

Old envelopes and postcards reveal incorrect veteran statuses in the 1930 U.S. census

About two million American soldiers, sailors, and Marines served with the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) in Europe from 1917–19. Surviving envelopes and postcards document their service and help fill gaps in World War I records caused by the 1973 fire at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis. The U.S. federal census can be a key source of genealogical information, but researchers are encouraged to verify age, spelling of names, and other details by using additional sources. Columns 30 and 31 of the 1930 federal census asked if the person was a U.S. military or naval veteran, and in what war or military expedition the person served. This article presents seven postcards and envelopes sent by soldiers during World War I and shows their incorrectly reported veteran status in the 1930 census. Each soldier is identified in sources that precede their military service, and up to at least 1930.

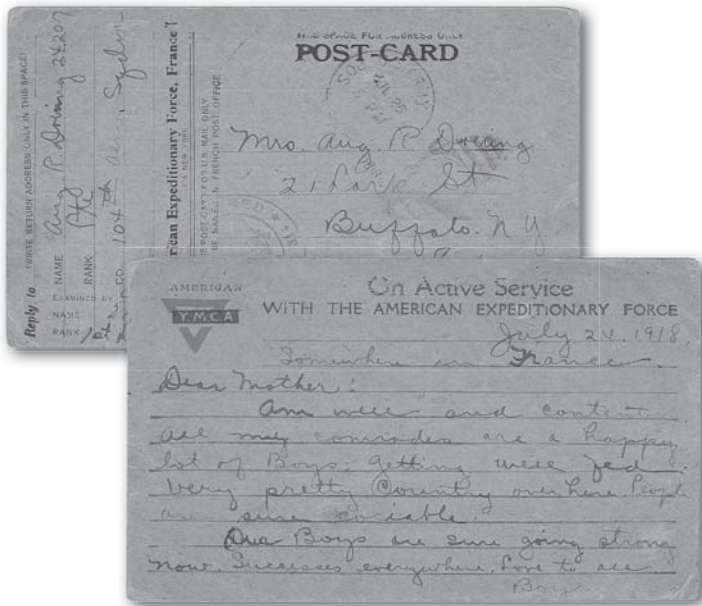
“Mrs. Chas. B. Knudson” of Chicago received an envelope from “Serg[eant] I.J. Knudson, Q.M.C.[Quartermaster Corps] N.A. [National Army]” sent in May 1918 (see figure 1). Ida (Mrs. Charles) Knudson and her son Irving are found in the 1920 census at the street address written on the envelope, and father and son are shown as Charles B. and Irving J. in the 1910 census.¹ The envelope, which was provided by the Young Men’s Christian Association, has a censor’s stamp and signature, and “Soldier’s Mail” written in the upper right, which was accepted in place of a stamp for overseas military personnel from 1917 to 1920.² Irving J. Knudson, son of Charles B. Knudson, applied for a U.S. passport in December



Figure 1. 1918 Y.M.C.A. envelope from Quartermaster Corps, National Army, AEF, France to Chicago. From author’s collection.

1920 for travel with his wife Lucy R.³ Irving and Lucy Knudsen, husband and wife, are in Kenilworth, Illinois, in the 1930 census, and on a 1936 passenger list with birth dates matching the 1920 U.S. passport application, and a street address matching the 1930 census.⁴ Columns 30 and 31 in the 1930 census for Irving J. Knudson are blank.

“Mrs. Aug. R. Doering” of Buffalo, New York, received a postcard from “Aug. R. Doering, [serial number] 24207, Pte [Private], 104th Aero Sqdn [Squadron],” sent in July 1918, that begins “Dear Mother” (see figures 2A and 2B). Mary (Mrs. August) Doering and her son, August Jr., are in Buffalo in the 1910 census, and Mary is in Buffalo in the 1920 census at the street address written on the postcard.⁵ The postcard was sent from “Somewhere in France,” reflecting the wartime prohibition on soldiers indicating their exact location. August R. Doering, son of August and Marie,



Figures 2A and 2B. 1918 YMCA postcard from 104th Aero Squadron, AEF, France, to Buffalo, front and back, sent from "Somewhere in France." From author's collection.



Figure 3. 1918 YMCA envelope from 354 Ambulance Company, AEF, France, to Denver. From author's collection.



Figure 4. 1918 American Red Cross envelope from Supply Company, 331 Regiment, AEF, France, to Cleveland. Photograph courtesy of Jim Forte Postal History.

and Helen Moeschler married 2 December 1919 in Omaha, Nebraska. August and Helen Doering are in Omaha in the 1920 U.S. census and are in Buffalo in the 1930 census.⁶ Columns 30 and 31 on the entire census sheet, as well as the two preceding and twelve succeeding sheets, are blank.⁷

"Mrs. C.E. McCarville" of Denver received an envelope from "Pvt [Private] C.E. McCarville, 354 Ambulance Co[mpany], 314 San[itary] Train," AEF, France, sent in September 1918 (see figure 3). Mrs. Pearl McCarville is listed in the 1919 Denver city directory, and Clarence E. and Pearl McCarville, husband and wife, are in Denver in the 1920 census.⁸ A picture of Clarence and his service with the 354th Ambulance Company are shown in *Cass County in the World War, 1917–1918–1919*.⁹ Clarence and "Pearle" Taylor are in Cass County in the 1900 census.¹⁰ Clarence and Pearl were married in about 1918. The McCarvilles are in Omaha in the 1930 census, and Clarence has "no" written in column 30 and his column 31 is blank.¹¹

"Miss A.J. Travnikar" of Cleveland received an envelope from "Sgt. [Sergeant] A.J. Westman, Supply Co, 331st Reg[imen]t," AEF, sent in December 1918 (see figure 4). The envelope was provided by the American Red Cross. An Augusta Travnikar, single, is in Cleveland in the 1910 census, and her mother and three siblings are in the 1920 census at the street address typed on the envelope.¹² Arthur James Westman and Augusta Travnikar married 23 September 1919 in Cuyahoga County, Ohio, and the couple is in Cleveland in the 1920 census.¹³ The couple appears again in Cleveland in the 1930 census, and Arthur J. Westman has "no" written in column 30 and his column 31 is blank.¹⁴

"Mrs. Ed. Lindenmuth" of Freeland, Pennsylvania, received a postcard from "Cook H.T. Lindenmuth, Bat[tery] A, 109 F[ield] Art[illery]," AEF in Laval, France, sent in January 1919 (see figure 5). The postcard is signed "Your Son Hal." Elizabeth (Mrs. Edward J.) Lindenmuth and her fourteen year-old son Harold are in Hazleton, Pennsylvania (six miles southwest of Freeland), in the 1910 census.¹⁵ Harold Lindenmuth, 24, and his wife Margaret,

are in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, in the 1920 census, and Harold, Margaret, and their daughter Marjorie are in Williamsport in the 1930 census.¹⁶ Harold Lindenmuth's 1949 obituary states that he was a World War I veteran and his next of kin include his wife Margaret and his daughter Marjorie.¹⁷ Harold Lindenmuth has both veteran columns blank in the 1930 census.

"Mrs. Peter Tipper" of Johnstown, New York, received a postcard from "Frank J. Tipper, Baty C, 321 F.A. [Field Artillery], AEF," France sent in January 1919 (see figure 6). Mrs. Peter Tipper and her son Frank are in Johnstown in the 1910 census, and Agnes (Mrs. Peter) Tipper and Frank are in Johnstown in the 1920 census at the street address written on the postcard.¹⁸ Frank J. Tipper of Johnstown, son of Peter and Agnes Tipper, married Clara L. Arendt in Tribes Hill, New York (four miles southeast of Johnstown) on 23 June 1921.¹⁹ Frank J. and Clara L. "Tupper," husband and wife, and their son Earnest J., are in Johnstown in the 1930 census.²⁰ Frank has "no" written in column 30 and his column 31 is blank on that census. The Tippers are in Gloversville (adjacent to Johnstown) in the 1944 city directory.²¹

"Mrs. S. Pletcher" of Newton, Kansas, received an envelope from "Corp[oral] Paul Pletcher, Co K, 139 Inf[antry], AEF," sent in February 1919 (see figure 7). "S. Pletcher," a widower, and his son Paul are in Newton in the 1920 census at the street address written on the envelope, and Samuel, Susanna, and Paul Pletcher are in Newton in the 1900 census.²² Paul registered with Selective Service in 1917; his home address matches the address on the envelope.²³ Paul and Mary Pletcher, husband and wife, are in Newton in the 1930 census; Paul has "no" written in column 30 and his column 31 is blank.²⁴ The Pletchers are buried in Newton; Paul's has a veteran's marker showing his service with "Co K 139 Infantry" in World War I.²⁵ His date of birth on his Selective Service registration matches the veteran's marker.

Missing or incorrect veteran status in the 1930 U.S. federal census is atypical. In writing this article, sixty-five World War I envelopes and postcards were examined and fifty-eight (89

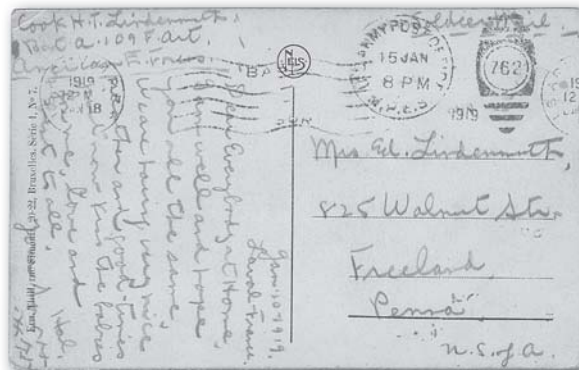


Figure 5. 1919 postcard from Battery A, 109 Field Artillery, AEF, France, to Freeland, Pennsylvania. From author's collection.



Figure 6. 1919 postcard from Battery C, 321 Field Artillery, AEF, France, to Johnstown, New York. Photograph courtesy of nf_stamps.

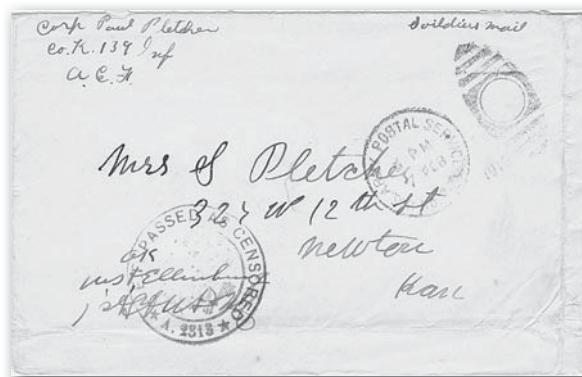


Figure 7. 1919 envelope from Company K, 139 Infantry, AEF, to Newton, Kansas. From author's collection.

percent) have the correct veteran status in the census. Yet these seven examples show, if generalized, that one in ten veterans in that census has an incorrect veteran status. Old envelopes and postcards can reveal an ancestor's military rank, service role, company, regiment, and locations served, and provide information that is unavailable elsewhere. These details can be used to find regimental histories and other records.

Old envelopes and postcards in postal history collections are also a source for our ancestors'

immigrant origins, political and social interests, work, and recreation.²⁶ Philgen <http://philgen.org> was launched in March 2009 to begin building a digital archive of envelope and postcard images with genealogical value and to promote an exchange between postal history collectors and genealogists. The site has grown to more than 1,450 envelopes and postcards. Every item includes a photograph (used with the owner's permission) and U.S. census or similar details on the sender and/or recipient. Postal history vendors and collectors have given Philgen.org permission to use thousands of photographs from their websites and archived philatelic auction catalogs. At present, genealogists cannot easily locate an envelope or postcard sent or received by their ancestors. Envelopes and postcards for sale and in postal history collections are often classified by their stamps, cancellations, and other postal markings. The purpose of Philgen.org is to make postal history accessible to genealogists by classifying envelope and postcard photographs by who wrote and received each one. 🌳

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1. 1920 U.S. census, Cook County, Illinois, population schedule, Chicago, ward 35, enumeration district (ED) 2221, sheet 10A (penned), dwelling 128, family 306, Irving Knudson; digital image, Ancestry.com (<http://www.ancestry.com>: accessed 19 March 2011); citing National Archives (NARA) microfilm publication T625, roll 355; 1910 U.S. census, Cook County, Illinois, population schedule, Chicago, ward 28, ED 1257, sheet 1B (penned), dwelling 13, family 23, Irving J. Knudson; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA microfilm T624, roll 274.

2. William Howard Taft and Frederick Harris, *Service With Fighting Men*, Part 1 (Ohio: Association Press, 1922):

284; "War Letter, Censorship!" (http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/warletters/sfeature/sf_censorship.html : accessed 19 March 2011); Theo. Van Dam, editor, and War Cover Club, *The Postal History of the AEF, 1917–1923* (State College, Penn.: American Philatelic Society, 1980): 13–14.

3. U.S. passport application of Irving J. Knudson, number 123,353, Dade County, Florida, issued 27 December 1920; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing *Passport Applications, January 2, 1906–March 31, 1925*, NARA microfilm M1490, roll 1,445.

4. 1930 U.S. census, Cook County, Illinois, population schedule, Kenilworth, ED 16-2218, sheet 7A (penned), dwelling 61, family 61, Irving J. Knudson; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA microfilm T626, roll 503; "New York Passenger Lists New York, 1897–1957," database, Ancestry.com, entry for Irving Knudson, age 45, arrived 23 December 1936 aboard the *Toloo*.

5. 1910 U.S. census, Erie County, New York, population schedule, Buffalo, ward 14, ED 130, sheet 16A (penned), dwelling 12, family 14, August Doering Jr.; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA microfilm T624, roll 944; 1920 U.S. census, Erie County, New York, Buffalo, ward 18, population schedule, ED 146, sheet 24A (penned), dwelling 21, family 329, Mary Doering; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA microfilm T625, roll 1,104.

6. Douglas County, Nebraska, Book 50, marriage record 49,630, August R. Doering and Helen Moeschler, Clerk of the Douglas County Court, Omaha; 1920 U.S. census, Douglas County, Nebraska, population schedule, Omaha Ward 6, ED 64, sheet 3A (penned), dwelling 13, family 16, August Doering; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA microfilm T625, roll 989; 1930 U.S. census, Erie County, New York, population schedule, Buffalo, ward 24, ED 15-297, sheet 12B (penned), dwelling 219, family 321, August R. Doering; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA microfilm T626, roll 1,432.

7. 1930 U.S. census, Erie County, New York, population schedule, Buffalo, Ward 24, ED 15-297, sheets 11B–18B (penned), dwellings 202–322, families 289–471; digital images, Ancestry.com; citing NARA microfilm T626, roll 1,432.

8. The Gazetteer Publishing and Printing Co., Denver, Colorado, compiler, *Ballenger and Richards Denver Directory, 1919*; digital image, Ancestry.com, 1355, "Mrs. Pearl McCarville"; 1920 U.S. census, Denver County, Colorado, population schedule, Denver, ED 309, sheet 8A (penned), dwelling 164, family 201, Clarence E. McCarville; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA microfilm T625, roll 162.

9. J.C. Beard, compiler, *Cass County in the World War, 1917–1918–1919, 1929*; digital image, *Internet Archive* (<http://www.archive.org/details/casscountyinworl00bear>: accessed 17 March 2011), 83, "Clarence E. McCarville."

10. 1900 U.S. census, Cass County, Iowa, population schedule, Atlantic, ward 3, ED 34, sheet 11B (penned), dwelling 253, family 257, Clarence E. McCarville; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA microfilm T623, roll 422; 1900 U.S. census, Cass County, Iowa, population schedule, Grove, ED 50, sheet 6A (penned), dwelling 97, family 100, Pearle Taylor; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA microfilm T623, roll 422.
11. 1930 U.S. census, Douglas County, Nebraska, population schedule, Omaha, ward 11, ED 28-127, sheet 28A (penned), dwelling 338, family 345, Clarence McCarville; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA microfilm T626, roll 1,279.
12. 1910 U.S. census, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, population schedule, Cleveland, ward 23, ED 344, sheet 5B (penned), dwelling 44, family 78, Augusta Travnikar; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA microfilm T624, roll 1,174; 1920 U.S. census, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, population schedule, Cleveland, ward 22, ED 421, sheet 3A (penned), dwelling 36, family 63, Augusta Travnikar; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA microfilm T625, roll 1,371.
13. "Ohio County Marriages, 1790–1950," database and digital image, FamilySearch.org (<http://familysearch.org>; accessed 5 April 2011); entry for Arthur J. Westman and Augusta J. Travnikar, marriage 30,861; citing Marriage Records, Cuyahoga County Courthouse, Cleveland; 1920 U.S. census, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, population schedule, Cleveland, ward 19, ED 390, sheet 17B (penned), dwelling 201, family 448, Arthur J. Westman; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA microfilm T625, roll 1,370.
14. 1930 U.S. census, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, population schedule, Cleveland, ward 19, ED 18-370, sheet 15A (penned), dwelling 5, family 8, Arthur J. Westman; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA microfilm T626, roll 1,772.
15. 1910 U.S. census, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, population schedule, Hazleton, ward 1, ED 41, sheet 8B (penned), dwelling 149, family 158, Harold Lindemuth; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA microfilm T624, roll 944.
16. 1920 U.S. census, Lycoming County, Pennsylvania, population schedule, Williamsport, ward 7, ED 93, sheet 18A (penned), dwelling 377, family 385, Harold Lindenmuth; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA microfilm T625, roll 1,599; 1930 U.S. census, Lycoming County, Pennsylvania, population schedule, Williamsport, ward 7, ED 41-68, sheet 8A (penned), dwelling 181, family 181, Harold Lindenmuth; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA microfilm T626, roll 2,075.
17. *Gazette and Bulletin (Williamsport, Pennsylvania)*, 4 November 1949, p. 6H, col. 1; digital image, Ancestry.com.
18. 1910 U.S. census, Fulton County, New York, population schedule, Johnstown, ward 2, ED 26, sheet 13A (penned), dwelling 244, family 348, Peter Tipper; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA microfilm T624, roll 949; 1920 U.S. census, Fulton County, New York, population schedule, Johnstown, ward 4, ED 27, sheets 4B-5A (penned), dwelling 76, family 111, Frank Tipper; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA microfilm T625, roll 1,113.
19. New York State Department of Health, Vital Records Index, marriage 7917, Frank J. Tripper and Clara L. Arendt, marriage date 23 June 1921, Tribes Hill; "Matrimonial, Tipper-Arendt," *Amsterdam (New York) Evening Recorder*, 24 June 1921, p. 3, col. 3.
20. 1930 U.S. census, Fulton County, New York, population schedule, Johnstown, ward 1, ED 18-25, sheet 1A (penned), dwelling 4, family 4, Frank J. Tupper; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA microfilm T626, roll 1,439.
21. H.A. Manning Company, compiler, *Manning's Gloversville and Johnstown (New York) for the Year Beginning August, 1944*, digital image, Ancestry.com, 211, "Tipper Ernest J." and "Tipper Frank J. (Clara L.)."
22. 1920 U.S. census, Harvey County, Kansas, population schedule, Newton, ward 4, ED 59, sheet 7B (penned), dwelling 166, family 172, Paul Pletcher; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA microfilm T625, roll 534; 1900 U.S. census, Harvey County, Kansas, population schedule, Newton, ward 1, ED 85, sheet 13A (penned), dwelling 272, family 280, Paul Pletcher; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA microfilm T623, roll 482.
23. "World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917–1918," digital image, Ancestry.com; Paul Pletcher, Newton Ward 4, Harvey County, Kansas; citing *World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917–1918*, NARA microfilm M1509; no roll cited.
24. 1930 U.S. census, Harvey County, Kansas, population schedule, Newton, ward 4, ED 40-17, sheet 24A (penned), dwelling 542, family 610, Paul Pletcher; digital image, Ancestry.com; citing NARA microfilm T626, roll 705.
25. "Find A Grave," database (<http://www.findagrave.com>; accessed 16 March 2011), Paul Pletcher, Harvey County, Kansas, Memorial # 27,445,490.
26. James R. Miller, "Philatelic Genealogy: Old Envelopes, Postcards, and Immigrant Origins," *New England Ancestors* 10 (Spring 2009): 37–38; and "Philatelic Genealogy Update: An Initial Assessment of the Genealogical Value of Old Envelopes and Postcards," *American Ancestors* 11 (Winter 2010): 45. Both articles, as well as other articles on philatelic genealogy, are viewable from the Main Menu of *Philgen.org* (<http://philgen.org>).

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