World War I Burial Case Files

By Lynna Kay Shuffield
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When Cpl. William W. Brown, Co. D, 141st Battalion, 36th Division, "went over the top" during the Battle of St Etienne in World War I on 8-9 Oct 1918, he fought as only a Texan should. While courageously advancing under violent artillery and machine gun fire, Brown was killed in action by German shrapnel, which resulted in fractures of the skull and left arm at the elbow.

He was originally buried in an isolated battlefield grave on the Medeah Farm at St. Etienne-a-Arnes (Ardennes). He was posthumously awarded the French Croix de Guerre with a silver star for extraordinary heroism. Brown was disinterred and reburied four times before he reached his final resting place at the Meuse Argonne Cemetery #1232 at Romagnesous -Montfaucon in Meuse, France in Grave 174, Sec. 85, Plot 4.

You are probably wondering how I learned so much about Corporal Brown and his death. There are little-known documents called "burial case files" for most World War I casualties contained in Record Group 92 at the National Archives in Washington, DC. These files are related to servicemen or women who died while in the military during the time period 1915-39; the files were maintained for war casualties as well as for military domestic deaths.

The folders are arranged alphabetically and contain documents related to the individual's name, military organization, place of residence, date of death, circumstances of death, places of burial, next of kin, etc. These files also contain documentation if the mother of the deceased participated in the "World War I Mothers' Pilgrimages" program, which was sponsored by the U.S. government. This program transported mothers and wives of the deceased to the overseas military cemeteries. When requesting copies of these burial case files, address your letter to the National Archives, ATTN: Old Military Records - RG 92, 700 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20408. Be sure to include as much information as you know about the solider, i.e., full name, date of birth/death, service number (if known), places of residence, etc.

World War I Document Archive

"The World War I Document Archive" is a Web site at: http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/ that contains documents and links related to the "Great War." Documents and materials included are contained in the following topic areas:

Special points of interest:

- *Tips for Census Research*
- *History in the Outhouses*
- *Marion County Florida Marriage Records*

World War I Burial Case Files

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(1) Conventions, Treaties and Official Papers; (2) Documents, by year beginning in 1914 through 1918; (3) Memorials and Personal Reminiscences; (4) World War I Biographical Dictionary; (5) World War I Image Archive; (6) Special Topics and Commentaries; (7) The Maritime War; (8) The Medical Front; and (9) World War I Sites: Links to Other Resources.

This Web site provides a wealth of information that is important to genealogists. This site allows you to learn about the war in which your ancestor fought. It is regrettable that many of us were never able to collect the personal stories of our ancestors and their experiences in World War I. Now, you can visit this Web site and obtain an impression of their experiences. I would also recommend this as a bookmark for students and libraries.

The World War I Document Archive is "dedicated to the encouragement of the collection, preservation, and development in electronic form of materials relating to the First World War, both as a resource for scholars and students and as a perpetual memorial to the heroism and sacrifice of those who participated in the war throughout the world." The executive director of the archive is A. Jane Plotke, Ph.D. She can be contacted by e-mail at: cd078@dogbert.xroads.com.

Follow Your Family Using Census Records
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Census records are one of the best ways to discover details about your family—and how that family changed every 10 years. You'll discover names, addresses, what people did for a living, even which ancestor fought in the Civil War or was first to arrive in America.

Start with the most recent census available: 1940. Then work your way back using details you pick up in more recent censuses to help you locate your family in censuses from earlier years.

1930 and 1940

Begin your search for family in 1940—the most recently released U.S. census. (Because of privacy laws, census records aren't released until 72 years after the census was conducted.) The 1940 census includes standard questions about names, ages, and residences; however, the form was

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also influenced by the Great Depression. New questions were added to see who was unemployed and how much income people earned. Individuals were also asked where they were living in 1935. Use this information to help you pinpoint your family in the 1930 census as well.

What to Look For

You've found your family in the 1940 census. So what do you do next? Start looking for the same family in the 1930 census—and then the 1920, and so on. Also, pay careful attention to the following details. They'll help you compare census documents to ensure you've found the right family.

Do family members match up?

Match up names of family members you already know with names in the new census record. Keep in mind these lists will rarely be exactly the same. In the 10-year span between censuses, babies are born, older children marry and leave home and grandparents move in or pass away. Don't ignore seemingly unrelated people living in the same household; you may discover that they are cousins or in-laws.

How similar are birth dates and birthplaces?

Once you've determined that the two families have similar household members, compare birth years and birthplaces. If the birth years differ by a few years, don't worry. The person answering the question may have been guessing or estimating. However, birth years that are a decade apart from one census to the next could indicate you're looking at a different person entirely. The more census records you gather for an individual, the easier it will be to determine actual birth details.

Does the location make sense?

In the past, it wasn't as common for families to move across the country or pull up stakes every few years. Many families lived in the same areas for decades. And if they did migrate, they often settled near other family members or people with similar religious and ethnic backgrounds. If a census shows your family in an unexpected location, make sure you take a second look at all the facts.

Are occupations the same?

While most people have a family tree full of farmers or laborers, you may be lucky enough to find an ancestor with a unique occupation, which can help you quickly identify that individual in another census.

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Looking Back—10 Years at a Time

As you follow your family from census to census, you'll need to take a minute to review one census record and then figure out what the family would have looked like 10 years earlier. For example, say you find a census record that shows a husband (age 26), wife (age 24), and son (age 4) living together in 1920. If you want to find each family member in 1910, you should take certain things into account. Because the child is only four years old, he will not appear in the previous census. And because both the husband and wife would be teenagers in 1910, they will probably be listed as children living in their parents' homes. The wife may be harder to track down if you don't know her maiden name, but if you find the husband, you may find the future wife living nearby.

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1900 to 1920

Censuses created in the early 1900s are much more detailed than earlier census records. In addition to names, ages and genders, you'll discover relationships between family members, street names, marital statuses, immigration years, parents' birthplaces and so much more.

Each Census Also Asked Unique Questions:

1920—The year a respondent was naturalized (became a citizen)

1910—If a man was a veteran of the Civil War

1900—The number of children a woman had given birth to

1890—Where is it?

Unless you're incredibly lucky, you won't be able to find family in the 1890 census. All of the census records—except those for 6,160 individuals—were destroyed by a fire and subsequent water damage. So how do you close the 20-year gap between 1900 and 1880? Fill in with other records, like city directories available on Ancestry.com, which may include addresses and other details. Or look for regional censuses, which many states conducted in 1885 and 1895. You can also look for clues in birth, marriage or death records.

1880 to 1850

During this time period, censuses were continually revised and refined. The 1850 census is the first to list the name of every individual in a household and include age, gender, race and birthplace. (Remember, relationships between individuals aren't recorded, so you can't assume everyone in a household is related.) In 1870, questions were added to indicate whether an individual's parents were born outside the U.S. and whether an individual had been born or married within the year. And in 1880, the census asked for relationships of household members and for parents' birthplaces.

1790 to 1840

On the surface, these early censuses don't appear to contain much helpful information; you'll see names only for the head of each household (generally men) and tally marks for other individuals. But by carefully comparing the number of individuals in a household with what you already know about a family, you may be able to determine which family is yours. Although family members aren't listed by name, age ranges can help you

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Can't Find Them? Try These Tricks

Switch up names.
If you can't find an ancestor using his or her expected name, try searching using middle names or nicknames. You can also try searching without a first name and then filtering your results by location, gender and age.

Look for a family member.
Can't find a specific individual? Try searching for someone living in the same household, such as a brother, sister or parent. Family members with uncommon names names can be particularly useful; it's easier to comb through the search results for an Oswald than a James.

Follow a neighbor.
When you find your family on a census record, don't forget to look at who's living next door. You may find siblings, parents or in-laws living in the same neighborhood. If you can't find your family, try searching for their neighbors; your family may still be living nearby but have been indexed incorrectly.

Explore new places.
Did your relative disappear from the state where they were living in previous census years? Broaden your search to states where his or her children, spouse or parents were born.

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zero in on possible birth years. And if a head of household disappears between censuses, it may be a clue that he or she died.

Next Steps

The clues you find in census records can lead you to a variety of other discoveries.

- **Find birth records.** Names, ages and birthplaces help you know where to start looking for birth records, which typically include a mother's maiden name, unlocking another branch of the family.

- **Locate marriage records.** You can estimate a couple's marriage date (and location) using the birth dates and birthplaces of their children. Marriage records often list a woman's maiden name and parents' names.

- **Track your immigrant ancestors to their homeland.** Citizenship status and foreign birthplaces can help you find an ancestor in passenger lists and naturalization papers.

- **Uncover military pasts.** Information about military service can pinpoint where to start searching for service and pension records for the veterans in your tree.

Searching

Each time you make a census discovery, note what you found in the record. Then use those details to search on earlier census. You can also save census discoveries to your Ancestry.com family tree, which allows you to search for the same person in other documents on Ancestry.com using all of the information you've saved about that person. Click **Search records** from the person page to get started.

Outhouses and History

Reprinted with permission from Pittsburgh House Histories on Facebook.com

On Polish Hill, two of Pittsburgh's last outhouses sit behind a vacant circa 1900 tenement building and bear mute witness to the challenging lives of immigrant millworkers a century ago. At the time of the 1910 census the 20 foot wide, 2500 square foot building on the property was crowded with 37 residents who were members of the Pańkowski, Gortat, Szalwinski, Brokos, Zalewski, Naczenski and Skory families, each with Polish immigrant parents and American-born children. At mid-century, outhouses like these remained somewhat common in the city's working-class communities; nearly all are now gone as a result of improved living standards, modern building codes, and deterioration. The buildings pictured may be gone shortly, as the Bureau of Building Inspection has ordered the property owner to repair or remove them. These buildings, like other vernacular and immigrant structures, are valuable for their ability to provide information on our collective past. Outhouses may be the butt of more jokes than other old building types—pun intended—but let's hope our society doesn't crap out on its responsibility to preserve or at least record these and other vernacular and immigrant building types.

Marriages 1844-1900

The following is a portion of an indexed list of marriage licenses from the Marion County Marriage Books A, B, and C (1844-1900) and Alachua County Marriage Book 1 (1837-1845). The list is organized alphabetically by the grooms' name. A copy of the original records can be obtained by contacting the Clerk of Court of either Alachua or Marion County.

Notes:

(1): The date shown as marriage date is the date the marriage license was issued. No marriage date or minister certification was recorded. It is not known if these people were actually married.

(82): Bride surname is Fraser on license and Kelsey on marriage certification.

(132): Bride given name on license is Louisa and on certification is Lovers.

Groom Name	Bride Name	Date Married	Note	Book & Page
Aaron Jr., Thomas	Collins, Maggie	3 Sep 1884		D-768
Aaron, Samuel	Strickland, Sallie	11 Aug 1891		1-322
Aaron, Thomas	Caldwell, Frances	24 Jun 1866		C-040
Abersham, Oliver	Hopkins, Elsie	19 Apr 1893		1-473
Abraham, William	Matchill, Ann I.	3 Apr 1853		B-040
Abraham, William	Stokes, Sarah E.	12 Jun 1890		1-229
Abram, Kellow	George, Ametea	9 Sep 1866		C-084
Abshier, William F.	Sieler, Mary	1 Sep 1895		2-108
Ackerman, Charles M.	McCormick, Maud	14 Oct 1896		2-196
Adair, Pike	Turnley, Emmie	27 Jun 1888		1-073
Adair, Silas W.	Mitchell, Susan	29 May 1897	(1)	2-253
Adams, Abner	Galbraith, Alice	13 Jan 1881		D-506
Adams, Alexander	Counts, Rose	7 Jul 1866		C-046
Adams, Alonzo	Higgenbotham, Catherine	29 May 1879		D-371
Adams, Barny A.	Miller, Minnie	6 May 1894		1-576
Adams, Ben	Adams, Mamie	19 Jul 1893	(1)	1-494
Adams, Charlie	Dickerson, Flora	24 Mar 1890		1-210
Adams, Frank	Kelsey, Caroline	10 May 1885	(82)	E-045
Adams, Frank	Fraser, Caroline	10 May 1885	(82)	E-045
Adams, Henry	Chambers, Madora	5 May 1892		1-393
Adams, James	Landrum, Indianna F.	9 Aug 1866		C-162
Adams, James	Hinton, Nancy Ann	26 Apr 1855		B-071
Adams, James	Henderson, Louisa	13 Dec 1883	(132)	D-726
Adams, James	Henderson, Lovers	13 Dec 1883	(132)	D-726
Adams, James	Stevenson, Mary	19 Mar 1889		1-128
Adams, Jerry	Johnson, Matilda	9 Sep 1866		C-078
Adams, Jerry	Harris, Fanny	30 Jun 1890	(236)	1-236
Adams, Joel	Harris, Louisa	27 Dec 1897		2-306
Adams, John	Thomas, Melvina J.	20 Sep 1859		B-143

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Upcoming Events and Programs

April 18, May 16, June 20, 2013
Special Interest Group
1:00 p.m. Marion County Public Library, 2720 E. Silver Springs Blvd.,
Ocala, FL
Speaker: Judy Wright
Topic: Family Tree Maker 2012 Training

April 18, 2013
Marion County Genealogical Society Meeting
2:00 p.m. Marion County Public Library, 2720 E. Silver Springs Blvd.,
Ocala, FL
Speaker: Linda Vivian
Topic: Quakers—Researching Church Records