

Charles Bradley, Civil War Sergeant, Prisoner of War, Long-Time Town Constable

Charles Bradley was born on Main Street here on April 14, 1842 to English immigrant and farmer Thomas Bradley and Newburyport native Sarah Wadleigh. After surviving the worst battles and Confederate prisons of the Civil War, Bradley returned, serving for over three decades as a constable.

Bradley lived here until August, 1862, when with his first cousin [George Young Bradley](#), he enlisted in [Major Boyd's](#) Company A of the 19th Mass. Infantry Regiment. With the 19th, Bradley took part in some of the most [vicious and hazardous battles](#) of the Civil War. At Fredericksburg, in early December 1862, the 19th was one of two regiments volunteered to participate in the forlorn hope crossing of the Rappahannock River under enemy fire. On July 3, 1863, they [rebuffed Pickett's charge](#) at Gettysburg.

During the [Wilderness Campaign](#) in May of 1864, Bradley's war experience took a drastic turn. On May 12, 1864 during the "Bloody Angle" battle at [Spotsylvania Courthouse](#), the 19th Mass. Infantry led the charge in fog, rain, and deep mud under the heaviest firepower seen in the war. The hand-to-hand fighting "[assumed an unspeakable character all its own, unrelated to strategy and tactics or even victory or defeat.](#)" Half of the 19th was killed, wounded, or captured in this engagement.

On the following day, Bradley was [captured while on picket duty](#). He spent nearly a year in Rebel prisons near Richmond and at the infamous [Andersonville prisoner of war camp](#) in Georgia. A soldier who arrived shortly before Bradley [wrote](#), "As we entered the place, a spectacle met our eyes that almost froze our blood with horror, and made our hearts fail within us. Before us were forms that had once been active and erect;—*stahvart men*, now nothing but mere walking skeletons, covered with filth and vermin." Bradley refused freedom at the cost of fighting for the South. He survived; [James Dunn](#), his West Newbury [colleague in the 19th](#), died at Andersonville of [scurvy](#).

At the war's end, Bradley was one of [173 enlisted men](#) in the 19th freed as paroled prisoners of war. Notwithstanding a life-threatening trainwreck along the way, [he rejoined the 19th](#) in time for the parade review of the Army of the Potomac in Washington, D.C. on June 23, 1865. Days later he mustered out.

On September 15, 1865 in Newburyport, Bradley married Ella Rines, a Maine native who had been working in Boston. During the years after the war, Bradley lived in West Newbury, working as a farmer, a blacksmith, and a shoemaker—perhaps all at the same time. He became an active member of the [Major Boyd Post](#) of the Grand Army of the Republic.

Bradley was first elected as one of three West Newbury constables in [1880](#). In that era, constables were paid on a piecework basis. So, for instance, in [1885](#) the entire budget for constabulary and police services came to \$142.37, from which Bradley was paid a total of \$17: \$9 for services associated with elections and town meetings and \$8 for police work at the Ruddock factory fire, 4th of July celebrations, and similar events. While serving as constable, Bradley also worked as a shoemaker and took on other jobs, including as an [agent for a local undertaker](#).

In the summer of 1886, the Bradleys [bought a house](#) at [9 Bridge Street](#) in West Newbury. Bradley continued to live there even after becoming a widower in [1893](#). He moved to Main Street in [the 1910s](#). In 1920, when nearing 78 years old, he left West Newbury to live in the [Soldiers' Home in Chelsea](#).

Upon Bradley's [retirement as constable](#) after 32 years of continuous service, "the citizens of the town of West Newbury [in town meeting assembled](#)," did:

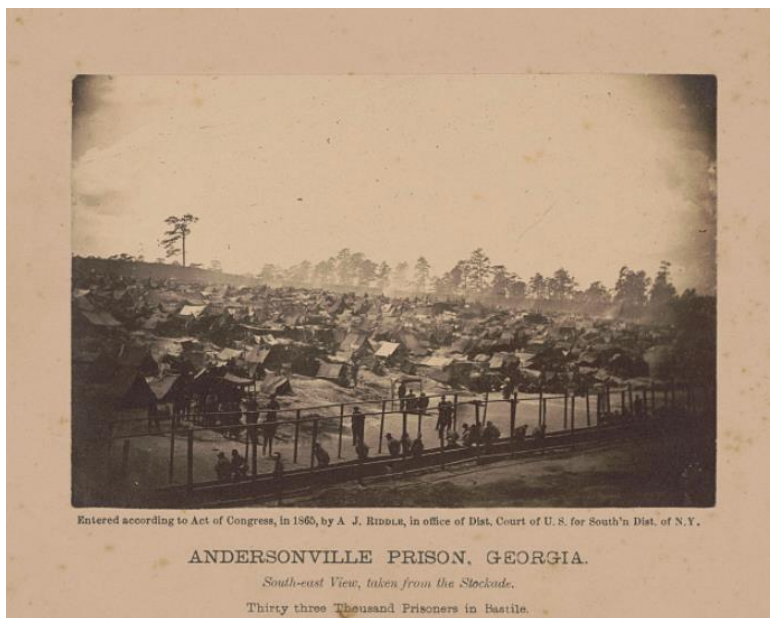
"Resolve That we realize and gratefully appreciate his services as an officer of this town, and

"Be it further Resolved That we express our appreciation of his faithful services as a soldier of the Civil War, and that future generations may know of his patriotic services. We desire to place on the record the fact that from Antietam to Spotsylvania he was always in the ranks and never in the hospital even thereafter till Appomattox; as a prisoner he endured the horrors of Andersonville.

"Therefore Be it Resolved That a copy of these resolutions be presented to Mr. Bradley and spread upon the records of the town."

Charles Bradley died on December 22, 1923 at age 80. He is buried with his wife at the Bridge Street Cemetery.

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Source: [Library of Congress](#)



Charles Bradley Source: G.A.R. Library



Battle of Spotsylvania Court House

Source: [Battlefields.org](#)



Charles Bradley's Civil War Artifacts

Source: G.A.R. Library



*19th Mass. Infantry Regiment
Battle Flags Source: [Wikipedia](#)*