

Story #854a Frank Cairns Sr.

PFC Frank Cairns Sr. (1896-1971) was a Mazomanie World War I veteran and a charter member of the Mazomanie Greening – Buelow American Legion Post #437.

Frank enlisted in the Army on April 2, 1918. His military number was 834103. He enlisted in Battery E of the 69th Heavy Artillery (Coastal Artillery Corps). This unit used 5” heavy guns. His unit was formed at Fort Worden WA. They were shipped from Quebec to France on the Demosthenes, arriving in France on August 17, 1918. The war ended on November 5, 1918 and his unit left France on February 4, 1919 on the USS Mercury. He mustered out on March 8, 1919, having served 11 months. His son Frank Jr. also served in the war.

Frank Elmer Cairns was born in Mazomanie May 10, 1896. He was the oldest son of Mazomanie farmer Charles W. Cairns (1870-1951) and Carolina Schuman (1871-1923). At the 1900 US Census of Mazomanie Township he is listed as a four year old, with his farming family. He is listed there as thirteen at the 1910 Census. Frank graduated from the University of Wisconsin Farm Short Course in 1917. He registered for the WW1 draft on June 5, 1917 with a medium build and height and brown hair and eyes. He was then a tester for the Highland Cow Testing Company of Highland IL.

Shortly after the war, Frank married Leta Amanda Blattner (1891-1979) on October 1, 1919 in Edwardsville IL. She was the daughter of Highland IL carpenter Louis Blattner (1856-1933) and Josephine Lee (1855-1923). The new couple are renting a farm in Mazomanie at the 1920 US Census.

Frank and Leta farmed in Mazomanie Township and Highland IL, until moving to Madison in 1948 as an employee of the Dairy Herd Improvement Association. They lived in Madison the rest of their lives. He later worked as a fieldman for the Holstein Breeders Association. He passed away in Madison on November 23, 1971 and is buried in the Mazomanie Cemetery with his wife. Leta and Frank had three children.