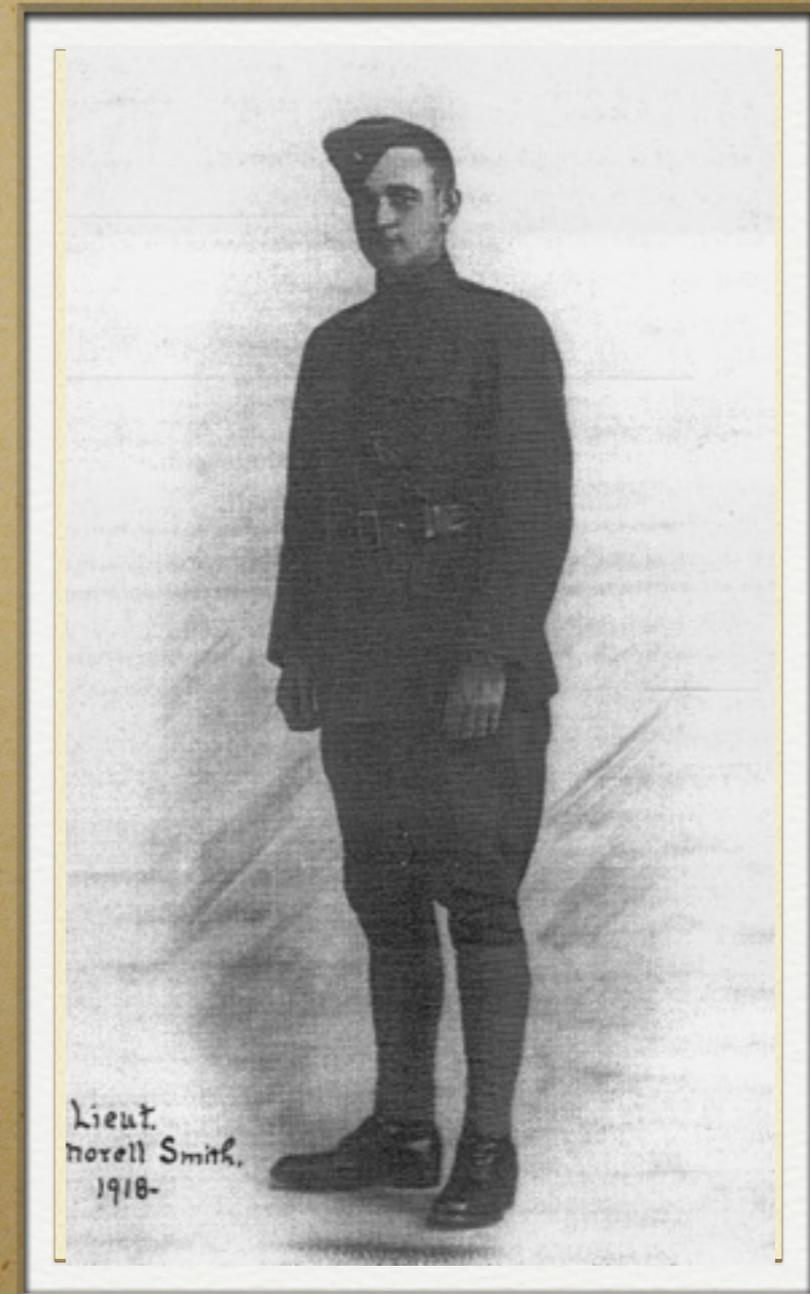


# The Story of Morell Smith (Revisited)

A joint presentation for the  
Newtown Historic Association  
and American Legion Post 440

by Mike Donovan and Jon Guy



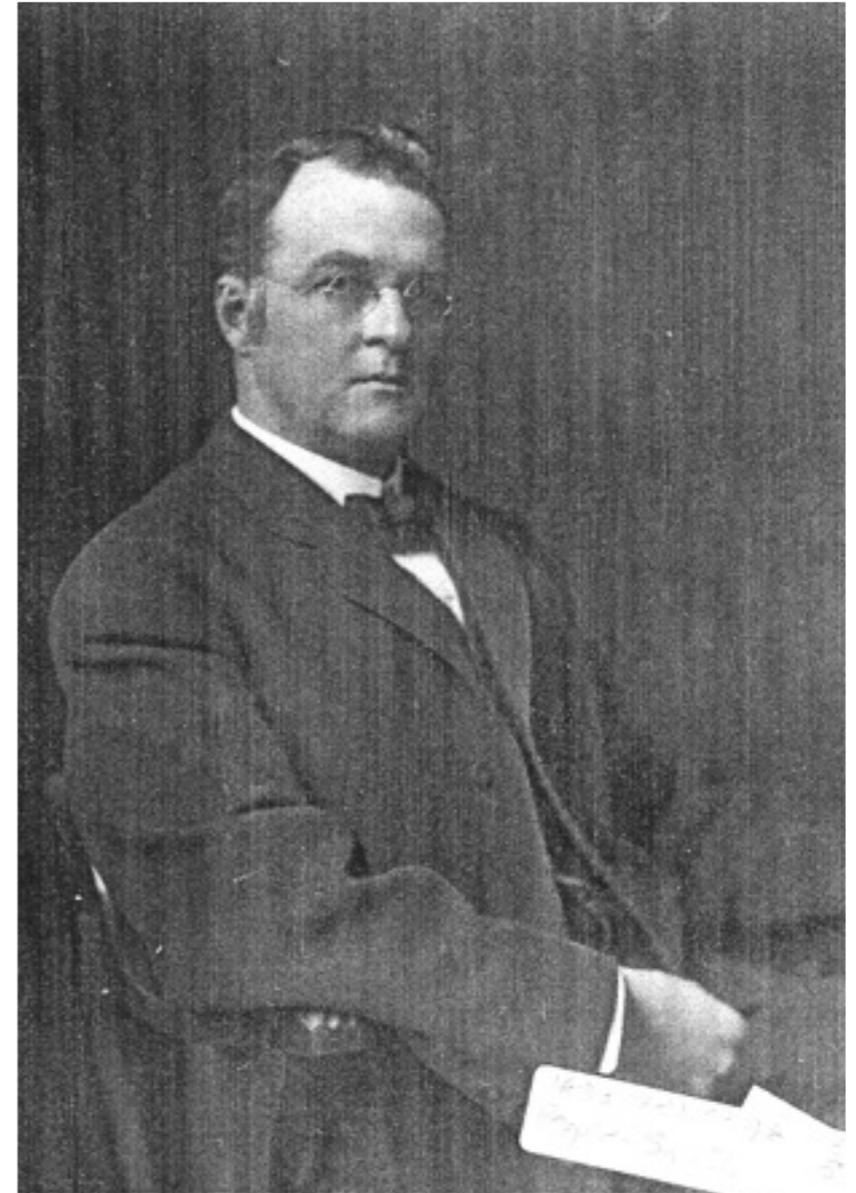
# Who was Morell Smith?

- Born in Newtown, September 3, 1888 (only child of Dr and Mrs C Smith)
- Newtown Public Schools
- George School Class of 1907
- Penn State Class of 1911
- Superintendent at Pulitzer / Whitney "Kiluna Farm" in Long Island, 1913
- Volunteered for Service, 1917
- Commissioned in France, June 1918
- Killed in Action in France, October 18, 1918

Lieut. Morell Smith Born Newtown-1888.  
Public Schools of Newtown; George-School-Class-07.  
State College of Penna. Class-1911.  
Military Training - Camp Upton (29) N.Y.  
"Over-seas" April-1918 with 77<sup>th</sup> Div.  
Commissioned upon completion of training in  
June; Became 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut; Co-"C"-310 Inf-  
78<sup>th</sup> Div., late in July-1918.  
Served at Thiaucourt (St Mihiel)-  
Sep. 17<sup>th</sup> to Oct. 5<sup>th</sup>.  
March to the Argonne-Oct. 5<sup>th</sup> to Oct. 15<sup>th</sup>-  
Engaged in the first phase of the  
"Meuse Argonne Offensive"-Oct. 16<sup>th</sup>  
on the Grand Pre-St. Juvin sector.  
Killed in action-at Bois de Loges, early  
morning of Oct. 18<sup>th</sup> while leading a  
Volunteer-Patrol.

# Dr. Charles B. Smith

- Born in Newtown, November 1864 (son of Dr. Elias Smith)
- Jefferson Medical College Class of 1884
- Married M. Anna Stackhouse, 1887
- Newtown's Family Physician
- President, Bucks County Medical Society, 1909-1910
- Died in Newtown, December 1927



# M. Anna Smith

- Born Maria Anna Stackhouse in Penn's Manor, 1861
- New Haven School of Medicine (now Yale School of Nursing) Class of 1884
- With sister Martha, was one of the first two Registered Nurses in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
- Married Dr. Charles Smith, 1887
- Led project to clear Newtown Creek and mark original Newtown Commons in 1930's
- Died in Newtown, November 1945



# The Early Years



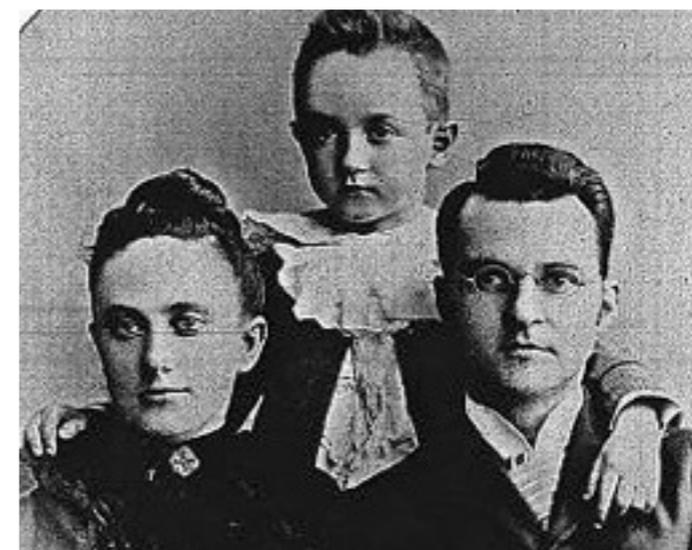
**Home/Office: 1 South State Street**



**3 Months**



**18 Months**

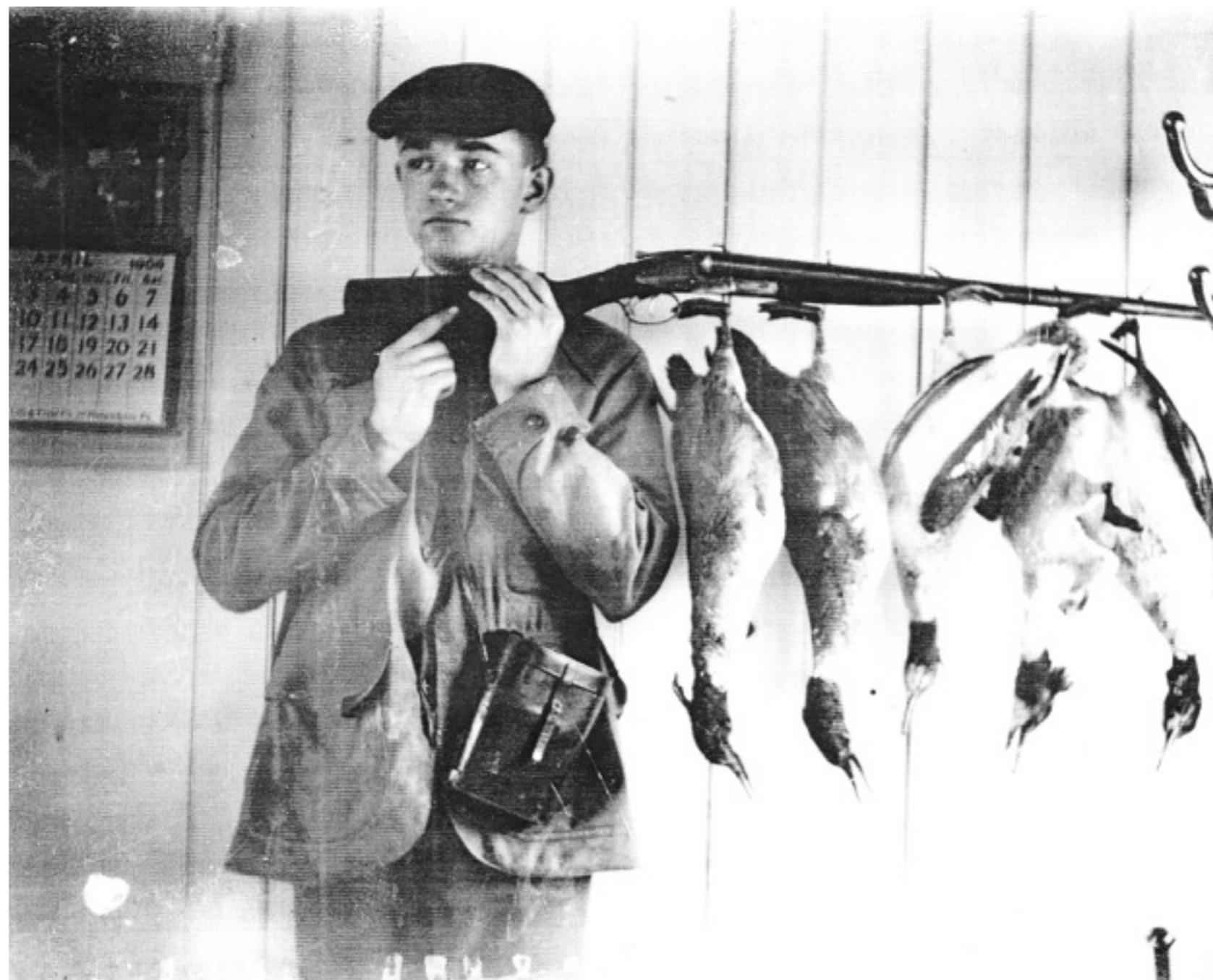




Morell Smith  
Age 7

Wynkoop Post 427, Grand Army of the Republic  
Temperance House, Memorial Day, 1896

# The Early Years



Taken in April 1906 (Age 17)

# George School

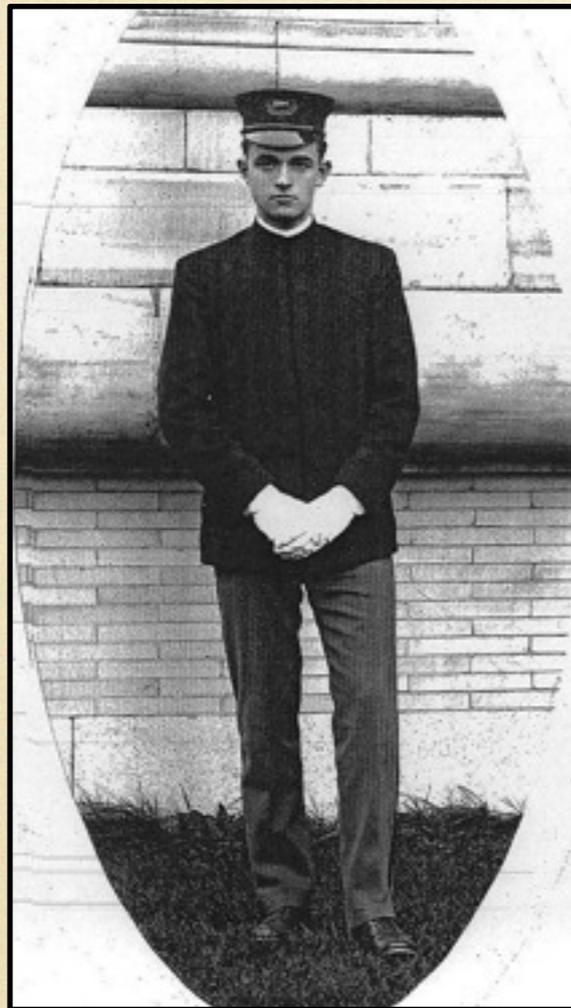
## Class of 1907

George School's thirteenth commencement was held on Fifth-day morning, Sixth month 13th, at 10 30 o'clock. The assembly room was filled with an interested audience. A special train that had left Philadelphia at 9 15 brought many friends of the school from that city and more distant points. On the platform, besides the principal and graduating class, were a number of the members of the Yearly Meeting's committee having charge of the school. A Scripture reading by Principal Walton opened the exercises.

Orations were delivered by three members of the class. The first to be introduced was Morell Smith, of Newtown, whose subject was "The New Agriculture." Farming, he said, is coming to be recognized more and more as a profession, rather than as a dull, laborious method of gaining a livelihood. In this country, which is the inexhaustible farm of the world, farmers enjoy many advantages.



# Life at Penn State

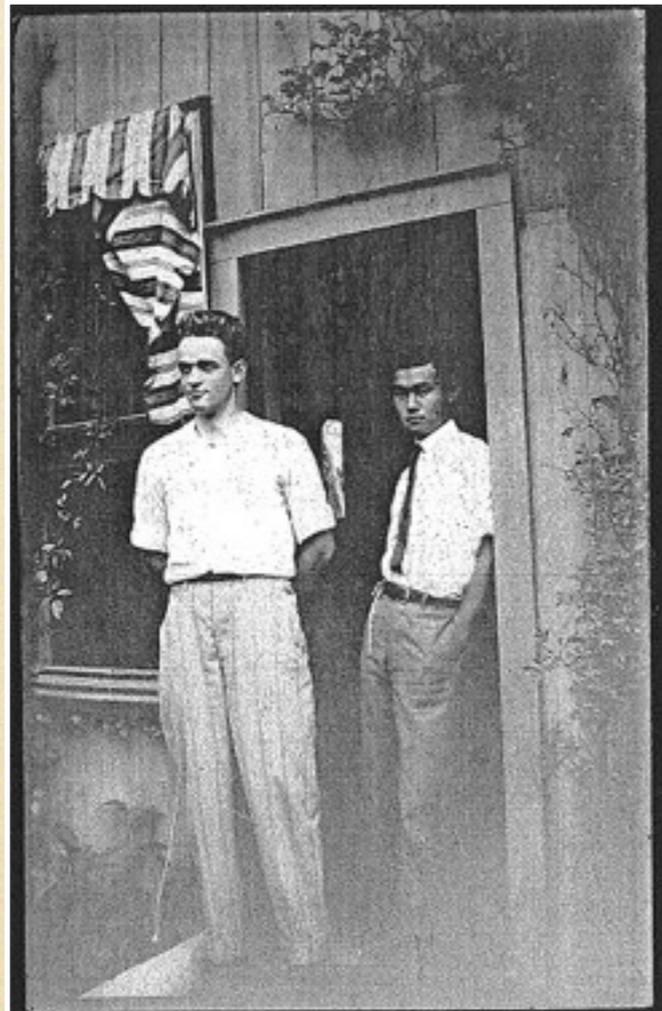


**Cadet, 1908**

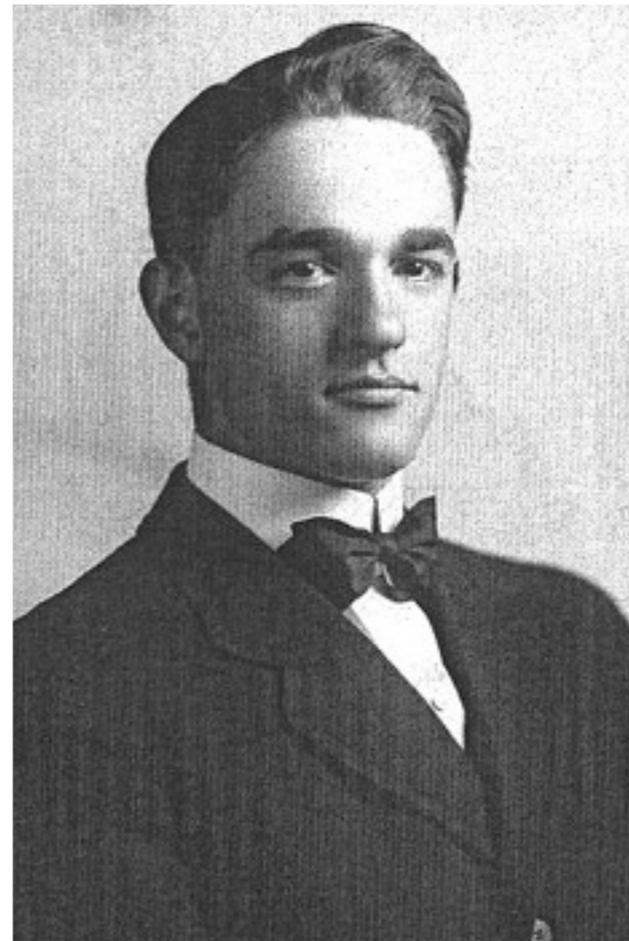


**Dorm Room, circa 1909**

# Graduation, 1911



Moons - Summer  
1909 - or 1910



Senior Year Photo, 1911  
Editor-in-Chief, "La Vie"

# Managing Kiluna Farm



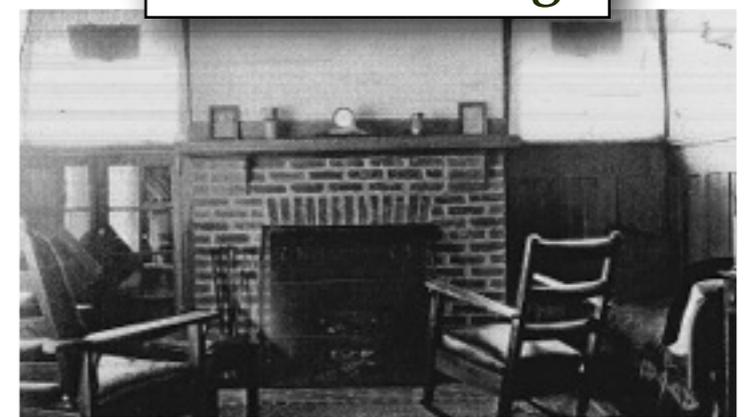
**Kiluna Farm, 1910-1990  
Manhasset, Long Island**



**Superintendent,  
c.1915**



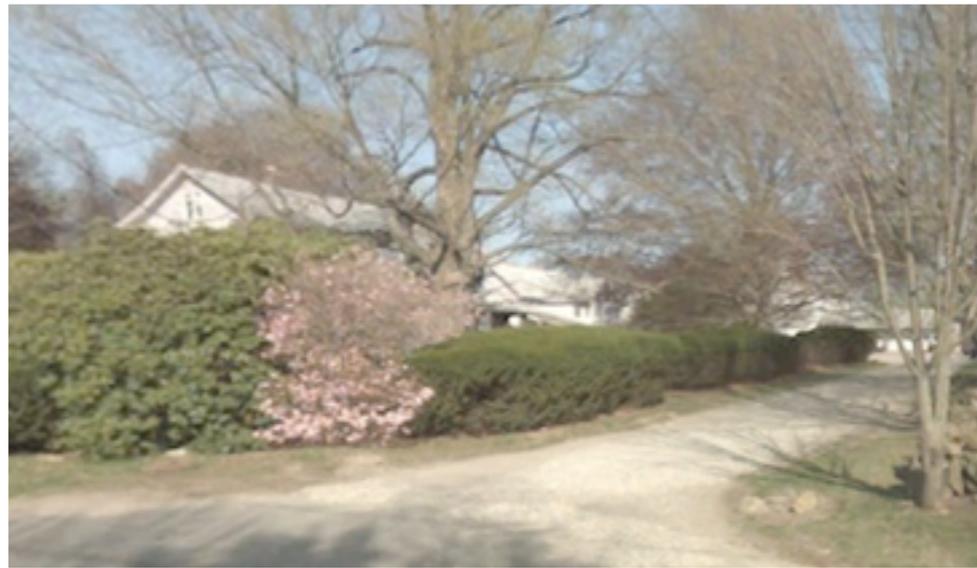
**Morell's Cottage**



# The Love Interest: Miss Sarah Platt



**Platt Family, 1917**



**The Platt House - Milford, CT**

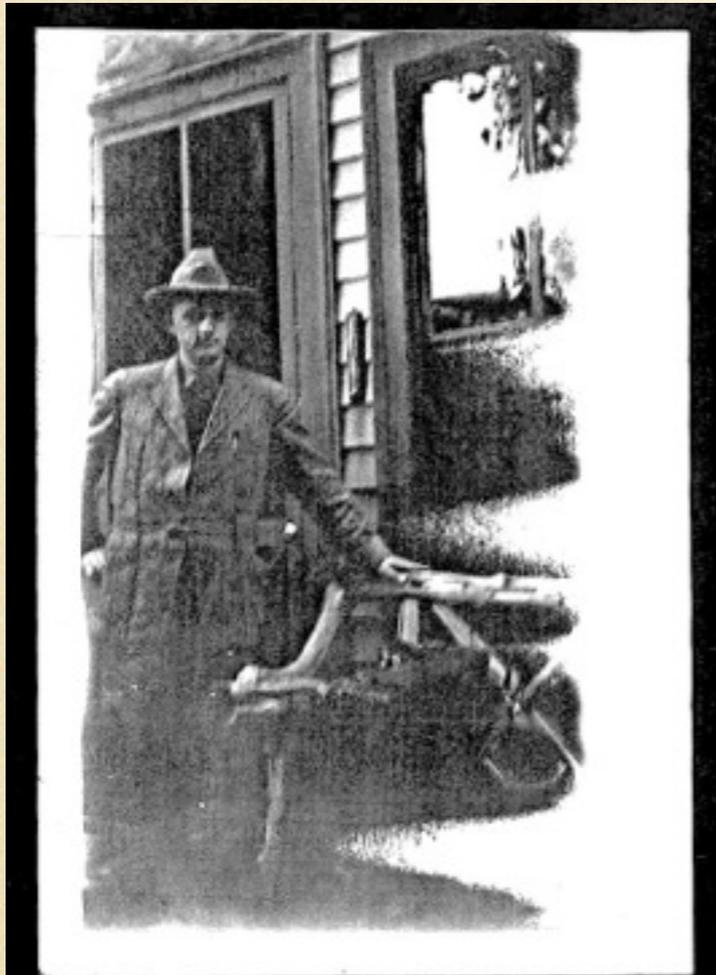
- Born in Milford, Connecticut, 1898
- Morell Smith met Sarah while visiting her father in 1913 to learn about hybrids of McIntosh apples
- Morell attended her graduation from Milford High School in June 1917
- Attended Skidmore College for one semester in 1917-1918
- In 1921, she married Milford dairy farmer Cornelius Stowe (d.1981); they had three daughters
- Died age 101 at her daughter Joan's home in Milford, 1999

# America Goes to War

- Until 1917, America had done its utmost to remain neutral towards the combating nations of the Great War
- In 1917, Germany refused to halt its unrestricted U-Boat attacks on ships destined to Britain and France; this resulted in loss of American lives
- Also that period, British intelligence intercepted a telegram to the German ambassador in Mexico, suggesting Mexico ally with Germany against America
- President Wilson asked Congress for a declaration of war on April 6, 1917



# Morell Volunteers



Afternoon of Sep. 18-1917-  
Last photo in Bivilliam Clottus-  
Taken just as leaving home-

Am preparing to go "south" on Friday for a few days & hope to have a good time. Cultivate the "Franklin" but keep your eye open for a "Rolls-Royce". I wonder if you remember the 3 important things I tried to tell you. Cordially & good luck,  
Morell.

*"...when I look at the stars from the trenches in France I will think of 'that night'.  
...I wonder if you remember the 3 important things I tried to tell you."  
- Morell Smith to Sarah Platt, August 1917*

*"I feel that I will enjoy military life and am going into it with my whole heart" - Morell Smith*



# Training in Camp Upton

- Due to his education and voluntary status, Morell Smith entered the Army as an officer candidate, assigned to the 306th Infantry, 77th Infantry Division (mostly New York immigrants)
- On September 18, 1917, he was 29 years old, 6'1" tall, and weighed 198 lbs.
- Training was hard that winter, due to unusually harsh weather conditions
- Promoted to First Sergeant, and was head of his squad of officer trainees
- Unit shipped off to France in April 1918



# Final Farewells



- Morell Smith's unit was scheduled to ship overseas from New York in mid-April 1918
- The State Dept. had a dance and farewell party for the departing New Yorkers, and Morell invited Sarah to come down, and put her up in a nice hotel in the City
- Refused permission to leave, Sarah was suspended the rest of the semester for leaving without permission -- the Dean was on the same train down to New York!
- She never regretted her decision to go, and never went back to study at Skidmore

# Off to France

- From arrival in theatre April until July 1918, Morell Smith's unit was assigned to a quiet sector and given training by British units



- In late July, Morell was given a commission to Second Lieutenant and reassigned as a platoon leader in Company C, 310th Infantry, 78th Division (largely comprised of immigrants from New Jersey)



# Correspondence

- The correspondence from Morell Smith to his parents and to Sarah Platt gives an interesting insight into the mindset of the American soldier in 1918
- There is a sense of purpose and duty that sounds remarkably similar to what one might have heard from a soldier in World War II, or even today
- Morell Smith was committed to do his part to ensure that free people could remain free, and that the world that came after the war would be better for the sacrifices made by those serving in the trenches

*You, the women of the world are looking for us to end the war with Victory. We must settle this war with a peace and league of nations that will make it forever impossible for a nation or group of nations to arm to the teeth, and, seeking the domination of the world, break its pledges to its unsuspecting neighbors, and slaughter their men, their women and their children. The pages of history must not be turned backward. This war of itself is the greatest of arguments for peace and we must insist on a peace that will protect the generations to come from the suffering this generation has endured. We are bound to win and we are going to win because we are in the right. The torch of civilization, undimmed by "Kultur", will blaze forth in greater brilliance, and out of it will come the world newborn.*

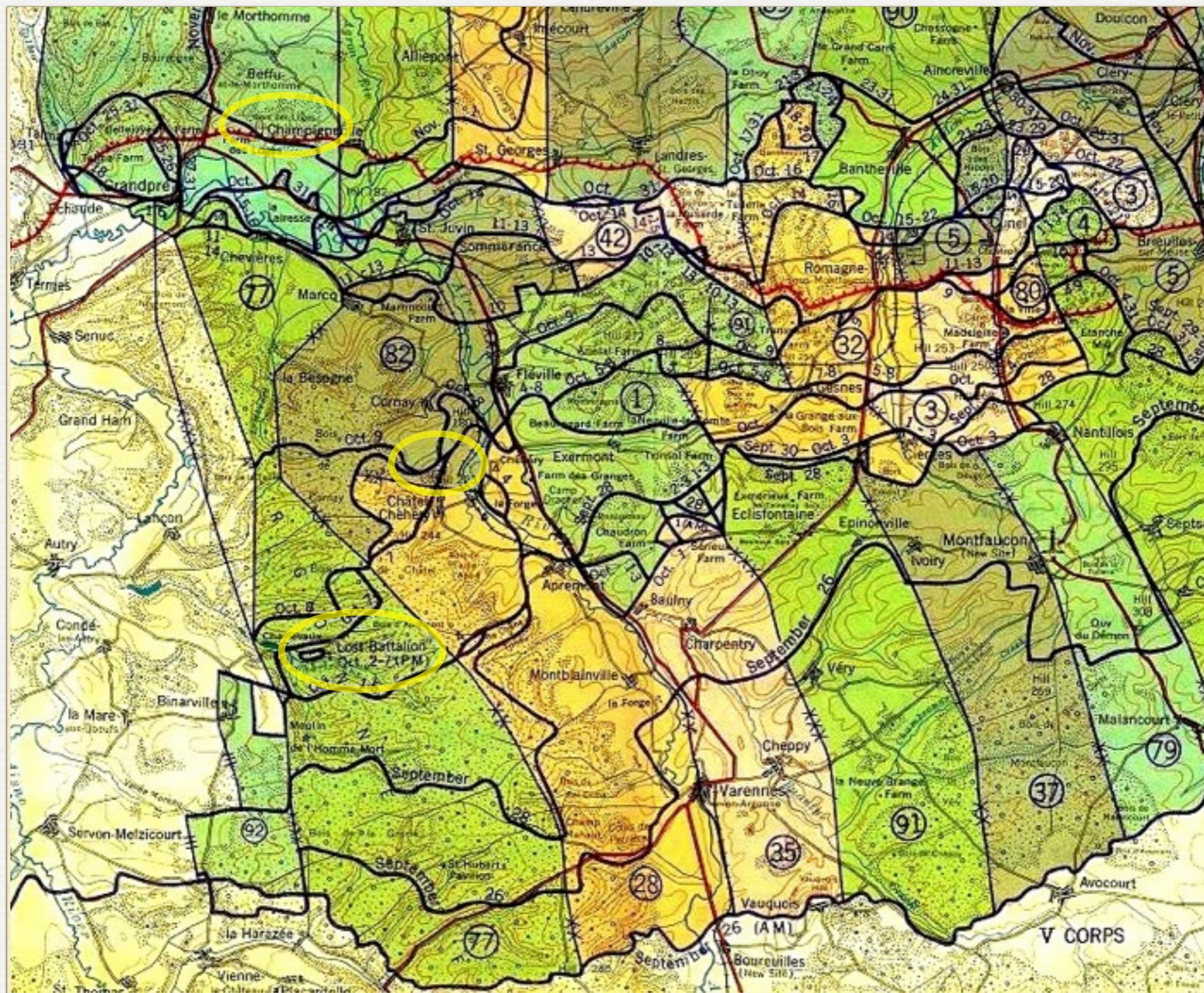
**Morell Smith, in a letter to Sarah Platt,  
September 25, 1918,  
from a "hole dug in the side of a trench"**

# Meuse-Argonne Offensive

- Following a successful operation at St Mihiel in September 1918, General Pershing formulated a plan of attack to drive the Germans off of the Hindenburg Line towards Sedan
- This is known as the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, as it was launched to assault the rough terrain between the Argonne Forest and the Meuse River
- Famous stories from this operation are those of Sergeant York and the "Lost Battalion" (map next slide)
- The 78th Division was in reserve until October 16th, relieving the 77th



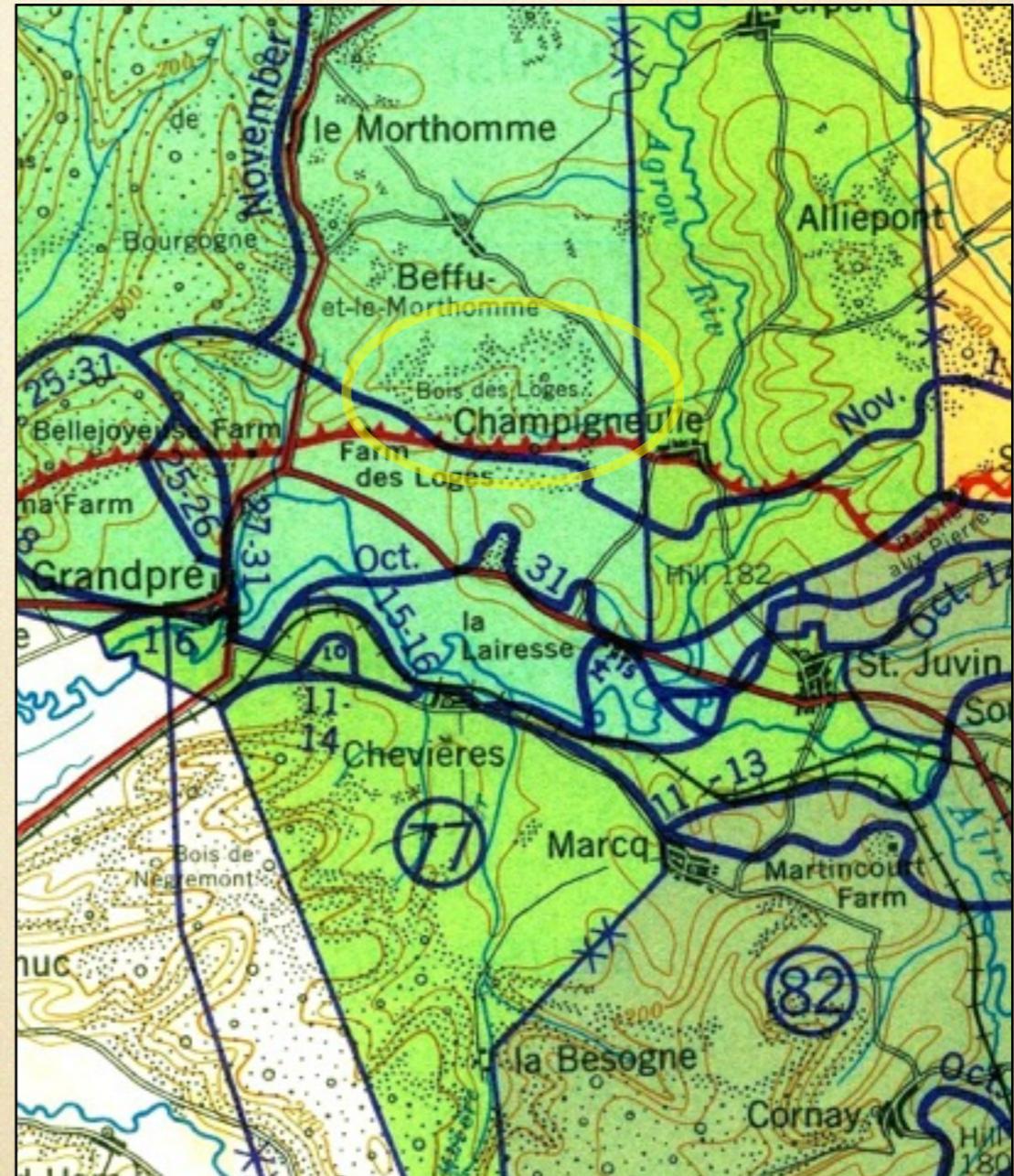
Shell Holes and Mine Craters  
Good illustration of type of ground in no man's land on the Meuse-Argonne front



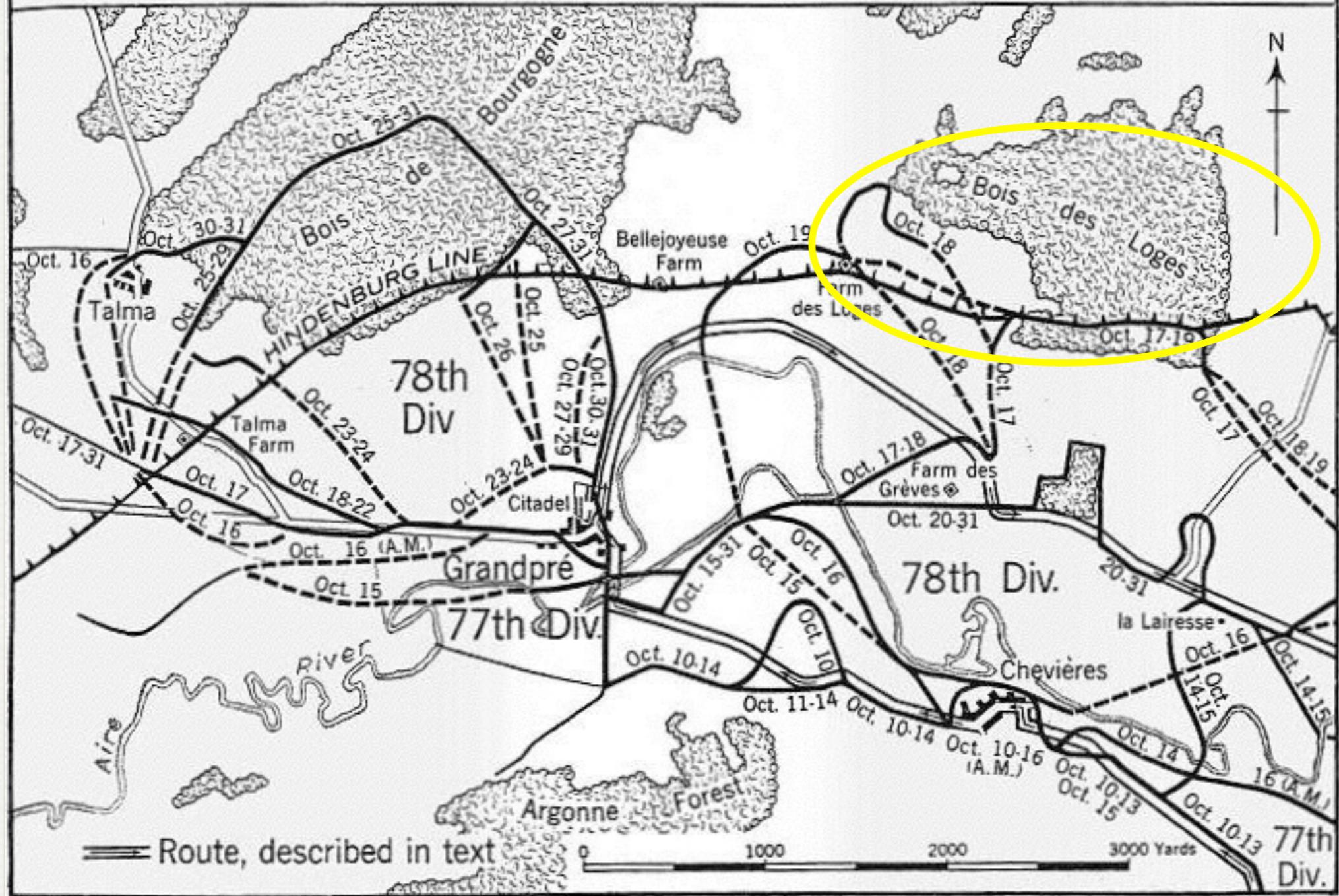
Meuse-Argonne Offensive, 1st Phase

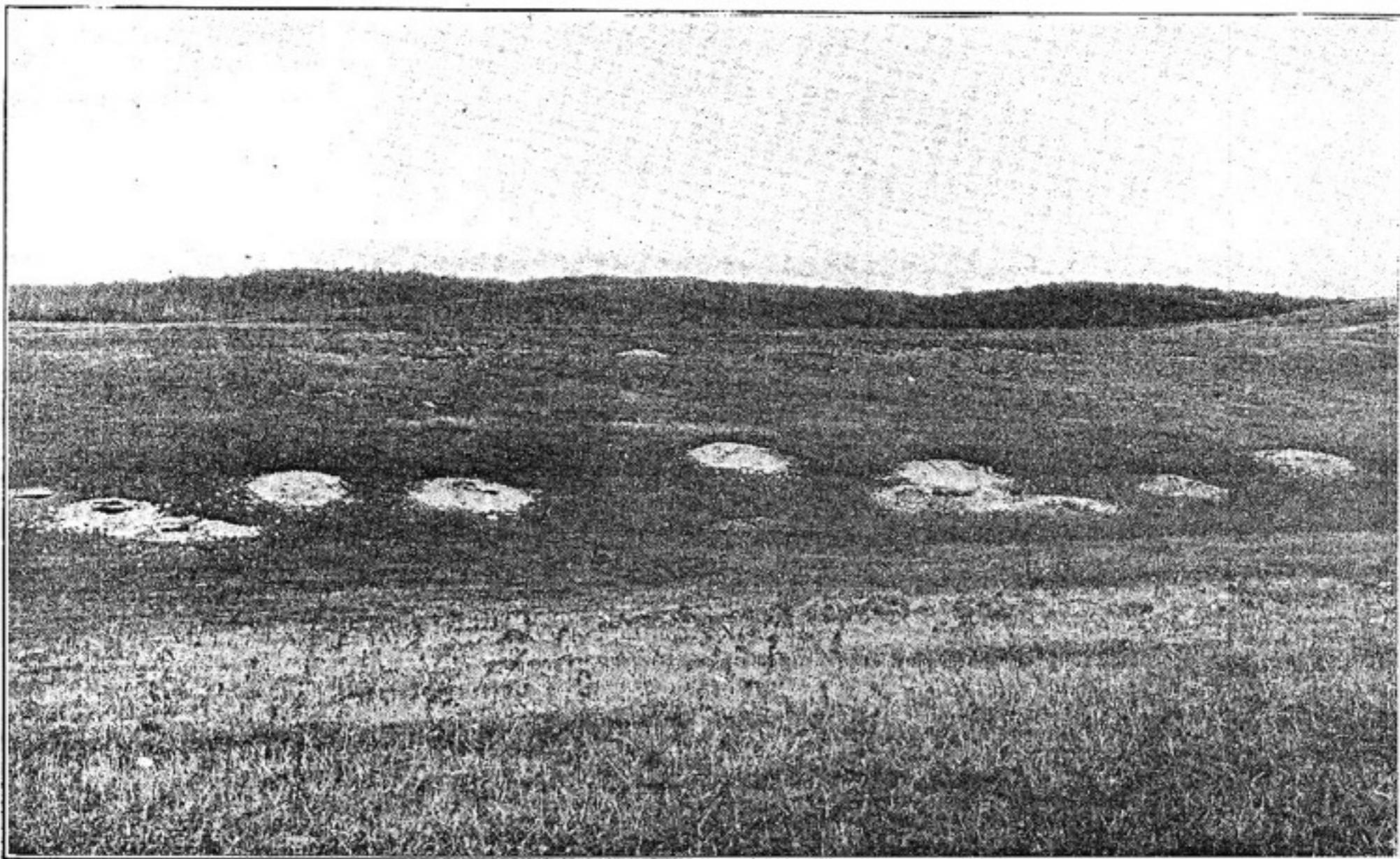
# The 310th Joins the Fight

- The mission of the 78th Division, and Morell Smith's 310th Infantry, was to keep the momentum of the attack past the Hindenburg Line
- The 77th Division incorrectly stated it had taken Grandpre, which put the 78th at great risk as it advanced towards the lines
- Morell Smith, the last officer in his company, entered the Bois des Loges with his platoon on October 17th, and desperate fighting ensued throughout the night and into the morning



# Ground Gained Near Grandpré by 77th and 78th Divisions October 10-31, 1918

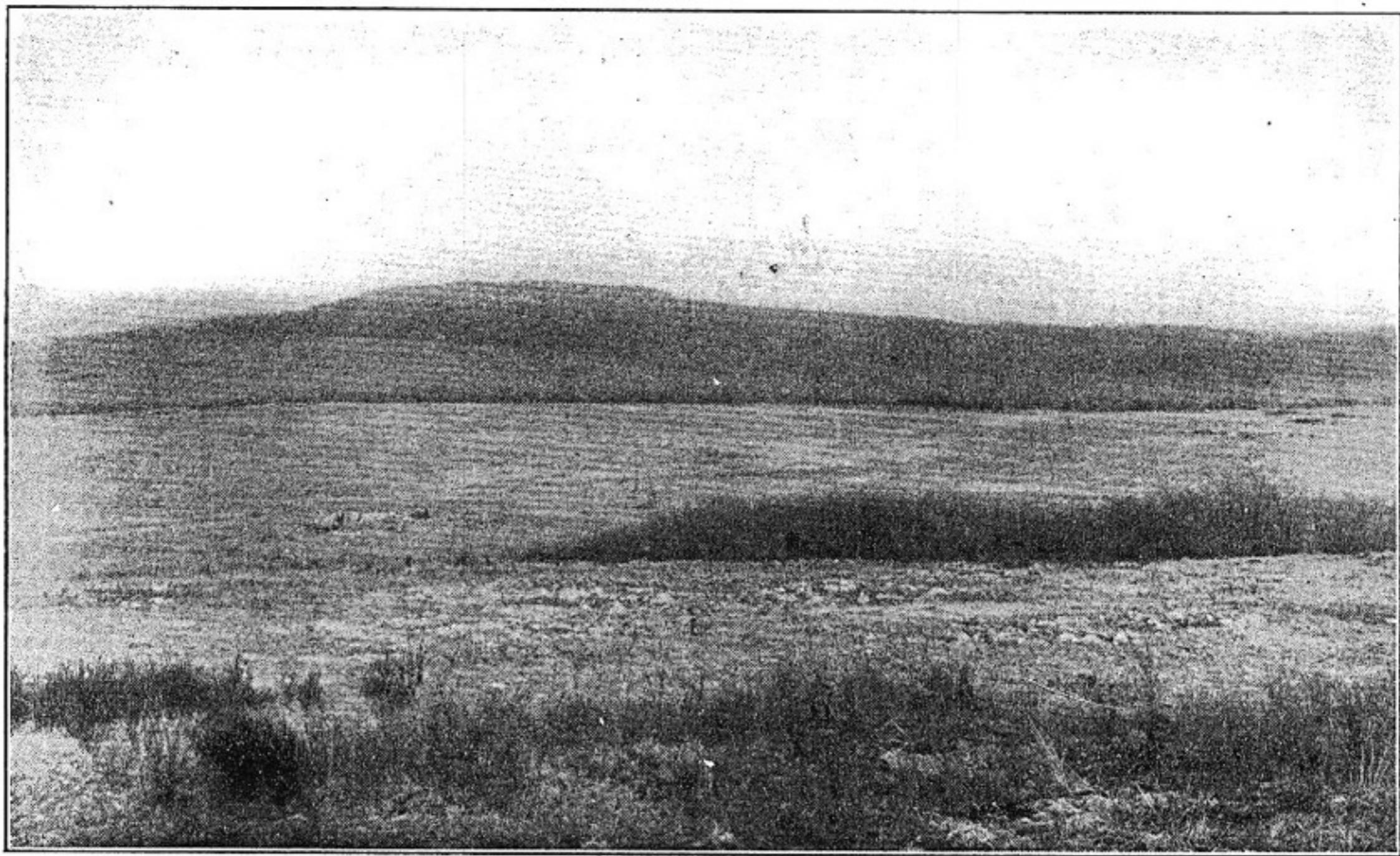




THE EDGE OF THE BOIS DES LOGES



Bois des Loges Today



Below the edge of this wood  
and beyond the roadway  
Lt. Smith was killed.

THE BOIS DES LOGES

11



Bois des Loges Today



Captured German Machine Gun on the Citadel at Grandpré  
Note the excellent field of fire



Inside the Bois des Loges



A Street in Grandpré, October 1918

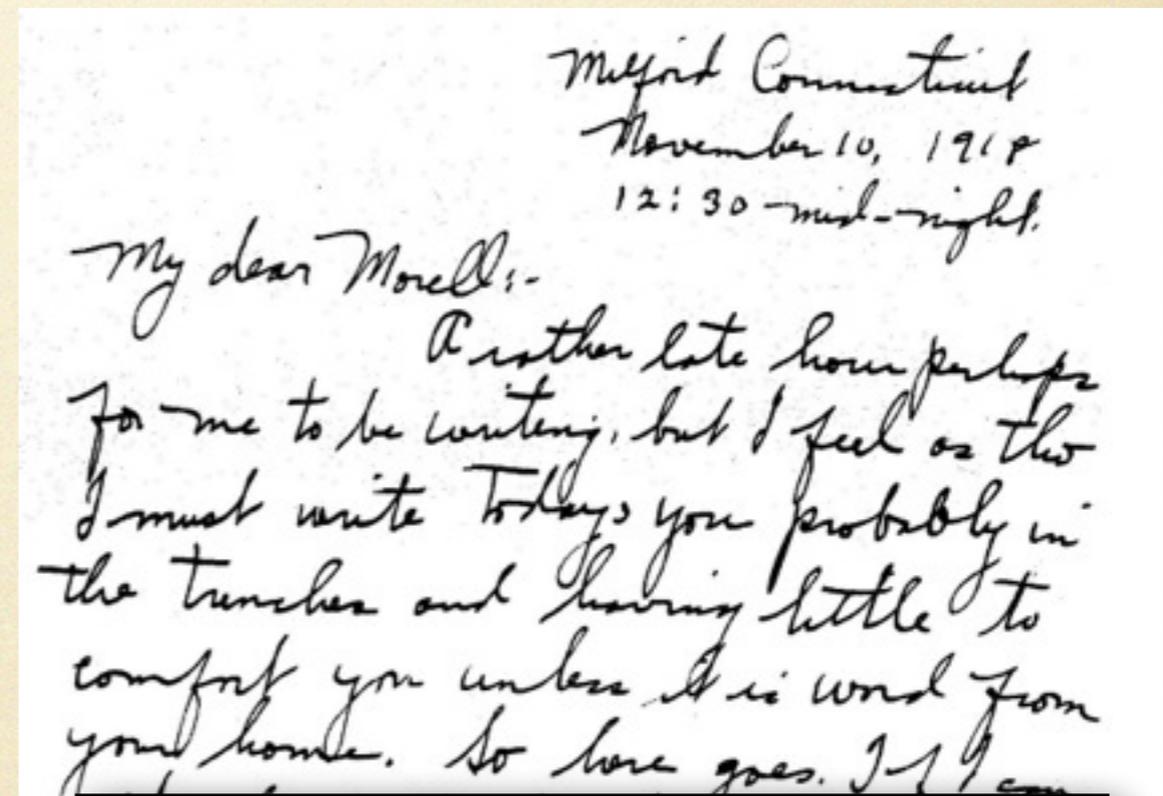


Grandpre' Today

# No Word from Morell

- The final letter home from Morell Smith to his parents was written on October 14, 1918, four days before his death
- We are missing that letter, but some of his words were:

*"Mud was very deep, country and roads rough, exposed to long-range gunfire by day, bombing raids by night. Food conditions were bad; kitchens were in the rear, unable to be brought forward. Immediately before action on the front line, many of the men were ill."*

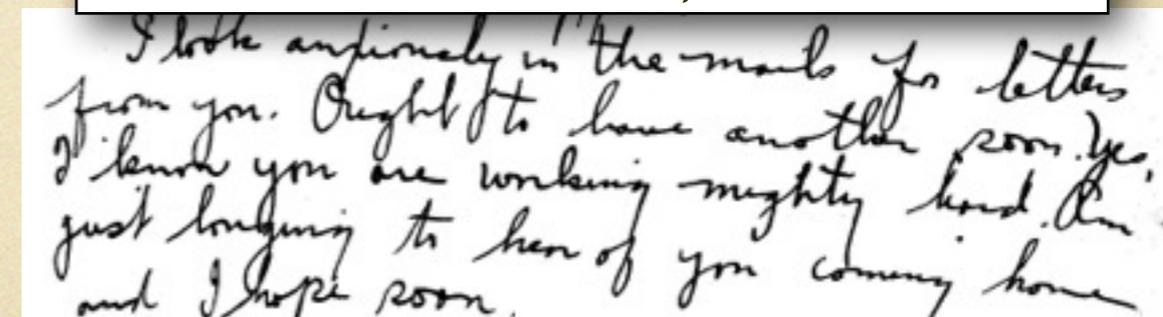


Milford Connecticut  
November 10, 1918  
12:30 - mid-night.

My dear Morell:-

A rather late hour perhaps for me to be writing, but I feel as tho I must write Today's you probably in the trenches and having little to comfort you unless it is word from your home. So here goes. I-I am

**Excerpts from Sarah's final letter to Morell:  
November 10, 1918**



I look anxiously in the mails for letters from you. Ought to have another soon. Yes, I know you are working mighty hard. Am just longing to hear of you coming home and I hope soon.

# The Fog of War

Second Lieutenant Morrell Smith, Company "C," missing since October 18, 1918, was slightly wounded early on the morning of that day. He was last seen in the Bois des Loges as he started back for the Battalion Aid Station, accompanied by his orderly. Neither he nor his orderly ever reached the aid station, and have been carried as "missing" since that date. The Lieutenant and his orderly are believed to have been again wounded or possibly killed outright and their bodies never recovered.

From the *History of the 310th Infantry, 1919*

Lieut Smith - last words - to the little volunteer Platoon - attending him - and his faithful Orderly, as recorded were "Make straight for the middle of the woods - keep five yards apart." About 5 A.M. - They had advanced about 50 yds - when machine gun cut - 3 out of the 4 men down - fatally.

Annotation Written by Dr Charles Smith in 1920

# Missing in Action: Search for Remains

Signal Corps, United States Army. 82579  
Telegram. 2695

RECEIVED  
15 MAR 1919  
O.C.O.M.  
G.R.S.

Received at  
58 PM U 141 OB  
NEUFCHATEAU MCH 14TH 1919  
CHIEF GRAVES REGISTRATION SERVICE

TOURS  
REPORT ON CASE OF LT MORRELL SMITH PERIOD I PERSONALLY VISITED THE VICINITY OF STJUVIN IN AN ENDEAVOR TO LOCATE THE GRAVE OF LT SMITH AND HAVE ALREADY HAD SEVERAL DISINTERMENTS MADE IN AN ENDEAVOR TO LOCATE THIS GRAVE PERIOD ALSO LEFT INSTRUCTIONS WITH THE OFFICER IN CHARGE OF CONCENTRATION TO HAVE ALL AVAILABLE FORCES PUT TO WORK MAKING DISINTERMENTS OF THE UNIDENTIFIED BURIALS SOME ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY IN NUMBER IN THE VICINITY OF THIS VILLAGE AND LT SMITHS GRAVE WILL BE LOCATED IF HE IS BURIED IN THIS AREA PERIOD EVERY POSSIBLE FACILITY WAS AFFORDED SERGEANT WALDO IN HIS MISSION BUT HE KNEW VERY LITTLE ABOUT THIS AREA OR ABOUT THE BURIAL PLACE OF LIEUT SMITH AND HE RETURNED WITHOUT REPORTING TO THESE HEADQUARTERS PERIOD I AM TO MAKE ANOTHER VISIT ON MONDAY AND WILL PERSONALLY FOLLOW THIS CASE PERIOD G 951 S....

STATEN  
758PM

82579

March 1919

G.R.S. Form #135  
IDENTIFICATION OPINION  
FILE NO. 82579

OPINION  
CASE *Smith, Morrell, see to G.C. 310 10/4*  
GRAVE *Gr. 23, Sec. 90, Plot 1, Coy. 1237*  
DECISION *No identification*

Date of Enlistment		Emergency Address		Report on Disinterment	
A.G.O. Report	W/A Report	A.G.O. Report	W/A Report	Report on Disinterment	W/A Report
Missing	Dental Work	Dental Work	Missing R.D.	Dental Work	W/A R.D.
U.S.					
U.L.	<i>Description of clothes does not agree with those which father says this man wore at time of death.</i>				
L.R.	<i>Also, Morrell Smith was not as frame as sufficient length of time to have above preparation can be accounted for as follows:</i>				
L.L.	<i>Service Stripes.</i>				

HEIGHT  
WEIGHT  
HAIR  
FRACTURES

IDENTIFICATION TAGS  
Found on Body  
Found on Cross

OTHER IDENTIFYING MARKS

ORIGINAL BURIAL DATA  
Body in this Grave concentrated from *Gr. 23, Sec. 90, Plot 1, Coy. 1237*  
This man reported buried originally *Gr. 23, Sec. 90, Plot 1, Coy. 1237*  
Organizations of other men buried around original location

Investigator  
APPROVED:  
CONCURRED:

April 1921

June 1921

available - The are trying to establish  
of his admission to this Base Hospital  
His condition - expressed medically - to me  
How long he was in your hospital?  
His - survival - and his departure - and  
possible - WHERE?  
Be good enough bid Doctur - to tell me - a Father -

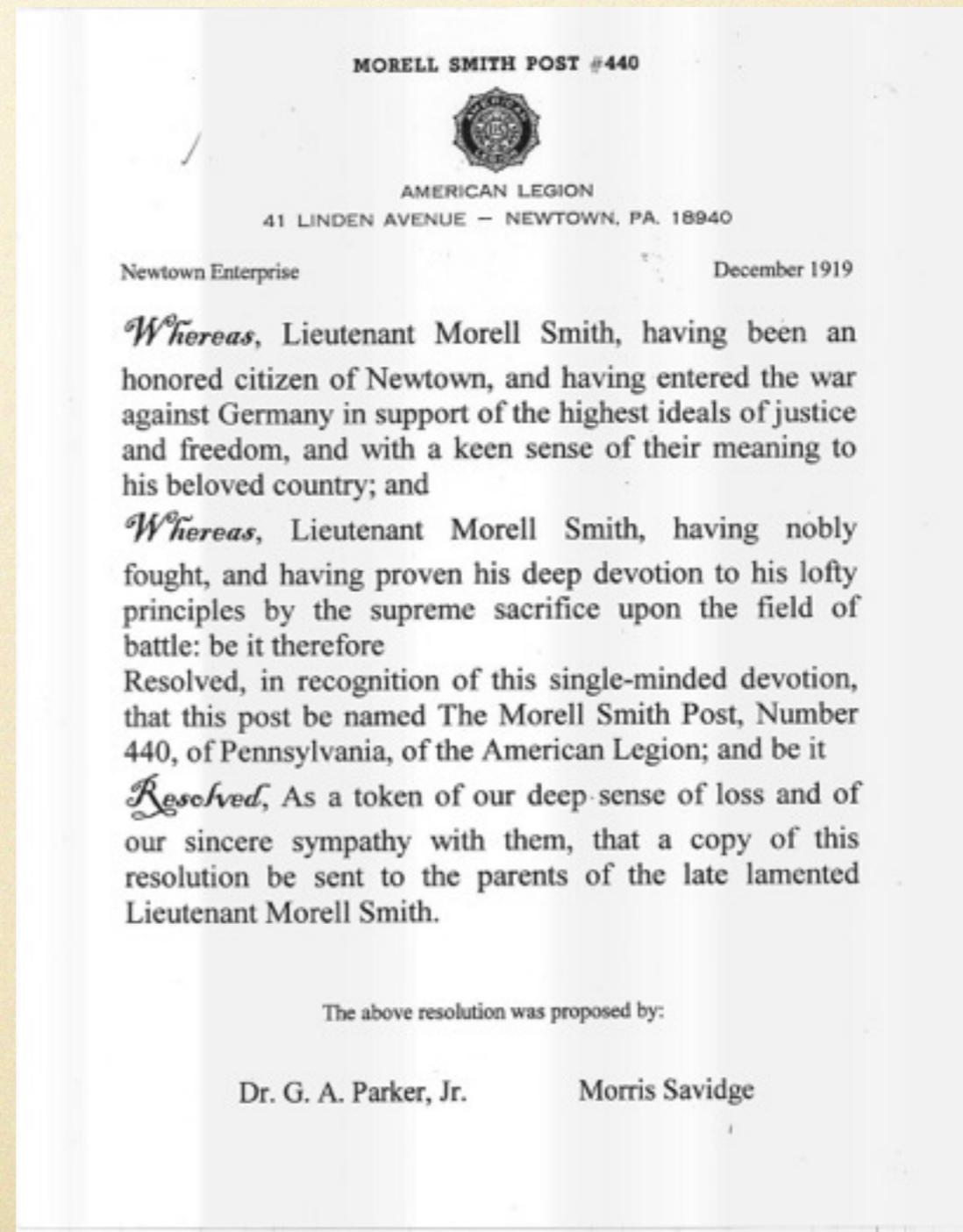
February 1919



Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery  
Romagne-Gesnes, France

# American Legion Post 440

- In late 1919, the returning veterans from Newtown resolved to form a chapter of the American Legion
- The group was assigned the designation "Post 440", and in honor of the only Newtonian to die in the Great War, named it The Morell Smith Post
- After WW2, the Legion was housed at 27 Court Street until the completion of the facility on Linden Avenue, which was dedicated in 1959



# The Facts Become Clearer

## Final Particulars Regarding the Death of Lieut. Morell Smith.

Dr. Charles B. Smith returned Tuesday from Rome, N. Y., where he had gone in search of detailed information concerning the precise manner and place of his son's death—facts which had escaped proper record at the time, owing to serious losses suffered by the company and the devastating and prevailing confusion. Through the efforts of a comrade, residing in Rome, who had been located there, the sole survivor of a "patrol" known to have gone out at 5 o'clock on the morning of October 18, this information was obtained.

*Newtown Enterprise -  
November 11, 1920*

Dr Charles Smith's Foreword to the  
*History of the 310th Infantry,*  
Newtown Library Copy

This little book depicts in unadorned narrative form, the Movements, of one of the many units of the American Expeditionary Force,-- (1917-18) from training to demobilization.

It is of particular value because representative of a great and potential movement of human forces, in World War History. In this it is brief and comprehensive.

To those who were more or less intimately acquainted with Lieut. Morell Smith, identified from earliest childhood with the community of Newtown, it will have an added interest, because of the fact that it was with this organization (310th Infantry) he served the Colors and paid the last full measure of devotion to his country and his country's ideals.

Born and nurtured amidst peaceful scenes and pursuits,-- rich in qualifications for his chosen vocation, he willingly sacrificed all, that the rampant hand of wanton might, be ever stayed and that Peace and International Justice should again prevail.

C.B.S.

1920

# July 1924: The Search is Over

- Remarkably, the U.S. Graves Registration Service never gave up on positively identifying all remains found in the Meuse-Argonne
- The remains of Morell Smith and his orderly, Private Augustino Ruggiero, were finally discovered in mid-1924, and identified by their ID tags
- The bodies were likely covered up by dirt from artillery bursts, but were agonizingly close to where the original search had been conducted
- Pvt Ruggiero now lies in the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery

QM 293 A-C  
Smith, Morell, 2nd Lt. July 3, 1924.

Dr. Charles W. Smith,  
Newtown, Bucks Co.,  
Pa.

Dear Dr. Smith:

The Quartermaster General is pleased to inform you that an extensive and very painstaking investigation has finally resulted in the recovery of your gallant son's body.

With reference to the circumstances of the identification, the Chief, American Graves Registration Service, Q. M. C., in Europe, has furnished the following report:

The body of 2nd Lieutenant Morell Smith, Co. C, 310th Infantry, was found buried with the body of Private Augustino Ruggiero, 1762042, Co. C, 310th Inf., in an isolated unde grave, Bois des Loges, Commune de Champigneulle, (Ardennes) Map Busancy 1/50000, East 294.920, North 287.495. The body of your son was buried in officer's whip cord uniform and field shoes. His identification tag was found on the remains reading: "M. Smith, 1st Sgt. Reg. Co. 306th Inf." reverse 2454900. Other means of identification were Officer's collar insignia, "crossed rifles" and USNA on collar of blouse. Braided on sleeve of blouse. Embroidered 2nd Lieut. bar on shoulder of blouse, and 2nd Lieut. bar with uniform.

Dental chart shows that there were found a number of gold and silver fillings.

Private Augustino Ruggiero's identification tag, bearing his name and serial number, was found on his remains.

The body of your son is now in the mortuary at the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery, Remagne-sous-Montfaucon, Meuse, France, awaiting instructions as to its final disposition. Kindly advise this office whether you wish the body of Lieutenant Morell Smith returned to this country for final burial. If so, instructions will be sent to the European Office, to return the body on the first available Shipping Board vessel sailing from a channel port. The return would probably be made within the next two or three months.

Please understand, it is not the policy of the Department to attempt to influence relatives as to the disposition of their dead, but to endeavor to carry out their wishes so far as is humanly possible. On the other

July 3, 1924



Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery  
Romaigne-Gesnes, France

# Finally Back in Newtown

## Buried With Military Honors.

Newtown's largest military funeral and one of the most impressive funerals which the town can recall was held Wednesday afternoon, when Lieutenant Morell Smith, of Company C, 310 Infantry, 78th Division, who was killed in action in the Argonne near the close of the world war, was laid at rest in Newtown Cemetery.

With an honor guard standing at attention near the flag-draped casket, friends of Lieut. Smith and of his family paid their last respects by calling at the home of the lieutenant's father, Dr. Charles B. Smith, between the hours of 10 and 2. A short private funeral followed after which the public attended the military ceremonies and burial.

Morell Smith Post, No. 440, American Legion, together with the Ladies' Auxilliary, the surviving contingent of five gray-haired members of the G. A. R., and the Sons of Veterans, were represented.

*Newtown Enterprise - October 18, 1924*



# Another Family Tragedy

## TRAGIC DEATH OF DR. CHARLES B. SMITH

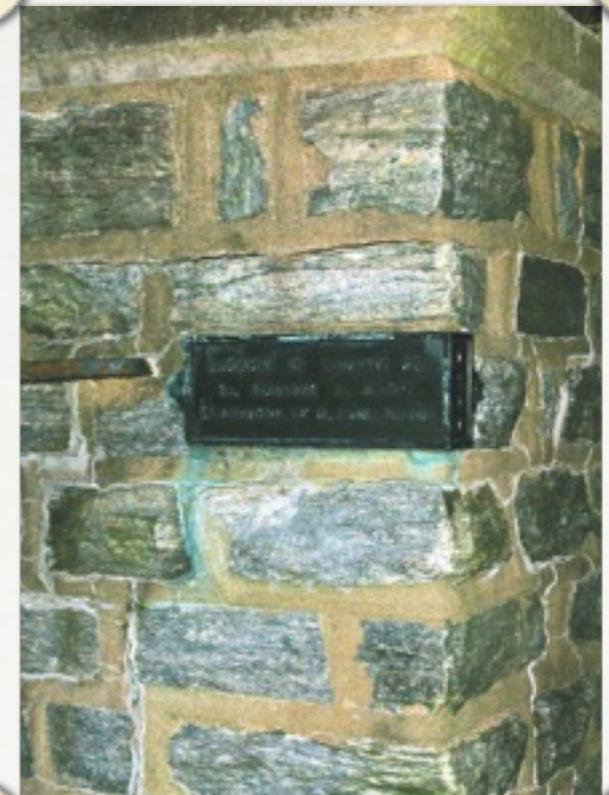
Dr. Charles B. Smith, aged 63, of Newtown, one of Bucks county's most prominent physicians, last Sunday afternoon ended his life on the grave of the son he had mourned for since he was killed in action overseas during the World War.

The doctor left his home about three o'clock last Sunday afternoon after telling his wife that he was going down to the home of Stacy B. Brown, a life-long friend, for a chat with him. Shortly before 5 o'clock, Mrs. Smith found a note on a desk near the doctor's office, and on it was written "I am going to see Stacy Brown, and then on to the cemetery," and it was signed "Charles."

Rushing to the telephone, thinking something was wrong, Mrs. Smith called Mr. Brown and inquired whether her husband was at his home. She was informed that he had not been there.

Immediately Mr. Brown drove to the Newtown Cemetery. As he entered the cemetery, he saw Dr. Smith's car parked next to the Smith family plot. When he drove up he was shocked to find a blanket spread over the grave of Dr. Smith's son, and on it was the lifeless form of the doctor with five bullet holes in his body, in and around his heart.

*Newtown Enterprise*  
December 16, 1927



*"Gateway in Memory of  
Dr. Charles B. Smith  
Presented by  
M. Anna Smith"  
- entry to Newtown  
Friends Meeting*

# Lifelong Devotion

- In 2006, a letter and package with photos and letters arrived at Post 440 from one of Sarah Platt's daughters, Ms. Joan Stowe
- She explained that Sarah married in 1921, but never forgot Morell Smith
- Sarah kept Morell's portrait on one side of her bureau, her husband's the other, until her death in 1999
- Sarah returned at least fifteen times to Newtown to place red roses on the graves of Morell and his parents

*The ADVANCE* / BUCKS COUNTY      OPINION AND COMMENTARY

## The story of a long-ago love

by Beatrice Stump



**Lieutenant Morell Smith**  
the Army on Long Island, where he was living, and sent to Camp Upton there. These two kept in touch and saw each other, and then one day she received the message he was being shipped overseas. There was the inference in her tale that he hoped they would soon be reunited, and he also hoped she would wait.

But Lt. Morell Smith never returned alive from France—he became one of the many who gave his life to “make the world safe for democracy,” and he was the first and only Newtown boy to be killed in the first

World War. She, in turn, continued her life and went to college, subsequently married and raised a family. But Lt. Smith is remembered to this day by a dear lady of 88 years, whose loving daughters brought her to Newtown to visit and remember. And I gathered there had been several visits.

Morell Smith's grave lies in our little Newtown cemetery, as do the graves of his entire family. My visitor informed me that tragically, his father, who was a local doctor, shot himself in grief, over his son's grave. His mother, she said, survived until the 40s. And our American Legion Post bears his name—the Morell Smith Post #649.

I told the daughters that I suspected if Lt. Smith had survived, they would not be who they are! We all laughed as they left, all of us a bit happier for their visit to Newtown.

Now maybe there are souls in town who know about this. And then again, perhaps not, and I am the only one who asked and listened and heard this moving little tale of love and devotion. And I wanted you to share it.

POSTSCRIPT. This encounter stayed with me all evening. This story of long-ago love—almost 70 years past. . . . Acting on intuition, that evening I inquired as to the location of Morell Smith's grave, and the next morning I drove over to visit our pretty little cemetery. And what did I find? Lying on each of the graves of Lt. Smith as well as on those of his mother and father was one long-stemmed red rose. And then I stood a moment as her story flooded back to me—this elderly lovely lady and her two charming daughters—and I thought about their pilgrimage to this quiet spot in Newtown.

BEATRICE'S NOTE: Lt. Morell Smith died in France fighting in the Argonne on October 8, 1918 in World War I and was the only. About 10 years later his remains were located and brought back to Newtown for interment.

July 10, 1986  
The ADVANCE of Bucks County

Article about Sarah Platt Stowe and her daughters' visit to Newtown in the *Advance of Bucks County* - July 10, 1986



Remember



Remember



Remember

## Bibliography and Sources

*A History of the 310th Infantry, 78th Division, USA*

Association of the 310th Infantry, Schilling Press, 1919 (Newtown Library)

*American Armies and Battlefields in Europe*

American Battle Monuments Commission, USGPO, 1938 (Newtown Library)

*The War to End All Wars*

Edward M. Coffman, Oxford University Press, 1968 (Newtown Library)

*Burial File of Lt. Morell Smith*

Michael J. Donovan, American Legion Post 440, 2001

*Newtown Enterprise and Advance of Bucks County Newspapers*

Files and Archives of the Newtown Historic Association

Newtown, PA

*Accumulated Letters and Recollections*

Joan R. Stowe, Milford, CT