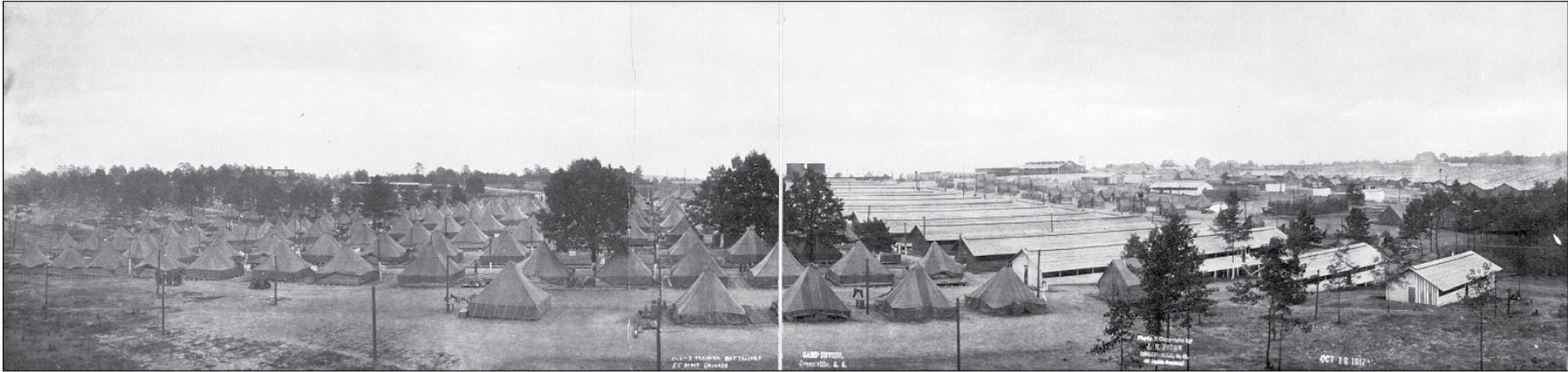


World War I profile



Samuel Swain, the first Brunswick County casualty from the 119th Infantry, trained at Camp Sevier, South Carolina.

Swain was early casualty among Brunswick soldiers

(Editor’s note: The Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range are gathering profiles of local veterans to mark the 100th anniversary of the Great War.)

Samuel Claudius Swain served only a few months in the Great War before becoming the first Brunswick County casualty from the famed 119th Infantry—“Old Hickory.”

Swain, who enlisted October 7, 1917, was also an early victim of what later became known as Spanish flu, the global influenza pandemic that proved even deadlier than World War I.

Born and raised in Brunswick County, Swain married Myrtle Clemmons on April 25, 1917. The couple had less than half a year together before he was ordered to report for duty at Camp Jackson, South Carolina. He eventually was assigned to Company C, 119th Infantry, 30th “Old Hickory” Division and trained at Camp Sevier, South Carolina.

Three months later, on January 7, 1918, Pvt. 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 December 14, 1917.

Swain died a month after Pvt. Carl Danford of Brunswick County lost his life from pneumonia following measles, when 4,000 men were still under quarantine.

A table from Chapter 12, Military Hospitals in the U.S., shows the sad statistics from the base hospital in Camp Sevier, where leaders were already fighting a war against disease, while trying to prepare American soldiers to fight overseas. The patient totals for several months, with resulting deaths are:

- November 1917 — 2,228 patients; 82 deaths;
- December 1917 — 1,217 patients; 56 deaths;
- January 1918 — 2,082 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 a single month. Worldwide, the epidemic claimed more than 25-million lives—more than the Great War.

Swain was laid to rest in the Antioch Baptist Church Cemetery at Bolivia. The Wilmington *Morning Star* published this account on January 10, 1918:



Photos contributed
Samuel Claudius Swain is buried at Bolivia.

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

Several members of the Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range recently visited the gravesite to pay respects and take photos of a restored headstone, as well as identify whether military honors are shown. Swain was honored by Diane Price of the Brunswick Town Daughters of the American Revolution.

Readers who would like to honor Swain or other veterans may e-mail caswellriflerange@gmail.com or visit www.caswellriflerange.com.