

William L Hiers
Military Service WWI



Pvt William L Hiers
Born: 5 Oct 1895 Brunson, SC
Married: 13 Feb 1921 Helen Marie Freeman
Died: 29 Aug 1983 Sanford, FL
Parents: Joseph Brabham Hiers & Carrie A Priester

Military Service
24 June 1918 – 2 June 1919

108th Ammunition Train, Company E, 33rd Division

The information that follows was obtained in April of 2011 from the National Personnel Records Center, Military Personnel Records, St Louis, MO. US Army personnel military records are stored here but many of the files were destroyed or badly damaged in a fire in 1973. I was able to obtain these records but as you can tell, they show signs of being in a fire and many are hard to read. I will try and explain the information from these files as best I can.

(Each entry to be initialed)
 CURRENT ENLISTMENT.
 Served in 1st enlistment period.
 Accepted for enlistment at Hampton, S. Carolina
 Enlisted June 24, 1918, at Hampton, S. Carolina
 by _____
 signed to Depot Brigade, 26th Co. 7th Bn.
 (Company and regiment or corps or department.)
 at Camp Jackson, S. C., June 24, 1918
 (Station.)
 transferred to _____, 1918
 (Company and regiment or corps or department.)
 Transferred to _____, 1918
 (Company and regiment or corps or department.)
 Furloughed to reserve at _____
 _____, 1918. Character: _____
 † Honorably discharged; † discharged and not recommended for
 reenlistment; † dishonorably discharged at _____
 _____, 1918. Character: _____
 † Strike out words not applicable.

(Last phase of the Meuse-Argonne
 (Offensive) Offensive operations with the
 33rd Divn. 1-11 Nov. 1918.
 Wounds or other injuries received in action: _____
 Medal of honor (action, with date thereof, for which granted): _____
 Certificate of merit (nature of service, with date thereof, for which
 granted): _____
 Furloughs: 12-15 Aug. 1918.
 Time lost to be made good under A. W. 107:
 (a) Absence without proper authority or in desertion.

 (b) Confinement under sentence or while awaiting trial and
 disposition of case, if trial resulted in conviction.

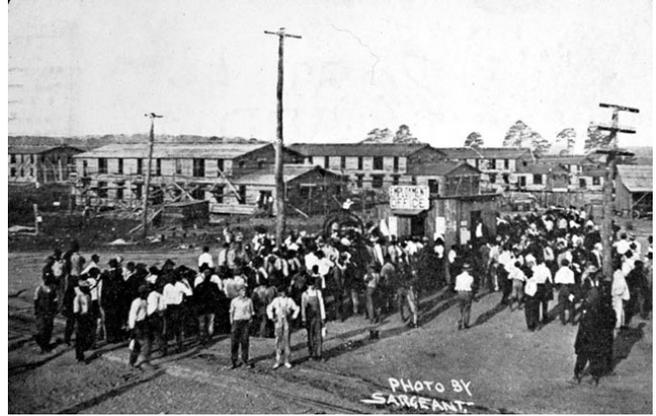
 (c) Unable to perform duty through the intemperate use of drug
 or alcoholic liquor or through disease or injury the results
 of his own misconduct.

 *Give date of qualification or rating and number, date, and source of order
 announcing same

REMARKS: Sailed fr the USA aug 20/18 &
arrived in France on Sept 3/18, left Brest,
France for return to the United States on
May 12, 1919 Arrived in Hoboken, New
Jersey upon arrival in the United States
on May 22, 1919.

From the records above we learn that William L Hiers enlisted in the Army in Hampton, SC, on 24 June 1918 and was assigned to Depot Brigade, 26th Company, 7th Battalion, at Camp Jackson, Columbia SC. He was on furlough 12-15 August 1918. He sailed from the US on 20 August 1918 and arrived in France on 3 September 1918. He participated in the last phase of the Meuse-Argonne offensive with the 33rd Division, Company E, 108th Ammunition Train, from 1-11 November 1918.

Pictures and information on Camp Jackson during the time that PFC William Hiers would have been there.



Soldiers Barracks at Camp Jackson, SC

Pvt William Hiers trained here from 24 June 1918 until he left for France 20 Aug 1918.

On June 2, 1917, a new Army Training Center was established to answer America's call for trained fighting men in the early days of World War I. This installation would become the largest and most active of its kind in the world. Named in honor of Major General Andrew Jackson, a native son of the Palmetto State and the seventh president of the United States, Camp Jackson was designated as one of 16 national cantonments constructed to support the war effort.

On 20 August, 1918, Pvt William Hiers left the US (ship unknown) and arrived in France on 2 September 1918.



Picture of WWI soldiers lined up at a dock waiting to board a transport ship to France.

At some point after arriving in France, Pvt William Hiers was transferred to the 33rd Division, Company E, 108th Ammunition Train. These soldiers were tasked with transporting badly needed ammunition to the soldiers on the front line. From what I can tell from researching the 108th, they were attached to the 58th Field Artillery and supplied shells for their cannon. The 33rd Division was made up mostly of the Illinois National Guard and supplemented with other men from across the country.

Below is information on the last phase of the Meuse-Argonne offensive that Pvt William Hiers participated in from 1-11 Nov 1918.

The **Meuse-Argonne Offensive**, also called the **Battle of the Argonne Forest**, was a part of the final Allied offensive of World War I that stretched along the entire western front.

Third phase: October 26 to November 10

By October 31 the Americans had advanced fifteen kilometers and had finally cleared the Argonne Forest. On their left the French had advanced thirty kilometers, reaching the River Aisne. The American forces reorganized into two armies. The First, led by General Liggett, would continue to move to the Carignan-Sedan-Mezieres Railroad. The Second Army, led by Lieutenant General Robert L. Bullard, was directed to move eastward towards Metz. The two U.S. armies faced portions of 31 German divisions during this phase. The American troops captured German defenses at Buzancy, allowing French troops to cross the River Aisne, whence they rushed forward, capturing Le Chesne (the **Battle of Chesne** ()). In the final days, the French forces conquered the immediate objective, Sedan and its critical railroad hub (the **Advance to the Meuse** ()), on November 6 and American forces captured surrounding hills.

The Meuse-Argonne Offensive cost Pershing 26,277 killed and 95,786 wounded, making it the largest and bloodiest operation of the war for the American Expeditionary Force. American losses were exacerbated by the inexperience of many of the troops and tactics used during the early phases of the operation. Germans losses numbered 28,000 killed and 92,250 wounded. Coupled with British and French offensives elsewhere on the Western Front, the assault through the Argonne was critical in breaking German resistance and bringing World War I to an end.

Above information from online research.

“ORDERS AND LETTERS OF COMMENDATION”

I. The Brigade' Commander cites the following organizations for distinguished conduct during the operations west of Verdun during the period from September 26th to October nth:

Brigade Headquarters Detachment

For courage and high devotion to duty of operations, signal, message and other details under shell fire in a rapid advance against a resisting enemy northwest of Verdun under adverse weather conditions extending over fifteen days.

108TH Ammunition Train

For marked zeal and energy in the service of ammunition to the artillery during all hours of the day and night over the most difficult roads and against adverse weather conditions in a continuous operation against the enemy northwest of Verdun extending over fifteen days.

The officers and the enlisted men of the 108th Ammunition Train never failed to deliver ammunition^ no matter what shell fire their trucks had to pass through or what losses they suffered while in discharge of this duty.

H. D. Todd, Jr.,

Brigadier General, U. S. A.

Above information from the book, “33rd Division AEF”

Below is another commendation the 108th Supply Train received.

To the officers and men, and especially to the truck drivers of the 108th Supply Train, the 108th Engineer Train, the Ammunition Trains serving with the 33rd Division, as well as all drivers of the 108th Sanitary Train, the highest possible credit is due. In the blackness of the night, amid rain and storm, without lights to guide their way, often under shell fire of the heaviest sort and subjected to hardships untold, these men performed their difficult tasks — which possessed none of the excitement or glamour that attends the fighting men in their career — with a fidelity, zeal and courage for which no praise is too high. Without their splendid devotion and the effective service which they rendered the efforts of the fighting troops would have been in vain.

Above information from "33 Division AEF" pg 6

FIELD MEDICAL CARD

(Check boxes)

REGIMENT OR STAFF CORPS *108th Am Trn*

SICK WOUNDED

LINE OF DUTY—YES OR NO

(Strike out descriptions which do not apply)

FIELD HOSP. No. *29* EVAC. HOSP. No.

DRESSING STA. No. CAMP HOSP. No.

DATE OF ADMISSION *12/7/18*

MORPHIA }
DOSE AND TIME }
A. T. SERUM }
DOSE AND DATE }
DIAGNOSIS *Bronchitis*

BASE HOSPITAL No.
DIAGNOSIS (if altered from above)

BASE HOSPITAL No.
DIAGNOSIS (if altered from above)

Service record shows:

On 7 December 1918, he was sent to Field Medical Hospital #29 with bronchitis and released on 14 December 1918 from that hospital.

3281839 #
Hilco McLean L. Pvt
Co. 108 Am Trn
Disch to duty
Bronchitis
R12 Fra. 29. 13/14/18
Hilco, Wm. L. #

Above:
Discharged to duty 14 Dec 1918 as Pvt in
Company E, 108th Ammunition Train

Above:
Field Medical Card showing date of Admission and diagnosis: Bronchitis

Some pictures of the 108th Ammunition Train from the book, "Illinois in the World War an illustrated history of the thirty-third Division." Vol II by Chicago Publications Society, 1921



108th Ammunition Train on a street in Brabant-en-Argonne

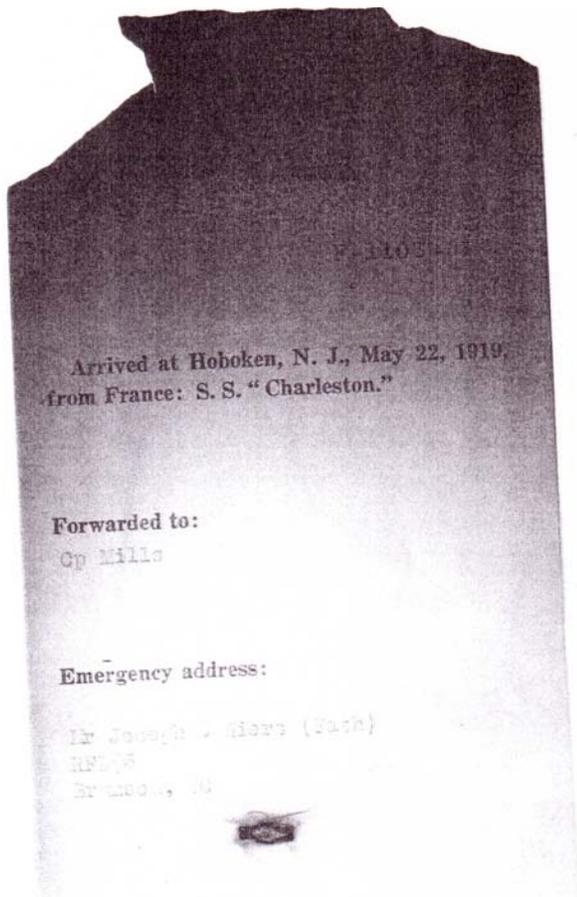


A line of trucks of the 108th Ammunition Train at Septfontaines

An armistice agreement with Germany ended the war on 11 Nov 1918.

With the end of the war, the 33rd, along with other divisions and units, began the post-war occupation of Germany. The 108th Ammunition Train was assigned to the job of cleaning up all of the material left by the Germans in their retreat through Luxemburg. This material included several hundred thousand rounds of ammunition, hundreds of cannon of various caliber, and horses and vehicles of every description.

Pvt William L Hiers left Brest, France, 24 April 1919, aboard the ship, Charleston, arriving in Hoboken, New Jersey on 22 May 1919.



Copy of service record showing date of arrival back in the U.S.



This is a picture of the USS Charleston circa 1915-1920



Pvt William L Hiers was honorably discharged from service on 2 June 1919 at Camp Jackson, SC after serving 11 months in service to his country during WWI

