Francis Michael Illa

Francis Illa was born on December 29th, 1896, to John Illa (1861-1954) and Mary Illa (1866-1929) in Hastings, Minnesota. His birthdate is incorrect on his death certificate and his headstone. Francis was the fifth of nine children. His two brothers Alfred and George, also served in WWI. Prior to WWI, Francis was a laborer.

Francis enlisted in the Army as a Private for Co Battery A, 56th Coast Artillery Corps (CAC) on February 7th, 1918. He trained at Jefferson's Barracks in Saint Louis, Missouri, before leaving on the RMS Olympic in 1918, where he was stationed in Le Cendre, France, and fought in the Second Battle of the Marne and the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. He sailed home on the U.S.S. South Dakota from Brest, France, in January of 1919. Francis was discharged from the Army on January 18th, 1919.

After Francis was discharged, he went back to live with his parents in Hastings, Minnesota, where he worked as a packer at a flour mill. On November 5th, 1919, Francis Married Josephine O'Leary in Dakota County. They had one son, Melvin Francis (1930-2008), who served in the Marine Corps in Korea as a Corporal. Francis and his family lived in Hastings, and he worked as a carpenter at the railway. He died on January 5th, 1949, at the age of 53, from Stomach Cancer in Saint Paul after being treated in the hospital for six months. After his death, Josephine married Othman Drometer.

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