

EBEN BRADBURY, JR. MEMORIAL

Hosted by: historian Bethany Dorau



Eben Bradbury left his home on Bromfield Street to join the Marines on April 17, 1917, just eleven days after the United States declared war on Germany. He was not the first Newburyport resident to join the effort, however, as others had joined Canadian and British units earlier in the war. Eben was sent first to Philadelphia, where he received rudimentary training, and was ashore in France just two months later. For the next year, he fought all over France with the 55th Marine Company.

At the end of May, 1918, German troops were surging toward Paris in a last, desperate effort to secure the capital and end the war in a position of strength. American troops were beginning to arrive in significant numbers, and German General Ludendorff knew that the window for a German

advance was closing. By June 1, the Marines had been given the daunting task of defending a former aristocratic hunting preserve known as the Bois de Belleau, or Belleau Wood. On June 6, the Battle of Belleau Wood began, with ferocious fighting through wheat fields and dense thickets. When the day was over, the Marines had suffered the greatest casualties in their history, but they held German advance was closing. By June 1, the Marines had been given the daunting task of defending a former aristocratic hunting preserve known as the Bois de Belleau, or Belleau Wood. On June 6, the Battle of Belleau Wood began, with ferocious fighting through wheat fields and dense thickets. When they day was over, the Marines had suffered the greatest casualties in their history, but they held



The last man to see Eben alive was Sargent Karl McCune, who sent a letter to his parents to let them know what had happened to their son.

"On the morning of the 12 of June, I was talking to your son just before going over the top and that is the last time I (saw) him. He was killed by a machine (gun) bullet just before reaching the woods."

Though Eben was killed in June, it was nearly three months before his family was notified, and in the meantime, his father received assurances from the war department via his United States Congressman that there was not need to worry about his son. In the end, the notice of his only son's death came by accident. One of the many letters that his father had sent, pleading with him to reply, was returned in September, marked "Killed in Action".

In November, Newburyport mayor Walter B. Hopkinson sent a letter to Eben's father, requesting a photograph to hang in City Hall to honor the man who "who laid down his life for his country in France". It was the first of many efforts to honor the sacrifice of the young men who had died in battle during the war. When the American Legion established a post in Newburyport, concerned citizen and family friend S.P. Hale wrote a letter to the Newburyport Daily News urging the Legion to name its post for the "brave, daring, and plucky lad" who was "a chip off the old block". Though this post was not renamed, VFW Post 1745 in Newburyport was later named for Eben Bradbury and a fellow Newburyport battlefield casualty, Cornelius Doyle.

On Monday, July 4, 1921, Eben Bradbury's father noted in his diary, "Dedication of a boulder with tablet attached in the triangle recently named for Eben by the American Legion Post 150."

On Armistice Day, November 11, 1931 (also Eben's birthday), the artillery piece was dedicated. This 1917 105 mm Howitzer was one of many captured by American forces and brought back to the United States. Newburyport, like many cities and towns, requested an artillery piece as a memorial, and in 1931, they were the recipients of one of the last memorial canons in the United States Armory. By the time this piece was dedicated, Eben Bradbury's family had moved to California, and would never return to Newburyport. For the last three decades, it has been cared for by Steve Bradbury Jr., a Korean War Veteran and distant cousin.

Eben Bradbury is buried in the Aisne-Marne American Cemetery in the heart of Belleau Wood, renamed the "Bois de la Brigade de Marine" by the French in honor of the heroic efforts of Marines like Eben Bradbury, Jr.

