

Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier

Around 1919, the Kansas State Historical Society and the American Legion solicited biographical information from returning veterans (primarily members of the 35th and 89th infantry divisions) and the families of those who died in service, notably from the Gold Star Mothers. Each veteran or family member was asked to provide letters, photographs, a biography, and military records. This file contains information on Louis Philip Billard, Third Aviation Instruction Centre. Louis died on July 24, 1918, in France. Billard Airport in Topeka, Kansas, is named after him.

Date: 1918-1920

Callnumber: World War I Coll. #49, Box 4 Kansas Soldiers

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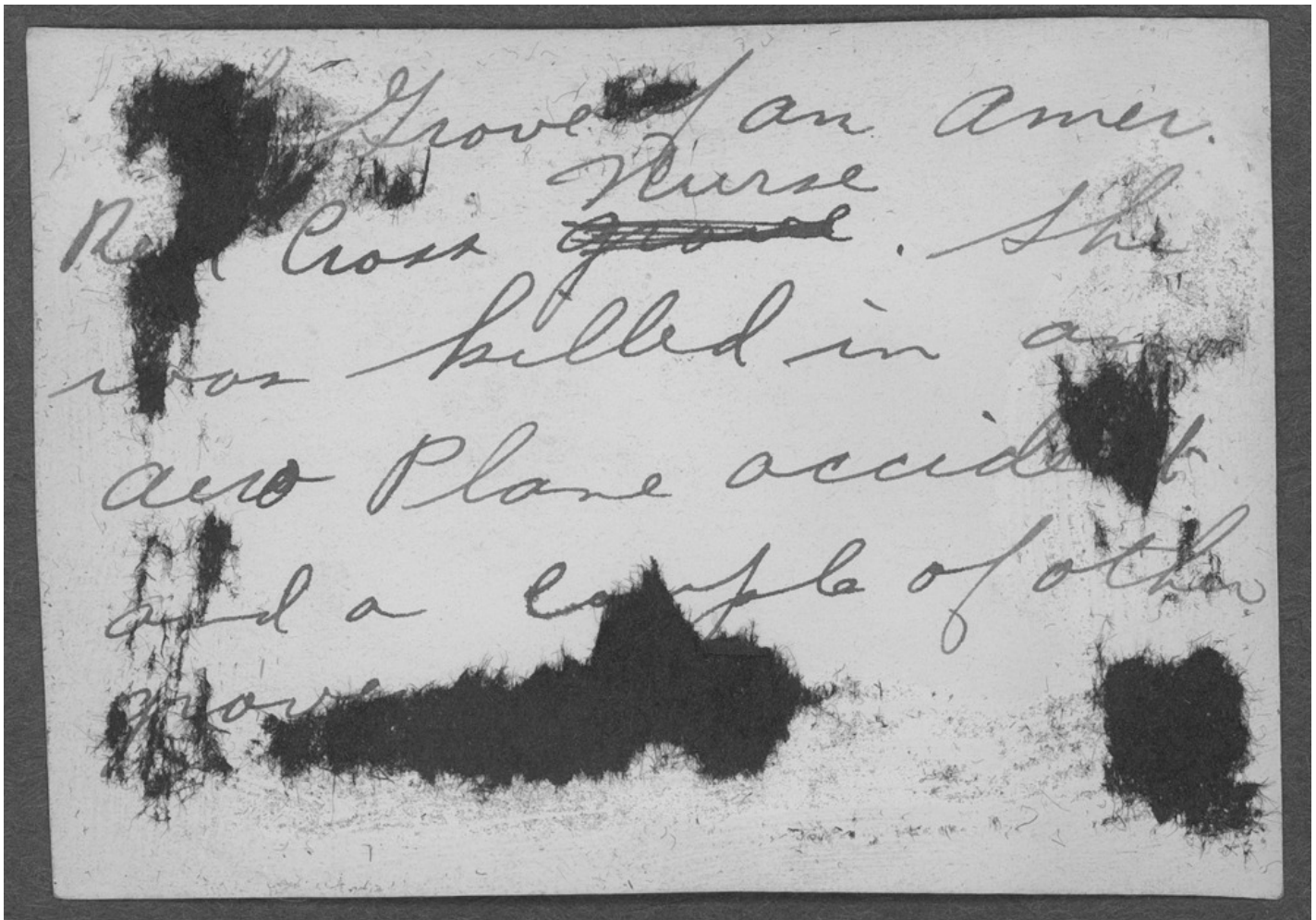
www.kansasmemory.org/item/224975

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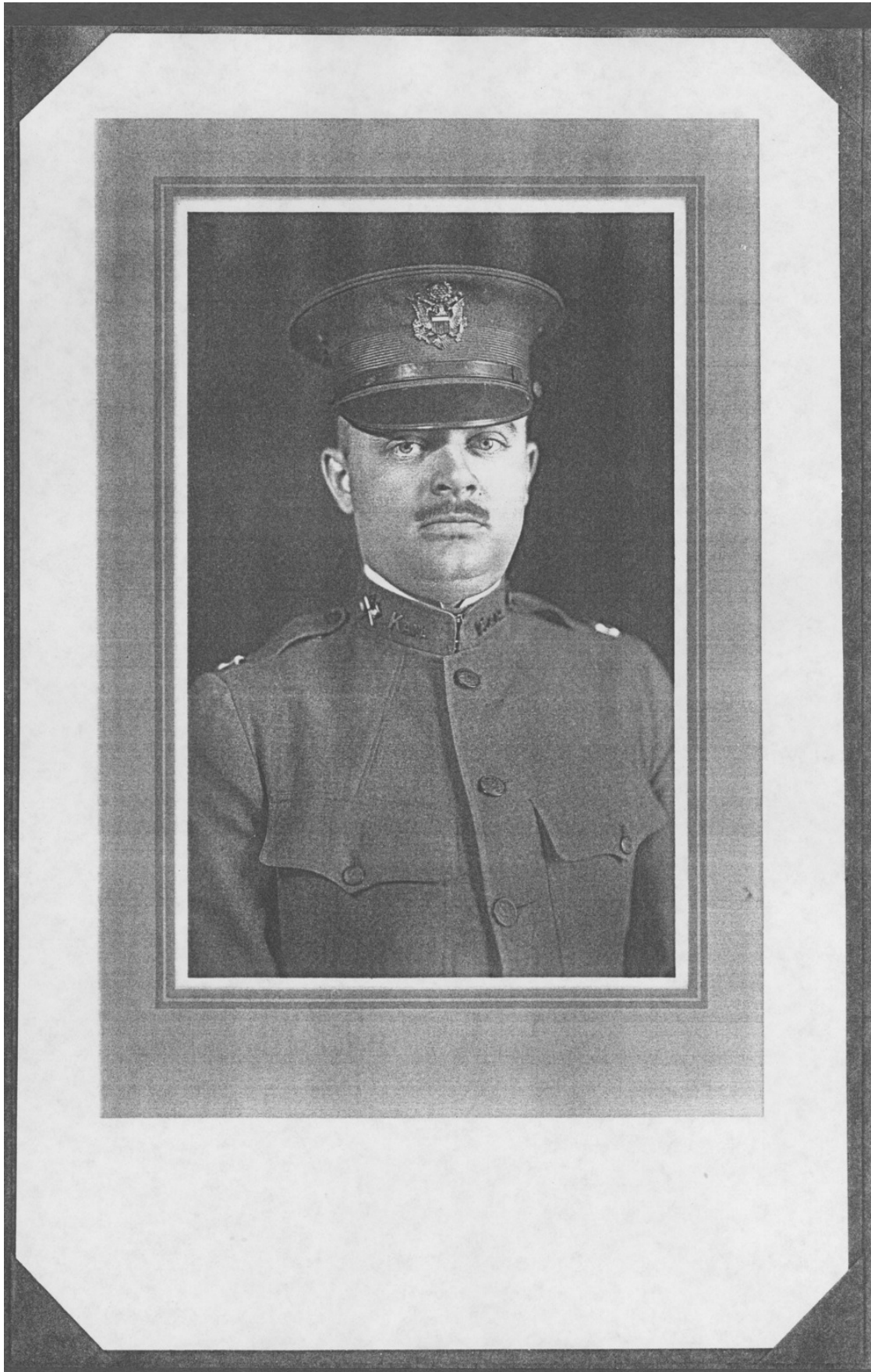
Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier



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Resolution.

News of the death of Phillip Billard, which occurred in the line of duty on July 24th, 1918, has come as a great shock to the people of Topeka and vicinity. The death of this intrepid young aviator is payment of one of the first installments of the price this nation is paying for human liberty. As such it touches the heart of the community which knew him best, and lays the burden of a great sorrow upon it. Therefore,

Be It Resolved By The City Commission Of Topeka:

Speaking officially for the City of Topeka and unofficially for the hundreds of citizens who knew Phillip Billard intimately and well, that we deeply deplore his death and extend our heartfelt sympathy to his father, the Honorable J. B. Billard and other members of the family. He died in the greatest cause for which humanity has yet fought, but his sacrifice shall not be in vain.

Be It Further Resolved, that this resolution be spread upon the minutes of the proceedings of the Commission and that a copy be presented to the Honorable J. B. Billard.

Jay E. House.
Mayor.

W. C. Tandy.
Commissioner.

W. S. Porter
Commissioner.

W. H. Nasson.
Commissioner

F. M. Newland.
Commissioner.

Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier

Topeka, Kansas, July 31, 1918.

At a called meeting of the Shawnee County Democratic Club held this day, the following proceedings were had:

We have this day learned through the public press of the death of our fellow member, Lieut. Philip L. Billard, which occurred on the 28th day of this month, in France while he was engaged in his line of duty as an aviator in the United States military service, fighting the battles of his country, and of civilization. We regret that an accident should have ended a career so full of promise and before he had opportunity to perform to his full ability his part of the task of winning the war and making the world safe for democracy.

We had hoped he would be spared and given the opportunity he craved, of flying to Berlin and taking a part in the capture of the capital of our country's enemy.

We know the depth of his patriotism, the measure of his ability, the quality of his courage, his love of fair play and his dislike of sham and oppression, and that he was willing to risk all, even his life, battling for the principles he believed in.

His personal friends in Topeka, where he was born and where he lived until he went to France, loved him. His fellow citizens admired his courage and respected him. His companions in arms recognized his ability and his many good qualities.

His death was glorious and in his home and in the halls of all the associations of which he was a member a gold star will forever attest the fact that he died that the world might be a safe and decent place in which to live.

Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier

2

Therefore, be it resolved by the Shawnee County Democratic Club that a gold star be forever displayed as its most sacred emblem in memory of our departed hero; that we extend to his honored father and brothers our deepest sympathy, and that a copy of these proceedings be furnished his family and the newspapers of Topeka.

F. E. Whitney
Secretary.

R. W. Blair.
President.

We, the undersigned, members of the Committee on Resolutions which prepared the foregoing, hereby personally express our deepest sympathy to our fellow members, the father and brothers of our departed friend Phil.

W. H. Kemper.

A. D. Birch.

Geo. Wagner.

Matt Brennan.

R. W. Blair.

L. M. Penwell.

W. O. Rigby.

F. B. Simms.

George Young.

S. R. Duckett

George S. Allen.

F. E. Whitney.

H. P. Miller

F. W. Freeman.

Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier

In Appreciation

The tragic information of Lieutenant Billard's death has shocked and grieved the many friends and admirers who have watched with intense interest his brilliant and daring career.

The same intrepid courage that was the key note of his dashing youth made possible his unusual service and loyalty to his country in a time of need when few were as prepared as he to serve.

We, the Women's Shawnee Democratic Club, wish to go on record as expressing our sincere appreciation of Phil Billard's courage and loyalty and earnest desire to serve.

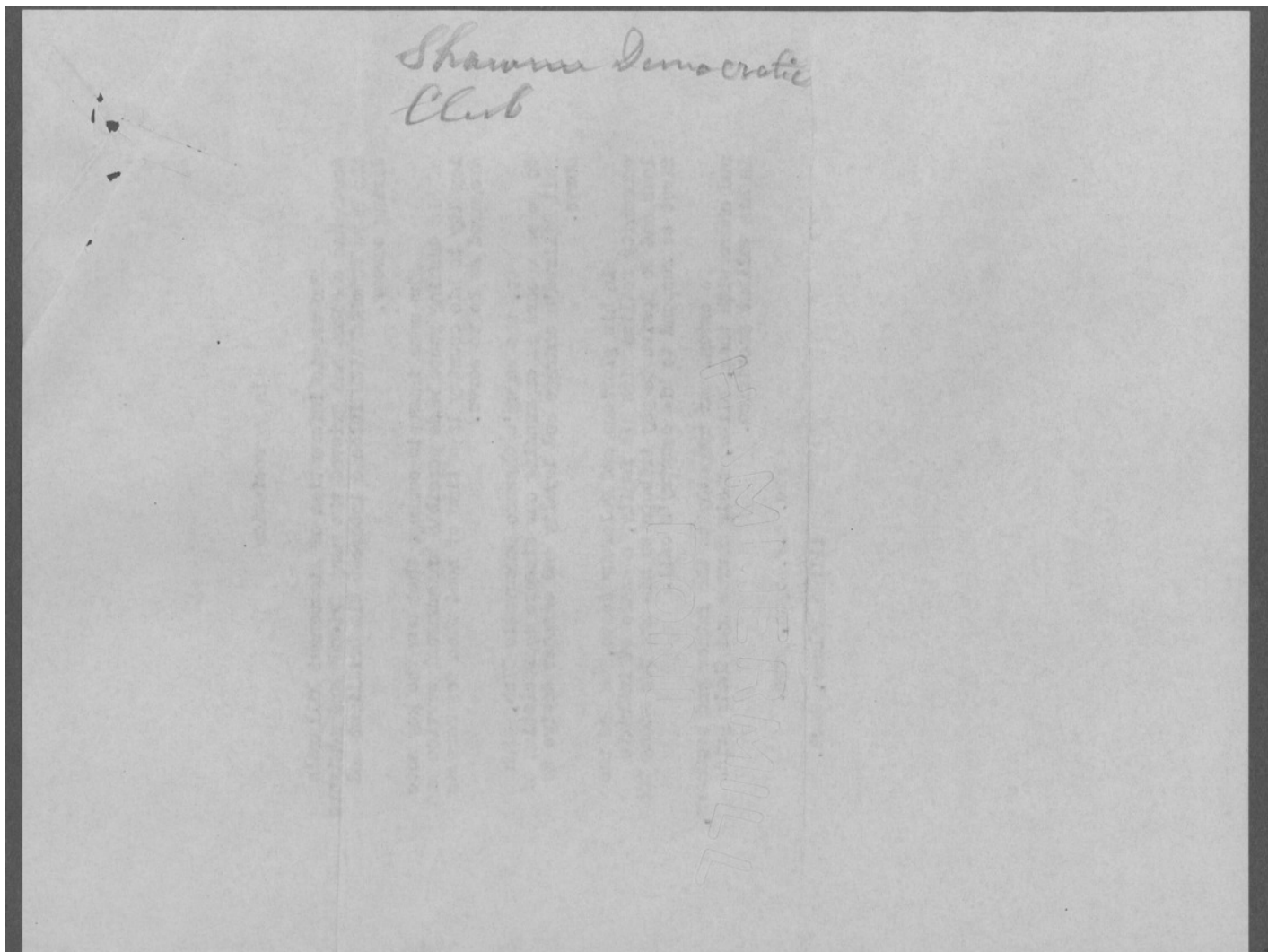
In his glorious and valorous death, we and the community realize with his family, a sense of infinite loss and we desire to pay tribute to him who was among the first to respond to his country's call.

We extend our sympathy to the father and brothers, and share with them, alike, their sorrow and their pride in his valiant sacrifice.

Mrs. W.F. Logan, Pres.

Lillian Malone, Sect.

Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier





Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier

Third AVIATION INSTRUCTION CENTRE
U S AIR SERVICE
AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES

80 2nd Aero Repair Squadron,
Issoudun, Indre, France,
July 25th, 1918.

Dear Mr. Billard:

I am writing this letter from the Orderly Room of the 802nd Aero Repair Squadron, at Third Aviation Instruction Centre, Issoudun, Indre, France. You will have been advised long before the receipt of this letter of your Son's death. He was killed here yesterday at about 10:45 o'clock A.M., in an aeroplane accident. I first met your Son here when we happened to be doing guard duty together. He had been assigned as Officer of the Guard, and I as Officer of the Day. That was sometime early in March of this year. As he was taking flying instructions here, I did not see a great deal of him for sometime after we were thrown together on guard. However, I kept in touch with him and when he returned from Italy, where he took the course in aerial gunnery, I saw him quite often. After finishing instruction offered here and in Italy-as you know- he was detailed as a tester of aeroplanes at the Major Repair Department here. He came to my squadron quite often for a meal at our mess, and after a time arranged to take dinner here with us each day. He was doing this at the time of his death.

The circumstances of his death will always be in doubt- and I am not writing this letter to you to give you the details. My purpose in writing is to tell you of the splendid work your Son was doing here, and of his popularity and sterling qualities as found by all of his comrades. He was known as one of the best pilots in the field. The work to which he had been assigned as tester- was particularly exacting and called for a very high degree of skill as a pilot and technical nicety in judging defects in 'planes. This work he was doing well- in fact he was known throughout the field as one of the very best flyers in the service here. The men of my squadron are detailed for duty at the Major Repair Department and many of them knew your Son personally. He was most popular- and deservedly so. He was the same with his comrades among the officers. He earned his popularity by his delightful personality and his great interest in his work. From a standpoint of service- it is certainly proper to write an inscription for him that his work was well done here. He spared no effort and gave his best talent to the duty assigned to him.

We have all lost a fine and true comrade, and the country has lost a very valuable man. We buried your Son yesterday; together with the Mechanic who was in the aeroplane and who was likewise killed. Your Son was not attached to this squadron by any post order- but he was messing with us and we regarded him as part of the organization. He was given a soldier's burial. There was an escort of two squadrons; a military band and various officers of the post. We buried him in the post cemetery and left wreaths upon the grave.



Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier

2

You will no doubt receive an official communication in regard to the circumstances and time of your Son's death. This letter is simply intended to let you know what we knew about him and how he was appreciated here. It may be that I can stop off at Topeka sometime in the future and tell you as much more of the story as you may wish to know- and as I am able to tell. You may rest assured that your Son gave up his life like a true American and you may well be proud of his record.

Respectfully yours,

O. B. Wyman,

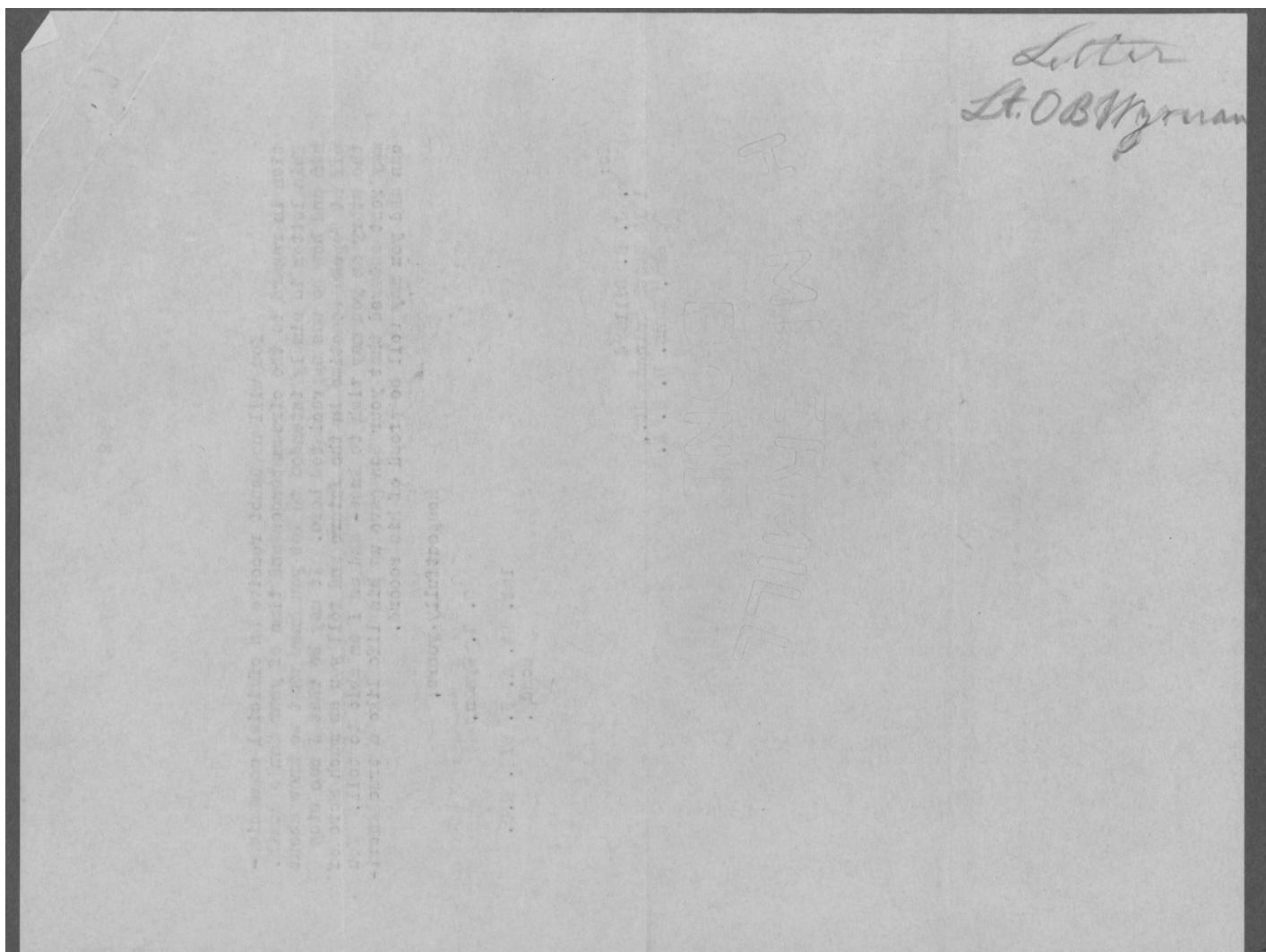
1st. Lt. A. S. SIG. R.C.
Comdg.

To:
Mr. J. B. Billard
1215 North Quincey St.,
Topeka, Kans. U. S. A.

BOOK

H. W. EBWIFF

Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier



Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier

Topeka, July 31st, 1918.

Friend Billard:-

I deem it a prime duty I owe to myself as a citizen, to send my heartfelt sympathy to you and yours over the death of Phil.

I knew him well, desired that he go to France, and believed he would come back wreathed and a general. I wrote him as much and his reply was as splendid a letter as I ever received.

He mingles his ashes with his own ancestral country, the bravest and most valiant land on the face of the globe. In your deepest grief, you must glory that his sacrifice was on the altar of your own native soil, for even higher things than you had braved to accomplish. My sorrow is the closest kin to my heart.

You are too well disciplined in philosophy to be so submerged by his death that you will not mingle with your sorrow a pride over this gallant, magnificent boy.

Sincerely yours,

Joseph C. Waters.

Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier

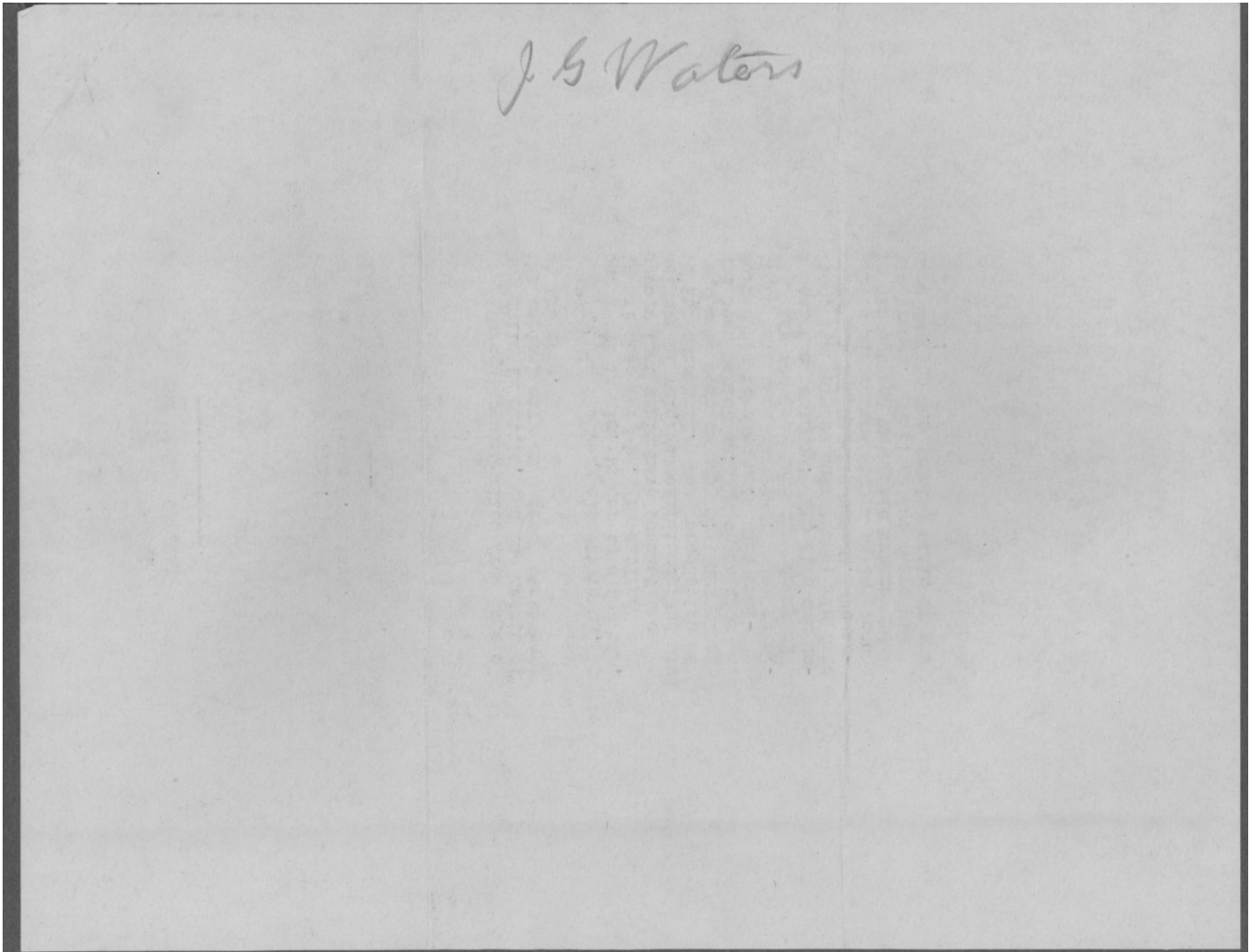
THE TOPEKA CAPITAL

PHIL.
By Joseph G. Waters.

Three thousand miles from home a boy falls in battle, and the hearts of the capital city of a great state weep at the news.

He was the very closest to us, in our faith in him, in our love for him, in our hope for him. He outlined a career that would have touched the heights of valorous efficiency and died at its threshold. What prophecies of good have come to naught! What glory has been denied us! What generous sorrow has reached us! What ambitions have been thwarted! What splendid life resolves into the memory of a denied expectancy! His life was action; its purpose chivalrous; his fate more than a community sorrow. We expected his return with a white plume in his hat and an heroic bronze upon his breast. Shall we not carve his name deep on the granite walls of our Valhalla!

Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier



Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier

H. P. DILLON
New England Building
Topeka, Kansas.

July 31, 1918.

Mr. J. B. Billard,
North Topeka, Kansas.

Dear Mr. Billard:

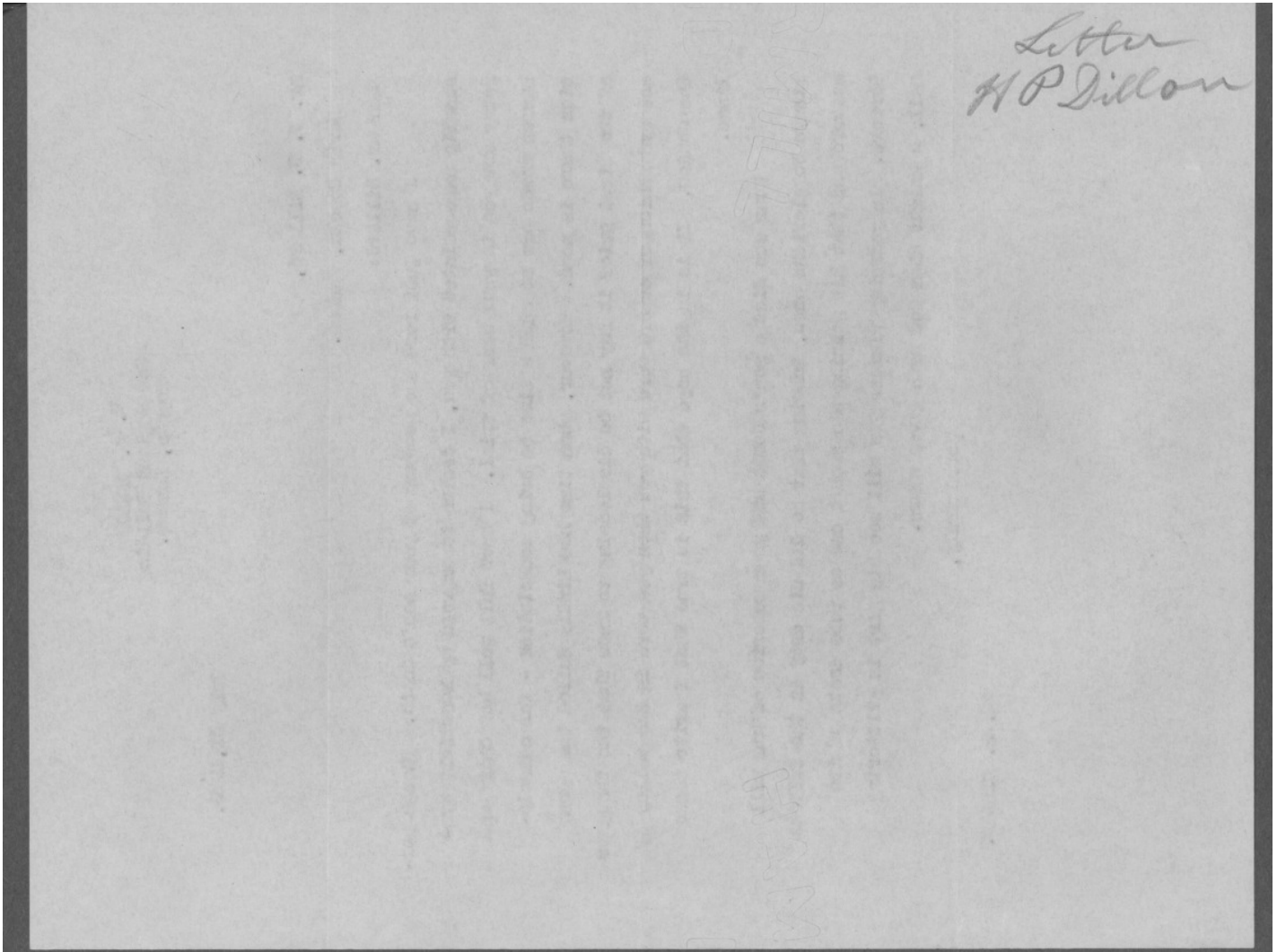
I have just read the account of your son's death. Though personally unacquainted with you, I desire to express my heartfelt sympathy for you in your hour of trial. I know full well how empty and barren words are at such a time to bring consolation - for consolation there is none. However, when time has kindly dulled the agony of the first grief it may not be displeasing to know that the thoughts and sympathies of others were with you when you were in the valley of the shadow. It is in the hope that this is true that I write these lines.

Your son died a man's death and your memories of him will always be glorious ones, knowing that he did his duty in the fullest measure and that his passing was such a one as robs death of its terrors. In yearning visions you will see him girt in glittering mail, a knight whom God hath given spurs.

Yours truly,

H. P. DILLON.

Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier



Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier

Topeka, Aug. 1, 1918.

My dear Mr. Billard:-

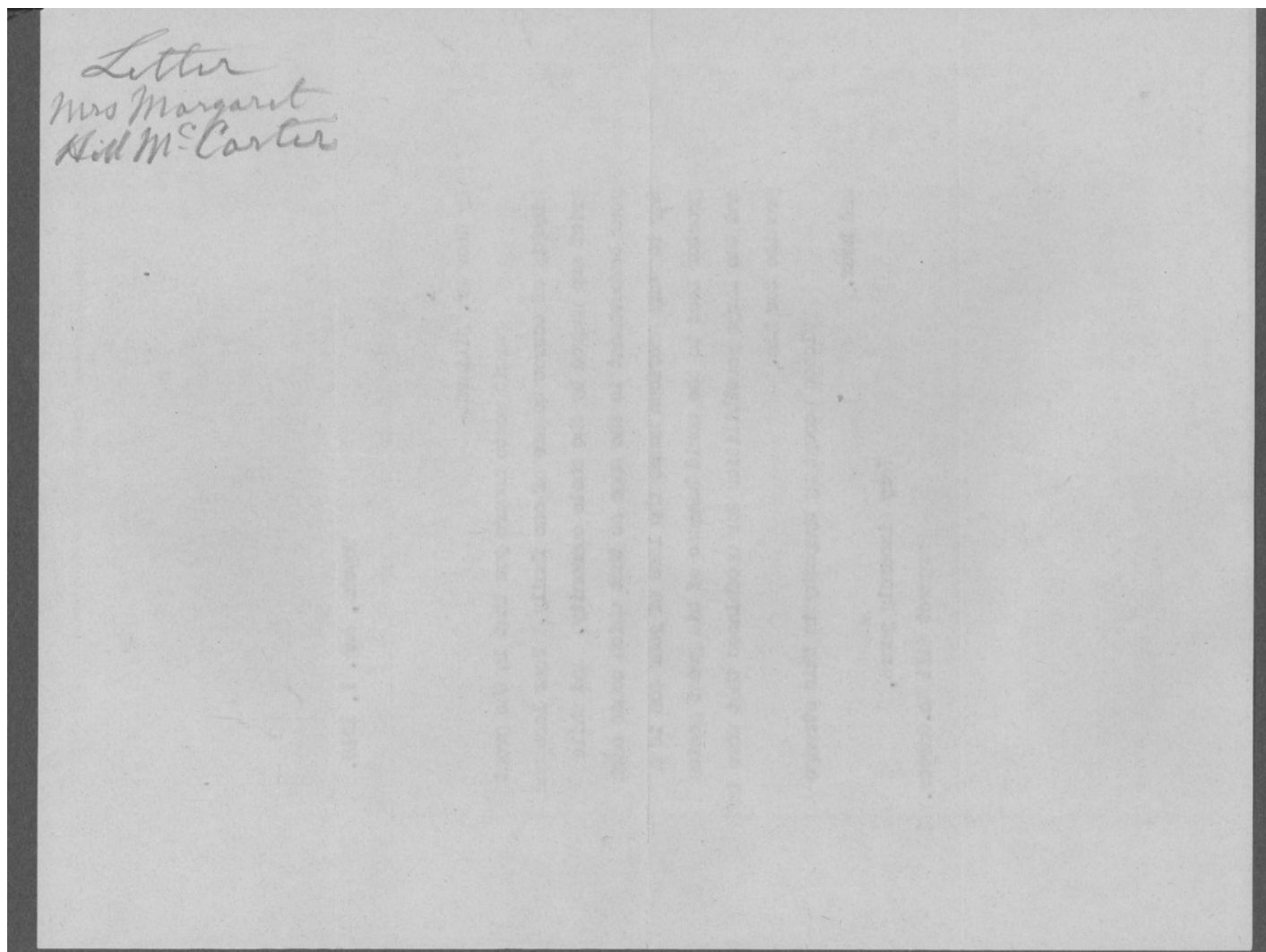
Permit me to assure you that in the great kinship of sorrow we are of one family. Your loss and grief are shared by the whole community. And while your bereavement is the same as that which comes each day to many American homes the loss of your son is a greater loss to the world because of his great genius and the large possibilities for usefulness that were in promise for him.

Please accept my sympathy in this strange and hour.

Very sincerely yours,

Margaret Hill Mc.Cortor.

Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier



Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier

UNITED STATES SENATE,
Washington, D. C.

August 6, 1918.

My dear Billard:-

I was indeed sorry to read of the sad and tragic death of your son, Phil, and I hasten to assure you and your family of my heartfelt sympathy. I know how anxious Phil was to be "over there" and do his part, and all of us who know him and know of his splendid work were indeed sorry to hear of his death. The people of Kansas all mourn with you in your loss.

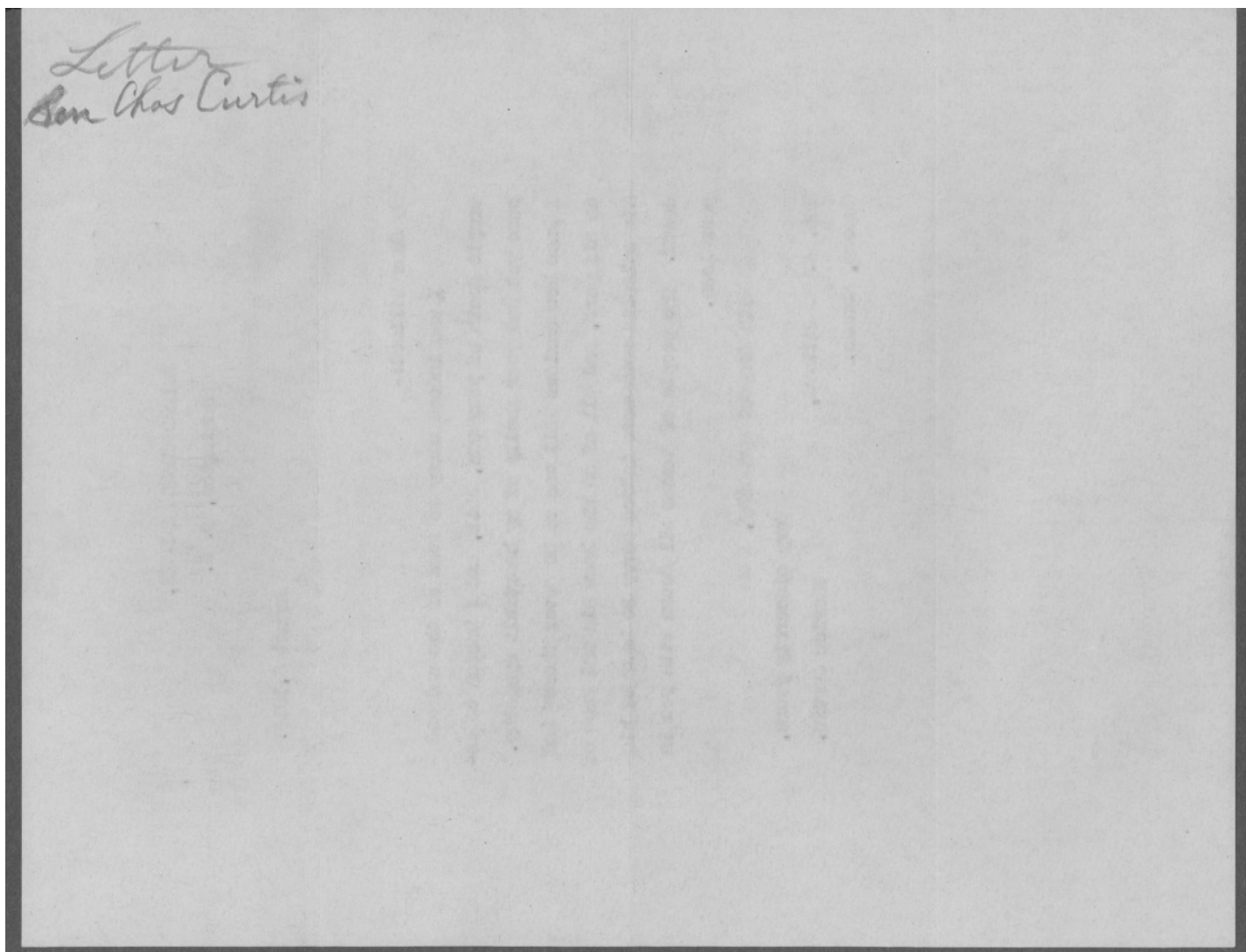
With deepest sympathy, I am

Very sincerely yours,

Hon. J. B. Billard,
Topeka, Kansas.

Charles Curtis.

Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier



Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier

Copy of Resolutions Adopted by
Topeka Rotary Club Aug. 15, 1918.

Our friend and comrade, L. Phil Billard, Aviator, a son of Kansas, a courageous, courteous, big hearted and adventurous gentleman with all the knightly qualities of the days of Romance, lies dead in the fields of France, a victim of War's insatiate cry for blood; the first sacrifice we as Topeka Rotarians lay upon the altar of our country.

He died in the extra hazardous service he sought. He fell as a true Rotarian, doing with his might, the duty at hand. Therefore, be it resolved, by the Topeka Rotary Club:

That while we mourn the loss of our comrade, we rejoice that he was able to enter upon the Great Adventure so worthily and with such chivalrous fortitude, exemplifying in his death as in his life, the Rotarian spirit of service to others.

Resolved, that we extend to our fellow member, his brother, to his bereaved father and to all those near and dear to him, our deepest sympathy and the assurance that his memory will be kept green in the hearts of all Rotarians.

Be it further resolved, that we as Rotarians in this solemn moment, pledge anew our undying devotion to the cause in which our brother fell; and as he "died to make men free" we renew our determination to make certain that his death shall not be in vain.

Be it further resolved that these resolutions be spread upon the records of the Topeka Rotary Club, as an expression of the high esteem in which we held our brother, and that a copy be sent to our honored citizen, his father.

Introduced by Marco Morrow.

Adopted August 5, 1918.

F. A. Derby.
President.

Cecil Howes
Secretary.

Rotary Club
Resolutions

Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier

THE FOLLOWING TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF PHILLIP BILLARD CLOSES
THE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY T. F. DORAN AT THE ELKS
MEMORIAL SERVICE, JANUARY 26, 1919.

There is another who was so long a member of this Order, and who was so loved by all that I would feel this service incomplete were his name omitted, although he had taken out his demit and was not a member when he entered the Great War, or at the time of his death. All of us hold in sacred memory the daring deeds and tragic death of Phil Billard.

He was born at 1215 North Quincy Street in this City, on the 27th day of April, 1891. The house where he was born is still the home of his parents. He died July 24th, 1918, at the age of twenty-seven years.

After completing his education, he engaged with his father in the milling business with marked success. Fortune smiled upon him, and afforded him ample opportunity to indulge his love of outdoor exercise and sports. He was one of our first motorists, and always operated a high-powered car. He became a most expert driver, and X though he broke all ordinances and speed records, no one was ever injured by Phil Billard's car. His modest demeanor and daring spirit commanded the respect and admiration of all. He was one of the first to own and operate an aeroplane. Before the war the whirl of the

Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier

2--

engine of his air ship was familiar to every ear in his home town; its sound called every eye to witness his wonderful feats as he looped and turned or sailed away, often to such heights that his ship became a mere speck in the sky or disappeared altogether above the clouds; and how anxiously and confidently we awaited his return. Transfixed with awe and thrilled with admiration, we watched him outspeed the swiftest creatures of the air,- rise and fall,-and glide to the earth with all the grace of a bird. I have seen him return from his aerial flights his face aglow with the exhilaration of the trip and rosy with the flush of youth,-the embodiment of courage and strength. Yet amidst the plaudits of thousands of friends, he was modest and retiring.

When war was declared, he was one of the first to volunteer in the service of his country. After a brief training and after acting as instructor for a time in the aerial training camps of this country, he was sent to France. There as he ^{was} he was a favorite, but his skill barred him from the glorious achievements he would have accomplished on the battle line. Because of his skill a greater service was demanded of him, and he was assigned to the difficult and dangerous task of testing out repaired and rehabilitated aeroplanes. None but the most skilled

-2-

Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier

3--

fliers could be entrusted with this important and hazardous work. While thus engaged, on the 24th of July, 1918, through the failure or explosion of the engine, his ship fell and the life of Phil Billard went out, a sacrifice for his country and for the liberty of mankind. Oh, how we wish we could call him back to share with us the joy of victory and the blessings of peace won by his sacrifice and that of thousands of other heroes.

Wherever the story of Phil Billard shall be told, loyal hearts will throb with quickened impulse, and devotees of liberty will wreath his name with the sweetest flowers of gratitude. Peacefully he sleeps, in a soldier's grave in a military cemetery, on a sunny slope, near the ancestral home of his family in France. Through unnumbered years, as Winter's snows may fall, as Springtime's verdure comes and poppies bloom above the graves that ridge the battlefields of France, as Summer's heat may glow or Autumn's richest colors gild the landscape, thousands of pilgrims will journey to the historic ground where his body lies, to pay homage to the countless dead who with him died that men might be free. No greater heritage can come to us than that we are brothers of such men.

And so, of all our so-called dead we say: "The good, the brave, the true, can never die." When the roll is

Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier

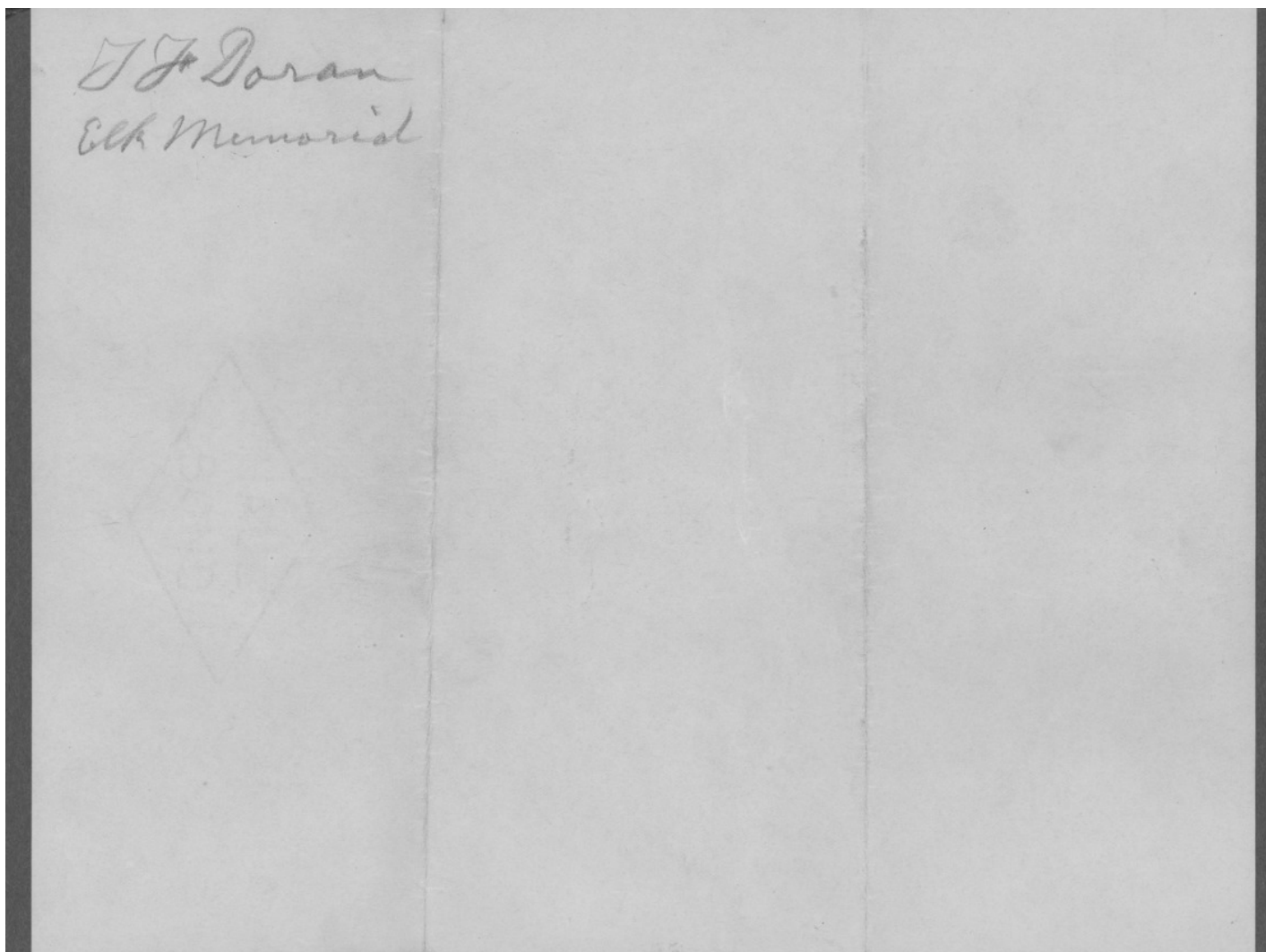
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called, to your name we answer "here." With you we each
repeat this solemn pledge of faith:

"I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.

And so beside the silent sea
I wait the muffled oar;
No harm can come from Him to me
On ocean or on shore."

Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier



Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier

Hamona Haus.
Nov. 5th 1920
Topeka Historical Society:
In enclosing a picture
of L. Phil Billard's grave
in France. He was a 1st
Lt. a S.P.C. - U.S.P. of the
Headquarters Dept. at the
3rd A.F.C. Tassouche
France. Phil was a "Tester"
at the time of his death,
July 24th 1918.

At this time the
"Liberty Aeroplane" was
a new thing overseas. Phil
being Tester of this Post,
Tested all planes that

Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier

was sent in. He was testing his third Liberty as I remember it.

He was about four thousand feet in the air and stunting. His last stunt was a "nose dive". Heading for the ground at a great speed, Phil tried to bring his plane out of the stunt by opening his motor to its greatest speed. He was unable to overcome this downward position, But only increased his speed. When he hit the ground it was thought that he

Louis Philip Billard, World War I soldier

falling at the rate of
four hundred miles per hour.

Phil was brave, ~~and~~
daring and an excellent
flier. This was probably
the reason that he was
held back as a Tester,
and was not sent to the
front.

written by

Stanley S. Martin

White City, Kans.

I was on the field the day
of his death. July 24th 1918

3rd A. I. C. means.

Third Aviation Instruction
Center. (Located at. Issoudun)