

Robert W. Gerlach

November 29, 1896 - February 17, 1993

Evelyn Bell Gerlach

May 17, 1901 - February 17, 1988

World War I

VA



**U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs**

National Cemetery
Administration



**Department
of History**

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Robert W. Gerlach (November 29, 1896–February 17, 1993)

Evelyn Bell Gerlach (May 17, 1901–February 17, 1988)

By Edward Vipatasilpin

Early Life

Robert Gerlach was born on November 29, 1896 in the town of Rhine, Sheboygan County, Wisconsin to German immigrants Henry and Anna Gerlach.¹ He had four siblings: sisters Elsie (1893) and Leta (ca. 1900), and brothers John (ca. 1906) and George (ca. 1909).² Robert's grandfather, William, emigrated from Germany in 1851.³ His arrival coincided with the first and smallest of four major waves of German immigration to Wisconsin in the nineteenth century. Most came from southwestern Germany as farmers who had suffered from crop blight or fled following political upheaval. William Gerlach was among the first of what became, by the 1890s, four million German Americans in Wisconsin or about 35 percent of the state's population.⁴

Military Service

When the United States entered the First World War, Congress passed the Selective Service Act of 1917 that required all men between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-one to register for the draft.⁵ To register, Robert reported his birth year as 1895, shown here in his draft registration card.⁶ He entered the Army on May 28, 1918 and trained at Camp Grant in Illinois until being released from service as a private on November 27, 1918.⁷

Post Service Life

Gerlach's wife, Evelyn Bell Rehm, was born on May 17, 1901 in Sheboygan to Herman – also a German immigrant – and Emma Rehm.⁸ Robert and Evelyn met around 1923 in Kohler, Wisconsin. Robert's older sister, Elsie, threw a dinner party in December of that year, her brother and Evelyn attended. This event may have played a role in the formation of their relationship.⁹ By May 21, 1926, they had married, shown here in the local newspaper announcement.¹⁰ Nearly nine months later, on March 5, 1927, Evelyn gave birth to their

daughter, Joy Evelyn Gerlach.¹¹ Robert worked as a photo engraver in Sheboygan to support his family.¹²

By 1940, the Gerlachs lived in Sheboygan, where the average monthly rent in 1940 was thirty dollars. Robert worked forty hours a week as a laborer earning \$1,400 that year. He earned above the average salary of \$956 a year for men.¹³ Meanwhile, Evelyn took care of their daughter and their home.¹⁴

In April 1942, shortly after the United States' entry into World War II, the federal government instituted the Fourth Registration, known as the "Old Man's Draft," which measured the industrial capacity of the US male citizens between the ages of forty-five and sixty-four.¹⁵ Robert registered for this draft.¹⁶ He did not serve in the military in the Second World War, but he contributed to the war effort by donating money to the Sheboygan Citizens War Fund.¹⁷

In their later lives, Robert and Evelyn lived in multiple states. In the early 1950s, they moved to Des Moines, Iowa, where they lived well into the early 1970s.¹⁸ In Des Moines, Robert continued his work as a photo engraver.¹⁹ They moved down to Citrus, Florida sometime in the 1980s where Evelyn died on February 17, 1988, at the age of eighty-six.²⁰ They had been married for over sixty years. Two years later, in July 1990, their daughter Joy died at the age of sixty-three in Alachua, Florida.²¹ Both Evelyn and Joy, thanks to their father's military service, were eligible to be buried at Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell.²² Following their deaths, Robert moved back to Wisconsin where he lived out the remainder of his days in Waupaca until his death on February 17, 1993 at the age of ninety-six.²³ He was subsequently interred at the Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell on March 5, 1993, joining his wife and daughter.²⁴

Endnotes

- 1 “1900 United States Census,” database, *Ancestry.com*, <http://ancestry.com> (accessed March 24, 2017) entry for Robert Gerlach, ED 55, Rhine, Sheboygan, Wisconsin.
- 2 “1920 United States Census,” database, *Ancestry.com*, <http://ancestry.com> (accessed March 24, 2017) entry for Robert Gerlach, ED 142, Sheboygan Ward 7, Sheboygan, Wisconsin.
- 3 “1900 United States Census.”
- 4 Robert H. Zeitlin, *Germans in Wisconsin* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2013), 7-8.
- 5 “World War I Draft Registration Cards,” *National Archives*, accessed March 25, 2017 <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/ww1/draft-registration>.
- 6 “U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918,” database *Ancestry.com*, <http://ancestry.com> (accessed March 25, 2017) entry for Robert Gerlach, Sheboygan, Wisconsin.
- 7 “Young Men of the Second District off doe Camp Grant, Ill,” *The Sheboygan Press*, May 28, 1918, page 8, *Ancestry.com*; “U.S., Department of Veterans Affairs BIRLS Death File, 1850-2010,” database *Ancestry.com*, <http://ancestry.com>(accessed March 25, 2017) entry for Robert Gerlach, SSN 393070769.
- 8 “1900 United States Census,” database, *Ancestry.com*, <http://ancestry.com> (accessed March 24, 2017) entry for Emma Rehm, ED 79, Sheboygan Falls Village, Sheboygan, Wisconsin.
- 9 “Entertains Friends,” *The Sheboygan Press*, December 11, 1923, page 5, *Ancestry.com*
- 10 “Miss Evelyn Rehm and Robert Gerlach United in Marriage,” *Sheboygan Press*, May 21, 1926, page 4, <http://ancestry.com>
- 11 “U.S., Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007,” database *Ancestry.com*,<http://ancestry.com> (accessed March 26, 2017) entry for Joy Evelyn Gerlach, SSN 392221610, Kohler Shebo, Wisconsin.
- 12 “U.S City Directories, 1822-1995,” database *Ancestry.com*, <http://ancestry.com> (accessed April 19, 2017) entry for Robert Gerlach, Sheboygan, Wisconsin, 1926.
- 13 “1940-2010: How Has America Changed?” *United States Census Bureau*, March 14, 2012, accessed April 18, 2017 <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/2012/comm/1940-census-change.html>
- 14 “1940 United States Census,” database, *Ancestry.com*, <http://ancestry.com> (accessed March 25, 2017) entry for Robert Gerlach, ED 59-48, Sheboygan, Sheboygan, Wisconsin.
- 15 “Old Man’s Draft,” *The Newberry*, accessed July 4, 2017, <https://www.newberry.org/old-mans-draft>.
- 16 “U.S., World War II Draft Registration Cards, 1942,” database *Ancestry.com*, <http://ancestry.com> (accessed March 25, 2017) entry for Robert Gerlach, Serial Number 2207, Sheboygan, Wisconsin.
- 17 “Additional Donations to War Fund Listed,” *The Sheboygan Press*, July 8, 1942, page 5, *Ancestry.com*

- 18 "Obituaries: Mrs. Leta Scanlan," *The Sheboygan Press*, January, 23, 1973, page 8, *Ancestry.com*
- 19 "US City Directories, 1822-1995," database *Ancestry.com*, <http://ancestry.com> (accessed March 28, 2017) entry for Robert W. Gerlach, Des Moines, Iowa.
- 20 "Florida Death Index, 1877-1988," database *Ancestry.com*, <http://ancestry.com> (accessed March 28, 2017) entry for Evelyn B Gerlach, Citrus, Florida.
- 21 "Florida Death Index, 1877-1988," database *Ancestry.com*, <http://ancestry.com> (accessed March 28, 2017) entry for Joy E Gerlach, Alachua, Florida.
- 22 "U.S., Find a Grave Index, 1600s-Current," database *Ancestry.com*, <http://ancestry.com> (accessed March 28, 2017) entry for Joy E Gerlach, Bushnell, Sumter Country, Florida.
- 23 "Wisconsin Death Index 1959-1997," database *Ancestry.com*, <http://ancestry.com> (accessed March 28, 2017) entry for Robert W Gerlach, Certificate number 005121.
- 24 "US Veteran Gravesites, ca.1775-2006," database *Ancestry.com*, <http://ancestry.com> (accessed March 28, 2017) entry for Robert W Gerlach, Bushnell, Florida.

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 28, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1897)

SERIAL NUMBER U 2207	1. NAME (Print) Robert William Gerlach <small>(First) (Middle) (Last)</small>	ORDER NUMBER
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2 PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print)
1601 Alexander Ct Sheboygan Sheboygan Wisconsin
(Number and street) (Town, township, village, or city) (County) (State)

[THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON THE LINE ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL]

3. MAILING ADDRESS
Same
[Mailing address if other than place indicated on line 2. If same insert word same]

4. TELEPHONE 4990 J <small>(Exchange) (Number)</small>	5. AGE IN YEARS 45 <small>(Mo.) (Day) (Yr.)</small>	6. PLACE OF BIRTH Sheboygan Co. Wisconsin <small>(Town or county) (State or country)</small>
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7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS
Mrs Evelyn Gerlach (wife) 1601 Alexander Ct Sheboygan Wis

8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS
Kohler Co Kohler Wis

9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS
Same
(Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)

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

D. S. S. Form 1
(Revised 4-1-42)

(over)

16-21630-2

Robert W. Gerlach
(Registrant's signature)

618
Form 1 113 REGISTRATION CARD No. 22

1 Name in full: Robert W^m Gerlach Age, in yrs. 21

2 Home address: 121 Stafford Plymouth Wis.

3 Date of birth: November 29 1895

4 Are you (1) a natural-born citizen, (2) a naturalized citizen, (3) an alien, (4) or have you declared your intention (specify which)? Natural born

5 Where were you born? Town Rhine Wis. U.S.A.

6 If not a citizen, of what country are you a citizen or subject?

7 What is your present trade, occupation, or office? laborer

8 By whom employed? 30 R P Kuehn

Where employed? Elkhart Lake Wis.

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)? No

10 Married or single (which)? Single Race (specify which)? Caucasian

11 What military service have you had? Rank _____; branch _____; years _____; Nation or State _____

12 Do you claim exemption from draft (specify grounds)? _____

I affirm that I have verified above answers and that they are true.

C Robert W^m Gerlach
(Signature or mark)

If person is alien specify alien on this card

48-2-14 A

REGISTRAR'S REPORT

1 Tall, medium, or short (specify which)? Short Slender, medium, or stout (which)? Medium

2 Color of eyes? Blue Color of hair? Brown Bald? No

3 Has person lost arm, leg, hand, foot, or both eyes, or is he otherwise disabled (specify)? _____

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:

J J Volk
(Signature of registrar)

Precinct First Ward

City or County Plymouth

State Wisconsin

June 5th 1917
(Date of registration)

