

World War I Draft Registration Records  
Middle Tennessee Journal of Genealogy & History  
Vol. XVII, Number 3/115



World War I draft registration cards are an excellent source of information about men born between 1875 and 1900. The Tennessee registration files are available on microfilm at the Tennessee State Library and Archives,<sup>1</sup> and records for most other states have been microfilmed by the National Archives. These other states' records can be borrowed on interlibrary loan through the LDS church. Not all registrants served, and not all who served are found among the registrations (those who were already enlisted in the regular army, for example, did not register). 24 million cards were filed nationwide, representing 23% of our population in 1918.

Registration forms vary according to the date, but generally they include the registrant's full name, date of birth, race, citizenship, occupation, approximate height and weight, and original signature (or mark). Genealogists will especially benefit from the requirement that the man's full name be given, as few other records of this period require including the middle name.

The laws providing for draft registration were national in scope. The first registration was taken June 5, 1917, and included men aged 21 through 31. One June 5, 1918, and August 25, 1918, additional registrations were held to include men who had turned 21 since the prior registration dates. On September 12, 1918, the registration was extended to include men aged 18 through 45, encompassing a much larger group of potential draftees. The Armistice was signed November 11, 1918 and local boards closed 31 March 1919.

The form used in 1917 asked for soldier's place of birth, occupation and by whom employed and where, number of dependants. In June 1918 the form was revised to include the father's birthplace. The September 1918 form did not include the soldier's or father's place of birth, but did ask for the name of the next of kin. The records indicate whether the men requested an exemption from the draft; in the 1917 registration it was common for the men to request exemption because their occupation was farming. Other exemptions were claimed due to disabilities.<sup>2</sup>

Records are arranged alphabetically by state, including Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C. They are file thereunder alphabetically by county or city, and then by names of registrants. Records for rural areas are arranged in one alphabetical sequence for the whole county. However, some men who lived across county lines were registered in an adjoining county.

Urban areas were divided into registration districts, generally along political ward boundaries. For example, there were 189 draft boards in New York City during World

War I, and the records for each of them are alphabetized separately. This makes searching for urban ancestors more difficult, but not impossible.

<sup>1</sup>World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918. TSLA microfilm #1438

<sup>2</sup>The introduction to the National Archives film publication indicates that further records of exemption claims and appeals are on file at the National Archives field offices. Tennessee records would be in the Atlanta regional office.

**Description: ancestry.com**

In 1917 and 1918, approximately 24 million men living in the United States completed a registration card. This represented approximately 98% of men under the age of 46 covering a huge portion of the population of the U.S. at the time. Total U.S. population in 1917-1918 was about 100 million individuals. In other words, close to 25% of the total population is represented in this record set.

The period of 1880-1920 was a high immigration period to the United States. Young men were required to register for the draft regardless of their U.S. citizenship status. This means that a large portion of immigrant men registered and gave information of birth date, birthplace, and in most cases their father's birthplace and nearest relative.

It should be noted that aliens were required to register but were not subject to induction into the American military. Persons already in the military did not register. Recent Italian emigrants wrote their last names first, resulting in some cards being filed under first names. Cards of Hispanics may be filed under their mother's maiden name surname if the registrant gave both parents' surnames. Also, men who resided in British territories sometimes listed themselves simply as British citizens without noting their origin in Canada, Australia, Ireland, Jamaica, etc. Illiterate men were unable to spell their names and birth location, so researchers should be quite flexible in searching for the spelling of names of illiterate men.

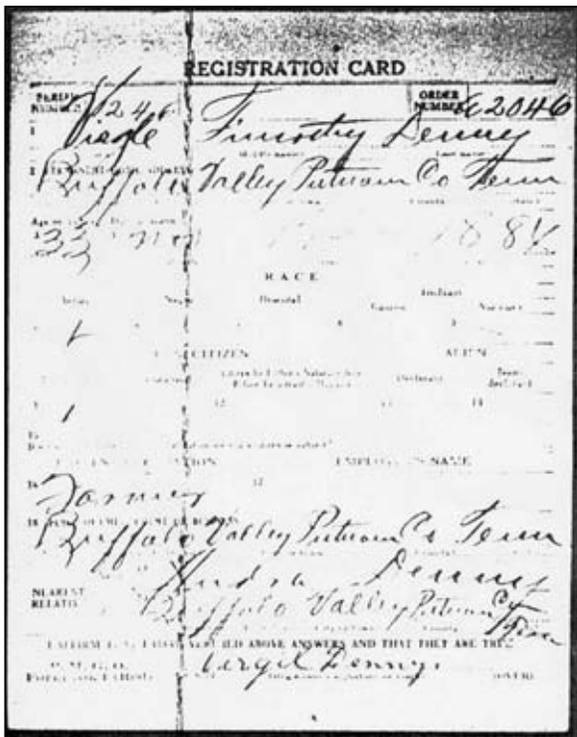
Source Information: Ancestry.com. World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-18 [database online] Provo, UT: Ancestry.com, 2002. National Archives and Records Administration. World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918. M1509, 20,243 rolls. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration. Only these states are listed on ancestry.com – February, 2004.

|         |          |                |
|---------|----------|----------------|
| Florida | Maryland | North Carolina |
| Georgia | Montana  | Pennsylvania   |
| Indiana | New York | Texas          |

World War I Draft Registration Card C – (12 September 1918)

REGISTRATION CARD

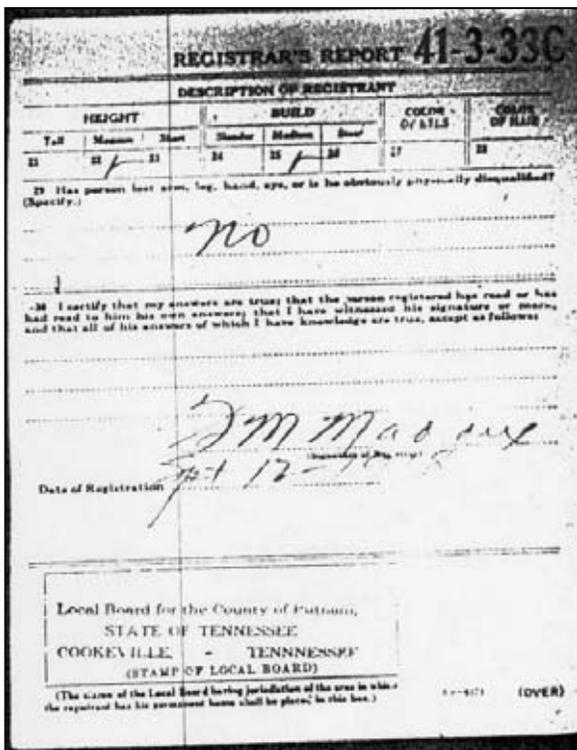
Serial Number: 1246 Order Number: A2046  
<sup>1</sup>First Name: Virgle (sic) Middle Name: Timothy Last Name: Denny  
<sup>2</sup>Permanent Home Address: Buffalo Valley, Putnam Co., TN  
<sup>3</sup>Age by Years: 33 <sup>4</sup>Date of Birth: November 17, 1884  
Race: <sup>5</sup>White – <sup>6</sup>Negro – <sup>7</sup>Oriental – Indian <sup>8</sup>(Citizen – <sup>9</sup>Non-Citizen)  
U.S. Citizen: <sup>10</sup>Native Born: **Yes** <sup>11</sup>Naturalized  
<sup>12</sup>Citizen by Father's Naturalization before Registrant's Majority: **Yes**  
Alien: <sup>13</sup>Declarant <sup>14</sup>Non-declarant  
<sup>15</sup>If not a citizen of the U.S. of what nation are you a citizen or subject?  
Present Occupation: <sup>16</sup>Farming <sup>17</sup>Employer's Name:  
<sup>18</sup>Place of Employment or Business: **Buffalo Valley, Putnam Co., Tenn**  
Nearest Relative: <sup>19</sup>Audra Denny <sup>20</sup>Buffalo Valley, Putnam Co., Tenn



I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.

P.M.G.O.  
Form No. 1

Virgil Denny  
Registrant's signature or mark



REGISTRAR'S REPORT  
DESCRIPTION OF REGISTRANT

Height: <sup>21</sup>Tall: <sup>22</sup>Medium **X** <sup>23</sup>Short  
Build: <sup>24</sup>Slender <sup>25</sup>Medium **X** <sup>26</sup>Stout  
<sup>27</sup>Color of Eyes <sup>28</sup>Color of Hair  
<sup>29</sup>Has person lost arm, leg, hand, eye, or is he obviously physically disqualified?  
(SPECIFY.) **NO**  
<sup>30</sup>I certify that my answers are true, that the person registered has read or has had read to him his own answers, that I have witnessed his signature or mark and that all of his answers of which I have knowledge are true, except as follows:

Signature of Registrar: **F.M. Maddux**  
Date of Registration: **September 12, 1918**

Local Board for the County of Putnam  
STATE OF TENNESSEE  
COOKEVILLE – TENNESSEE  
STAMP OF LOCAL BOARD

(The stamp of the local board having jurisdiction of the area in which the registrant has his permanent home shall be placed in this box.)

**Virgil Timothy Denny** – b. 17 November 1884, Buffalo Valley, TN – d. 26 June 1949, Buffalo Valley, Putnam Co., TN – s/o **Timothy Denny** - b. 22 December 1825, Gordonsville, TN - d. 5 November 1898, Buffalo Valley, TN & **Elizabeth Hettie Paul** - b. 26 October 1844, TN - d. 22 March 1922, Big Indian Creek, Silver Point, Putnam Co., TN – Timothy Denny was the s/o **Zachariah Denny** – b. 19 January 1794, Person or Granville Co., NC – d. 27 February 1848, TN & **Katherine Stallings** – b. 2 March 1798, NC – d. ca. 1860, TN.  
Virgil Timothy Denny md Audra Camilla Anderson: Both Buried: Cookeville City Cemetery, Cookeville, TN.  
Timothy Denny md Elizabeth Hettie Paul: Both Buried: Capt. William Jared Cemetery, Silver Point, nr. Buffalo Valley, TN.

F.M. Maddux = **Fred Miller Maddux** - b. 20 February 1883 – d. 8 April 1922 – s/o **Snowden Davis Maddux** – b. 13 April 1855 – d. 8 June 1887 & **Mary J. Burton** – Snowden Davis Maddux was the s/o **Snowden Horten Maddux** – b. 9 December 1812, VA – d. 16 April 1975, Buffalo Valley, TN & **Lucy Ann Leftwich** - b. ca. 1813, VA – d. 7 December 1886, TN  
Family Buried: Maddux Cemetery, Putnam Co., TN on **Walter Warren Shanks** farm.