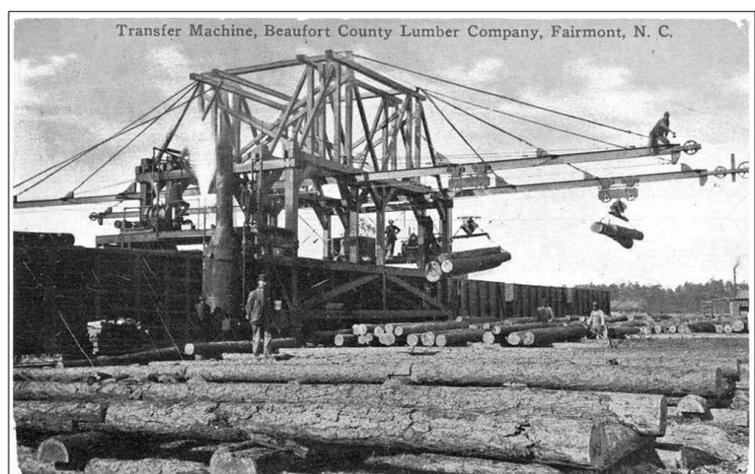


Photos contributed

The ship, USS George Washington that delivered Fred Wilson to France.

Died of disease—Corp. A. R. Canady, Bug Hill; Privates Fred Wilson, Fairmont; J. C. Brown, Kannapolis; John Evans, New Bern; Henry Grier, Charlotte.

Fred Wilson's death announcement in the newspaper.



Transfer machine, Beaufort County Lumber Company in Fairmont, NC, 1905-1915. [Source: NC Postcards].

WWI Profile: Pvt. Fred Wilson 1895-1918

BY NORMA ECKARD

Note: Because the 1890 Census records were destroyed and the family is recorded as no longer living in Brunswick County by 1900, more details than normally included are presented to assist with the identification of the family and determine when and where they lived in Brunswick County.

Fred Wilson was born in Brunswick County, N.C., the son of Jackson and Francis Shine Wilson. His sister Kizzie Wilson Buck, the only sibling whose death certificate was found, is also identified as being born in Brunswick County. Her death certificate is also the source of their mother's maiden name, Shine. The entire family is repeatedly recorded in census records as born in North Carolina.

The 1900 Census shows the family was now living in Hillsboro, S.C., farming. In 1910, the family was living in Fairmont in Robeson County, N.C., where they appeared to have remained for many years. His father was now working in a sawmill.

Fred's mother presumably passed away between the 1910 Census and 1912 or 1914 when his father married Cora Stephans. FamilySearch shows the date as 1914, while Ancestry shows 1912, although the image of the marriage license in Ancestry shows the actual marriage took place in 1914.

Fred Wilson's WWI Draft Registration shows he was born in Brunswick County, N.C., living in Fairmont, N.C., and working at the Beaufort County Lumber Company in Fairmont.

The Beaufort County Lumber Company operated in Fairmont, N.C., from 1910-1925, employing up to 400 people at its peak. The company included a lumberyard, sawmill, and kiln drying plant as well as a company village named North Fairmont with streets and houses for workers.

In 1927, while the company began moving operations to Columbus County, parcels were bought by Richard Bradshaw, a former sharecropper and the first black entrepreneur in Fairmont. Bradshaw rented the houses and sold them over many years.

Fred Wilson was ordered to report for military duty on April 1, 1918. He and the other draftees were received at Camp Grant, Illinois on April 8, 1918 [Source: Ancestry].

On May 8, 1918, at Hoboken, N.J., he boarded USS George Washington, famous for warning ships of an iceberg it passed on April 14, 1912, which sank Titanic hours later.

Pvt. Wilson was serving in a Labor Battalion, 10th

Company, Camp Grant Reinforcement Draft [Source: Ancestry]. A total of 15 Companies formed the Camp Grant Reinforcement Draft. The soldiers would be assigned where needed after arriving overseas.

On May 26, 1918, Pvt. Wilson passed away from lobar pneumonia. His name was published on national casualty lists. [Online source of clipping shown above: Polk County news and the Tryon bee, 1918 Sept 06. p.3]

The location of his death is unknown. There is no record of his remains returning to the U.S. and no record of burial overseas. It was only 18 days after he boarded USS George Washington.

John Carlisle is another Brunswick County veteran who died of pneumonia overseas. No record was found for the return of his remains, yet a headstone is in Griffin Cemetery in Ash, N.C. It is possible that Fred Wilson's remains were returned despite no record. If so, the cemetery below is the likely place his remains were laid to rest.

Fairmont Cemetery

Richard Bradshaw's daughter Marie married a Fairmont undertaker named Robert Alston. A Mr. Bradshaw had purchased the Fairmont cemetery many years earlier that was used for African Americans, as described in the online Fairmont Board of Commissioners Minutes of 2002.

It appears that this cemetery is where Fred Smith's sister Kizzie Wilson Buck was buried in 1950 (05/09/1892-05/07/1952) [Source: Ancestry]. The funeral director's name is R.J. Alston. Fred Wilson's father is also listed as buried in Fairmont Cemetery (d. 01/23/1921) [Source: Ancestry]. It should be investigated whether Fred Wilson is also buried there. If his remains were returned to the country, his remains would likely be placed in the cemetery with his family.

If you would like to help us honor Fred Wilson or another Brunswick County WWI veteran, email the Friends of Ft Caswell Rifle Range at ftcaswellriflerange@gmail.com or go to www.caswellriflerange.com.

A future fundraiser, Oktoberfest, is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 12, at the Caswell Beach public service facility building (fire station) from 5 to 8 p.m. to raise funds for publishing the book of Brunswick County men and women that served in WWI; to continue historic preservation of the rifle range memorial; and to honor Brunswick County WWI veterans. There will be a dinner and dance with music by The Back Porch Rockers. More information will follow.

Another Roll Call is planned for Veterans Day, Monday, Nov. 11, at 11 a.m. beside the 1918 Fort Caswell Rifle Range Memorial in Caswell Beach.