

John Henry Fuller's Long Journey Home

By Shelby Jean Roberson Bender. © 25 October 2014.

One man's long journey home began just a few years shy of nearly a century ago. This story is about a young, slender built black man named John Henry Fuller.

Born in the Lacrosse community of Schley County Georgia in October 1890, the 1900 United States Federal Census shows him as a nine year old boy living with his father, John, a widower, and his brother William and sister, Minnie who were three and six years younger than he was.

By 1910, the census records John as a boarder living in the neighboring county of Terrell, working as a farm hand.

In less than a decade, he was inducted into the United States Army at

The image shows two historical forms. The left form is a 'REGISTRATION CARD' for John Henry Fuller, dated June 5, 1917. It lists his name as John Henry Fuller, age 27, born October 1890, in Lacrosse, Schley Co., Ga. He is described as a 'Natural Born' citizen, single, and working as a 'Farm Laborer' for Mr. W. J. Slappey. The right form is a 'REGISTRAR'S REPORT' signed by O. H. McLean on June 27, 1917. It confirms Fuller's registration and lists his physical characteristics: tall, slender, black, and single. The registrar's name is O. H. McLean and the date is June 27, 1917.

Ellaville, Georgia on April 30, 1918. Fuller's World War I registration card, signed with his "x" on June 5th, 1917 stated that he was 27 years old when he registered for service to his country. Registered as a single black man whose stature was tall

and slender, he was currently working as a farm laborer for Mr. W. J. Slappey on his nearby land.

Military record form no. 724-1, A.G.O. lists his Army serial number: 2,655,011. Including the time he served overseas – July 10, 1918 to July 5, 1919,

Fuller John H 2,655,011 1
 (Surname) (Christian name) (Army serial number) *White *Colored.

Residence: R F D 2 Ellaville GEORGIA
 (Street and house number) (Town or city) (County) (State)

*Inducted at Ellaville Ga on Apr 30, 1918

Place of birth: Ellaville Ga Age or date of birth: 28 yrs

Organizations served in, with dates of assignments and transfers: 157 Dep Bn. to May 22/18; Co B 327 Serv Bn. CMC to Disch

Grades, with date of appointment: Pvt 1st Apr 15/19;

Engagements:

Wounds or other injuries received in action: None.

Served overseas from July 10/18 to July 5/19, from to

Honorably discharged on demobilization July 13, 1919

In view of occupation he was, on date of discharge, reported 0 per cent disabled.

Remarks:

Form No. 724-1, A. G. O. *Strike out words not applicable. † Dates of departure from and arrival in the U. S. Nov. 22, 1919.

Fuller served in the 157 Dept. Brig; Co B 327 Service Battalion as a Private 1st Class. He was honorably discharged on demobilization on July 13, 1919 and returned to his home community of Lacrosse.

The 1920 United States Federal Census of Talbot County, Georgia has listed in the community of Prattsburg, living on Red Bone Road, a John H. Fuller, age 29 with his wife, Susana, aged 19 and a son Willie T. age 2 years and 9 months. John could neither read nor write. His wife, 10 years his junior is listed as able to both read and write. His occupation is listed as farmer on a general farm.

54	54	Fuller John H.	Head	1 R	M	13	21	M
✓		— Susana	wife		F	13	19	W
✓		— Willie T.	son		M	13	2 9/12	M

1920 Federal Census John H. Fuller

Fuller's whereabouts for the next twelve years are not for certain.

CERTIFICATE OF DEATH
STATE OF ALABAMA—BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS
STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

File No. for State Registrar Only: **24796**

1. PLACE OF DEATH
County: **TUSKEGEE** Reg. District or Beat No. **1** Certificate No. **707**
Town or City: **TUSKEGEE, ALABAMA** Street or R. F. D.: **VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HOSPITAL**

2. FULL NAME: **John Henry Fuller** (If death occurred in a hospital or institution, give its NAME instead of street and number)
(a) Residence, No. **Box 103, Ellaville, Ala.** Street or R. F. D.: **Box 103, Ellaville, Ala.** (If non-resident, give city or town and State)

PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS

1. SEX: **Male** 2. Color or Race: **White** 3. Single, Married, Widowed, or Divorced: **Widowed**
4a. If married, widowed, or divorced: **HUSBAND of (or) WIFE of** **Lucie**
5. DATE OF BIRTH (month, day, and year): **7 7 1892**
6. AGE: **39** (Years, Months, Days) If LESS than 1 day, or min.

7. TRADE, PROFESSION, OR PARTICULAR KIND OF WORK DONE, AS OPERATOR, DRIVER, BOOKKEEPER, ETC.: **Truck Driver**

8. INDUSTRY OR BUSINESS IN WHICH WORK WAS DONE, AS SILE MILL, SAW MILL, BANK, ETC.: **None**

9. DATE DECEASED LAST WORKED AT THIS OCCUPATION (month and year): **None**

10. TOTAL TIME (years) SPENT IN THIS OCCUPATION: **None**

11. BIRTHPLACE (city or town) (State or country): **Ala.**

12. NAME: **James Miller**

13. MAIDEN NAME: **Annie Deafues**

14. BIRTHPLACE (city or town) (State or country): **Ala.**

15. BIRTHPLACE (city or town) (State or country): **Ala.**

16. INFORMANT: **Veterans Administration Hospital** (Address) **Tuskegee, Ala. &c.**

17. UNDERTAKER: **Lucie Underkaker** (Address) **Tuskegee, Ala.**

18. Filed: **NOV 19 1931** Registrar

20. Cause of Death: **Chronic Pulmonary Tuberculosis, Far Advanced active.**

21. DATE OF DEATH (month, day, and year): **NOV 5 1931**

22. I HEREBY CERTIFY, That I attended deceased from **June 30 1931** to **NOV 5 1931**. I last saw him on **NOV 5 1931**. Death is said to have occurred on the date stated above, at **11:15 P.M.** The principal cause of death and related causes of importance in order of onset were as follows: **Chronic Pulmonary Tuberculosis, Far Advanced active.**

Contributory causes of importance not related to principal cause: **None**

Was an operation performed? **No** Date of: **None**

For what disease or injury? **Chronic Pulmonary Tuberculosis**

What test confirmed diagnosis? **Medical Laboratory Yes**

13. If death was due to external causes (violence) fill in also the following: Accident, suicide, or homicide? **None** Date of injury: **None** Where did injury occur? **None** Specify whether injury occurred in industry, in home, or in public place: **None** Manner of injury: **None** Nature of injury: **None**

14. Was disease or injury in any way related to occupation of deceased? **No**

(Signed) **J. H. Miller** Registrar in Charge. M. D. **NOV 19 1931** (Address) **None**

*State the disease causing death; see other side for further instructions.

The next primary evidence of his whereabouts is tied to his death certificate from Macon County, Alabama which records his death as occurring on November 5, 1931. Fuller had been hospitalized in the Veterans Administration Hospital in Tuskegee, Alabama for 128 days. Cause of death: pulmonary tuberculosis.

Although the death certificate for John Henry Fuller

states that he is widowed, a 1940 Census record of Chicago's 20th ward enumerates Susie Fuller, age 39 (widow) living with her son, Willie E., age 23, who was working for the WPA (Work's Progress Administration) street project. They lived at 1850 Filmont Street, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.

A government issued three feet tall white marble headstone was ordered from the War Department on O.Q.G.M. form No. 623 on the 6th day of September

1932. The form states Fuller served as a Private 1st Class in Company B of the 327 Service Battalion; that he died on November 5, 1931 and was buried in Marietta Cemetery near

WAR DEPARTMENT
O. Q. G. M. FORM NO. 623
Approved Aug. 13, 1932
Revised July 25, 1932

APPLICATION FOR HEADSTONE
(PLEASE MAKE OUT AND RETURN IN DUPLICATE)

Name: **Fuller, John H.** Rank: **Private** Company: **B** U. S. Regiment, State Organization, or Vets.: **327 S.A. Service Battalion** Date of Death: **Nov 5 1931**

Name of Cemetery: **Marietta Cemetery** City: **Lacrosse** State: **GA.** Division: **EMAC** If World War Veteran: **Yes**

TO BE SHIPPED TO: **Sherman Tok** (Name of consignee) at **Ellaville, Schley Co Ga** (Give town, county, and State)

POST OFFICE ADDRESS OF CONSIGNEE: **R.F.D. 2 Box 103 Ellaville, Ga.**

DO NOT WRITE HERE

Verified: **464230** This application is for the UNMARKED grave of **Soilder** If it is understood the stone will be furnished and delivered at the railroad station or steamboat landing above indicated, at Government expense, freight prepaid, and agreed it will be promptly removed and set up at private expense.

Ordered: **SEP 22 1932** From: **Sherman Tok, Applicant**

Shipped: **10/3/32** Address: **R.F.D. 2 Box 103** Date: **Sept 6 1932**

*Stones must not be requested for any grave at which a private stone, monument, or other permanent marker is already erected or is to be erected. Please whether soldier, sailor, marine, Army nurse, etc.

Lacrosse, Georgia. The marker was to be shipped to Sherman Tok (sp) at

Ellaville, Schley County, Georgia. Date of shipment is noted as 10/31/32.

For an unknown length of time, a lone small concrete gravestone marked Fuller's burial place in rural Georgia's Schley County Marietta Cemetery. The time line of the whereabouts of the government issued military gravestone has gaps.



Photo courtesy of Linda Adams

A recent act of kindness by a few persons, who made a kindred friendship with Fuller, honored a man who had once served his country with valor and honor.

On a cool fall day in late November 2013, I came across the military issued marble headstone in an antique store in Sasser, Georgia. Being a long



time genealogist and historian and an eighth generation native Floridian with deep Georgia roots who has studied, lectured and written about the history of gravestones, I questioned the store owner, Jimmy Bridges about how he came by having it in his store. Initially, Bridges told me that a lady had told him the marker had come from Andersonville and was removed when they replaced older markers.

Photo courtesy of Shelby Bender

His interest in conversing with me was short. He quickly returned his attention to the conversation he was having with a couple of women about what was happening in the small town of Sasser. His concern for the displacement of a veteran's grave marker showed little depth.

Finding no record of a John Fuller being buried at Andersonville, and being doubtful of Bridges' story about grave markers at the historic cemetery being replaced, I didn't feel confident that the history of the marker was being pursued, or that it would be returned to its rightful place. My skepticism led me to turn to my research skills. Focusing on John Fuller's family and military history, I found that his burial site was the Marietta Cemetery near Lacrosse in Schley County, Georgia.

Following instincts developed from more than 40 years of research and knowing that the stone needed to be returned to its rightful place, I emailed members of the Ellaville Schley County Historical Society and the Georgia Gen Web Project for Schley County. As fate would have it, only one person took

an interest in the email and luckily that person forwarded the email to Linda Adams who lives in Ellaville. Having an interest in history, she picked up on the pursuit to return Fuller's grave marker to its proper place. Phone calls exchanged and the road to returning the military gravestone for veteran John Henry Fuller was paved. In late Spring 2014, Linda and two friends traveled the ninety some odd miles round trip to the Sasser antique store and inquired about the grave stone for John Henry Fuller. Bridges told Adams "that he found the stone in Americus, Georgia about 5 years ago and bought it for \$15 just to keep someone from using it for a purpose other than for what it was intended. He sought to find out where Fuller was interred so that he could put the stone back on his grave and had traced him to Schley County, but had not gone further." He was quick to offer the marker to Adams and with his help they all loaded the heavy marble stone into the back of her vehicle. The marker was once again journeying back to Schley County for re-installment at the grave

of John Henry Fuller.

In a quiet wooded cemetery off Lacrosse Road in Schley County, three shots were fired at 10 a.m. on Saturday, September 20, 2014. Jim Boling, wearing a vintage 1930 U.S. Army uniform, shot a rifle volley as a salute to honor John Henry Fuller, World War I Veteran. The salute was part of a memorial service ceremony presented by the American Legion Thomas



Photo courtesy of Linda Adams

Edwin Wall Post 191 of Ellaville commemorating the re-placement of Fuller's military headstone at his grave in Marietta Cemetery. Marietta Cemetery is about 4 miles east of U S 19 on the north side of S R 271, just a quarter mile east of the intersection of 271 and Bumphead Road. Located in the woods

about 200' behind the site of the Marietta Church and School, the land is in private ownership. The current owner graciously invited the public to hold the service on his property.



After an introduction and welcome from Linda Adams, Post Commander Randy Powell delivered the memorial dedication. Chaplain Carvas Passmore gave the invocation. Legion veterans Nedra Clawson, Wayne Malphous and Pascal Hollis performed the ritual of the folding of the flag, which was followed by Jim Boling's rifle volley.

Photo courtesy of Linda Adams

Attending the ceremony were Fuller's relatives who still live in Ellaville: Mary Thomas and Fred Smith. Following the ceremony, Thomas was presented with the ceremonial flag.

John Henry Fuller's long journey home has finally come to the end of the road. New friends have been made, family members celebrated the life of their departed loved one, and once again a community of veterans has come to the service of our country.

God Bless the United States of America, the men and women of the Armed Forces who serve to protect our country and its freedom, and God Bless the Memory of John Henry Fuller.

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