

Charles Lewis Carr, Local Businessman, Newlywed, and West Newbury's Fallen WWI Soldier

Most remembered as West Newbury's contribution to the 53,402 American combat deaths in the first World War, Charles Lewis Carr was born here on [January 7, 1888](#), the oldest son of Ann Spalding and George Gardner Carr. A lifelong resident, Carr married Sunday school teacher/hometown girl Madeline Archer Trow in 1913. Upon his wedding, he was [described as](#) "very popular in town among a large circle of friends and ... a successful business man, being associated with his father in the wholesale meat business" located at 66 Main Street. The newlyweds lived at [200 Main Street](#) and at this time, Carr was listed among the Town's ["heaviest taxpayers."](#)

The couple's lives changed forever on [October 5, 1917](#), when Carr left for Army training at Camp Devens in Ayer, MA, to serve in the Great War. In [November he joined the 328th Infantry Regiment](#), part of the 82nd Division, at a training camp in Atlanta, GA. Because the 82nd drew soldiers from all over the country, many of whom were recent immigrants learning English in camp, it was called the ["All American Division."](#)

On May 1, 1918, Carr and others in the 328th's Third Battalion sailed from Boston to Liverpool. He was "someplace in France" by the end of May, in the trenches. A [history of the 328th](#) described the "dreary monotony of trench warfare ... : to sit for days in a trench gazing intently at the enemy lines and never see anything to shoot at, chow details, wire stringing details, trench digging details, patrols every night with monotonous regularity and at the end of several weeks to be holding the same positions with nothing apparently accomplished."

September found Carr marching double file in rain and fog, amidst shelling and nerve gas, through and around the traffic of American artillery and machine gun companies moving into position, all advancing toward the heavily fortified Argonne Forest. The [Meuse-Argonne Campaign](#), which lasted from September 26 to the war's end on November 11, 1918, was ["the largest and most costly military operation in American history,"](#) with over a million US troops in the battle. Commanders sent massive waves of relatively unprepared doughboys into frontal attacks against an experienced enemy deploying modern,

[industrial warfare techniques](#) from long-held, hardened positions.

At [7 a.m. on October 8, 1918](#), Carr's Company I was ordered to attack at the village of [Cornay](#). The troops faced relentless machine gun fire, heavy shelling, and the Germans' new tactic of [air attacks](#). That day they succeeded in capturing a few buildings at the edge of town, at an enormous cost of American lives. [Army records](#) say of Charles L. Carr, "Killed in action October 8, 1918, at Cornay, Meuse-Argonne offensive." He was one of [26,277 Americans](#) killed in the Meuse-Argonne operation, the final battle of the "Great" War that was not the [War to End All Wars](#).

It appears that Carr's fate was far from clear to those back home in West Newbury. The first newspaper reports of Carr's death appeared in [December 1918](#). A memorial service at the Second Congregational Church, featuring his photo with no casket, did not take place until [February 15, 1919](#). Flags in Town were at half-mast during the service. Other [memorial services](#) followed, incorrectly noting his date of death as October 15, 1918, well after the fight at Cornay.

Like others who perished in the chaos of the Meuse-Argonne campaign, Carr had been hastily buried in France. The [War Department](#) was content to leave fallen Americans in foreign lands. Americans were not. Ultimately, some 74,000 postcards were sent to the bereaved, allowing them to elect to have their loved ones exhumed and returned home. Between 1919 and 1922, the US military identified, disinterred, and repatriated about 44,000 fallen servicemen, including Charles L. Carr.

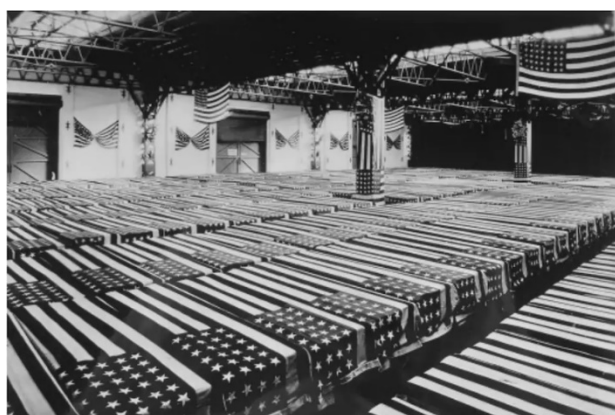
When the Town's American Legion Post was formed at the end of 1919, it was named [Charles L. Carr Post No. 240](#) in honor of West Newbury's only soldier killed in action in World War I. Upon the return of his remains, the Carr Post arranged a [full military funeral](#). Carr's body was brought to Town on August 19, 1921, and laid in state at Town Hall. At the end of services at the Second Congregational Church on the 21st, roads were closed as a caisson drawn by six black horses conveyed Carr's flag-draped casket down Main Street past his widow's house to Merrimack Cemetery, where he was finally buried at home.

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House where the 328th Infantry's Third Battalion made its stand in Cornay in October 1918

Source: [*History of the 328th Infantry Regiment*](#)



Caskets of U.S. service members are assembled in Antwerp, Belgium, for shipment home. (U.S. Army Signal Corps)

Source: [*The Washington Post 5/31/2021*](#)

Source: [*World War I battle devastated U.S. forces, broke hearts at home*](#)



Charles Lewis Carr Source: *G.A.R. Library*



On the first day of the Meuse-Argonne Allied offensive in France, a U.S. Army 37-mm gun crew man their position. (AP file photo)