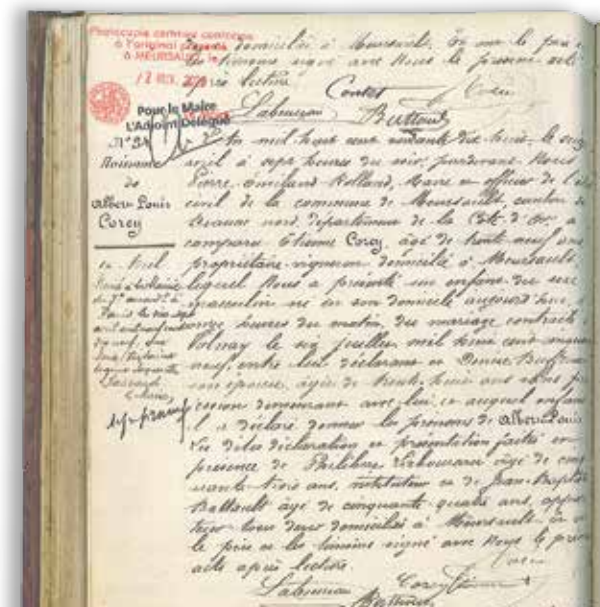


Albert Corey: The Only Frenchman of the 1904 Olympics

By Clément Genty

Albert-Louis Corey, the only Frenchman to take part in the 1904 Olympic Games in St. Louis, was born on 16 April 1878 in the commune of Meursault, the son of a winegrower, as this certificate (right) clearly shows.

Photo: Clément Genty Archive



The 1904 Olympics were initially planned to be held in Chicago, but St. Louis hosted them instead due to the possibility of twinning the event with the *Louisiana Purchase International Exposition*, honouring the centennial of the acquisition of Louisiana from France by the United States.

France, like many European countries, was not represented by a team. Only one Frenchman participated: Albert-Louis Corey, known as Albert Corey. He won two medals as a long-distance runner. The purpose of this document is to shed light on this little-known athlete, licensed to the Chicago Athletic Association, so that, 117 years after the Games, his true nationality can be recognised.

Albert-Louis Corey

There are few sources concerning Albert Corey. For his birth, we can rely on the civil registry of the commune of Meursault, France, digitised by the department of Côte d'Or.¹ Thus, we can undoubtedly state that Albert-Louis Corey was born on 16 April 1878 in the commune of Meursault. He was the son of Étienne Corey, winegrower and landowner, aged 39, and Denise Buffenoir, without profession, aged 38. The two married on 6 July 1859 in Volnay, a neighbouring village of Meursault.

The family name Corey seems to be widespread in Meursault, as there are various inhabitants with this name. For example, in the census of 1876, there is a person named Charlie Corey, a winemaker living on Rue de la Planche Meunière, and in the census of 1886, there is a person named François Corey, a winemaker living on Rue des Forges. Albert Corey lived with his family on Rue des Prés, a street currently named Rue Pierre Joigneaux.

Military period

Albert Corey's military service record is considered a reliable source and gives us insight into his army career as well as his changes of residence.² Registered as a commercial employee, Corey volunteered for four years, starting on 4 November 1896. He joined the eighth battalion of *Chasseurs à pied* (light infantry) and was ranked 2nd class on 6 November. He was made corporal on 1 February 1898 and sergeant on 28 March 1900.



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He was reappointed for two years on 31 August 1900 and was promoted to sergeant major on 23 October 1901. He re-enlisted for three years on 29 July 1902. He went missing on 2 January 1903 and was considered a deserter six days later.

First sport events

On 27 July 1894, Corey was registered as a participant in the amateur bicycle race Lyon–Dijon–Lyon, organised by the newspaper *Le Progrès*. Wearing bib number 42, he was one of the 89 competitors at the start. In Lyon, he ranked eighth with a delay of 5 hours and 26 minutes compared to the winner, who displayed a time of 10 hours and 55 minutes. The final result is unknown.

In August 1905, Corey was mentioned in the US press as having beaten – while serving in the French military – the long-distance running record of 100 miles in 1899, with a time of 16 hours and 22 minutes. In another article, it was mentioned that he held the record for the longest distance, covering 63 miles (101.39 km) in 12 hours.³

On 7 July 1901, Corey participated as a runner in the Paris Marathon, Paris–Conflans, as a soldier. He is registered as a resident in Amiens, which corresponds to the barracks of the second corps of the eighth battalion of *Chasseurs à pied*. He finished in tenth place with a time of 2 hours and 53 minutes. Despite not receiving a prize (only the first seven were awarded) he had the satisfaction of being in the top ten – a surprise ranking, since he was not mentioned by the newspaper *Le Vélo* as one of the predicted top 12 winners. Later, *Le Vélo* reported that Corey, who came to register for the marathon in his military uniform, was greeted with shouts of “*Vive l’armée!*” (long live the army).⁴

On 28 May 1902, Corey was part of a group of four non-commissioned officers and one officer who carried out a 92 km *raid* (marathon race), Amiens–Abbeville–Amiens in 16 hours and 30 minutes, including a break of 1 hour and 15 minutes. “*Le raid a été effectué en tenue de*

campagne avec chargement du sac réglementaire, plus deux jours de vivres” (The marathon was carried out in uniform with a loaded regulation bag, plus two days of food supplies).⁵

Returning to the Paris Marathon, organised on 6 July 1902 between Achères and Paris, Corey finished seventh, with a time of 3 hours and 12 minutes.⁶

On 17 July 1902, he competed in the 150 km Paramé–Rennes–Paramé ultra-distance race. Registered as a licensee at the Union des Sports de Paris (USP), Corey “*a particulièrement grande confiance et escompte la première place*” (is particularly confident and is expecting the first place). Wearing bib number 43, he broke away at the start with two other runners and took the lead after the first 21 km. The outcome is not known.

On 28 September 1902, he took part in the 24-hour pedestrian race, organised at the Buffalo velodrome in Neuilly-sur-Seine. He was second after the first hour with 13.750 km covered, then first after the second hour with 26 km. He remained in the lead until the fourth hour, then regained the lead again after the sixth hour, when he covered 60.750 km. He gave up during the seventh hour, having run 65 km.

Move to the United States

Corey moved to the United States at an unknown date in 1903. He is not listed by the immigration office on Ellis Island. He settled in Chicago, Illinois. He first worked in a hotel located in Dayton, Ohio⁷. Then he moved to Chicago, Illinois, where he worked for Swift & Company meatpacking plant, for 22.5 cents an hour.⁸

The 1904 Olympic Games

The 1904 Olympics were the first to offer a medal system based on gold, silver, and bronze, corresponding to first, second, and third place, respectively. Held from 1 July to 23 November 1904, the Games introduced new



Union Stock Yards in Chicago was the heart of the meat industry for decades. Corey came to the United States in 1903, where he first worked as a cook in Dayton, Ohio, and later in Chicago for the Swift and Armour stockyards. Far left: As a soldier, Corey took part in the Paris–Conflans marathon in 1901.

Photo: Clément Genty Archive



Saint Louis 1904: the marathon runners on the starting line – Corey with number 7. He received a silver medal for taking second place.

Photo: Mark Bennett, History of the Louisiana purchase exposition



sports such as boxing, freestyle wrestling, decathlon, and dumbbells. A total of 651 athletes participated in the 95 events, with 12 NOCs represented; athletes from Africa competed at the Games for the first time.

While working for the Swift & Company slaughterhouse in Chicago, Corey read in a newspaper that runners were being recruited for the next Olympics. According to an article in *The Washington Times*:

Corey is a Frenchman by birth and a professional strike-breaker by occupation. Corey was attracted to Chicago by the recent butchers' strike. It was exactly six weeks ago that Corey made his first appearance on Marshall Field, Chicago, and told Trainer "Mike" Butcher that he was a distance runner and that he would like to represent the Chicago A. C. in the marathon. After watching Corey run at a good clip for forty-five minutes, Butler told him "he would do." Corey's training was all done over a cinder track. His showing under these circumstances was remarkable.⁹

Corey was listed as an American in the marathon race for an unknown reason. In a 2010 *Los Angeles Times* blog post, Brian Cronin wrote about this situation:

One last little curiosity occurred when Arthur [sic!] Corey finished second at 3 hours and 34 minutes. Corey was a Frenchman, but since he did not have the right papers, he was listed as an American, which is what he is still officially listed as to this day.

Albert Corey joined the Chicago Athletic Association, which competed at the Olympic Games in St. Louis in the 4-mile team race against the New York Athletic Club. New York won, and Corey (third from left) finished ninth.

Photo: James E. Sullivan, Review of the Olympic Games 1904



1904 Olympic Marathon

Following the disqualification of Fred Lorz, who finished first, due to cheating, Corey placed second with a time of 3 hours and 34 minutes, behind Thomas John Hicks, who placed first with a time of 3 hours and 28 minutes. A lot has been written about this event, which in many ways was memorable. We won't go back over these sports anecdotes, except for this comment made in a post-race report by Olympic chronicler Charles Lucas:

The Marathon race, from a medical standpoint, demonstrated that drugs are of much benefit to athletes along the road, and that warm sponging is much better than cold sponging for an athlete in action.¹⁰

Four miles

Albert Corey also competed during the 1904 Games in the 4 mile (6.44 km) team race with the Chicago Athletic Association squad. Corey teamed up with four other runners: Lacey Hearn, Sidney Hatch, James Lightbody, and Frank Verner. All four except Corey were Americans, which gave the team the quality of a "mixed team" or "international team". Competing against the New York Athletic Club, Corey's team placed second, winning silver.

Reports of the Games

There is no official report on the St. Louis Olympics. On its website, the Olympic Studies Centre states:

No official report on the Games was published by the Organising Committee. However, two works published in English in 1905 are jointly regarded as the official reports on these Games, namely "The Olympic Games 1904" by Charles J.P. Lucas, and the "Review of the Olympic Games of 1904" by James E. Sullivan.

The first report, however, states that Corey is French, without any doubt: "A Frenchman, wearing the colors of the Chicago Athletic Association, finished second."

A few pages earlier, a possible reason for the unofficial recognition of Corey's French nationality is presented:

England and France did not send a single competitor to America, and the French people showed their ingratitude by an entire absence of representation. America made the Paris games a success, and without American entries the second revival of the games would have been a farce. Neither France nor England were missed from the games of 1904 however and it is doubtful, indeed, if a single Frenchman could have finished even fourth in any of the events. In fact, only one Englishman would have stood a chance of winning any event whatever, and that man was Shrubbs, who holds several world's records in the distance events.¹¹

Career in the United States

On 6 May 1905, Corey participated in a 25 mile (40.23 km) marathon and finished fifth. On 23 September, he participated in the 25 mile marathon from Chicago, but dropped out halfway through.

On 7 December 1905, Corey, "the French long distance footracer", participated in a 90 mile (144.84 km) race from Chicago, Illinois to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This race was linked to a prize offered by a Mr. Blast from Milwaukee for anyone who could cover the distance in less than 18

hours. Corey took part in the event with one of his friends, Joseph Replate.

Corey finished fourth in the 1906 Chicago Marathon, with a time of 3 hours and 13 minutes. He obtained second place the following year, with a time of 3 hours and 6 minutes, and won the race in 1908, with a time of 2 hours and 57 minutes. At the Missouri Athletic Club Marathon in 1908, he had his best time: two hours and 38 minutes; he finished fourth.

In 1907, he broke the record for 100 miles (160.93 km), with a time of 18 hours and 33 minutes; the previous time was 19 hours and 54 minutes. In 1916, this record was still unbeaten.

1908 was a decisive year for Corey. He received many proposals to take part in races, though mention of him in the American newspapers noted how he harassed his competitors in view of remunerative races. Unfortunately, he only suffered failures. In March 1908, he took part in a race in New York, where the objective was to cover the longest distance within six days at Madison Square Garden; ultimately, he was "handicapped by a bad partner".

Two months later, he announced that he had refused the proposal made by France for him to wear the French "tricolour" uniform at the next Olympic Games in London. The reasons were administrative: having joined the First Regiment Athletic Association, he could not take



Corey went professional in 1905. That year, he participated in the first edition of the Chicago Marathon, organised by the Illinois Athletic Club. He was considered one of the favourites, but gave up. Two years later, he finished second in 3:06:55 h. The photo shows him after the race.

Above: medal and ticket from 1905.

Photo: Chicago Sun Times/Chicago Daily News collection, Chicago History Museum; Clément Genty Archive

MARATHON WINNER
TRAINED ON WINE.



In 1908, Corey ran without a sponsor, but with a French flag on his chest. Since he drank wine during the races, the press considered alcohol to be his secret.

Photo: Passaic Daily Herald, 1908



Albert Corey as a warrant officer in the early 1920s. He was wounded three times during the First World War. In 1915, he was taken prisoner by the Germans, spending this time in a camp in Giessen.

Photo: Albert Corey family archive

leave without fear of losing his place in the group; that would have ended his professional status, despite the fact that he had been running with them for almost ten years.

The 1908 Olympics took place without Corey. Less than two months later, on 12 September, the press announced that he was no longer part of the "First regiment team" of Chicago.

On 25 November 1908, he was announced as a starter in the Yonkers Marathon the next day. He came in second, behind Johnny Hayes, a 22-year-old clerk at Bloomingdale's department store in New York City. The jury had declared him Olympic champion in London because the first-place winner, the Italian Dorando Pietri, had been led across the finish line by officials, completely exhausted.

At the beginning of 1909, a particularity of Corey's character was revealed: that he never drank alcohol between races, only during them:

"Champagne Charley" is the name which Albert L. Corey is known to some of his competitors in the long distance running game. This would indicate a free use of wine, but Corey never touches it or another stimulant while in training. It is only during a race that he has recourse to it.

While on his run from Ravinia Park to Chicago in the I.A.C. Marathon, Cory took several "swigs" from a champagne bottle, and after crossing the line a winner he finished the bottle. His trainer at that time was Georges Pettitain, a compatriot and hotel chef.¹²

On 23 January 1909, "The French Runner" participated in the Chicago Marathon but was outclassed by Dorando Pietri. Corey's performance was considered "pitiable". He was largely beaten, with a gap of 7 miles (11.27 km), by Pietri, who finished with a time of 2 hours and 56 minutes.

In February 1909, Corey, still in the United States, contacted the French newspaper *L'Auto-vélo*, which took the opportunity to recall his record:

Albert Corey, who left for America in 1903, is 28 years old. At the 1904 Olympic Games in St. Louis, he placed second in the marathon, behind the American J. Hicks. In 1907, in Boston, he was second in another marathon, behind JJ Hayes. Finally, in May 1908, he won the Chicago Marathon and was to be part of the team sent by the United States to the London Olympic Games. Corey was also the official holder of the American amateur 100-mile, 160.932 km track record in 18 hours and 33 minutes. Recently turned professional again, he was beaten in a marathon race by Dorando Piétri.¹³

He repeated the Six-Day Race in New York at the beginning of March 1909 with a man named Hegelmann, but was apparently largely overtaken by a French duo.

Back to France

According to available records, Albert Corey worked as a journalist in France between July 1909 and December 1912. We can thus deduce that he returned from the United States between March and July. His articles may be found in newspapers such as *L'Ouest-Éclair* (25 May 1910), *La Liberté* (6 July, 3, 7, 10, 18, 21, 24, and 31 August; 4 September; 12 and 23 October; 9, 16, 23, and 30 November 1910) and *Comœdia* (1909, March and June 1911, 1912).

Corey's son Albert was born on 31 October 1910 in the 14th district of Paris, and officially registered on 19 November 1910; Corey's declared profession on that document is that of journalist.

First World War

Corey joined the army in 1914, probably on the occasion of the mobilisation, and was "rayé des contrôles de la desertion" (struck off the desertion controls) on 14 August 1914. Amnestied, he was assigned to the eleventh depot company and was made corporal on 5 November 1914 and *sergent-fourrier* (quartermaster) on 17 August 1915.

He was then assigned to the eighth battalion of *Chasseurs* three days later. He disappeared on 25 September, 1915 at Aubérive (Marne-France) and was taken prisoner for three years. He was repatriated on 13 December 1918. Wounded three times, cited twice, he was awarded the Croix de Guerre medal.

Post-war period

Corey married Marie Sassard on 17 April 1919,¹⁴ at which time he had the declared profession of "comptable, actuellement sergent-fourrier" (accountant, currently quartermaster). He was made a warrant officer on 24 April 1919. He was reappointed to the military for three years and was posted to the 124th infantry regiment on 14 November 1919. He fought in Poland, Algeria, and the Levant.

He then changed regiments several times and was reappointed for seven months and thirteen days on 21 December 1922. He was discharged from military service on 18 January 1924. In 1921, documentation shows that Corey was working as a journalist for the newspaper *Comœdia*.

Death

Corey was declared unfit for the army on 5 August 1926, but the news never reached him. He died on 3 August 1926 at 10 am at Boucicaut Hospital, 78 rue de la Convention, in the 15th district of Paris. His death notice states that he was an accountant by profession. He was buried in Bagneux Cemetery on 6 August. His wife Marie died on 2 January 1975 in the commune of Martigna

(Jura–France).

The need for Corey's recognition

Albert Corey was a French citizen, without any doubt. However, the IOC made him an American. Some press titles relied on the official source. Thus, in an article by *Paris–presse–l'intransigeant* published in 1956, Corey is considered a "Yankee".

As we have seen, the American press at the time always considered Corey a Frenchman. Likewise, when consulting later writings, such as *La Galaxie Olympique* (1996), *The Olympic Marathon* (2000), and *The 1904 Olympic Games* (2009), none of them lists Corey as an American. Finally, the scientific articles are unanimous: in articles such as "Development of the Marathon from Pheidippides to the Present with Statistics of Significant Races" (1977), "'Viva l'Italia! Viva l'Italia!' Dorando Pietri and the North American Professional Marathon Craze, 1908–10" (2008), as well as the doctoral thesis by Sébastien Fleuriel (1997) – Corey is always referred to as a Frenchman.

Albert Corey's recognition as a French citizen would facilitate international recognition of these forgotten Games, especially in his country of origin – France. And particularly in light of the 2024 Olympic Games that will be due to take place in France, Corey's two medals would allow the "tricolour nation" to have won medals at all the Summer Olympics to date – a result that only Great Britain has achieved so far.

Conclusion

We have already seen that the IOC recognises two reports as official concerning the 1904 Olympic results. The only report to mention Corey presents him as French. However, the IOC official website incorrectly identified him in several ways:

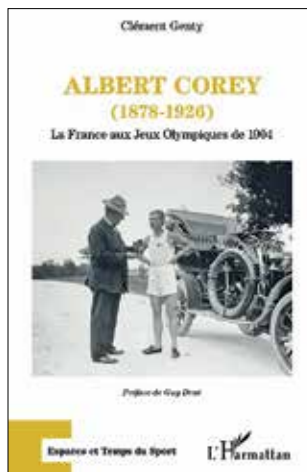
- His spelling is Albert COREY and not Albert CORAY;
- His date of birth is 16 April 1878 and not 1 January 1878.
- His citizenship is French and not American.

There is no doubt that he was a French citizen and his arrival in the United States in 1903 prevented him from becoming a US citizen a year later.

To this end, it seems important to recognise Corey's nationality and to correct an error that has been going on for too long.

Fun facts

Following the completion of research on Albert Corey by this author, a research project was set up and presented to the IOC through Guy Drut, former Olympic champion and IOC Member. As of 2021, the Swiss institution recognises Corey's French nationality and has corrected the spelling



Clément Genty, City Councilor of Meursault (Côte d'Or), published a biography of Albert Corey in 2021 with a foreword by IOC Member and 1976 Olympic champion Guy Drut. *Albert Corey (1878–1926): La France aux Jeux olympiques de 1904.* Paris, L'Harmattan, 2021, 204 pages, €22, ISBN: 978-2-343-22519-7

of his name and date of birth.

Finally, Albert Corey's great grandson, Serge Canaud, was contacted about this in the midst of the COVID–19 pandemic. Believing it to be a prank, he hung up three times. It was only after the fourth time that his wife took the call and, with the documents presented, the descendant accepted this story, which had been previously unknown to the family.

The press picked up on this beautiful story and more than 60 articles were written and published in France, in Europe, and on all continents. The IOC now mentions the French nationality of Corey, which makes France the only country, together with Australia, Great Britain, and Greece, to have participated in all Olympic Games. ■

- 1 Civil registry of the city of Meursault, year 1878, birth certificate number 34.
- 2 Military record for Albert Louis Corey, canton of Charenton, department of the Seine, class of 1898, no. 2790.
- 3 *The Evening, Edition World*, 17 December 1905, 16.
- 4 "Marathon," in *Le Vélo*, no. 3141, 21 July 1901, 1–2.
- 5 "Le Telephoniste. Allo ! Allo !" *L'Auto*, no. 597, 3 June 1902, 1.
- 6 "Levéillé, Abel. marathon (professionnels)," in *L'Auto-vélo*, no. 631, 7 July 1902, 3.
- 7 Frenchman Corey has run far enough to circle globe twice, *The Dayton Herald*, 27 February 1909, 6.
- 8 Claims for a Freeze–Out. – Corey a professional and wants a six day race, *The Inter Ocean*, 31 December 1905, 9.
- 9 "Personal Comment on Men and Things in the Olympic Games," *The Washington Times*, no. 3738, 4 September 1904, 9.
- 10 Lucas, Charles J.P. (1905), *The Olympic Games*, 51.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 15.
- 12 "Wine's Part in Athletics: Albert Corey Finds it Stimulant, Dorando Pernicious. Frenchman Always Uses it. Italian Marathon Runner Ascribes London Defeat To Champagne," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 3 January 1909, 4.
- 13 *L'Auto-vélo*, 1909: "Albert Corey, parti en Amérique en 1903, est âgé de vingt-huit ans. Aux jeux olympiques de Saint-Louis en 1904, il se classe second dans le Marathon, derrière l'Américain J. Hicks. En 1907, à Boston, il est second d'un autre Marathon, derrière J-J Hayes. Enfin, en mai 1908, il gagne le Marathon de Chicago et devait faire partie du team envoyé par les Etats-Unis aux Jeux Olympiques de Londres. Corey est en outre détenteur officiel du record amateur américain des 100 milles, 160kil. 932 mètres, sur piste en 18h. 33 minutes. Redevenu dernièrement professionnel, il fut battu dans un match de Marathon, par Dorando Piétri."
- 14 Civil registry of the city of 7th district of Paris, wedding certificate no. 326, year 1919.