



Meuse-Argonne Offensive **September 26 – November 11, 1918**

The Meuse-Argonne Offensive of World War I ranks as one of America's most significant battles in terms of men and equipment engaged, the numbers of dead and wounded, and the strategic consequences. More than 1.2 million Americans took part in this 47-day offensive. Of these, more than 26,000 lost their lives. The scale and results of this offensive underscored America's emerging role on the world stage and helped bring an end to the war.

When the United States entered World War I in April 1917, Britain and France recommended that American soldiers fight as replacements, or as tactical level units serving under Allied command. Gen. John J. Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Forces, insisted that U.S. forces would fight as an independent army alongside the Allies, but in a sector of their own. The Meuse-Argonne Offensive fulfilled this vision by committing the U.S. First Army to a battle of unprecedented scale, duration and intensity in American history.

On September 26, 1918, nine American divisions began the first assault along a twenty-four-mile front from the Argonne Forest to the Meuse River—about 150 miles east of Paris. The objective was to cut vital German rail communications running through Mezieres and Sedan, and to serve as one of two Allied pincers converging on the Germans in Belgium and Northern France. The intense fighting caused heavy losses on both sides, but American forces had penetrated the formidable defenses of the "Hindenburg Line" by October 11. The U.S. First Army renewed its assault several times after much-needed pauses for rest, reorganization and replacement. Fresh divisions relieved those that had suffered the most grievous combat losses. A final push began on November 1. German forces began withdrawing across the entire front. Recognizing that they could no longer prevent defeat, the Germans signed an Armistice effective at 11:00 a.m. on November 11. Fighting continued until the final minute, with Americans losing their lives up until that point.

To further tell this story, the American Battle Monuments Commission has released the [Meuse-Argonne Offensive Interactive](#). This free, digital tool allows the user to follow the paths of American forces as they fought this massive campaign.

Including dynamic maps showing the locations of units over time, narrative text, and an encyclopedia of people, places, organizations and equipment involved, the [Meuse-Argonne Offensive Interactive](#) provides comprehensive insight into this critical World War I offensive.

Members of the American armed forces who lost their lives in this offensive are honored at Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery.

— American Battlefield Monuments Commission
www.abmc.gov



Sgt. Raymond H. Crum, Sr
139th Infantry Regiment (Kansas)
35th Infantry Division
World War I

Raymond H. Crum, Sr. was born in 1895 and raised in Downs, KS. He completed high school in Downs and attended the University of Kansas prior to entering the U.S. Army in 1917. He completed his basic and advanced training and was shipped overseas to Europe in 1918 with the 139th Infantry Regiment, a unit of the 35th Infantry Division. During the battle of the Meuse-Argonne Forest in September, he was shot and wounded in the right leg by German gunners. He lay on the battlefield for two days before being captured by German forces and taken to their field hospital. He was treated well and had to have his leg set twice to stabilize the injury. The second time was without anesthesia, but with only a strong drink and French prisoners holding him down! He remained a POW until the end of the war when he was repatriated on 28 December 1918 by the Red Cross. For his service, he was awarded the Purple Heart and appropriate Campaign medals. Sent to recover at the Army hospital at Fort Sheridan, Ill., he remained there for 14 months. While there, he met a young Army student nurse who cared for him throughout his stay. They fell in love and after his release and another 9 months of civilian treatment, were married in 1921. From that union came three sons and one daughter. All the sons were/are Veterans (the two oldest in WW II - both died in 2020 - and youngest, a retired, career Army officer). Sgt. Crum, because his leg was permanently shortened and his bone damaged, had to wear a heightened shoe and experienced annual bouts of osteomyelitis (a bone infection) until penicillin was discovered in the 40's. He died in June of 1970 and is buried next to his loving wife in a private cemetery in Tampa FL.

A Wall Cap is donated in his memory by his youngest son, Col. Raymond H. Crum, Jr. US Army (Retired) and his Family.

— Colonel Raymond H. Crum, Jr.