

WWI Fort Caswell Nurse Profile: Bertha Jost, 1891-1943

BY NORMA ECKARD

AND AMY ECKARD

*Bertha H. Jost
Perth-Amboy, NJ
Army Nurse Corps
2nd Lieutenant (assumed)
Served:
March 21, 1918 — November 11, 1922
Fort Caswell, US Army
Post Hospital:
March 21, 1918 — March 20, 1919*

Bertha H. Jost was born in Germany on Sept. 29, 1891, according to her WWI VA Index. (The middle initial was listed on the 1915 NJ Census and 1915 Elizabeth City Directory, excerpt shown below.)

Her mother had three children, Leana (Adelaide), Bernhardt and Bertha, the youngest. Her mother Katrina (1867-1892) passed away within a year of Bertha's birth, according to sources, but records were unavailable to confirm.

Her father Gustav married Menne Dettmer [Source of name: Gustav's death certificate] around 1894 in Germany [Source: 1910 US Census]. Their only child, Margaret/Gretchen, was born the following year, in 1895 [Source: 1905 NJ Census].

The family immigrated to America around 1901. No documents were found to confirm the exact date.

The 1905 NJ Census shows the family immigrated together in 1900, the 1910 US Census shows Gustav arrived in 1900 and the family joined him in 1901 and the 1915 NJ Census shows Gustav arrived in 1899 and the family in 1901.

They settled around Perth Amboy, NJ, a small community across the bay from Staten Island. The first occurrence of Gustav Jost, Bertha's father, was found in the 1903 Perth Amboy City Directory, listing his home as Maurer, NJ. [Source: Ancestry.com. U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995 [database online]. Provo, UT, USA]

The 1905 NJ Census shows that Gustav was a house carpenter, a trade he pursued throughout his life.

On Dec. 21, 1909, the Perth Amboy evening news published an announcement on page 4 for Adelaide

Ind. Jean P. Dennis, Bertha Jost, Dora A. Bell, Ida E. Trollinger, to U. S. Army Post Hospital, Fort Caswell, N. C. Mabel G. White, to U. S. Army Post Hospital, Chanute Field, Rantoul, Ill. Ethel Gladstone, to U. S. Army Post Hospital,

American Journal of Nursing, May 1918; Vol. 18, No. 6 (May, 1918), pp. 734; Nurse Jost, along with Nurses Bell, Dennis, and Trollinger, began serving at Fort Caswell around March 20, 1918.

ARMY NURSE CORPS

Transfers: (July), To Station Hospital, Fort Banks, Mass., Della Killeen and Helen Drew; to Station Hospital, Ft. Benjamin Harrison, Ind., Jane G. Molloy, Della J. Bonner, Lylan M. Grady, Amelia F. Hanna, Elizabeth Hansbrough, Mary A. Kalouner, Katherine E. Kelly, Catherine Morrison; to Station Hospital, Camp Benning, Ga., Alta Berninger, Dorothy Cleveland; to Station Hospital, Jefferson Barracks, Mo., Mary M. Brady; to Station Hospital, Ft. Leavenworth, Kas., Helen L. Cole; to Letterman General Hospital, San Francisco, Calif., Kathleen O'Driscoll, Anne G. Slater; to Station Hospital, Ft. McPherson, Ga., Harriet Glogston; to Station Hospital, Ft. Sam Houston, Tex., Katherine Burns, Mary U. Curran, Margaret V. Garrity, Margaret Houston, Susan E. Littlepage, Margaret Spearman, Mary L. Tooker, Harriet N. Willett; to Station Hospital, Ft. Sheridan, Ill., Elizabeth H. Crowthers, Viola Ferguson; to Station Hospital, Ft. Sill, Okla., Kathryn Jones, Agnes J. O'Neill, Myrtle L. Rains; to Station Hospital, Ft. Totten, N. Y., Bertha Jost; to Walter

Wilmington Hotel.

Among the arrivals at the Wilmington are: T. D. Warren, New Bern; A. R. Corinth, Rocky Mount; T. W. Drake, Southport; Geo. R. Newton, Fayetteville; N. B. Emery, Charlotte; S. S. Kirkland, Hillsboro; Jas. S. Butler, St. Pauls; J. Clein, Ed. A. Klein, Greensboro; Miss Bertha Jost, Fort Caswell; B. F. Taylor, Maxton.

On June 27, 1918, The Wilmington Dispatch marked her arrival at the Wilmington Hotel on page 7.

Jost's marriage to E. [Edward] Krebs of Brooklyn on December 24th.

By 1910, Bernhardt had joined his father as a carpenter, and Bertha had presumably left home to pursue nursing. She was not found in the 1910 US Census.

However, in 1915, she was listed in the 1915 NJ Census as a nurse at Elizabeth General Hospital. The 1915 Elizabeth City Directory also included her, as shown. [Source: Ancestry.com. U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995 [database online]. Provo, UT, USA]

Her family remained in Perth Amboy, as seen in the 1915 NJ Census.

Nurse Bertha Jost joined the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) in March 1918, serving at Fort Caswell. She remained in the ANC through 1922, although few details are found.

The table below lists her service, based on several records and yet still incomplete.

*03/21/1918 — Fort Caswell, NC
03/20/1919 — Oteen US General Hospital, Asheville, NC
07/1922 — Fort Totten, Queens, NYC
11/11/1922 — Discharge*

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On June 27, 1918, The Wilmington Dispatch marked her arrival at the Wilmington Hotel on page 7.

On January 4, 1919, her brother-in-law Edward Krebs was struck by a trolley car. He died two days later, on January 6, 1919.

Auto Rams Trolley; Man is Killed

Rahway, Jan. 7. Edward Krebs, of 210 Manor place, Cranford, died about 2:30 o'clock yesterday afternoon in Army General Hospital No. 3, Colonia, from injuries received Saturday afternoon when his automobile ran into a car of the Trenton fast line trolley system of the Public Service Corporation on the St. George avenue grade crossing in Woodbridge.

At the time of the acci-

dent Krebs was driving toward Perth Amboy and the trolley was headed toward Elizabeth. It was a two-car train and Krebs' auto struck the rear car. He was hurled from his seat and his skull was fractured. The injury was in the shape of a cross, each section being about eight inches in length. The auto, a large Studebaker, was demolished.

Mr. Krebs was a contractor, and was 28 years old. He came to Cranford from Chrome some time ago. He was an Elk and a member of the fire department. He is survived by a widow and three sons, Edward, Lester and Rudolph.

A brief obituary and burial notice were also published in the Perth Amboy evening news. Edward Krebs was laid to rest in Rosedale Cemetery. Bertha's sister Lena/Adelaide would not join him until 1971. She never remarried.

On March 29, 1919, the Oteen weekly newsletter from Asheville, NC, welcomed Nurse Davis and Nurse Jost to their new assignments from Fort Caswell.

On June 30, 1919, the Perth Amboy evening news published an article on page 2 about the local women who served in the Nurse Corps. It included Nurse Jost as one who went overseas, although from records, she spent the war in service at Fort Caswell, followed by Oteen Hospital in Asheville.

On the week of July 12, 1919, the Oteen weekly newsletter listed Nurse Jost as an incoming patient.

NURSES CORPS REPRESENTED

Some Local Women Saw Duty Overseas While Others' Work Kept Them in America

Seven young women in this city as nurses entered the service of their country. Mrs. Mable C. O'Hara, Misses Camilla Hartman and Bertha Jost went across and official reports show that their work over there was of such merit that this city can feel as proud of its daughters who were on the firing line as of its sons.

Mrs. Glen Barker, the Misses Carolina Juhl, Elsie Olson and Jenny Haasmussen, also nurses, did work among the service men in this country under the heading of Red Cross and like the lady the girl behind the gun did her bit too, just as well as the lady with the spur of the firing line.

Other Women Overseas
Two other young women are also overseas at present doing work along welfare lines. Miss Alice Goddard, who was head librarian at the local library before she resigned her position, left June, 1918, and took up work with the Y. M. C. A. overseas. She did casual work in the morning and cooperated with the American Library Association in the afternoon and evening. At present she is stationed in Dijon in France. The other, who went over with the library association, is Miss Edith Crowell. She left a short time ago and is doing excellent work along welfare lines. It is at attempting to keep the lady who have time heavy on their hands to keep occupied.

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continued serving in Asheville, NC, at US General Hospital No. 19 (Oteen). There were over 100 nurses listed and about 650 patients.

Around January 7, 1922, Bertha's stepmother Menne Dettmer Jost passed away. Very brief notices were published in Perth Amboy evening news.

In 1922, Nurse Jost was transferred to Station Hospital, Fort Totten, NY.

[Source: The American Journal of Nursing, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Oct., 1922), pp. 214, (at bottom of the excerpt shown)]

She was discharged from the Army Nurse Corps on November 11, 1922. Nurses had achieved ranks by then, so the assumption is she had earned the rank of 2nd Lieutenant.

The 1925 NYC Census shows her working as a trained nurse in NYC.

Bertha was not located in the 1930 US Census.

In 1940 Bertha was lodging in Manhattan at the Central Club for Nurses, a charter member of the Metropolitan YWCA, located on 132 East 45th St. She reported that she hadn't worked for 50 weeks and had no income. It's likely that she was ill at this time, possibly with tuberculosis, given that she served at Oteen Hospital in Asheville, and her obituary indicated that she had a long illness.

Her family, including her father, sister Leana/Adelaide Krebs, brother Bernhardt, and half sister Margaret/Gretchen, continued living in Woodbridge on Rahway Ave, as seen in the 1940 US Census

Bertha Jost passed away on September 30, 1943. Her obituary is shown below. There are no photos of her gravesite so military honors cannot be confirmed.

World War I Nurse Dies; Rites Tomorrow

WOODBIDGE — Miss Bertha Jost, who served with the army as a nurse in World War I, died early yesterday in her home, 727 Rahway Avenue, after a long illness.

Funeral services will be held tomorrow afternoon at 2 o'clock from the Greiner Funeral Home, 44 Green Street. Burial will be in the family plot in Alpine Cemetery, Perth Amboy.

Miss Jost is survived by two sisters, Mrs. Lena Krebs and Miss Gretchen Jost and one brother, Bernhardt Jost, all of Woodbridge.

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Photo contributed from Findgrave

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Independent-Leader (Woodbridge, NJ), 1 Oct 1943, p. 1.

On September 30, 1950, her father passed away after three days at the National Elks Home in Bedford, Va. He was laid to rest in the family plot. Bertha's brother Bernhardt was located there, and it is assumed her stepmother Menne who passed away in 1922 was also laid to rest there. The obituary below contains the last known reference to Bertha's half sister Gretchen/Margaret.

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The bearers, all members of the Elks, were: Jeppe

Jorgensen, Paul Layden, Daniel Dwyer, Charles Simmen, Stephen Fodor, and Joseph F. Maloney.

Mr. Jost, a retired carpenter and builder died Saturday at the National Elks Home, Bedford, Va. He was 87 years old. Born in Germany, Mr. Jost was a resident of Woodbridge for 25 years. He was a carpenter and builder for 5 years before retiring. He built the Elks clubhouse in Perth Amboy and was a member of Perth Amboy Lodge, BPO Elks.

He is survived by two daughters, Mrs. Leana Krebs and Miss Gretchen Jost; one son Bernhardt, all of Woodbridge. He is also survived by eight grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren.

Raritan Township and Fords Beacon (Fords, NJ), 50 Oct 1950, p. 2.

If you would like to help us honor Bertha Jost or another Brunswick County WWI veteran, please email the Friends of Ft Caswell Rifle Range: <ftcaswellrifle@gmail.com> or go to: www.caswellrifle.com

Donations continue to be sent supporting the historical preservation of the 1918 World War I Fort Caswell Rifle Range Memorial and the book featuring all the men and women that served their country from Brunswick County. Send donations to Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range, 5 Foxfire Trace, Caswell beach, NC 28465