

WWI Fort Caswell Nurse Profile: Elizabeth A. Ford, 1883-1954

By **NORMA & AMY ECKARD**
GUEST COLUMNISTS

*Elizabeth A. Ford
Asheville, NC
Army Nurse Corps
Served:
March 21, 1918 – April 22, 1919
Fort Caswell, US Army
Post Hospital:
March 21, 1918 – October 8, 1918*

Annie Elizabeth Ford was born in Citra, Florida, in 1883. Her family was from Tennessee, living in Florida for only a few years, and most continued to live in Tennessee until their deaths. Her family tree is located in Family Search.

By 1900, only the three youngest children were living at home in Montgomery County, Tenn., which is about 50 miles NNW of Nashville, near the Kentucky border. The census lists that her mother had eight children, five living.

Her mother passed away in 1907. Elizabeth moved to Asheville, NC, in 1909, where she remained the rest of her life [Source: obituary].

The 1910 Census shows her living as a boarder with her widowed sister, Lelia Robinson, both working as trained nurses.

Lelia's obituary [Asheville Citizen-Times, 18 Oct. 1947; p. 2.] states that she was a graduate of Maryland General Hospital in Baltimore. The 1900 Census lists her as a trained nurse at that

hospital. On March 21, 1918, Elizabeth joined the Army Nurse Corps. The following was published in the Asheville Citizen-Times, 22 March 1918; p. 6.

Miss Elizabeth A. Ford, a well known trained nurse of this city, leaves today for Fort Caswell, where she has enlisted in the government service.

Nurse Elizabeth A. Ford was assigned to the US Army Post Hospital at Fort Caswell, Brunswick County. On Oct. 8, 1918, she was transferred to Camp Jackson, SC, until her discharge on April 22, 1919. Recall from previous posts that the 30th "Old Hickory" Division, returned to Camp Jackson at discharge. Nurse Elizabeth Ford likely processed them then. Her NC WWI Service Card is shown here.

Her sister Lelia joined two months later on May 16, 1918, and was sent to the Base Hospital at Camp Gordon, Georgia, until her discharge on December 25, 1918. Her NC WWI Service Card is also shown.

Both Elizabeth and Lelia are listed as NC WWI Nurses on the Appalachian State University NC Nursing History page.

About a week after being discharged from WWI service, on May 1, 1919, Elizabeth married William E. "Jack" Shope of Asheville, a police officer and volunteer fire fighter from Asheville. All later census records show that her sister Lelia continued her nursing duties (in

1920, Nurse Robinson was working at the United States Marine Hospital in Detroit), and from the 1930 census record forward, all three lived together.

An article in the Asheville Citizen-Times of July 6, 1941, announces a meeting called by Elizabeth, serving as chairman of the Red Cross nursing committee. The meeting was to make plans for a refresher course for all Red Cross ex-service and inactive nurses. In 1943, Elizabeth was reelected as the historian for the North Carolina American Legion. The photo of her at the top of the profile was taken from that story. Her obituary, printed below, lists the many years devoted to the veteran community.

Her sister Lelia passed away in 1947. She was laid to rest in the same cemetery as Elizabeth and husband Jack. Neither sister had children.

Annie Elizabeth Ford Shope passed away on June 9, 1954, in Asheville. She was 70 years old. The cause of death was mesenteric thrombosis, a blood clot formed where blood is drained from the small intestine, which caused gangrene of her small intestine.

Mrs. Shope Dies in City

Mrs. W.E. (Jack) Shope of 61 Center Ave., died in an Asheville hospital yesterday following a brief illness.

She was the former Miss Annie Elizabeth Ford, daughter of Jesse Manley and Sarah Anderson Ford. Funeral services will be conducted at 3 p.m. tomorrow in the chapel of Morris-Lineberry-Black Funeral Home.

The Rev. H.B. Dendy, pastor of the Weaverville Presbyterian Church, will officiate. Burial will be in Lewis Memorial Park.

Mrs. Shope had resided in Asheville since 1909 and served in World War I as an Army nurse.

For seven years, Mrs. Shope was an officer in the North Carolina Department of the American Legion. She served for 10 years as historian of the Kiffin Rockwell (now Rockwell-Ballew) Post of the American Legion.

Mrs. Shope was married in May, 1919, to W.E. Shope.

Surviving are the husband; two brothers, Samuel T. Ford of Nashville, Tenn., and Gilbert T. Ford, of Oneco, Fla.

"Mrs. Shope Dies in City," Asheville Citizen-Times (Asheville, NC), 10 June 1954, p. 3.

She was laid to rest in Lewis Memorial Park in Asheville with her sister Lelia. Her husband Jack was laid to rest there the following year. Elizabeth and her sister Lelia were eligible for a military headstone or flat marker. No application was found. There are no photographs to verify.

If you would like to help us honor Annie Elizabeth Ford Shope or another Brunswick County WWI veteran or nurse, please email the Friends of Ft Caswell Rifle Range: <ft-caswellriflerange@gmail.com> or go to : www.caswellriflerange.com

Oktoberfest in Caswell Beach was a huge success Saturday Oct. 12, at the Caswell Beach Town Public Service Facility. The Friends earned \$2,000 to be applied to historic preservation of the rifle range memorial and the book to be published honoring the men and women who served in WWI from Brunswick County. Turtle Island Caterers served authentic German food and The Back Porch Rockers played music. Dan O'Neal grilled sausages for snacks from noon to 3 p.m., and



"Mrs. Elizabeth Shope is Reelected to Office of Historian." Asheville Citizen-Times (Asheville, NC), 23 June 1943, p. 14.

Annie Ford's death certificate.

gave the money earned to the nonprofit. Many thanks to all who attended.

Also, another roll call 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. Please bring a chair.

The graduate nurses' class will meet this afternoon at 4 o'clock at the home of Miss Elizabeth Ford, 39 South French Broad avenue. All graduate nurses are invited to attend.

This clipping from 1915 shows that Elizabeth was a graduate nurse in 1915. Source: Asheville Citizen-Times, 5 May 1915; p. 9

Miss Elizabeth A. Ford, a well known trained nurse of this city, leaves today for Fort Caswell, where she has enlisted in the government service.

Sister Lelia's Service Card showing she joined two months later on May 16, 1918, and was sent to the Base Hospital at Camp Gordon, Georgia.