

# Frank Van Pelt collection

AFC 2001/001/104650

Guides to the Collections in the Veterans History Project



Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress  
Washington, D.C.  
November 2016

Contact information: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/vhp.contact>

Catalog Record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/2017655249>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/eadvhp.vh017015>

Processed by Aron Swan

Finding aid encoded by Irene Lule, July 2017

## Collection Summary

**Title:** Frank Van Pelt collection: Veterans History Project (U.S.)

**Inclusive Dates:** 1917-1931

**Call No.:** AFC 2001/001/104650

**Creator:** Van Pelt, Frank, 1890-1949.

**Extent (Photographs):** 3 photographs.

**Extent (Manuscripts):** manuscripts: 42 items.

**Language:** In English.

**Location:** Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**LC Catalog record:** <https://lccn.loc.gov/2017655249>

**Summary:** The Frank Van Pelt collection documents Van Pelt's United States Army service during World War I. The collection includes correspondence, memoirs, and photographs dating 1917-1931. Born and raised on the Kansas-Oklahoma border, he served in Fort Logan, Colorado; Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; Fort Monmouth, New Jersey; and in France with the Company A, 101st Field Signal Battalion. He worked primarily in radio companies and was discharged as a Sergeant First Class on April 29, 1919. Frank Van Pelt died on August 13, 1949.

## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

### People

Buggey, Betty

Van Pelt, Frank, 1890-1949--Correspondence.

Van Pelt, Frank, 1890-1949.

### Organizations

American Folklife Center

Veterans History Project (U.S.)

### Subjects

World War, 1914-1918--Personal narratives, American.

World War, 1914-1918--Veterans--Kansas.

### Form/Genre

Autobiographies.

Correspondence.

Manuscripts.

Photographs.

## Arrangement

Arranged into two series: Manuscripts and Photographs. Materials are arranged alphabetically by type of record.

## Acquisition

Accessioned, 2016.

## Copyright Status

Duplication of collection materials may be restricted.

## Access and Restrictions

Collection is open for research; access restrictions apply. To request collection materials, please contact the Veterans History Project at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/vhp.contact>

## Preferred Citation

Frank Van Pelt Collection (AFC/2001/001/104650), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

## Biographical Note

Frank Van Pelt was born in Arkansas City, Kansas, on July 14, 1890. He was the fifth child, out of nine, born to John Henry and Amanda Van Pelt. He was raised on a farm near Newkirk, Oklahoma, and received a limited formal education at a local county school. Van Pelt worked as a telegraph operator for the St. Louis–San Francisco Railway.

Van Pelt enlisted in the United States Army on June 1, 1917, in Arkansas City, Kansas, before receiving a draft notice. He wrote to his family regarding his reasons for enlisting, telling them that he preferred to choose the branch of the military in which he served. He left the next day for Fort Logan in Denver, Colorado. Within a few days, he departed for Fort Leavenworth in Kansas, where he remained for a short period of time. By July 7, 1917, he was on the move again to the East Coast. He arrived in New Jersey on July 13, 1917, and remained near the Little Silver area until his overseas deployment. During this period of time, Van Pelt's activities included drilling, wireless telegraph training, and construction. Van Pelt embarked to Europe in February 1918 from Camp Devens on the SS *Great Northern* and arrived in Brest, France, six days later. From there, he traveled extensively throughout France working with Company A, 101st Field Signal Battalion. Working with radios, Van Pelt would listen to German messages and provide transcription before sending them for code breaking. He was involved in several battles and offensives including the Aisne-Maine Offensive and Château-Thierry. Van Pelt also received several promotions, eventually reaching the rank of Sergeant First Class. Following the armistice, he remained in France until April 1919. He returned home via Boston and was discharged at Camp Funston, Kansas, on April 29, 1919.

Following his service, Van Pelt returned to the Kansas-Oklahoma border. He received several job offers before returning to the St. Louis–San Francisco Railway as a telegraph operator. He moved to Pierce City, Missouri, in 1933. He married Fannie Lee Hughes and raised four children. Frank Van Pelt died on August 13, 1949.

## Scope and Content

The Frank Van Pelt collection documents Van Pelt's United States Army service during World War I. Spanning 1917-1931, materials include correspondence, memoirs, military papers, and photographs.

The correspondence in the collection spans from 1917-1919, during Van Pelt's service in the United States and France. Letters are sent by Van Pelt to his family. Topics in the letters include camp and military life; references to personal relationships; short anecdotes about visits to federal prisons and food; weather; wheat; Germany; brief descriptions of visits to the front; YMCA and the Red Cross; family relations; and Van Pelt's thoughts regarding the military and war. Most letters span several days of writing. The memoir in the collection was written by Van Pelt to his children, in 1931. It documents his World War I experience and ends with his arrival at home following the war. Topics in the memoir include sentiments towards the war and draft; French society; descriptions of battles and skirmishes; radio/telegram duties; recollection of the death of French and American pilot, Gervais Raoul Lufbery; thoughts on Reba Crawford of the Salvation Army; YMCA sentiments; short anecdotes; and a general overview of his two year military career. A transcribed edition of the memoir created by an unknown person is also included. The transcription contains numerous copy editing changes. Military papers include Van Pelt's discharge certificate, enlistment record, and pay receipts from the Veterans Bureau. Photographs include a landscape image and photocopies of Van Pelt in uniform and a suit.

## Description of Series

Container

Series

Series I: Manuscripts

Series II: Photographs

# Container List

Container	Contents
<b>Series I: Manuscripts</b>	
BOX-FOLDER MSS2822/1	Correspondence, 1917-1919 1 folder <a href="#">Digital content available</a> MS01: Letters by Van Pelt to his family while serving in the Army during World War I. Topics in the letters include camp and military life; references to personal relationships; short anecdotes about visits to federal prisons and food; weather; wheat; Germany; brief descriptions of visits to the front; YMCA and the Red Cross; family relations; and Van Pelt's thoughts regarding the military and war. Most letters span several days of writing.
BOX-FOLDER MSS2822/3	Memoirs, 1931 1 folder <a href="#">Digital content available</a> MS02: An account written by Van Pelt about his service in the Army during World War I. Topics in the memoir include sentiments towards the war and draft; French society; descriptions of battles and skirmishes; radio/telegram duties; YMCA sentiments; short anecdotes; and a general overview of his two year military career.
BOX-FOLDER MSS2822/4	Memoirs, 1931 1 folder <a href="#">Digital content available</a> MS03: A typed version of Van Pelt's account about his service in the Army during World War I. The transcription contains numerous copy editing changes.
BOX-FOLDER MSS2822/6	Military papers, 1919 1 folder <a href="#">Digital content available</a> MS04: Discharge certificate and enlisted record 04/29/1919; and pay receipts with correspondence from the Veterans Bureau 1929-1930.
<b>Series II: Photographs</b>	
BOX-FOLDER MSS2822/7	Original photographic print, February 22, 1919 1 folder <a href="#">Digital content available</a> PH01: An image of a field removed from correspondence (MS01) dated 02/22/1919.
BOX-FOLDER MSS2822/8	Photocopy of photographic print, undated 1 folder PH02: A portrait of Van Pelt wearing his Army uniform. PH03: A portrait of Van Pelt wearing a suit.