legion and lifetime member of Village Point United Methodist Church. Williams was also a past chairman of the church board.

He was the husband of the late Stella Lee Williams and the son of the late John L. and Susan Gurganus Williams.

Survivors include a daughter, Mrs. Vivian Milligan, of Hubert; five grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild.

Albert Williams was also laid to rest in Gurganus Cemetery in Shallotte. Military honors are shown.

Most of the information gathered was from History 119th Infantry, 60th Brigade, 30th Division. U. S. A. Operations in Belgium and France, 1917-1919.

The Brunswick County World War I Memorial is planned for dedication at the site of the rifle range this year on Armistice Day, Nov. 11.