

WWI Fort Caswell Nurse Profile: Dora A. Bell, 1892-1968

BY NORMA ECKARD
AND AMY ECKARD

*Dora Alice Bell Harris
Cumberland, MD
Army Nurse Corps
2nd Lieutenant
Served:
March 22, 1918 – January 5, 1921
Fort Caswell, US Army
Post Hospital:
March 22, 1918 – August 8, 1918
Overseas:
September 1, 1918 – November 25, 1919*

Dora Alice "Dovie" Bell was born and raised in Pendleton County, WV, in the Appalachian Mountains near Western Maryland. There is a partial family tree in Family Search.

The 1900 Census shows the family having five children, all living. Dovie was the second oldest daughter, age 8. Her father was presumably a farmer, as listed on the 1910 Census.

Dora could not be found in the 1910 Census. However, the following articles from 1914 shows she was enrolled in the nursing training program at Western Maryland Hospital in Cumberland, MD, as well as Bellevue Hospital

in NYC. More news about Dora was found from June 30, 1918.

Another Nurse Leaves for Hospital Service Tenth from Western Maryland Hospital to Enlist Since March 1 for Army Work

Miss Mildred Parsons, Kansas City, Kan., graduate nurse of the Western Maryland Hospital, leaves today to take up her duties at Base Hospital, No. A, Newport News. Miss Parsons is the tenth Western Maryland nurse to enlist since March 1. Those in service now are: Misses Matilda Duvall, Camp Dix, N.J.; Nola Lepley, Fort Bliss, El Paso, Texas; Martha Mont, Corpus Christi, Texas; Ethel Matlick, Walter Reid Hospital, Washington D.C.; Dora Bell, Greenville Hospital, North Carolina; Pearl McFarland, Hospital No. 1, Aberdeen, Md.; Mary A. Boyle and Edith Head, unassigned.

The Government is so much in need of nurses that it is felt the public should do all it can to relieve private duty nurses.

"Another Nurse Leaves for Hospital Service." Cumberland Evening Times, 30 June 1918, p. 2.

Details of her US Army service may be found on her WWI MD Service Card, which is located in bound volumes, Maryland in the World War 1917-1919; Military and Naval Service Records, Volumes I & II, and is shown below in table form for easier reading. Her military service is not detailed after December 1919, although she remained in the service until January 1921.

03/22/1918 – 08/08/1918	Fort Caswell, NC
08/08/1918 – 09/01/1918	Mobilization Station
09/01/1918 – 10/12/1918	Base Hospital No. 60 (France)
10/12/1918 – 10/17/1918	Base Hospital No. 81 (France)
10/17/1918 – 04/09/1919	Provisional Hospital No. 1
04/09/1919 – 05/09/1919	Evacuation Hospital
05/09/1919 – 07/29/1919	Camp Hospital No. 33 (Brest, France)
07/29/1919 – 11/25/1919	Demobilization Station
11/25/1919 – 12/06/1919	Base Hospital; Fort Sam Houston, TX

The Passenger List below is for Aquitania, leaving NY on September

2, 1918, containing 8 pages of nurses in the Army Nurse Corps, for a total of more than 200. This excerpt shows her mother as her next of kin, with her mother's address as Elkins, WV. As mentioned in the introductory Fort Caswell nurse post, nurses were not assigned overseas service against their will.

As her service card shows, she moved assignments often while overseas. She was also the recipient of the Order of St. Sava (Serbian) Military Year: 1917-1919. No details were found regarding the award.

When she returned to the United State near the end of 1919, she continued service but as mentioned, details are unknown. Her final day of service was the date she was married, January 1, 1921.

On January 1, 1921, Dora A. Bell, graduate nurse from Elkins, WV, married Joseph M. Harris, US Army Officer currently living in Los Angeles.

Source of excerpt shown above: Ancestry.com. California, Marriage Records from Select Counties, 1850-1941 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014.



Photo contributed from Findagrave

The grave of Dora Alice Bell Harris

Dora and Joseph remained in Los Angeles until their deaths. Joseph would eventually become a real estate broker, as shown in the 1930 Census. The 1940 Census includes three of Dora's brother's children. Curiously, the children are also listed that year in her brother Minor's Census in WV. The reasons behind this are unknown.

No additional information or obituaries were found. Dora Alice Bell Harris passed away on June 29, 1969, in Los Angeles at age 76. She was laid to rest next to her husband at Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Glendale, CA.

If you would like to help

us honor Dora Alice Bell Harris or another Brunswick County WWI veteran, please email the Friends of Ft Caswell Rifle Range: <ftcaswellriflerange@gmail.com> or go to : www.caswellriflerange.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

GROOM		BRIDE	
PLACE OF MARRIAGE COUNTY OF ALAMEDA.		STATE INDEX NO. _____	
STANDARD CERTIFICATE OF MARRIAGE PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS		LOCAL REGISTERED NO. 7	
FULL NAME <i>Joseph M. Harris</i>		FULL NAME <i>Dora A. Bell</i>	
RESIDENCE <i>Los Angeles, Cal.</i>		RESIDENCE <i>Elkins, Randolph Co. W. Virginia</i>	
COLOR OR RACE <i>White</i>	AGE AT LAST BIRTHDAY <i>43</i> Years	COLOR OR RACE <i>White</i>	AGE AT LAST BIRTHDAY <i>28</i> Years
SINGLE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WIDOWED <input type="checkbox"/> OR DIVORCED <input type="checkbox"/>	NUMBER OF MARRIAGE <i>1st</i>	SINGLE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WIDOWED <input type="checkbox"/> OR DIVORCED <input type="checkbox"/>	NUMBER OF MARRIAGE <i>1st</i>
BIRTHPLACE <i>Virginia</i> (State or Country)		BIRTHPLACE <i>West Virginia</i> (State or Country)	
OCCUPATION (a) Trade, profession, or particular kind of work... (b) General nature of industry, business or establishment in which employed (or employer) <i>Officer U.S. Army</i>		OCCUPATION (a) Trade, profession, or particular kind of work... (b) General nature of industry, business or establishment in which employed (or employer) <i>Nurse Graduate</i>	
NAME OF FATHER <i>R. H. Harris</i>		NAME OF FATHER <i>W. M. Bell</i>	
BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER <i>Kentucky</i> (State or Country)		BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER <i>West Virginia</i> (State or Country)	
MAIDEN NAME OF MOTHER <i>Sarah A. Martin</i>		MAIDEN NAME OF MOTHER <i>Loetie Abrogast</i>	
BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER <i>Virginia</i> (State or Country)		BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER <i>W. Virginia</i> (State or Country)	
Maiden Name of the Bride, if She Was Previously Married _____			

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NURSES ENTER NEW YORK HOSPITAL FOR TRAINING

Misses Cheska Bollman, Nola Lepley, Dora Bell and Ethel Matlick, student nurses of the Western Maryland Hospital, left yesterday for New York to take a six month's course in Bellevue Hospital, joining the other student nurses from the Western Maryland hospital, who entered the training school at Bellevue three months ago. The arrangements with the New York hospital to receive nurses from the local hospital was made by Miss Mary Ealy Hale, the superintendent of the Western Hospital.

Training at NYC Hospital for 6 months [Source: Cumberland Evening Times, 30 June 1914, p. 9]

BEST SHOES FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

THE BEE HIVE

65 Baltimore Street See Page 20

CUMBERLAND DIRECTORY 1917 679

NURSES.

Amtower Edith, 70 Union.
Andrews Florence, 80½ Union.
Avers Mabel E, 120 Grand av.
Baird Jean, 36 S Liberty.
Bell Dora, 32 Park
Boch Ella & Lena

Nurse Bell is listed in the 1917 Cumberland City Directory. [Source: Ancestry.com. U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA]

NURSES GO TO NEW YORK HOSPITAL

Misses Ruth Canty, Viola Derham and Pearl McFarland, student nurses of the Western Maryland Hospital, left today for New York to take a six months course of nursing in the Bellevue Hospital.

Through an agreement reached with the Bellevue hospital management by Miss Mary E. Hale, superintendent of the Western Maryland hospital, student nurses from the latter institution are given the opportunity to take a six months' course in Bellevue. The three student nurses, Misses Nola Lepley, Cheska Bollman and Dora Bell, who have completed their six months' training in Bellevue, returned to the Western Maryland today.

Additional training at NYC Hospital [Source: Cumberland Evening Times, 31 Dec. 1914, p. 10.]