

Kansas Memory



Henry J. Allen, World War I correspondence

Section 4, Pages 91 - 120

This series of fifteen letters was sent by Henry J. Allen to his wife Elsie Jane Allen and his daughter Henrietta Allen. Subjects broached in the letters concern family, friends, Wichita community news, the Allens' new home at 225 Roosevelt, the horrors of war, innocence of youth, France and Italy. Allen was strongly affected by the horrors of the battlefields of World War I.

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that lead down into the
Sea. at Boulogne, where
I've made my Headquarters.
The city is filled with
soldiers from all countries.
It's one of the most interesting
places you ever seen. In
place times it was a
great seaport town for
channel and ocean traffic.
I ought to go out and
buy post cards and
send you souvenirs
but I simply do not
have time, & still on
my automobile trips.

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At 7³⁰ in the morning
and came back about
7³⁰ in the evening covered
with limestone dust
and so weary that I
fairly fell asleep over
my dinner, for one had
one evening that I might
have done something and
instead of writing you
and mother & went to
a nurses ball, where
I sat and yawned until
I felt silly. So I came
home, and got to bed at
11 P.M., & woke at 5
A.M. and cannot sleep

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So I got up and wrote the article which mentions the ball. Wednesday night I stayed at Dieppe, which is a rare old French coast town, and in summer time a great watering place something like Atlantic City. We stayed in a grand hotel, but it was nice going to Manitoba in the winter so far as people were concerned. There were only three or four other guests at the hotel - but I had a great night listening.

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to the ocean^r) Went out
on the beach and sat till
midnight thinking of you
and mother and Kansas
and war - and peace and
of how & should be up in
my room writing, its getting
difficult to write in yours
room. Summer has arrived
and if you close all your
windows and shutters to
keep the light in you
keep the air out, But
(it was indescribably peaceful
that night at Dieppe. I seemed
a million miles from
every body - and was seemed

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Non-existent ¹¹. As a matter
of fact you cannot realize
war over here when you
get 40 or 50 miles away.
Apparently there is no suffering
among the population outside the refugee from
people are well fed, well
clothed. Prosperity is
greater in the ~~zone~~
of the soldiers than it
ever was. and the French
peasant is getting in
real money a price for
his products which
he never got before.
There is plenty of money.
Wages are high.

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but you can buy any
thing you need - tho'
not everything you want.
You has to go without
bread for four days
because I didn't get
a bread card before
leaving Paris, nine
rain out may 30th
and I didn't get it renewed.
On two days I've taken
the waiter out & bread for
four days I had to
go without but I didn't
mind it, last night I had
soup, fried sole, french fried
potatoes, an omelette, french

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up with beans,¹² and closed
the moaque feast with
strawberries, eaten without
cream, but with sugar.
There seems to be plenty
of eggs and I eat too many
that I fairly cackle. You
get them in the morning
and again in the evening.
On meatless days you
get them sometimes served
twice in the same
meal, done in different
style. The French are such
matchless cooks that they
can dispense that same old
egg until it is past.

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all the attributes ^{of} of a
rare delicacy.
I miss my bread card
about half the time and
am improving my figure.
Don't expect too much of
me, but I've already lost
3 inches of waist measure
and my uniform made
in Washington is getting
baggy. (I see Mr. Smith
every day when I'm in
Phris. His office is just
across the hall from
mine. The day I left
we went out in my
car (I have a car now)

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strictly for office business) to the great Paris race track but not to see races. We are putting up a big American group of hospitals and in Paris we sought to provide a recreational hall for the convalescent. We walked over the place and picked out a big, beautiful room under one of the grand stands, which used to be a cafe. It will make a grand recreation.

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room and Mr. O'neal
began at once to figure
on the necessary equipment.
He's perfectly fine at
that sort of thing and
I'll never be able to tell
of the good work he's
doing. After we had looked
over the room we went
and stood for a moment
looking at the race
track and he said "I hasn't
been out here since Parks
and I visited this track
together" & said he was
looking glum so I
pulled out that picture

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J Connell you had sent
me and flashed it on
him all at once. He
sure was surprised when
I said casually "Do you
know this dear young girl?"
He thought it would
be you, of course.
I'm leaving for Paris
again today. I drive
to Rouen, five hours.
will leave here in just
an hour. get to Rouen
at 5. stay there monday
and then take train
for Paris. I'm

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going to have my Smyth
out to my apartment to
dinner soon as I get back,
The other day I visited
Fontainebleau, in company
with Mr Shaw to visit
French hospitals in
which there are
Americans. We travel
around quite a bit
together and she is perfectly
wonderful. I told her
all about you and
she sent you a handsome
ring - rather she gave
it to me to bring

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It's a piece¹⁹ of glass from
the cathedral at Reims
set in platinum. I'm
sending it for you
because I'm afraid
I would get lost
& sent it. Mrs
Shaw is a tall regal
sort of a beauty - about
the height of Mrs. Clappberg
but she is brilliant and
highly cultured and some
say she wants you to
visit her in Boston where
she belongs to the inner
circle. That's her
one fault so far as I

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Can judge - She's always thinking and talking in terms of her set. Its the Boston crowd that doesn't associate with anyone who keeps a store, unless, I presume, its a very big store. But she's doing a lot of great work over here in connection with Mrs Lathrop in the A.F.F.W (American fund for French wounded). One of my new assistants in the hospital visiting program is Mrs

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A Helen Crean. She is a
daughter of General Nicholson
who visited Wichita
with the soldiers that
time when the 7th
Cavalry and 10th artillery
were there. Her brother
was the young man
who fell so desperately
for May. Mother will
remember it & think.
Just before I left Harris
Frank T. Drees wrote
me and wanted to
be remembered to you
and mother.
I had another surprise

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a day or twond before I left.
Ruth Frazier who used
to be society editor of
the Beacon visited me.
She's an army nurse
at Base Hospital No 9,
and was in Paris shopping.
She was getting ready
to go to New York to
take her sister Marie
who was one of our
book keepers at the
Beacon, back to America.
Marie has been suffering
from shell shock
for six months. She

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Was caught in a
bombing raid on
the hospital near Amiens
six months ago - and her
nerves went to pieces.
She hopes to recover
back in the States and
then return. Ruth will
come back immediately
after taking Marie to
a hospital in N.Y.
(Mrs Hendrie could
make an item of this)
I made an address
at the American Club

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Decorsten ²⁴ dor - About
300 American were
there at luncheon - and
it was a very interesting
occasion, they tell me
I made a good speech.
Tell mother thd the
day & visible hospital
at Fontainebleau I went
through the palace.
In Marie Antoinette
boudoir & found a
man sketching a picture
of the war

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Walter Gay ²⁵ ~~wore~~ famous
decorator, mother darling,
has heard of him, he
happened to be a
friend of Mrs. Shars.
So I had a nice visit
with him, I'm so
grateful to you for your
frequent letters - and
you a fortune ^{that} when
I get back to Paris
I'll find mail from
both you and mother.
I'm going to take

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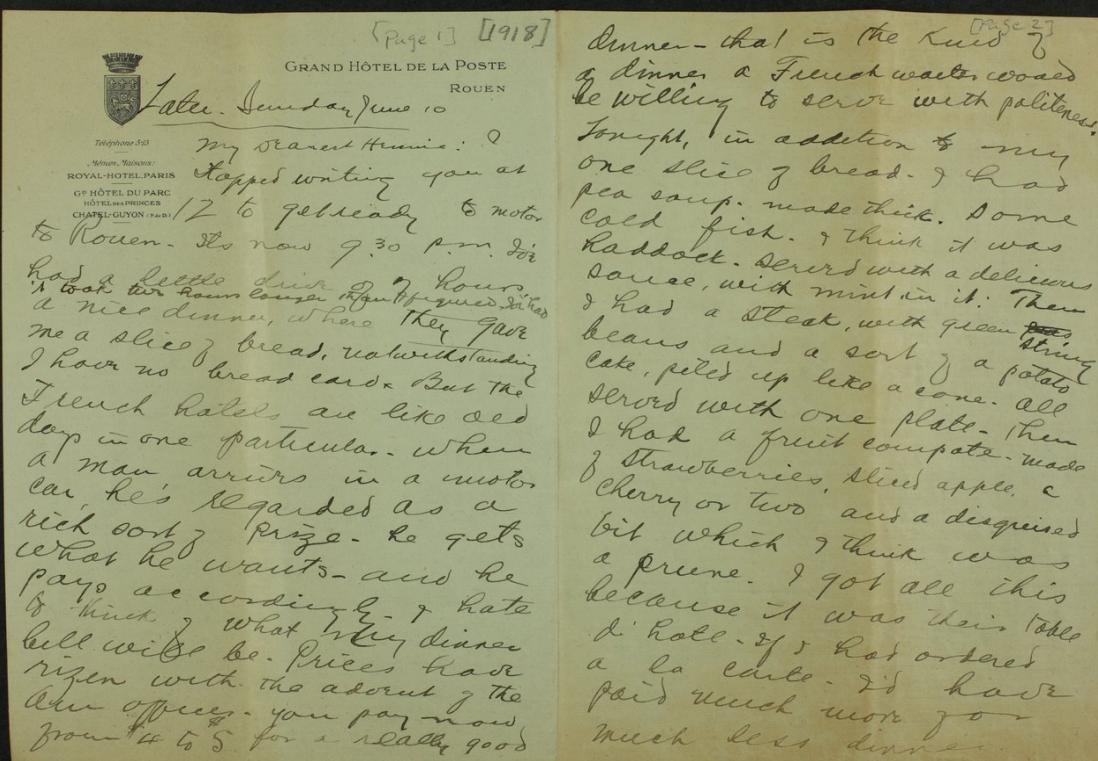
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this letter back to
Mail at Paris, or
Maybe at Rouen
because my time
is getting short
and I must pack
my kit bag and
Get a bite to eat
before my car
comes. Give my love
to mother and everybody
Yours with
great love and longing
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[Page 3]
Now I'm Smoking an American
cigar which costs me 3 francs
to continue. and beating back
to normal life. I don't give
myself a flogging like this
very often. I wish you
and mother could see
me. I know what mother
would say. She'd say "for
heaven sakes go up and
put some powder on
your face." for I'm almost
blistered. The sun has
been beating on me
for 4 days. and in addition
the limestone and cement
dust from the roads
has ground their way
into my skin. and it stings
like the interior finish
of a lobster. And I suffer

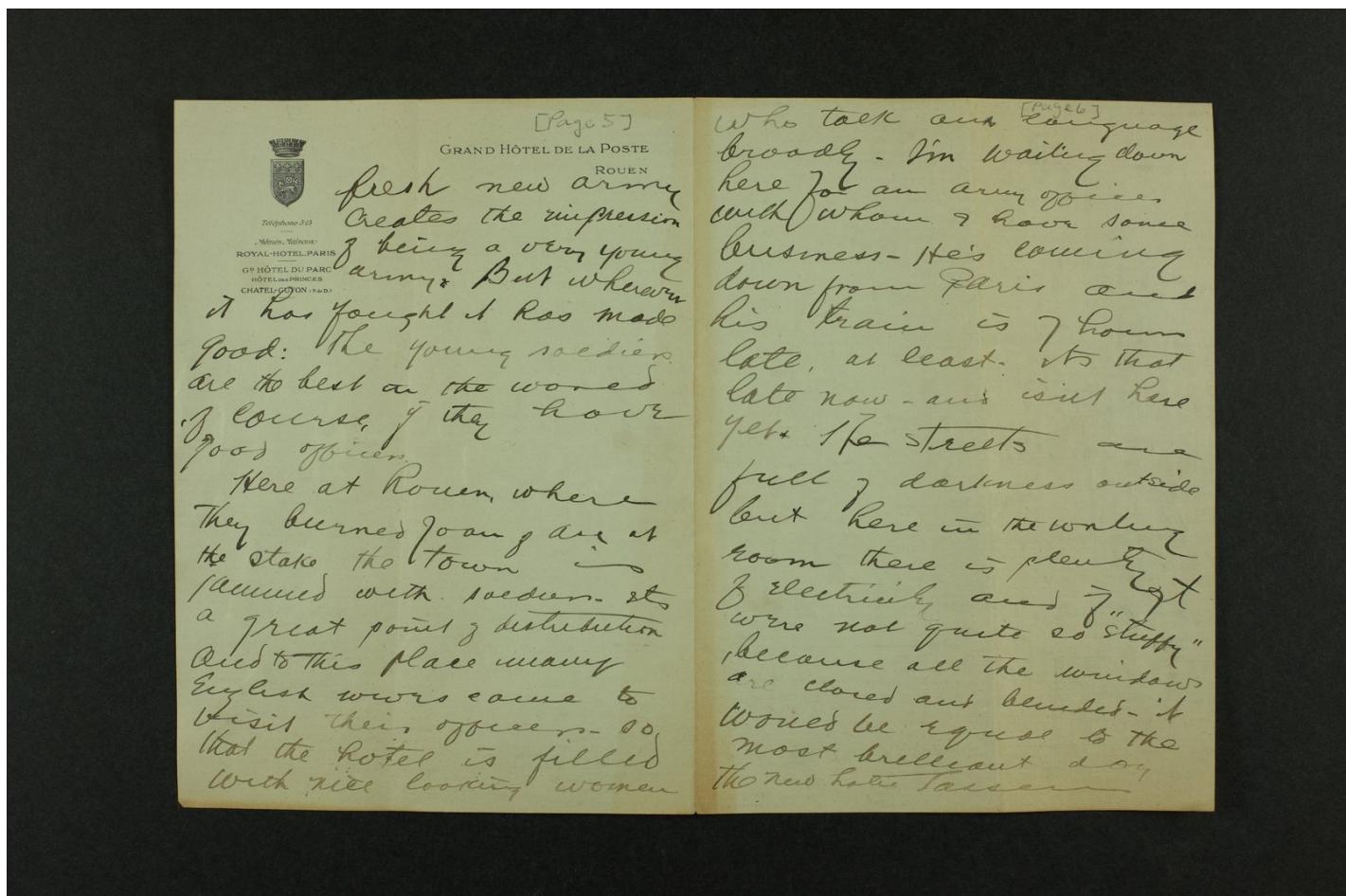
[Page 4]
like a man who ^{leaves} lick
with a frown. but I feel fine
about my dinner and I
like my job. for 3 days I've
been seeing the poor soldiers.
and oh my dear, he does
grip your heart. Why, he's
just a boy. The other
soldiers over here are
also older. Of course they
have had, most of them,
the aging experience of
4 years & bitter hardship
and naturally they look
older. Then they are
older, so far as a majority
of them here concerned. The
natural effect of 4 years
wastage has been to
put older men into
the line. so that our

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will soon know. It does
is the Hale train any
way? why doesn't any
one ever write me any
real news, its pretty dull
over here with nothing
on but war and no
body talking about
what's going on
in Wichita. You get
tired of the big dramatic
things and long for
a touch of simple, home
yornation. Does Leutze
tell write me about the
little things.

I forgot to stop now
because I notice ours

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in the office a
rustle which indicates
that the Harris train
is in.

I love you and
mother with all
my heart - and I count
the days till October,
or maybe November when
I start home again.

Yours with great love

Father

Next letter will be to
mother in about a
week

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The next day [Page 9]
I got back to Paris, and there
was a letter from mother, a
letter from wife White and
a lot of Beacons.
Mother's letter was a real
kick & far almost as though
I could hear her say it - I
know she feels mean about it, but
she needs Radar & looks for
it brought back home. Then this
morning I got a cheerful
letter written May 15 and full
of dear, good spirit. It makes
me feel good all over to see
her giving some dinners and
using the house. and I'm
overjoyed at the fact that
she loves the house. She
makes me feel that every

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time she writes. I'd like [12/10/03]
a very unhappy man & she
didn't like the house.
I also got a good letter
this am. from Coleman
and one from Will
White, but I haven't had
a description yet of mother's
entertainment of Gen Woods and
the others.
Miss close. as I have
an article to get up
I'm writing two articles a
week. and I don't keep me
hustling some. but now this
makes me feel fine about
them. She's complimented them
twice. Yours with love to
you and mother.

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June 16 [1918]

My Dear Elsie.

It's Sunday again and
I'll stop my other writing to
write you for a few moments.
I got up early, about 6 - and began
a newspaper article which
is nearly finished, and I want
to finish it and write a
second one by midnight.
We had Mr. Smyth and
Clarence Brodie out to
dinner - a Mr. Winthrop of Boston
, one Jim Hutchins' friends was also
here and we had a very
interesting time - everybody loved
Clarence and Hutchins said

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after he was gone ^{away}, I had
a boy & I want him to
be like that. Clarence was
leaving at midnight for
his place, where he is ^{to be} equipped
and within a few days will
be flying ^{as no found}. This one of ten
selected to co-operate with a
French flying Esquadillee
on the Somme, and it made
me warm all over to hear
him talk. He was positively
enchanted with the prospect.
We had a good dinner; liver
and bacon and fried potatoes.
Second course, cold meat with
hard boiled eggs and lettuce
salad.
Then we had new ripe cherries.

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on the stem - and took
our coffee in the library
and talked for a long time.
We've had ripe strawberries
once a day - they are very cheap
now, & I don't know how
our living expenses
are going to stack up
but I see that its going
to be about ~~\$100~~ a month
more than living at the
hotel would be and I
think I'll go back to hotel
at the end of the second
month - if we are still in Paris.
That "if" is big in lorry-
bodys mind just now

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and people are leaving by
the thousands. Of course its
the time of the year when
many would be leaving
anyway. But there is no
use in disguising the
fact that much concern exists
over the presence of the
big German drive only
39 miles away. Personally I
do not believe they will break through
but undoubtedly they intend ^(to Germany) & make
Paris a difficult place to live
in this summer. It has been
a hard week because so many
of our men are now in the
lines that the hospitals are
all filling up and that makes