

JOSEPH VOLNEY WILSON

U. S. Army 1st Lieutenant, Aviator, 163 Aero Squadron

Died in Plane Crash on October 23, 1918 in France

Compiled by Linda Cunningham Fluharty.

Born on September 16, 1895 in Grove City, Pennsylvania, Joseph "Volney" Wilson was the son of Rev. Gill Irwin and Amanda Robb Wilson. The father was pastor at Warwood Presbyterian Church at the beginning of World War I and then served at the First Presbyterian Church in Parkersburg, West Virginia for decades.

Form 1 3965 REGISTRATION CARD		No. 58
1	Name in full <i>Volney Wilson</i>	Age, in yrs. <i>21</i>
2	Home address <i>2241 Chapline St. Wheeling W. Va.</i>	
3	Date of birth <i>September 16 - 1895</i>	
4	Are you (1) a natural born citizen, (2) a naturalized citizen, (3) an alien, (4) or have you declared your intention (specify which)? <i>natural born</i>	
5	Where were you born? <i>Grove City Penn. U.S.A.</i>	
6	If not a citizen, of what country are you a citizen or subject? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
7	What is your present trade, occupation, or office? <i>Student for ministry</i>	
8	By whom employed? <i>W. J. College</i>	
9	Where employed? <i>W. J. College</i>	
9	Have you a father, mother, wife, child under 12, or a sister or brother under 12, solely dependent on you for support (specify which)? <i>no</i>	
10	Married or single (which)? <i>single</i> Race (specify which)? <i>white</i>	
11	What military service have you had? Rank _____; branch _____; years _____; Nation or State _____	
12	Do you claim exemption from draft (specify grounds)? <i>no</i>	
I affirm that I have verified above answers and that they are true.		
283 <i>J. Volney Wilson</i> Per <i>Rev. G. I. Wilson</i>		

REGISTRAR'S REPORT	
1	Tall, medium, or short (specify which)? <i>Tall</i> Slender, medium, or stout (which)? <i>slender</i>
2	Color of eyes? <i>Blue</i> Color of hair? <i>Brown</i> Bald? <i>no</i>
3	Has person lost arm, leg, hand, foot, or both eyes, or is he otherwise disabled (specify)? <i>no</i>
I certify that my answers are true, that the person registered has read his own answers, that I have witnessed his signature, and that all of his answers of which I have knowledge are true, except as follows:	
Signature of Registrar: <i>John H. Wells, Clerk</i> County Court Clerk <i>W. Va.</i>	
Precinct	_____
City or County	_____
State	_____ (Date of registration) _____

World War I Draft Registration – Lived on Chapline Street, Wheeling

Volney was an athlete and student at Washington and Jefferson College in Washington, Pennsylvania, but when World War I started, he wanted to serve. Even before the United States got into the war in April 1917, Volney and his older brother, Gill Robb Wilson, wanted to go to Europe and participate in a non-military way, which was legally allowed. The following article is from January 1917.

WASHINGTON, Pa., Jan. 31.—Three of the leading athletes of Washington and Jefferson College today announced that next week they would leave their studies for France, where they had volunteered for service with the American ambulance. They are Volney Wilson, of Sistersville, W. Va., captain of the varsity track team; C. H. Guy, of Boston, center of the football eleven, and Philip Fisher, of Sharon, Pa., center on the basketball five.

The brothers went to France and served as ambulance drivers and then joined the French Air Service and trained as pilots. Volney, a Corporal, was a member of the Lafayette Flying Corps. He joined the U. S. Army Air Service in August 1917 and was commissioned as a First Lieutenant. His brother Gill had one serious injury but returned to active duty. Volney was killed in France on October 23, 1918 when the engine of his plane failed. He received the French Croix de Guerre with Bronze Star for his service.

There are a great many articles about the Wilson brothers' service as aviators.

<p><i>Wheeling Intelligencer, 3 May 1919</i></p> <h3>Presbyterian Church Plans Memorial For Late Volney Wilson</h3> <p>Living memorials are planned by the Presbyterian church in the U. S. A. for Presbyterian heroes who made the supreme sacrifice in the world war, of whom there were about 4,000. As far as practicable these will take the form of perpetuating the life work planned by the men who fell in the service.</p> <p>A shining example is the case of Lieutenant Joseph Volney Wilson, son of Rev. Gill I. Wilson of Wheeling, West Virginia, but who was probably the first Presbyterian aviator. He won the Croix de Guerre and other medals for exceptional bravery and was three times cited for the Distinguished Service Medal.</p> <p>While Wilson was still in the service Dr. S. Hall Young, pioneer Presbyterian missionary to Alaska, now in charge of the special Alaskan interests of the Presbyterian mission field, said to Lieutenant Wilson "They are planning aerial mail routes in Alaska. Why can we not have aerial missionary routes in that country with you the pioneer?"</p> <p>Lieutenant Wilson replied "Count on me for that."</p> <p>Subsequently he was instantly killed while trying a faulty De Havilland plane adopted by the United States.</p> <p>Inasmuch as Lieutenant Wilson had dedicated his life to preaching the gospel in Alaska, Dr. Young is determined that his place will be adequately filled. Dr. Young will in June canvass Lieutenant Wilson's state, West Virginia, for a fund of \$40,000 as a living memorial to support a Lieutenant Wilson missionary in Alaska.</p>	<p><i>Wheeling Intelligencer, 18 Sep 1919</i></p> <h3>UNVEIL TABLET IN MEMORY OF VOLNEY WILSON</h3> <p>SISTERSVILLE, W. Va., Sept. 17.—A beautiful bronze memorial tablet is to be placed in the local Presbyterian church as a tribute to the memory of Volney Wilson, son of Rev. G. I. Wilson, former pastor of the Presbyterian church here, now of Parkersburg, W. Va.</p> <p>The tablet is presented by the famous Lafayette Escadrille, of which Volney was a member when he met death in such a tragic manner.</p> <p>Preparations are being made for the unveiling of the tablet with appropriate services, and the ceremony will likely take place about Oct. 5 or 12. Charles Kinsolving, son the Episcopal bishop of Brazil, and a chum and fellow officer of Wilson's, and Dr. S. Hall Young, of the Alaska office of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, will be the chief speakers.</p> <p><i>Wheeling Intelligencer, 20 July 1922</i></p> <h3>J. VOLNEY WILSON'S BODY WILL REST IN FRENCH MAUSOLEUM</h3> <p>The body of Lieutenant Joseph Volney Wilson, who was cremated in his burning plane in France on October 23, 1918, while fighting with the LaFayette Escadrille, will be placed to rest in a mausoleum near Verdun, France.</p> <p>Lieut. Wilson was the son of Rev. and Mrs. Gill Wilson, formerly of this city, but for the past three years residents of Parkersburg. Rev. and Mrs. Wilson have been notified of the action of LaFayette Escadrille Memorial Association, which has planned a suitable resting place for American members of the Escadrille, who were killed in action in France. Sixty-four names will adorn the monument but only 62 bodies will rest in the mausoleum as the bodies of two were never recovered.</p> <p>Alexandre Marcel, chief architect of the French government, has designed the plans for the memorial garden and copies have been sent to every relative of the dead aviators. The garden will occupy a site about two miles outside of Verdun, the ground having been donated by the French government for the purpose.</p>	<p><i>Wheeling Intelligencer, 8 Apr 1918</i></p> <h3>LOCAL BOY IN FRANCE HONORED WITH WAR MEDAL</h3> <p>LIEUT. J. VOLNEY WILSON, SON OF REV. AND MRS. G. I. WILSON, BRINGS DOWN GERMAN PLANE.</p> <p>Is First Wheeling Boy to Have Such Honor Conferred Upon Him by the French Government.</p> <p>Word has been received here telling of the awarding of the French War Cross to Lieut. J. Volney Wilson, of this city, who has been serving with the French aviation corps. Lieut. Wilson is the son of Rev. and Mrs. G. I. Wilson, of South Chapline street, who are at present at Camp Meade, Md., working in behalf of the Young Men's Christian Association.</p> <p>Lieut. Wilson has been "over there" for more than a year, and has won a high esteem among the French army officers. He joined the service with several Washington & Jefferson College students a short time before the entry of this country in the war. They first served with the Red Cross as ambulance drivers, but since have been transferred to the aviation corps.</p> <p>Gill Wilson, a brother of Lieut. J. Volney Wilson, is also serving in France, but he is with the American troops at an army aviation station. He, too, went over as an ambulance driver, but has been transferred with the American troops. He was injured several months ago in a fall with his airplane.</p>
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According to an article (above) Lt. J. Volney Wilson's body was cremated in the burning plane. His remains were placed in a mausoleum in Verdun, France. At some point, the remains must have been returned to the United States and for interment at Mt. Olivet Cemetery, Parkersburg.

WILSON JOSEPH VOLNEY		MC 80 046
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Box 556 Parkersburg W Va		A 3 965 115
En	Died 10/23/18	T
Born 9/16/95		R
Enl 8/1/17	Dia	CL
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U. S. VETERANS BUREAU
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Form 7202—Rev. Sept., 1925

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