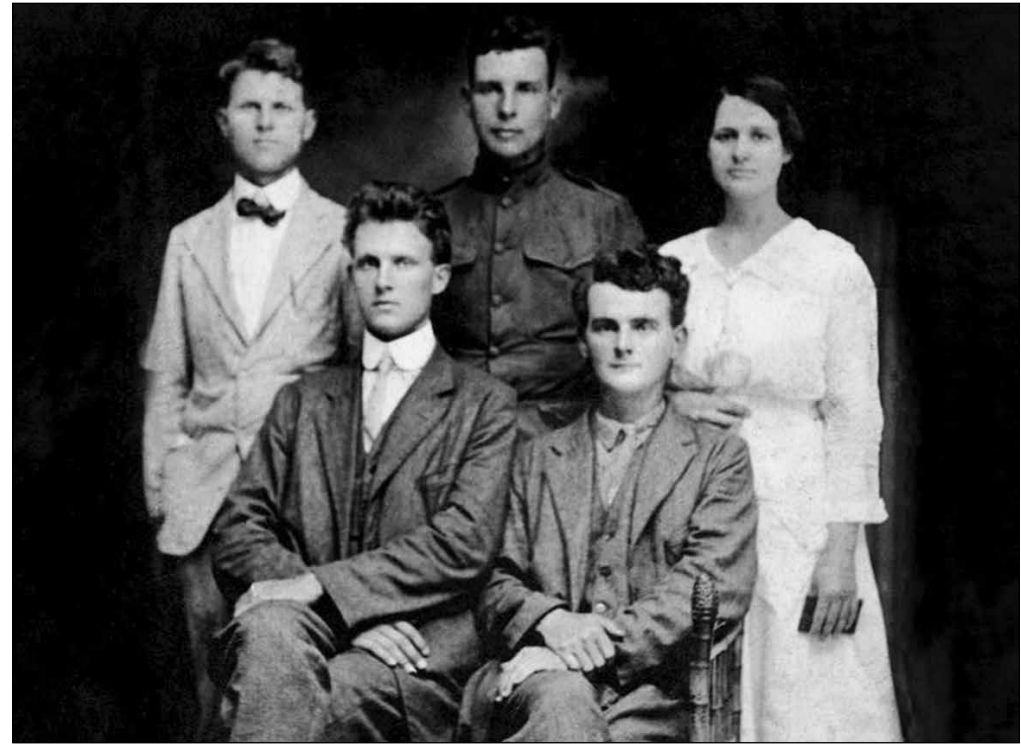




Mary Earp presents Norma Eckard with a check for \$500 from the Willetts family to honor her father and his two brothers.



Front row are Fredrick Arnold Willetts, left, and William Edgar Willetts; back row from left are William Henry Willetts, George Finnis Willetts and sister Zelfhia Eunity Willetts.

## Family honors Willetts brothers with Fort Caswell donation

At the May meeting of Brunswick Town NSDAR, Mary Willetts Earp presented Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range President Norma Eckard with a check for \$500 from the Willetts family to honor her father and his two brothers who each served in World War I.

Earp is the last direct descendant living today. She gave a speech, sharing her thoughts about the Honor a Brunswick County World War I Veteran program to raise funds for the memorial planned onsite at the 1918 Fort Caswell Rifle Range.

"Few people know about this war and the sacrifices that were made. It is our responsibility

to educate family members and the community," she said, according to a news release. She spoke about the formation of the Daughters of the American Revolution Chapter in Brunswick County, as she was one of the early members. It struggled through those first years but has created a strong base of members. The Brunswick Town chapter has supported the stabilization of the rifle range and honoring Brunswick County World War I veterans. Earp's nieces are also members of the DAR in their communities.

Earp also shared a picture of her father and his siblings. She explained that "my family was poor and those clothes are not indicative of how

they lived. I have been told that the traveling photographer rented clothes."

Earp first contacted Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range in March. She continues to reach out to others in the community to inform and update them about the memorial to honor the county's World War I veterans.

Pvt. William Edgar Willetts was honored with a donation by Earp and his niece, Anne Willetts Jones.

Pvt. Frederick Arnold Willetts was honored with a donation by his great-nieces Sue Jones Jordan and Maggie Faulkner Harper.

Pvt. George Finnis Willetts was honored with

a donation by his granddaughters Joann Willetts Neal and Beth Willetts Osborne.

The nonprofit has received donations for the planned World War I Memorial at the site of the 1918 Fort Caswell Rifle Range. The thermometer at the right side of the website, [caswellriflerange.com](http://caswellriflerange.com), indicates the amount of funds still needed for a memorial. It also shows the number of Brunswick County veterans who have been honored and the number not yet honored.

Anyone who wants to honor a World War I veteran or to help support the nonprofit can contact the Friends at [fcaswellriflerange@gmail.com](mailto:fcaswellriflerange@gmail.com).



Mary Willetts Earp honors her father at his graveside.



Ron and Norma Eckard are pictured with their awards.

## Eckards receive Community Service Award

The Brunswick Town Chapter NS-DAR recently awarded its prestigious and coveted Community Service Award to Norma and Ron Eckard for their tireless service and unflinching commitment to the restoration and preservation of the Fort Caswell World War I Rifle Range. The range is one of the few of its kind remaining in the United States.

Thanks to the effort of the Eckards and other Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range Inc., the range has been designated as one of the 100 National World War I Centennial Memorials by the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission and the Pritzker Military Museum and Library. The Historic Wilmington Foundation has listed the Fort Caswell Rifle Range among the Most Threatened Historic Places in the Cape Fear Region.

Norma is president and husband Ron is administrator of the Friends of Fort Caswell, which has been certified as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. The organization was founded to stabilize and preserve the Fort Caswell Rifle Range. All members are volunteers and receive no compensation. Go to its website, [caswellriflerange.com](http://caswellriflerange.com).

The site was discovered in 2011 by a homeowner's landscape committee, which included Norma. The structure, covered with weeds, tree limbs and dirt, could not be immediately identified but piqued their curiosity. Since that first day of discovery, the Eckards and others have been actively involved in restoring this decaying piece of history.

Stephanie Hosid, DAR Community Service Award chairwoman, presented the award to the Eckards and explained the criteria for selection: "The DAR Community Service Award is to recognize unpaid voluntary community service of individuals and organizations. The recipient must have contributed to the community in an outstanding manner through cultural, educational, humanitarian, patriotic, historical, citizenship, or environmental conservation endeavors or by organizing or participating in community activities," she said, according to a news release.

The Brunswick Town Chapter is particularly proud the Eckards were selected for this recognition, as Norma has been a member of the chapter since 2008.