

**GEORGE T. WORMS  
KILLED IN ACTION - WORLD WAR I**

**WILLIAM H. WORMS  
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**BROTHERS**

George and William Worms were sons of William and Gertrude (Bisges) Worms of St. Elizabeth. They grew up on the family farm two miles east of St. Elizabeth located at the southwest corner of the junction of today's Kemna Bridge Road and Ridge Road. Their father, William, Sr., was a German-born immigrant, not uncommon in the German American settlement at St. Elizabeth. The family spoke German in the home but the children were also fluent in English outside the home. Schooling was bilingual, with some classes in English and other classes in the German.

**Departure Celebration.** The Worms brothers were among 43 young men from Miller County who entered military service together on September 20, 1917. There was a large, patriotic send-off celebration the day they boarded the troop train in Eldon that transported them to basic training at Camp Funston, Ft. Riley, Kansas. An estimated three thousand people gathered for the event, which began with a parade through downtown Eldon on Maple Street that was led by the 43 young men, followed by the Decker's Boy Band with 24 members, and behind the band was a contingent of the G.A.R. (Grand Army of the Republic, Civil War veterans on the Union side), who carried a large American flag as they marched. After the G.A.R. men, many citizens joined in the parade all carrying and waving flags. Then came the Red Cross ladies carrying red crosses. The young men going into service were served a chicken lunch with many other good things to eat. After several patriotic speeches by prominent citizens, the "soldier boys" were presented with a beautiful American flag. As they were boarding the train, they were given boxes of cakes, pies and chicken. *Eldon Advertiser*, Sep. 27, 1917.

**Service and Sacrifice of George T. Worms.** George was an enlisted man in the U.S. Army infantry, assigned to the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division. The U.S. Army 3rd Division, in which George Worms served, was on the front line along the south bank of the Marne River in the summer of 1918. On July 15, German Imperial forces launched a massive attack designed to break through the Allied lines by crossing the Marne River in what is known as the Second Battle of the Marne. French army units on the flanks of the American forces fell back, but the 3d Division stood its ground, stopped the enemy offensive, and earned its nickname, "Rock of the Marne." *en.wikipedia.org/wiki/3rd\_Infantry\_Division\_(United\_States)*

U.S. Army Pvt. George T. Worms was killed the second day of the battle, July 16. He is buried at the Aisne-Marne American Cemetery, Belleau, France, Plot B, Row 1, Grave 46. The Aisne-Marne American Cemetery sits at the foot of Belleau Wood and contains the graves of 2,289 American war dead, most of whom fought in the Marne River valley in the summer of 1918. *www.abmc.gov/decendent-search/worms%3Dgeorge; www.abmc.gov/aisne-marne#.Wbq2p8ZryUk.*

**Service and Sacrifice of William H. Worms.** William was an enlisted man in the U.S. Army infantry, assigned to the 138<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, made up of young men from Missouri and Kansas. The 35<sup>th</sup> Division was part of the massive Meuse-Argonne Offensive that lasted from September 26 until the Armistice on November 11. It was the largest operation of the American Expeditionary Forces in World War I, with 1.2 million American soldiers participating under the command of General Pershing. It was the deadliest campaign in American history, with over 26,000 American soldiers killed in action.

*[www.archives.gov/research/military/ww1/meuse-argonne](http://www.archives.gov/research/military/ww1/meuse-argonne)*

Unfortunately for Pvt. Worms and his fellow infantrymen of the 35<sup>th</sup> Division, they were sent into battle over open ground into the face of enemy machine guns and without adequate artillery support. The 35<sup>th</sup> collapsed in a few days and had to be taken out of the line. The division suffered 1,126 killed in action and over 6,000 wounded. *[www.worldwar1.com/dbc/ferrell2.htm](http://www.worldwar1.com/dbc/ferrell2.htm)*

U.S. Army Pvt. William H. Worms was killed in action on the second day of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, September 28. He is among the 14,246 American soldiers buried at the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery, Romagne, France, Plot D, Row 6, Grave 25.

*<https://www.abmc.gov/Meuse-Argonne>; [www.abmc.gov/decendent-search/worms%3Dwilliam](http://www.abmc.gov/decendent-search/worms%3Dwilliam)*

**Third Brother Disabled in Combat.** A third Worms brother, Ignatz C. Worms, also served in the U.S. Army infantry in World War I. He was blinded by poison gas during combat. He lived in a veteran's home until his death Jan. 24, 1957, four days short of his 67<sup>th</sup> birthday. He is buried at St. Lawrence Cemetery, St. Elizabeth, north section, Row 7, Grave 1.

**Americans in World War I.** The United States entered the "Great War" in Europe in April 1917, nearly three years after the war began in August 1914. By 1917, the war between the Allied powers led by Great Britain and France and the Central powers led by Germany was at a stalemate, locked in trench warfare in northern France. Germany was gearing up for a great offensive in 1918 to win the war, and the armies of Britain and France were worn down. America mobilized quickly. Around four million were inducted into service, and over two million American soldiers were transported to France in 1918 to serve in the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) under the command of General John J. Pershing.

The arrival of the American army along the Western Front blunted the 1918 Germany offensive and turned the tide of war in favor of the Allied forces, culminating in the surrender of Imperial Germany on November 11, 1918. By the end, 116,708 American military personnel died from all causes (influenza, combat and wounds). Brothers George and William Worms were in that number. Another 204,000 were wounded, including brother Ignatz Worms