John Achatz

John Achatz (sometimes spelled Achartz) was born in 1881 in Austria and immigrated with his family to the United States in 1891. He was the oldest of eight children of John (1861-1906) and Johanna Achartz (1862-1941), who settled in New Trier in Dakota County. He became a naturalized citizen in Hastings, Dakota County, Minnesota on 30 June 1902.

By 1910, John Achatz, Jr. had enlisted in the U. S. Navy, where he held the rank of water tender, a crewman aboard a steam-powered ship who was responsible for tending to the fires and boilers in the ship's engine room. In the 1910 census he was enumerated while serving aboard the USS New Hampshire, where he was listed as a "sailor."

We know that he died in service in September 1918. There is some uncertainty surrounding his death. The *Hastings Gazette* and the *Hastings Democrat* reported that he had been gassed in France and died aboard a ship returning to the U.S. However, the *South St. Paul Daily Reporter* said that he was lost at sea.

His last assignment was aboard the USS Siboney. The Siboney was a civilian ship requisitioned during WWI as a troopship. According to Wikipedia, the Siboney made 17 transatlantic voyages for the navy carrying troops to and from Europe, and had the shortest average in-port turnaround time of all navy transports. During her maiden voyage, her steering gear malfunctioned which resulted in a collision between two other troopships in the convoy. Wikipedia also tells us that on 4 September 1918, Siboney sailed from New York on her fifth crossing and arrived at Saint-Nazaire nine days later. On 15 September, she embarked a number of wounded troops and left Saint-Nazaire the same day, but, due to heavy submarine activity, swung at anchor for several days before her convoy sailed. She arrived on 29 September at New York. Perhaps Achatz died of influenza, as the ship experienced an epidemic in October that killed a number of soldiers.

Achatz is buried at Holy Cross Cemetery in Yeadon, Delaware County, Pennsylvania, and he shares a grave marker with Rose Achatz (1875-1930). She is believed to be Orpha Rose Achartz, who was born in New York. Little is known of Achatz's life after he left Minnesota. We don't know whether Rose was his wife or another family member.