



Photos contributed

Camp Sevier, S.C., Oct. 18, 1917

The World War I story of Army Pvt. Samuel Swain

BY AMY ECKARD

SPECIAL TO THE BEACON

Samuel Claudius Swain was born and raised in Brunswick County. Most of his family is buried in Bolivia or Wilmington. On April 25, 1917, he married Myrtle Clemmons.

Swain was ordered to report for duty on Oct. 6, 1917, then accepted into the military at Camp Jackson, S.C., on Oct. 15, 1917. He eventually was assigned to Company C, 119th Infantry, 30th "Old Hickory" Division and began training at Camp Sevier, S.C.

Three months later, on Jan. 7, 1918, Swain died of pneumonia. His was the first known casualty in the 119th Infantry from Brunswick County. His death certificate was filed from Camp Sevier and shows he had been ill since Dec. 14, 1917. His death was a month after Pvt. Carl Danford lost his life from pneumonia following measles, when 4,000 men were still under quarantine. The entire camp was under quarantine during November 1917.

This table from Chapter 12, Military Hospitals in the U.S., shows the statistics from the base hospital in Camp Sevier. The hospital opened in September 1918. The patient totals for several months, with resulting deaths are shown.

- November 1917: 2,228 total patients, 82 deaths

- December 1917: 1,217 total patients, 56 deaths

- January 1918: 2,082 total patients, 31 deaths

The pandemic of 1918 was yet to occur, beginning in September 1918 with a peak in October of nearly 7,000 patients and 332 deaths in one month.

Swain was laid to rest in the Antioch Baptist Church Cemetery in Bolivia. The Wilmington Morning Star, Jan. 10, 1918, p. 6, published this account:

Brunswick Soldier Dead
News of the death of Private Samuel Claudius Swain, stationed at Camp Sevier, S. C., resulting from pneumonia, was received by relatives yesterday. He was 29 years old and had been in the service but a few months. He was a son of Mr. B. F. Swain, of Suburb, Brunswick county, and is survived by his wife, one sister, Mrs. Walter Clark, and three brothers, Preston, Cleveland and Roger. The funeral and interment will take place probably



The recently restored headstone of Samuel Claudius Swain where he was laid to rest at Antioch Baptist Church Cemetery in Bolivia

today at his old home. The bereaved family has the tender sympathy of a host of friends.

Several members of the Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range recently visited his gravesite to pay respects and take photos of a very nicely restored headstone, as well as identify whether military honors are shown. We thank Diane Price, Brunswick Town member of the NSDAR, for honoring Swain.

If you would like to help us honor Swain or another Brunswick County World I veteran, go to caswellriflerrange.com or email ftcaswellriflerrange@gmail.com.

A monument will be placed at the site of the rifle range in Caswell Beach Veterans' Day 2018 in honor of the men and women from Brunswick County who served their country. A book is to be published during 2019 containing all 725 names, as well as a historical overview of the 1918 World War I Rifle Range Target Pit Storage Room.

Amy Eckard of Caswell Beach is webmaster/researcher of Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range Inc.