

# World War I Profile: Frederick Arnold Willetts , 1895-1972

By **NORMA ECKARD**  
GUEST COLUMNIST

*Frederick Arnold Willetts  
Winnabow, Brunswick  
County, NC  
US Army  
Private*

*Served: August 25, 1918  
— October 29, 1918*

Frederick Arnold Willetts was born and raised in Winnabow, Brunswick County. Two of his brothers also served, George Finnis Willetts and William Edgar Willetts.

Because Frederick was

not yet 21 when the 1917 draft registration was held, he registered for the draft in 1918. His Draft Registration shows he was living in Winnabow and working on the family farm. His physical description was tall, slender, with dark blue eyes and light hair.

Frederick was the third Willetts brother to receive the order to report for duty. He reported for duty on August 26, 1918, and was sent to Camp Jackson, SC [Source: Ancestry]. He was assigned to 156th Depot Brigade for training.

The construction of Camp Jackson began on June 11, 1917. The first

soldiers arrived on June 22. Construction was completed on December 22, 1917.

Recall from Richard Herbert Gray's WWI profile, the 81st Division was responsible for much of the construction and organization at Camp Jackson until they moved to Camp Sevier in May 1918.

The Depot Brigade was to receive recruits, train them, then send them where needed. In some cases, recruits required physical training for the rehabilitation of injuries or health related issues. Camp Jackson's Depot Brigade was the 156th.

Pvt. Willetts was honor-

ably discharged two months later on October 29, 1918, with a Surgeons Certificate of Disability and a 12 1/2 percent disability, indicating that the disability was a result of his military service. The General Pension Act of 1862 also included compensation for diseases incurred while in service, such as tuberculosis.

One clue into his disability is the date he was honorably discharged: October 29, 1918. The country was suffering from the influenza pandemic and southern camps in particular were hit hard with common childhood diseases such as the measles, as mentioned

earlier in Carl Jefferson Danford's WWI Profile.

It seems likely that Pvt. Willetts contracted one of the illnesses, which caused the camps to be quarantined, such as measles. A chronic condition that contributed to his death has been linked to measles. He could have suffered from influenza and pneumonia, causing damage to his lungs. Or it could have been a completely unrelated injury. But this is all guesswork based on records of other injuries sustained by soldiers during training.

After his discharge, Fred settled in Wilmington, working as a carpenter. He married and raised a family.

Frederick Arnold Willetts passed away on June 9, 1972, after several months in the VA Hospital in Fayetteville. His brother, William Edgar Willetts died just three days later.

On June 10, 1972, the following obituary was published in The Wilmington Morning Star.

## Fred Willetts

Fred Willetts of Rt. 5 died in the Veterans Administration Hospital in Fayetteville Friday morning following a lengthy illness.

Mr. Willetts was a retired carpenter and was the son of the late W.H. and Annie Arnold Willetts.

Survivors include his wife, Mrs. Virgie Russ Willetts of the home; a son, Robert Arnold Willetts of Carolina Beach; four brothers, William A. Willetts of Wilmington; F.S. Willetts of Ingold; J.C. (Grimes) Willetts of Winnabow; S.D. Willetts of Supply, two sisters, Mrs. Eliza Singleary of Supply, Mrs. Eula Bolling of Leland; two grandsons.

Funeral services will be held Sunday at 2 pm at the Chapel of Andrews Mortuary, with the Rev. John D. Stitt officiating. Burial will be in Greenlawn Memorial Park.

The family will receive visitors from 7:30 to 8:30 pm Saturday at Andrews Mortuary.

He was laid to rest in Greenlawn Memorial Park Cemetery in Wilmington. A military flat marker is shown.

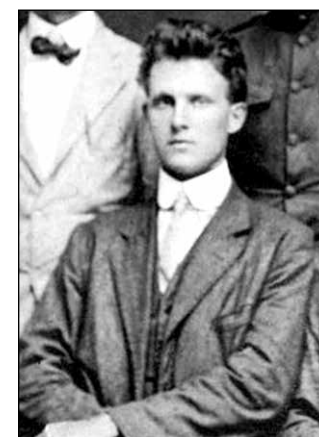


Photo contributed by Mary Willetts Earp

**Frederick Arnold Willetts, born and raised in Winnabow, registered for the draft in 1918.**

Read more about the Willetts brothers on the website, [caswellriflerange.com](http://caswellriflerange.com) (Willetts brothers honored with a family donation).

Source:

US Army Basic Training Combat Museum (2016) The Birth of Camp Jackson, Fort Jackson, S.C., The R. L. Bryan Co.

If you would like to honor Frederick Arnold Willetts or another Brunswick County WWI veteran, email the Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range at [ftcaswellriflerange@gmail.com](mailto:ftcaswellriflerange@gmail.com)

Oktoberfest in Caswell Beach is scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 12, at the Caswell Beach Town Public Service Facility Building (Fire Station) 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 authentic German food and drink as well as a dance with music by The Back Porch Rockers. A polka dance contest and best dressed Oktoberfest outfit will be awarded.

The Friends of Ft Caswell Rifle Range are in need of vendors to participate in the Oktoberfest In Caswell Beach event Saturday, Oct. 12, from noon to 3:00 p.m.

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



Photo contributed

Camp Jackson, 156th Depot Brigade. The construction of Camp Jackson began on June 11, 1917. Construction was completed Dec. 22, 1917. (Source: Library of Congress)



Photo contributed

Pictured is the headstone of Frederick Arnold Willetts.