

Charles Acy Stockton
December 22, 1893 – November 1, 1971
WWI Soldier
Abilene, Taylor Co., Texas

Charles Acy Stockton was born in Abilene, Taylor County, Texas, just before Christmas, on December 22, 1893. Charlie Stockton's family consisted of his father and mother, William Benjamin and Frances Lavada (McElhannon) Stockton, two older brothers and six older sisters. Charlie was the youngest child of his parents who lived to maturity. When he was born, his oldest sister, Georgia O'Kieff, was twenty; his oldest brother, George Oscar, was fifteen. Likewise, his youngest brother, William Edgar, was four, and his youngest sister, Regina Palestine (my grandmother) was six. In between, were sisters, Flora Lee, called "Daisy"; Mary Launa, called "Mamie"; and Minnie Myrtle.

Charlie's paternal grandparents were James M. Stockton (1814-1882) and Elizabeth Adeline Miller (1830-1905); his maternal grandparents were George W. McElhannon (1831-1864) a soldier in the Civil War and Mary S. Trout (1834-1885) all of Jackson County, Georgia.

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When the Texas and Pacific Railroad came through Taylor County in January 1881, the railroad company promoted Abilene, in the northeast corner of the county, as the "Future Great City of West Texas." Abilene became the county seat on October 23, 1883, succeeding Buffalo Gap. Seven years later in 1890, the town had a population of 3,194, and in 1900 it had only grown to 3,411. The entire county consisted of only 10,449 souls in 1900, and had an entirely ranching, cattle, and agricultural economy. The whole state of Texas had a population in 1890 of only 2,235,527! In 1893, the year Charles Acy Stockton was born, Grover Cleveland was serving as the twenty-fourth president of the United States and Daniel James Moody, Jr. was governor of Texas. Twenty years later in 1903, the town of Abilene had a population of 9,204.

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When Charlie was about ten years old, his father, "Bill" Stockton, age fifty-three, was killed while constructing a silo somewhere in or around Taylor County, which collapsed inward, causing him to fall from the scaffold that he was standing on. His father's funeral and his subsequent burial in the Abilene City Cemetery may have been the first death in the family that Charlie could remember. William Benjamin Stockton died July 30, 1904.

Charlie may have had a little more education than his brothers and sisters, and attended school in Abilene at the encouragement of his older siblings. When he was fifteen, according to the 1910 census, he was living with his mother at 608 Pecan Street, probably in the same home where he was born in 1893. He listed his occupation that year as "laborer in a butcher's shop." Charlie learned to be a butcher and how to use meat cleavers and butcher knives in the meat market owned and operated by his brother-in-law, Cornelious Hall (called Uncle Neil by family members), husband of Charlie's oldest sister, Georgia O'Kieff, whom the family called "Keefe." The occupation of butcher was a trade Charlie Stockton followed all his life.

In 1910, Cornelious and Keefe were living next door on one side of Fanny Stockton and Charlie, and on the other side, lived another sister, Minnie and her husband, John W. Meyer. John Meyer also listed his occupation as “butcher – retail” and more than likely, he too, worked for Corneilous Hall. Family members recall that “Uncle Neil” had a thriving meat market shop and business. Fannie Stockton was listed without occupation in 1910, and her children probably looked after her daily welfare.

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In 1917, amid the rumblings of war, the Administration of Woodrow Wilson decided to rely on conscription rather than voluntary enlistment to raise military manpower for World War I. They proposed the American draft wherein approximately 24 million men born between 1872 and 1900 would complete civilian draft registration cards for three draft registrations that were held in 1917 and 1918. Although they were required to register for the draft, it did not necessarily mean that every man was subject to induction into the American military. Registrants whose numbers were drawn later on were then subject to induction unless they could show good cause why they should not be inducted. In reality, only a minority of the civilian men who registered were ever called up for military service.

Between 1917 and 1918, more than 26 million men from the United States ages 18 through 45 registered with the Selective Service for World War I and over 4.7 million American men and women served in the war. This included men born between the years of 1872 and 1900. The first draft registration on June 5, 1917 was for all men between the ages of 21 and 31.

Each county was allocated one draft board, and in the case of large, heavily populated areas, an additional draft board was located for about every 30,000 persons. At that time, Abilene had a population of almost 24,000. In most communities and towns, on the designated registration day, many businesses and schools closed down. As a rule, registration started at 7:00 or 7:30 a.m. and lasted until late at night.

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In the first registration held on June 5, 1917, Charlie Stockton was about twenty-three when he went downtown to Precinct One to register at the local draft board for the WWI draft. The registrar was James E. Clark, who may have been a local public official, teacher, or business man.

Charlie gave his address as 608 Pecan, Abilene; said he was born December 22, 1893; and that he was a butcher by trade, employed by C. Hall. He listed his mother as dependent upon him; that he was single, Caucasian, and had no prior military service. He described himself as short and stout with green eyes and brown hair; then he signed the registration card “Charlie Stockton,” affirming that he had “verified the above answers and that they are true.” After his registration was completed, Charlie was given a bluish-green certificate, embossed with an eagle at the top and signed by the registrar, to prove that he had registered.

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According to his military service card, ordered from the Texas Adjutant General’s office at Austin, Texas, Charlie’s number did not come up (was not drawn) until one year later in the fall of 1918. This card gave the following information:

Army military serial number as 3,988,955

Name: Charles A. Stockton

Residence at 608 Pecan, Abilene, TX

**Inducted at Abilene, Texas on September 5, 1918*

Place of birth: Abilene

Age or date of birth: December 23, 1893

Organizations served in, with dates of assignments and transfers:

*165 Depot Brigade to November 5, 1918; QMC (Quarter Masters Corps)
at Camp Johnston, Florida to Discharge.*

Grades with date of appointment: Pvt.

Wounds or other injuries received in action: None

Honorably discharged on demobilization: January 2, 1919

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When Charlie was formally inducted into the army at Abilene on September 5, 1918, he was immediately sent for training to Camp Joseph Johnston, an Army training camp from the time of its commissioning on October 15, 1917 until its closing on May 16, 1919, located at Jacksonville in northeast Florida. Over this nearly two year period the Camp developed into a major training center for Army quartermasters, and grew to a complex of over 600 buildings, where it held the nation's second largest rifle range. *(In 1928, the site was occupied by the Florida National Guard and renamed Camp J. Clifford R. Foster.)*

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During his time in service, the 1917-1918 so-called "Spanish Flu" appeared and spread world-wide, causing more deaths over four years than resulted from the entire First World War. It was (and remains) the single most deadly epidemic in modern times. An estimated 50 million people around the globe lost their lives as a result of contracting "the flu." People living and working in crowded Army posts, servicemen, hospital workers, and urban areas were especially hard-hit by this highly contagious disease, resulting in massive suffering from pneumonia and fatal pulmonary complications.

Newspapers in Jacksonville daily reported deaths due to flu, and pleaded for donations of blankets, warm coats, food, and other supplies and types of relief for the soldiers at Camp Johnston. Since he was there such a short time, Charlie most likely escaped contracting the flu as it began to wane, but his mother probably worried a lot about his welfare while he was away.

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Soon after arrival at Camp Johnston in September 1918, Charlie probably received his government issues – uniforms, tent, and housing items, such as a cot, mattress, two blankets, and perhaps a mess kit. Physical examinations, including shots for typhoid and small pox, were administered to those who had not already received them. Each unit was inspected soon after its arrival and the new soldiers began various forms of outdoor training.

As soon as he could find time, Charlie probably began to write and receive letters and post cards from his mother and sisters, and perhaps even a girl friend or two from Abilene. Too bad

none of these survived because they would have provided a glimpse of his life as a soldier in training for the next three months.

Though his service in the Army was short, his letters might have included descriptions of camp life and his daily meals, routine maintenance tasks, entertainment, and camp songs. Occasionally, the soldiers saw films and concerts at the Camp theater. Charlie's mother passed his letters around to family members so they too could read about his daily routine. Most likely he told his mother and sisters about the soldiers represented in his barracks, who came from as many as fifteen or twenty states. Many were of different nationalities which included Irish, Scottish, and Jewish. The Jacksonville region reported a significant military presence.

The above dates – from the time he was inducted September 5, 1918, until the date of his discharge on January 2, 1919 - provides evidence that Charlie saw military service for about four months. He may have completed his basic training, but had only served in the army less than three months when WWI officially ended on November 11, 1918 “at the eleventh hour” – *11-11-11, 1918*. The war lasted from August 1914 to November 1918, so the war “to end all wars” was about over when Charlie was inducted into the army. Thankfully, he wasn't among the ones who were sent overseas and had to fight in the trenches, where so many soldiers were gassed by the Germans, or to the Battle of the Argonne Forest in the Verdun sector, September 26-November 11, 1918, where the U.S. had casualties and losses of 117,000. Private Charles Acy Stockton was honorably discharged upon demobilization of his unit on January 2, 1919, and most likely he rode a passenger train back to Abilene.

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In the spring of 1919 after his return home, Charlie was nearly twenty-six and probably felt it was time he seriously considered settling down. At that age, he was a prime candidate for marriage and perhaps starting a family of his own. After all, he had grown up as one of nine children. One of his boyhood flirtations apparently turned serious when he saw little Estelle Price again, and she won his heart. Charlie may have known Estelle for a long time and was probably good friends with her two older brothers, Carl and William Price, who were about the same age as Charlie. No doubt Estelle wrote letters to Charlie while he was “soldiering” in Florida.

That summer, Charles Acy Stockton and Miss Estelle Price were married by the Taylor County Judge E. M. Overshiner at his office in the county courthouse on May 3, 1919 in Abilene. Charlie was twenty-five and Estelle was seventeen, so he was about eight years older than his bride.

According to the 1920 census, after their marriage, the young couple set up housekeeping for awhile at the home of his mother, Frances Stockton, age sixty-three, on Pecan Street. They are listed as C. A. “Stocton” (sp.) and Estella. In addition, Jack and Cash Estes, twin boys, age five were living in the home. These two boys were raised by Frances Stockton, when their mother died and asked her good friend, “Ma” Stockton to take and raise them. The twins were actually part of “triplets” born on March 3, 1914 at Abilene. Their mother was Sally Brooks, born 3 July 1883 in Grayson County, Texas, who married Will S. Estes.

Research in Abilene City Directories from 1921 through 1955 found Charlie listed as either a butcher or meat cutter, and he and Estelle were living at various addresses in Abilene. However,

by 1929, he had returned to live with his mother at 608 Pecan Street, and Estelle was no longer listed living with her husband.

It is known that the couple was still living together in 1927 because a card of thanks from the family was published in the *Abilene Reporter* newspaper when Charlie's sister, Flaura Lee Wingo (called "Daisy" – who married Walter See Wingo), died August 15, 1927. One of the family signers was Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Stockton, so they apparently divorced at some point between August 1927 and 1930.

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Over the years, Charlie worked in several small-town grocery stores and meat markets, and of course in a small town like Abilene in those days and years, everybody gets to know everybody by name, and folks were able to call out and say, "Good morning, Charlie. Good Morning, Mrs. Stockton."

When Abilene was still rural – and in the days before refrigeration, town folks typically shopped for perishables two times a week in mostly family-run stores. As time went on, Abilene meat markets in the small independent mom and pop neighborhood stores carried several rows of grocery items, and refrigerated goods and produce began to line the sides of the shop. For the small space, a large variety of goods were squeezed in and organized into the aisles. And perhaps there were jars of candy and cookies, and a choice of soft drinks at the front entrance.

In most of the smaller grocery stores, such as the one Cornelious Hall owned where Charlie learned to become a butcher, the real "bread and butter" was the store's meat. Uncle Neil's meat market was defined by a long narrow interior, typical of those in the late nineteenth and twentieth century grocery and butcher shops. Neil Hall bought his own meats from a slaughter house just outside of town, then custom-cut it, and cured part of it in a smoke shop at the rear of the building. His wife O'Keiffe helped with grocery purchases, re-stocked shelves and waited on customers, while Corneilous and Charlie filled the customers' meat orders, wrapping each order in white butcher paper tied with string, or sometimes they hung large cuts of meat on "skivers," (large dowels) made of hickory wood, to make it easier for the customer to carry the meat order home.

In the fall there was a big barrel of sauerkraut and one of dill pickles next to the meat counter. They also sold butter, milk and bread and canned goods. A photographer took an 8x10 photo of Neil Hall's store one year, all decorated for Christmas, showing three men, thought to be Uncle Neil Hall, Charlie, and John Meyer, standing at the meat counter at the back of the store.

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In the 1930 census, enumerated on April 23, Frances Lavada Stockton is listed as "Frank L. Stockton – age 75" and Charlie, who listed himself as "divorced," is living with his mother and listed as "Cecil A. Stockton – age 32." Also listed is Cash Estes, age 16, and Jack Estes, age 16 (twin boys that Grandma Stockton raised). They were still living on Pecan Street.

Charlie is not listed until 1936/37 in the City Directory again at 608 Pecan, but in the 1937/38 directory Charlie is rooming at 435 China Street. By that date his mother had died. Frances Lavada Stockton died January 21, 1937. Aunt Mame wrote to my grandmother about the circumstances on the day she died, a very detailed description. My grandparents, Bertie and

Regina (Stockton) Altman, lived in Union County, New Mexico, out on their remote ranch at Seneca. Times were very hard then and they had no phone and no way to be notified, even by telegram, because they were living so far out in the country, so of course they were not able to go to the funeral.

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During the years of WWII, Charlie worked for awhile at the Milton Newman Grocery. He resided at 2201 Kirkwood and by 1955 he had worked for several years as a butcher at the Gooch Packing Company on Route 3. His brother, Willie E. Stockton and his second wife, Edith, were living at 1442 S. Eighth in 1957.

For the next fourteen years, Charlie Stockton was not listed in later City Directories and he had probably moved out southwest of Abilene a few miles and was living at Caps or View, where he lived when he retired.

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My sister, Regina "Reggie" Cox, and I once made a detour and went by Abilene to see our grandmother's sister Mamie, when we were on our way home from San Antonio, where we had been to the 1968 HemisFair. When Aunt Mame came to the door, both of us were stunned - it was as if our grandmother was opening the screen door for us. It was unbelievable how much alike they were - and both never weighed over 100 pounds. We had a delightful visit, and it is still imaged and indelible in my memory.

I asked her about the Stockton family Bible because Grandmother had told me she had it. But Aunt Mame said it was out back in a trunk in a storehouse, and when she went to get it once, it had been completely destroyed by termites. Nothing was left but ashes, she said. Too bad, Bibles are so revealing and provide so much documentation.

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Charles Acy Stockton died from heart problems on November 1, 1971 in the Veterans Administration Hospital at Big Spring, where he had been a patient for about six weeks. He was the youngest son of his parents who lived to maturity, and was the last son to pass away of his generation. He was survived by his sister, Mamie Lowry, who was eighty-seven at the time and still lived in her own home at 634 Merchant Street in Abilene.

When Charlie's death Certificate #81072 was ordered, it indicated he had been in the Veterans Administration hospital at Big Springs for forty-five days before his death occurred on November 1, 1971. According to his physician's report, he died from "*ASHD with myocardial infarction - sudden, due to generalized arteriosclerosis with auricular fibrillation*". He was about six weeks short of being seventy-eight.

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The obituary in the *Abilene Reporter* newspaper (no date) announced Charlie's death in 1971:

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**CHARLES A. STOCKTON**

*Funeral for Charles Stockton, who died at 11:45 a.m. Monday in the the Big Spring Veterans Administration Hospital, will be at 10:30 a.m. Thursday in Elliott's Chapel of Memories.*

*The Rev. Hershel Thomas, pastor of the Eastside Baptist Church, will officiate. Burial will be in Elmwood Memorial Park.*

*He was born Dec. 22, 1894, in Abilene. He was a retired butcher. He was a veteran of World War I. He attended schools in Abilene.*

*Survivors are one sister, Mrs. C. J. Lowry of 634 Merchant, and a number of nieces and nephews.*

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Estelle may have remained close to Charlie's family, and especially to Aunt Mame Lowry, who was about eighty-seven when her brother died. Most likely Charlie's sister was not in good health by then and unable to tend to business affairs, such as choosing a monument. Estelle and her second husband Ira Lee Morrison apparently offered to take care of this for her, and ordered a free government marker.

On November 9, 2007, the Elliott-Hamil Funeral Home in Abilene sent me data for Charley's gravesite that I had requested. One of the papers revealed that when he died, Estelle and her husband Ira Lee Morrison had filled out paperwork and saw to it that Charlie had a WWI bronze marker put up – which said:

Charlie A. Stockton, WWI, Pvt. U. S. Army, Dec 22, 1893 - Nov 1, 1971

The funeral home also sent a colored photo of the marker, along with a map for the cemetery's location - and the plot and lot number. One funeral home form questioned by what authority Estelle had to put up the marker and what her relationship was. She listed, "ex-wife." And this was some forty years later after their divorce in the late 1920s. It was a very nice gesture on her part, I think. I was so happy to learn who Estelle married and the good deed she and her husband had done. I like to imagine that perhaps Estelle may have always had some feelings for him in her heart - and maybe he did for her too, since he never married again.

Charlie was probably living at Caps, just outside of Abilene, when he went to the Veterans Hospital in Big Spring. As mentioned, he was there in the hospital for about six weeks before he died, according to his death certificate.

Charlie and Estelle never had any children. In fact, neither of Charlie's brothers - George Oscar or William Edgar "Bill" - had children. Grandmother called her brother "Bill" but his obituary read, "Willie E. Stockton." In another record or two he was called William. My guess is this was probably his real name - named for his father, William Benjamin Stockton. Uncle Will answered a letter I wrote him in 1963, asking about the Stockton family. He told me his father came from Atlanta, GA and brothers and sisters were " Bering, Jimy, Osker and sister Minnie."

A notation at the bottom said: "P.S. I am sorry I can't help you much. This is all I can think of. You know I am old myself. I am 75 years old today, December 31, 1963."

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My grandmother gave me a black book about the History of World War I that she told me belonged to her brother, Charlie. I think the gift of his book gave me the inspiration to seek all I could discover about him and write his story so he would not be forgotten.

~ Janice Cox Brown, Tyler, Texas
September 11, 2010

Sources:

- 1) Abilene City Cemetery Records, Office: P. O. Box 60, Abilene, TX 79604-0060
- 2) Ancestry.com – 1900, 1910, 1920 & 1930 Taylor Co. TX Federal Census Records
- 3) Elmwood Memorial Park Cemetery, 5750 Hwy 277 South, Abilene, TX 79601
- 4) Elliott-Hamil Funeral Home Records, 542 Hickory St., Abilene, TX 79606
- 5) Ancestry.com – WWI Draft Registration Cards
- 6) Texas Almanac, Abilene, Taylor Co., TX – 1917 Population Schedule
- 7) Texas Adjutant General's Office – Military Service Card for Charles A Stockton
- 8) Internet: WWI, Camp Joseph E. Johnston, Jacksonville, Florida
- 9) Internet: Spanish Flu history and statistics, 1917-1918
- 10) Marriage Records, Taylor Co. Courthouse, 300 Oak St., Abilene, TX 79602
- 11) Abilene City Directory 1921 – 1937/38, researched by Marty Ketchersid, Genealogy Assistant, Abilene Public Library, 202 Cedar St., Abilene, TX 79601
- 12) Abilene Reporter newspaper, 101 Cypress St., Abilene, TX 79601-5888
- 13) Ancestry.com: Texas Death Index, 1903-2000
- 14) Family History Research Collection begun in 1962 by Janice Cox Brown.
- 15) Audio taped history from my mother, Frances Lavada Altman Cox and her Brother, Reginald Neal "Webby" Altman, Oral History conducted over 17 years.
- 16) Old letters from my grandmother, Regina Palestine (Stockton) Altman; her sister, Mary Launa "Mamie" (Stockton) Lowry; her brother, Willie A. Stockton.