



By David Osborn, Site Manager
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Service & Sacrifice: Profiles of American soldiers of World War I buried at St. Paul's

Profiles of two service members buried in the historic cemetery at St. Paul's Church National Historic Site reflect common and also distinct elements of the experiences of soldiers from the area who served in the American army during the First World War.

Both of the soldiers -- James Mitchell Virus and Clarence Lanzendoen -- entered the service through the draft, or the Selective Service Act. First passed by Congress in May 1917, the national conscription accounted for about 60-percent of the approximately five million men who served during the conflict. The original legislation specified men aged 21 to 30, but that was expanded to 18 to 45 through an amended law approved in August 1918. Men were expected to register upon reaching the proper age.

Virus and Lanzendoen were born in New York, but they were also both partly of German ancestry. This ethnic identity could have created a unsettling situation for the men during the war years when Germany was the principal enemy of the United States. Although one of the largest and longest resident of American ethnic groups, Germans and especially the German language faced opposition and often hostility during the conflict, with ordinances passed changing German sounding place names and banning the teaching of German in many school districts and colleges. People of German ancestry also encountered social ostracism, community pressure to demonstrate patriotism and occasional physical attacks. Despite these wartime manifestations of hostility, young men of German ancestry were subjected to the draft. Yet, there is nothing in the records

WWI Army Card - Langen, J. Lusham, C. (Box 112)

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Lanzendoen, Clarence 4 486 059 *White *Colored.
(Surname) (Christian name) (Army serial number)

Residence: 3517 Delaville Ave. E Chester Bronx New York NEW YORK
(Street and house number) (Town or city) (County) (State)

*Enlisted *R.A. *N.G. *R.R.G. *Inducted at L B 7 New York N.Y. on Sept 9 1918
Place of birth: New York N.Y. Age or date of birth: Jan 16 1897

Organizations served in, with dates of assignments and transfers:
Co. M Prov Regt 166 Dep Aric to death

Grades, with date of appointment:
Pvt

Engagements:

Wounds or other injuries received in action: *None.

Served overseas from † to †, from † to †

Died of Broncho pneumonia (Cause and date of death) Oct 2 1918

Person notified of death: Eola Lanzendoen Mother
(Name) (Degree of relationship)

Remarks: 3517 Delaville Ave West Chester Bronx New York (No. and street or rural route) (City, town, or post office) (State or country)

Form No. 754-B, A. G. O. *Strike out words not applicable. † Dates of departure from and arrival in the U.S.
Nov. 22, 1919. 1-771

demonstrating difficulties for these two soldiers, and it is possible their removal by two or three generations from German identity was sufficient to avoid problems encountered by first generation immigrants.

James Virus fought in France in 1918, survived the ordeal of modern war, and returned to Mt. Vernon, New York to resume civilian life. The other soldier, Clarence Lanzendoen, died at a training camp in the United States from the influenza epidemic that tore through the ranks in the fall of 1918. He

lived about a mile from St. Paul's, and worshipped at the church. Parish records show he was baptized in the historic stone edifice at the age of 20 months on October 1, 1899, one of ten children of Henry and Ella Lanzendoen given the Episcopal sacrament at St. Paul's. Employed as a laborer, Henry was born in New York, while both of his parents - Clarence's grandparents -- were born in Germany.

At age 21, Clarence was inducted into the service in New York City on September 9, 1918, and assigned to Company M., Provisional Regiment 156. The St. Paul's parishioner was dispatched for training to Camp Sevier, located in Greenville County, South Carolina. He wasn't there long, tragically dying on October 2, of "broncho pneumonia," as listed on army records, which was a common way to register deaths from the influenza epidemic. He was 21. The casket bearing his remains was transported to Mt. Vernon, and burial followed at St. Paul's on October 8, five weeks before the Armistice ended the fighting in Europe.

James Virus was several years older, born in the area in 1889; he lived near St. Paul's his whole life, witnessing the expansion of Mt. Vernon from a village to a city. His father Frederick was born in Germany, while his mother Mary was a native New Yorker. James was one of seven children.

Virus was unmarried when he entered the Army on May 26, 1918, assigned to Co C of the 2nd anti-aircraft machine gun battalion, a unit which included several other Mt.

Vernon residents. For detail and physical description, the 28-year old New Yorker was of medium build and height, with black hair and grey eyes; he was "Not Bald." This enlistment overlapped with the period of the major increase of American forces in France, and Virus reached the Western front on June 30.

Virus was one of millions of American soldiers in the final campaign that helped push the Germans back in France in the war's final five months. He probably experienced combat in the Meuse-Argonne offensive of late September through November, and possibly at St. Mihiel. One note in his military record shows a demotion in rank. He is listed as a Corporal on July 22, indicating a promotion from his initial rank, but then Private a month later. While there is no documented explanation for this demotion, the reduction in rank could have been caused by any of a variety of minor infractions. Virus returned

Virus, James	5,169,416	1
(Surname)	(Army serial number)	* White * Colored.
Residence: 16 N. Terrace Ave Mt Vernon	NEW YORK	
(Street and house number)	(Town or city)	(State)
* Enlisted * R. A. * N. G. * E. R. G. Inducted at Mt Vernon N Y on May 26/1918		
Place of birth: Mt Vernon N Y	Age or date of birth: Oct 7, 1888	
Organizations served in, with dates of assignments and transfers: Co C 2 A A. M. S. Bn to dish		
Grades, with date of appointment: Corp July 22/18, Pvt Aug 30/18		
Engagements: XX		
Wounds or other injuries received in action: None		
Served overseas from June 30/18 to Feb 21/19 , from † to †		
Honorable discharged on demobilization March 8/19 , 19 19		
In view of occupation he was, on date of discharge, reported 0 per cent disabled.		
Remarks:		
Form No. 724-I. A. G. O. * Strike out words not applicable. † Dates of departure from and arrival in the U. S. Nov. 22, 1918. 2-7202		

to America along with the large transport of soldiers in early 1919, and was honorably discharged in March.

The veteran lived another ten years, experiencing and participating in a period of rapid growth for the small suburban city north of the great metropolis. Employment included an usher in a Mt. Vernon theater, doorman, and by the mid-1920s, a bottler, probably working in the growing local beverage industry. Following marriage in the 1924, he and his wife Marion had a daughter named Dorothy. She was five years old when Private Virus died in August 1929, just shy of 40, at a navy hospital in Brooklyn, followed by interment at St. Paul's.