

Alexander Lucas

June 6, 1893 – March 2, 1989

World War I

VA



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

National Cemetery
Administration



**Department
of History**

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Alexander Lucas (June 6, 1893–March 2, 1989)

By Kyle West and Luke Bohmer

Early Life

Alexander Lard Lucas was born in Satilla Mills, Camden County, Georgia on June 6, 1893 to Alexander Lucas Sr. and Rhonda Luke. Alexander likely worked hard in his early years, as the Lucas family worked as farm laborers, a common, if difficult way for African Americans to earn a living in the rural south. As with many farming families, the Lucas family was quite large. Throughout his early life, Lucas lived with his father and two older sisters, Dicy (1888) and Kissie (1882), shown here in the 1900 census.¹ By 1900, Alexander Sr. and Rhonda Lucas' six oldest children had already moved out.²

While still only a teenager, Alexander Lucas moved across the Georgia state line to Jacksonville, Florida where he resided with his uncle, Oscar Luke, and his cousin Charlie Gream.³ By 1918, Lucas had moved to Cleveland, Ohio in order to pursue a career as a mechanic.⁴ In the early twentieth century, Cleveland became a hub for the burgeoning automotive industry, creating a wealth of industrial jobs and opportunities. Alexander Lucas was one of thousands of southern blacks who migrated to Cleveland, quadrupling its black population between 1910 and 1920.⁵ This vast exodus of African Americans from the South around this time is known as the Great Migration. From 1910 to 1970, more than six million African Americans moved to northern cities to escape the Jim Crow south and participate in America's swelling urban manufacturing industries.⁶ In June 1918, he married Anna Thurman.⁷

Military Service

After only a few months as newlyweds, the US Army conscripted Lucas on August 9, 1918-- one of nearly 368,000 other African Americans. While we do not know the details of Lucas' service, he rose in the ranks to the position of sergeant, a remarkable achievement for an African American in the segregated US Army. To appease white fears about arming blacks, 89 percent of African Americans served in units assigned to support roles such as constructing fortifications, burying bodies, and manning supply caravans. The 11 percent of African Americans who saw combat became world renowned for their tenacity and effectiveness. The Buffalo Soldiers and the Harlem Hellfighters became a vital part of the Meuse-Argonne

Offensive in the final months of the war, even though all African Americans in the military, faced open and relentless discrimination by their compatriots and superior officers.⁸ Living in Ohio, Lucas may have joined the Buffalo Soldiers via the 93rd infantry division's 372nd regiment; his rank further suggests he was a combat veteran.

Postwar Life

Alexander Lucas returned to the Midwest following the war. He found a job as a tailor in Lansing, Michigan, roughly 240 miles northwest of Cleveland. Sometime between 1918 and 1920, Lucas and Anna divorced and he remarried Willetta J. Farris, a Cleveland native, as seen here.⁹ By 1930, Alexander had divorced again and lived alone in Dayton, Ohio, working as a grocer.¹⁰

The onset of World War II provided job opportunities for many World War I veterans. In 1940, Lucas found a position as a shipping clerk for the Department of the Interior in Washington, DC. He lived in federal public housing attached to the North Interior Building in downtown Washington, where he worked.¹¹ Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal likely made his employment possible. One of its provisos created incentives to hire African Americans for government positions. Between 1933 and 1941, the number of black federal workers had tripled as a result of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and one million more African Americans found employment in public works projects thanks to this initiative.¹²

We have fewer records for the second half of Lucas' life. Between 1942 and 1989, he moved to the Miami area, where he passed away on March 2, 1989 at the age of ninety-five. Alexander Lucas' life was indicative of many of the hardships and opportunities that African Americans experienced during the first half of the twentieth century. From being born on a small farm in rural Georgia, to being one of the hundreds of thousands of African Americans who left their homes to find opportunities in the Midwest, to being one of the 380,000 African Americans who participated in the First World War, to earning a position in the federal government, his life illustrates the tribulations as well as triumphs of African Americans in the early twentieth century.

Endnotes

- 1 "1900 US Federal Census," database, *Ancestry.com*, <https://ancestry.com> (accessed March 28, 2017), entry for Alexander Lucas.
- 2 "1880 US Federal Census," database, *Ancestry.com*, <https://ancestry.com> (accessed July, 12, 2017), entry for Alexander Lucas.
- 3 "1910 US Federal Census," database, *Ancestry.com*, <https://ancestry.com>, (accessed March 30, 2017), entry for Alexander Lucas.
- 4 "Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Marriage Records and Indexes, 1810-1973," database, *Ancestry.com*, <https://ancestry.com> (accessed July 13, 2017) entry for Alexander Lucas Junior and Anna Thurman.
- 5 Kenneth L. Kusmer, "Black Cleveland and the Central-Woodland Community, 1865-1930," in *Cleveland: A Metropolitan Reader*, ed. William Dennis Keating, Norman Krumholz, and David C. Perry (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1995), 271-3.
- 6 Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Random House, 2010), 8-9.
- 7 "Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Marriage Records and Indexes," entry for Alexander Lucas Junior and Anna Thurman.
- 8 Gail Buckley, *American Patriots: The Story of Blacks in the Military from The Revolution to Desert Storm* (New York: Random House, 2001), 163-70.
- 9 "Ohio Marriages, 1800-1958," database, *FamilySearch.org*, <https://familysearch.org> (last updated December 2014), entry for Alexander L. Lucas and Willetta J. Farris, November 11, 1920.
- 10 "1930 United States Census," database, *Ancestry.com*, <https://ancestry.com/> (accessed March 30, 2017) entry for Alexander Lucas.
- 11 "WWII 'Old Man's Draft' Registration Cards," database, *Fold3.com*, <https://fold3.com/> (accessed July 13, 2017) entry for Alexander Lucas Jr.; "1940 United States Census," database, *Ancestry.com*, <https://ancestry.com/> (accessed July 13, 2017) entry for Alexander Lucas.
- 12 Neil A. Wynn, *The African American Experience During World War II* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 17-8.

TWELFTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES.

SCHEDULE No. 1.—POPULATION.

State Georgia
County Banden

Supervisor's District No. 11 Sheet No. 27
Enumeration District No. 2

Township or other division of county

Name of Institution

Name of incorporated city, town, or village, within the above-named division

Ward of city

Enumerated by me on the Eighth day of June, 1900, E. F. Dorn Enumerator.

LOCATIONS	NAME	RELATION	PERSONAL DESCRIPTION										NATIVITY			CITIZENSHIP			OCCUPATION, TRADE, OR PROFESSION			EDUCATION			SPECIAL INQUIRY		
			AGE	SEX	DATE OF BIRTH	Color	Marital Status	Years of Schooling	Years of Service	Years of Residence	Place of Birth of this Person	Place of Birth of Father of this Person	Place of Birth of Mother of this Person	Year of Immigration	Year of Naturalization	Year of Arrival in this Country	Year of Arrival in this Country	Year of Arrival in this Country	Occupation	Trade	Profession	Years of Schooling	Years of Attendance	Years of Attendance	Years of Attendance	Years of Attendance	Years of Attendance
1	Blanche Mack	Wife	3	F	1893 6 8	W	M				Georgia	Georgia	Georgia														
2	James	Head	3	M	1897 2 8	W	M																				
3	Elizabeth	Daughter	3	F	1897 6 3	W	M																				
4	James	Head	3	M	1898 11 8	W	M																				
5	James	Head	3	M	1898 9 8	W	M																				
6	Robert	Head	3	M	1898 3 8	W	M																				
7	James	Head	3	M	1898 11 8	W	M																				
8	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
9	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
10	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
11	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
12	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
13	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
14	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
15	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
16	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
17	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
18	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
19	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
20	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
21	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
22	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
23	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
24	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
25	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
26	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
27	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
28	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
29	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
30	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
31	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
32	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
33	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
34	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
35	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
36	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
37	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
38	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
39	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
40	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
41	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
42	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
43	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
44	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
45	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
46	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
47	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
48	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
49	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				
50	James	Head	3	M	1898 2 8	W	M																				

STATE Florida COUNTY Orlando TOWNSHIP OR OTHER DIVISION OF COUNTY Orlando NAME OF INSTITUTION Orlando

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND LABOR BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

THIRTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES: 1910 POPULATION

NAME OF INCORPORATED PLACE Orlando ENDORSED BY ME ON THE 21st DAY OF April 1910.

206

SUPERVISOR'S DISTRICT NO. 53 SHEET NO. 17A

WARD 6th Ward ENDORSED BY Geo. C. Hart DATE 2707

LOCATION.	NAME.	RELATION.	PERSONAL DESCRIPTION.	ACTIVITY.	INDUSTRY.	RECREATION.	EDUCATION.	RELIGION.	OTHER.
1	1401 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
2	1402 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
3	1403 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
4	1404 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
5	1405 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
6	1406 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
7	1407 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
8	1408 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
9	1409 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
10	1410 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
11	1411 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
12	1412 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
13	1413 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
14	1414 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
15	1415 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
16	1416 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
17	1417 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
18	1418 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
19	1419 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
20	1420 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
21	1421 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
22	1422 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
23	1423 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
24	1424 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
25	1425 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
26	1426 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
27	1427 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
28	1428 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
29	1429 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
30	1430 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
31	1431 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
32	1432 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
33	1433 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
34	1434 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
35	1435 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
36	1436 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
37	1437 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
38	1438 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
39	1439 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
40	1440 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
41	1441 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
42	1442 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
43	1443 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
44	1444 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
45	1445 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
46	1446 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
47	1447 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
48	1448 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
49	1449 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
50	1450 303 371	Male	10	10	10	10	10	10	10

County 7/ out growing

Word of day — 7

Enid Ra. 1007

POPULATION SCHEDULE

**Township or other
division of County**

Engineer O. Blackford

[illegible]

S. D. No. _____ E. D. No. _____
 Entered by me on April 30, 1940. 15 B
William A. Travette Entrepreneur.

[illegible]

NAME: *Lucas Anna* (3-P. A. 2) *42745*

Certificate No. *597,597* ARMY WIDOW. Law: ACT JUNE 27, 1890

Name of Soldier: *Alexander*

Service: *Pri. G. 5 U. S. G. V. I.*

ISSUES.				MINORS—\$2 PER MONTH ADDITIONAL.		
CLASS.	RATE.	DATE OF COMMENCEMENT.	DATE OF CERTIFICATE.	NAME.	COMMENCEMENT.	ENDING.
		<i>8 27th Oct. 1903</i>	<i>19th Sept. 1905</i>	<i>Offie</i>	<i>27th Oct. 1903</i>	<i>Feb. 1908</i>
Increased to \$12.00 per month from April 19th 1908 by act of that date.				<i>Geneva</i>	<i>" "</i>	<i>" 29th July 1909</i>
Fees: INC. 25 OCTOBER 6, 1917				<i>Inc 30 May 1, 1920</i>		
Transferred from: <i>Columbus,</i>				Transferred to:		
Died:				Bureau notified:		
Remarks:						
Former Roll No. <i>827</i>						

NAME: *Lucas Anna E* (3-P. A. 2) SPECIAL ACT

Certificate No. *640844* ARMY WIDOW. Law: GENERAL LAW

Name of Soldier: *Lucas, Simeon S* SPECIAL ACT.

Service: *Pr 7th Pa V Cav*

ISSUES.				MINORS—\$2 PER MONTH ADDITIONAL.		
CLASS.	RATE.	DATE OF COMMENCEMENT.	DATE OF CERTIFICATE.	NAME.	COMMENCEMENT.	ENDING.
		<i>12 19th Apr 1908</i>	<i>31st Mch 1908</i>			
		INC. 25 OCTOBER 6, 1917				
Fees:						
Transferred from: <i>TOPEKA, KANSAS.</i>				Transferred to: <i>Final rept. AUG 20 1918</i>		
REMARKED <i>3/4/18</i>				Bureau notified: <i>5/21/18</i>		
Remarks: <i>New Underwood Evidence filed with case</i>						
Former Roll No. <i>6276</i>						