

Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers

Section 22, Pages 631 - 660

These two volumes, entitled Letters from Kansas Boys: European War, 1914-1918, contain letters from soldiers serving in World War I. The letters were printed in Kansas newspapers between 1914 and 1918 and clipped and compiled by the staff of the Kansas Historical Society. The clippings are organized alphabetically by soldier's last name.

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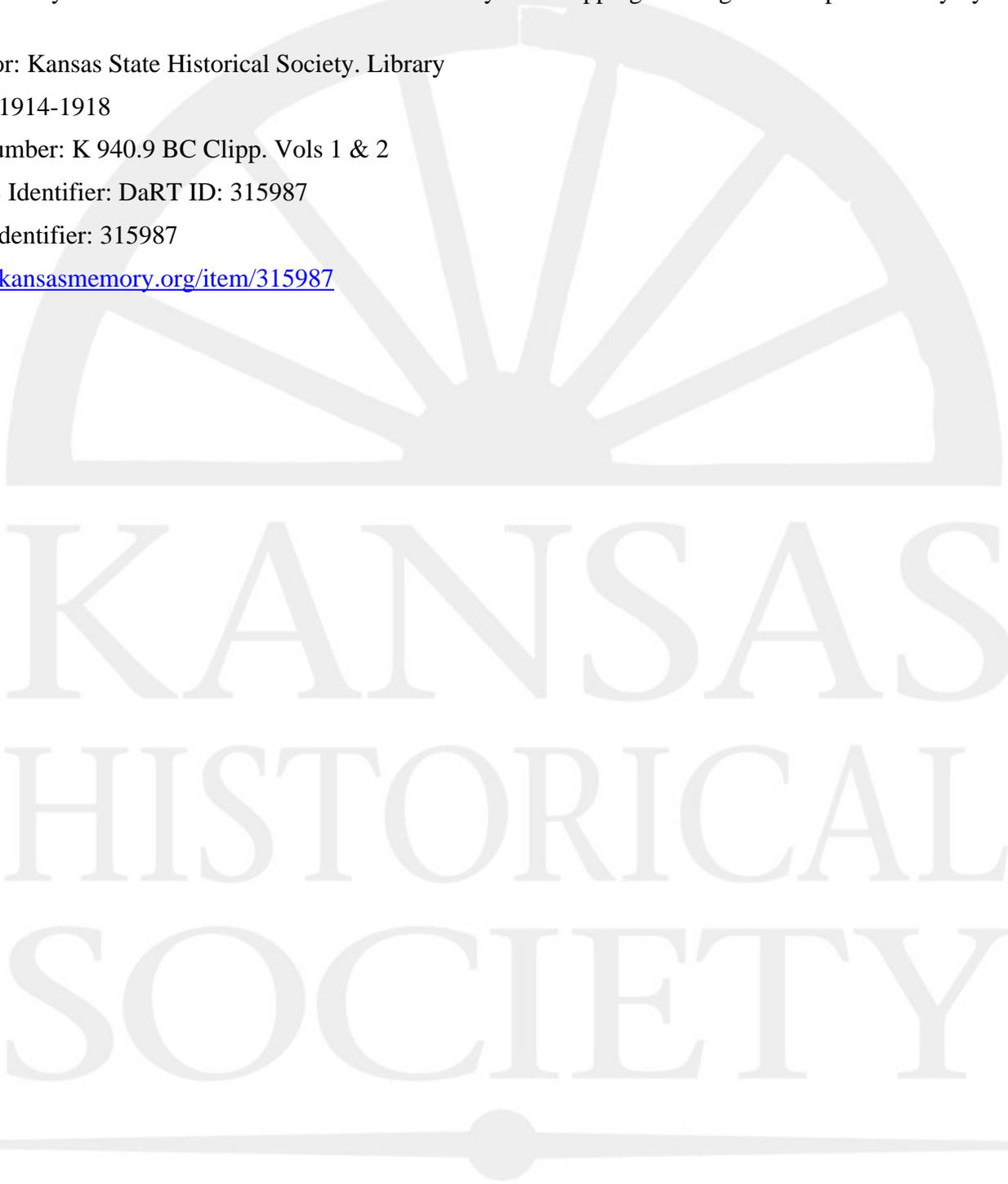
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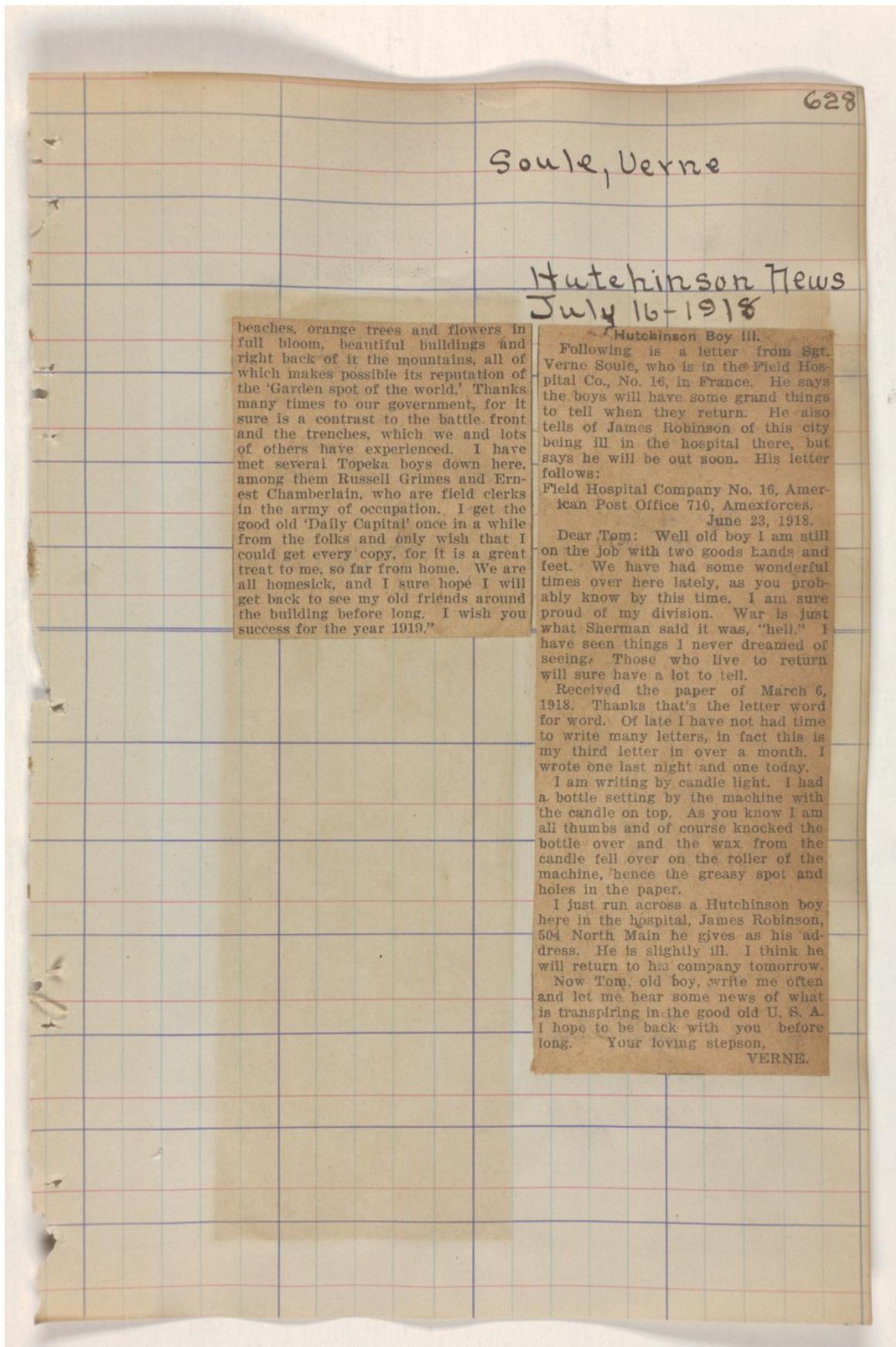
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Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers



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Soule, Verne

Hutchinson News
July 16-1918

beaches, orange trees and flowers in full bloom, beautiful buildings and right back of it the mountains, all of which makes possible its reputation of the 'Garden spot of the world.' Thanks many times to our government, for it sure is a contrast to the battle front and the trenches, which we and lots of others have experienced. I have met several Topeka boys down here, among them Russell Grimes and Ernest Chamberlain, who are field clerks in the army of occupation. I get the good old 'Daily Capital' once in a while from the folks and only wish that I could get every copy, for it is a great treat to me, so far from home. We are all homesick, and I sure hope I will get back to see my old friends around the building before long. I wish you success for the year 1919."

Hutchinson Boy III.

Following is a letter from Sgt. Verne Soule, who is in the Field Hospital Co., No. 16, in France. He says the boys will have some grand things to tell when they return. He also tells of James Robinson of this city being ill in the hospital there, but says he will be out soon. His letter follows:

Field Hospital Company No. 16, American Post Office 710, Amexforces.

June 23, 1918.

Dear Tom: Well old boy I am still on the job with two goods hands and feet. We have had some wonderful times over here lately, as you probably know by this time. I am sure proud of my division. War is just what Sherman said it was, "hell." I have seen things I never dreamed of seeing. Those who live to return will sure have a lot to tell.

Received the paper of March 6, 1918. Thanks that's the letter word for word. Of late I have not had time to write many letters, in fact this is my third letter in over a month. I wrote one last night and one today.

I am writing by candle light. I had a bottle setting by the machine with the candle on top. As you know I am all thumbs and of course knocked the bottle over and the wax from the candle fell over on the roller of the machine, hence the greasy spot and holes in the paper.

I just run across a Hutchinson boy here in the hospital, James Robinson, 504 North Main he gives as his address. He is slightly ill. I think he will return to his company tomorrow.

Now Tom, old boy, write me often and let me hear some news of what is transpiring in the good old U. S. A. I hope to be back with you before long.

Your loving stepson,
VERNE.

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Spencer, Alexander

Topeka Journal
Oct-26-1918

Miss Gladys Parker has received the following letter from Sergeant Vern Sowle and has also received the souvenirs which he mentions in the letter. It is her intention to place them in some window down town for others to see:

Dead Glad:

Today I subscribed for the Stars and Stripes to be mailed to you direct from the Paris office. This paper gives more in detail than we can write. I don't know why, either. It has been full of news of us lately.

Yes, I know it has been some time since you last heard from me, but if you could have followed our footsteps for the past three weeks you would readily understand why. Newspapers dated June — should explain. I am enclosing several small German souvenirs; these I have taken from the captured men. This one from the cap of a sergeant. This button from a private's coat. This two-mark bill I removed from the wallet of a corporal. So you see the American boys are on the job.

My company worked 60 hours without sleep on one occasion and 48 on another. Then to cap that off we made a wonderful hike which developed a great many blistered feet. Believe me the boys deserve a lot of credit.

Some parts of France are wonderful, very picturesque and antiquated. Large old chateaus adorn the hills and valleys, which at present writing are covered with green foliage and flowers.

Censor might object to more description.

I have been in several of the various chateaus and am sure you would enjoy a visit to them.

Well, Glad, we are licking the dirty German sox off the enemy. They haven't a ghost of a chance. I may be home in a very short time. No more news.

Yours,
SGT. VERN SOWLE.

W. Alex Spencer, first lieutenant, 58th infantry, U. S. A., has recently been made an instructor in an army candidate school in France. Lieutenant Spencer was in the front fighting line most of the summer, excepting the two weeks spent in Red Cross hospitals, as a result of shell shock and battle exhaustion, after the great Franco-American offensive. During this rapid advance he commanded a company and for four weeks was not even able to remove his clothing or shoes at night. His letters to his mother, Mrs. Chas. F. Spencer, contain much of general interest, and from these we make a few extracts.

His exciting experiences began while going overseas, when the transport on which he was sailing destroyed the U-boat that attacked it, and four officers and twenty-eight members of the U-boat crew were taken on the transport as prisoners. Just before landing the soldiers were all called together for a thanksgiving service for a safe voyage across.

In reply to questions in regard to his reported shell shock Lieutenant Spencer says: "Now, something about this shell shock business: Have written you about being in the front line with the American Marines from about the 2d to 8th of July, for observation. Then I was up in observation with a French outfit from about the 12th to the 16th, during which time the boche attempted his last offensive toward Paris. I returned to the outfit one morning, and that evening the whole outfit moved out and into the front lines. We were in reserve the first day of the drive, the 18th. All that day I was very busy helping to translate orders from the French headquarters over us, and also acting as interpreter, in addition to having duties with the company. That night I went with some of the officers and spent half the night out in No Man Land and had an hour of rest (it was very chilly) before going over the top. The men were so sleepy and tired that they would fall down and go to sleep before we could get them placed, and it was awfully hard to get them up and move them around where we wanted them. For we had to keep quiet, and were working in the dark, had gas all around us, and everybody 'all in.' We went over the top at 4:35 a. m., under a terrific barrage by the Germans. After we had proceeded out of our positions, and were making good headway, with casualties of course, something happened which knocked me senseless for awhile."

It was this night, July 19, that his friend, William Heap, of Topeka, first lieutenant medical corps, found him beside a shell hole and gave first aid.

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First Lieut. W. Alexander Spencer,
with the 59th U. S. A. infantry in
France.

The next day, however, he was back in the front lines and commanded a company throught the remainder of the offensive. During one of the brief lulls in this offensive, on July 24, he wrote of celebrating the two national birthdays, saying, "We have had two holidays, July 4 and July 14, (French day) and on both days I was in the lines, with an American outfit on the 4th and with the French on the 14th. We have had some tough work lately and I am glad to be having a little rest. The fact that the Germans are getting the worst of it helps, however. It will interest you to know that I have again been recommended for promotion, but there can be so many recommenda-

tions without anything happening that I am not getting excited. I am sorry I could not write you more of late, but it has been impossible. We haven't had an easy time of it. You have been reading of the allied push and German retreat, of course."

When the 59th was at last relieved from active duty at the front and had marched until 4 a. m. to a place of safety, Lieutenant Spencer was found to be quite ill and was sent to the hospital, under protest. In four successive days he was moved from one hospital to another until at last he found himself in one of the base hospitals at Limoges, from which he writes: "Up front we could never tell in our letters the places where we were located but they tell me it is permitted here, so far back from the lines. I am in no of the buildings formerly occupied by the Haviland china works here at Limoges, towards the southwest part of France. It is a large hospital and they have many patients here, surgical and medical. There are several hospitals at this town. It seems strange to be where there is no bombardment—not even danger of air raids—and it's certainly great to sleep in a real bed, and have American women for nurses. And in coming down here on the train it seemed strange to see prosperous towns and villages. All we have seen near the front has been destruction and no civil population. What I have seen the last two or three days has reminded me more of the France I saw six years ago."

While at this Red Cross hospital at Limoges Lieutenant Spencer had time to write of conditions abroad that are enlightening. "Of course in the danger zone the towns have no lights showing at any time. In Paris the street lights are few and shaded so as not to be easily visible from above. And the street cars there are dimly lighted with green light which does not show much from a distance. On the English coast the same rules about lights prevail. Before the war Limoges had about 100,000 people, but now has between 125,000 and 150,000, on account of the general exodus from towns near the front.

"The English and Americans have beautiful Red Cross railway trains—large cars painted and well equipped with powerful engines, and they really travel, too. Most of the Red Cross cars are fitted with beds—I think thirty-six to the car. We get the Paris editions of the New York Herald, Chicago Tribune and London Daily Mail, daily on the date of issue. The Red Cross kept us supplied with them at the front, also, but usually one day old."

About two weeks after his return to the front, Lieutenant Spencer received a telegram appointing him an

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Spencer, Roy W.

Kansas City Star
77ch-9-1918

Instructor in an officers' training camp, called Army Candidate School at American Postoffice 714. He does not tell where this is located, but says: "This town has a remarkable geographical location, it is very high, on a mountain, surrounded by flat country with hills in the distance. Must have made a wonderful mediaeval fortress. Walls all around the city on the edges of the plateau, and the view is magnificent. There are two cog-rail lines to the valley, and railroad lines below. This is a great army educational center. All kinds of schools, either in town or within a few miles, ranging from army staff college to schools for all kinds of specialists. You see officers here from all branches of the service. The candidates (in the army candidate school) are picked men from all regiments over here. They are mostly sergeants, already are good soldiers, and most of them have been in action—certainly a fine looking bunch of men."

Lieutenant Spencer was evidently chosen for this position on account of his civilian experience in the teaching profession as well as for his services in the front lines. He is a graduate of Washburn college and has his master's degree in education from Columbia university, New York City. He has had several years experience as a high school principal, and at the time he volunteered for military service he was head of the department of American history and civics in the Kansas City, Kansas, high school.

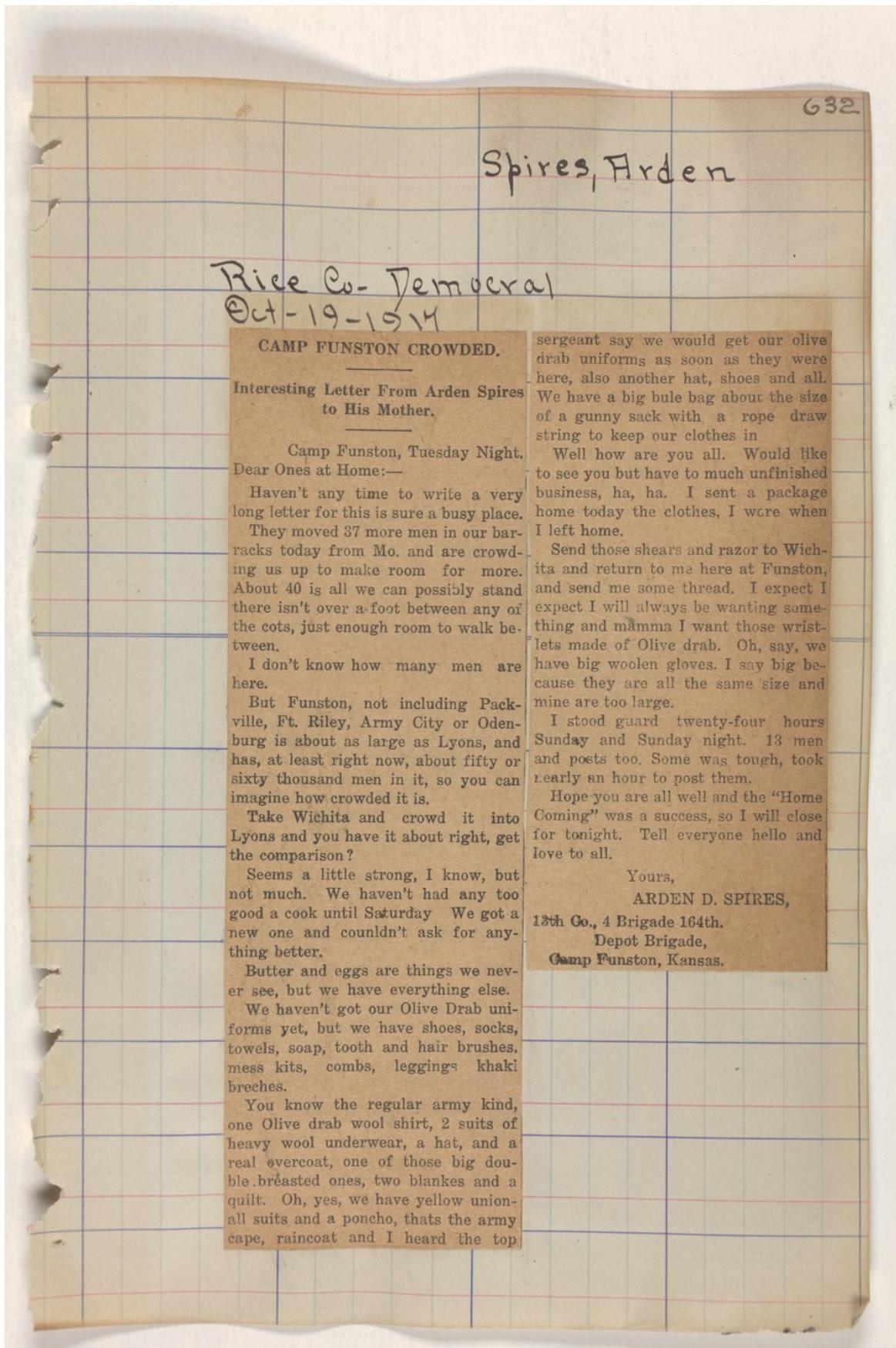
WAR LIFE A BUSINESS MATTER.

Salary and Travel Enough in Return, Kansas Soldier Believes.

An extract from a letter from Roy W. Spencer to his father, Dr. W. W. Spencer of Mankato, Kas.:

You spoke in your letter of me making a sacrifice. In one way, perhaps, I did, but it is mostly a business proposition. I took a job to do my part in the war, but in return there is \$40.80 for every month beside everything else furnished me. I have had the chance to travel seven thousand miles and see four foreign countries, without expense to me. There are people who have spent hundreds of dollars to see what I already have seen. Do not worry about me, as I am going to set foot in the U. S. A. again, and you'll hear me shout from the coast to Kansas when I do.

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Spires, Arden

Rice Co- Democrat
Oct-19-1914

CAMP FUNSTON CROWDED.

Interesting Letter From Arden Spires
to His Mother.

Camp Funston, Tuesday Night.
Dear Ones at Home:—

Haven't any time to write a very long letter for this is sure a busy place.

They moved 37 more men in our barracks today from Mo. and are crowding us up to make room for more. About 40 is all we can possibly stand there isn't over a-foot between any of the cots, just enough room to walk between.

I don't know how many men are here.

But Funston, not including Packville, Ft. Riley, Army City or Odenburg is about as large as Lyons, and has, at least right now, about fifty or sixty thousand men in it, so you can imagine how crowded it is.

Take Wichita and crowd it into Lyons and you have it about right, get the comparison?

Seems a little strong, I know, but not much. We haven't had any too good a cook until Saturday We got a new one and couldn't ask for anything better.

Butter and eggs are things we never see, but we have everything else.

We haven't got our Olive Drab uniforms yet, but we have shoes, socks, towels, soap, tooth and hair brushes, mess kits, combs, leggings khaki breeches.

You know the regular army kind, one Olive drab wool shirt, 2 suits of heavy wool underwear, a hat, and a real overcoat, one of those big double breasted ones, two blankets and a quilt. Oh, yes, we have yellow union-all suits and a poncho, that's the army cape, raincoat and I heard the top

sergeant say we would get our olive drab uniforms as soon as they were here, also another hat, shoes and all. We have a big blue bag about the size of a gunny sack with a rope draw string to keep our clothes in

Well how are you all. Would like to see you but have too much unfinished business, ha, ha. I sent a package home today the clothes, I wore when I left home.

Send those shears and razor to Wichita and return to me here at Funston, and send me some thread. I expect I expect I will always be wanting something and mamma I want those wristlets made of Olive drab. Oh, say, we have big woolen gloves. I say big because they are all the same size and mine are too large.

I stood guard twenty-four hours Sunday and Sunday night. 13 men and posts too. Some was tough, took nearly an hour to post them.

Hope you are all well and the "Home Coming" was a success, so I will close for tonight. Tell everyone hello and love to all.

Yours,

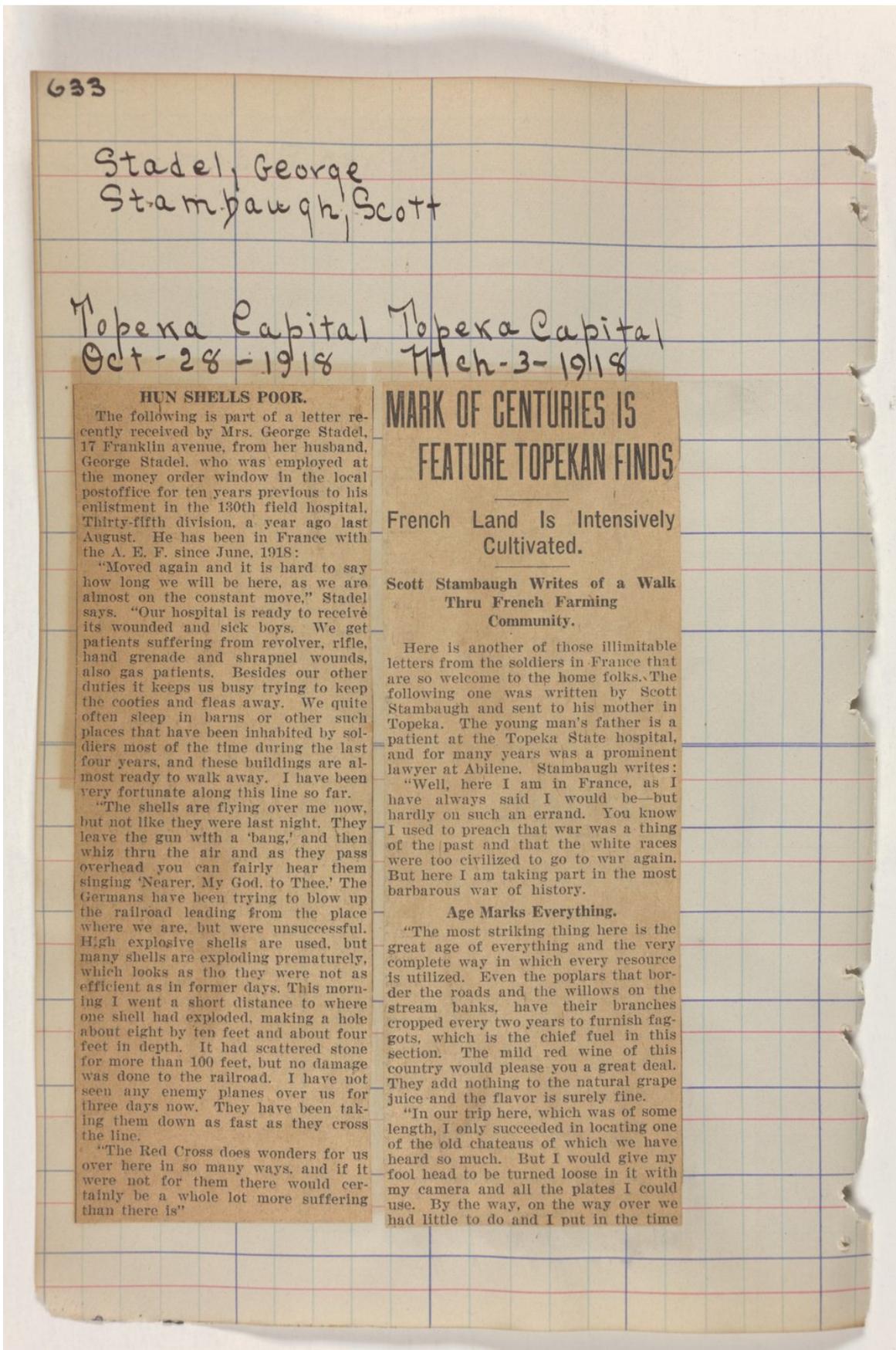
ARDEN D. SPIRES,

13th Co., 4 Brigade 164th.

Depot Brigade,

Camp Funston, Kansas.

Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers



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Stadel, George
Stambaugh, Scott

Topeka Capital Oct-28-1918
Topeka Capital March-3-1918

HUN SHELLS POOR.

The following is part of a letter recently received by Mrs. George Stadel, 17 Franklin avenue, from her husband, George Stadel, who was employed at the money order window in the local postoffice for ten years previous to his enlistment in the 130th field hospital, Thirty-fifth division, a year ago last August. He has been in France with the A. E. F. since June, 1918:

"Moved again and it is hard to say how long we will be here, as we are almost on the constant move," Stadel says. "Our hospital is ready to receive its wounded and sick boys. We get patients suffering from revolver, rifle, hand grenade and shrapnel wounds, also gas patients. Besides our other duties it keeps us busy trying to keep the cooties and fleas away. We quite often sleep in barns or other such places that have been inhabited by soldiers most of the time during the last four years, and these buildings are almost ready to walk away. I have been very fortunate along this line so far.

"The shells are flying over me now, but not like they were last night. They leave the gun with a 'bang,' and then whiz thru the air and as they pass overhead you can fairly hear them singing 'Nearer, My God, to Thee.' The Germans have been trying to blow up the railroad leading from the place where we are, but were unsuccessful. High explosive shells are used, but many shells are exploding prematurely, which looks as tho they were not as efficient as in former days. This morning I went a short distance to where one shell had exploded, making a hole about eight by ten feet and about four feet in depth. It had scattered stone for more than 100 feet, but no damage was done to the railroad. I have not seen any enemy planes over us for three days now. They have been taking them down as fast as they cross the line.

"The Red Cross does wonders for us over here in so many ways, and if it were not for them there would certainly be a whole lot more suffering than there is"

MARK OF CENTURIES IS FEATURE TOPEKAN FINDS

French Land Is Intensively
Cultivated.

Scott Stambaugh Writes of a Walk
Thru French Farming
Community.

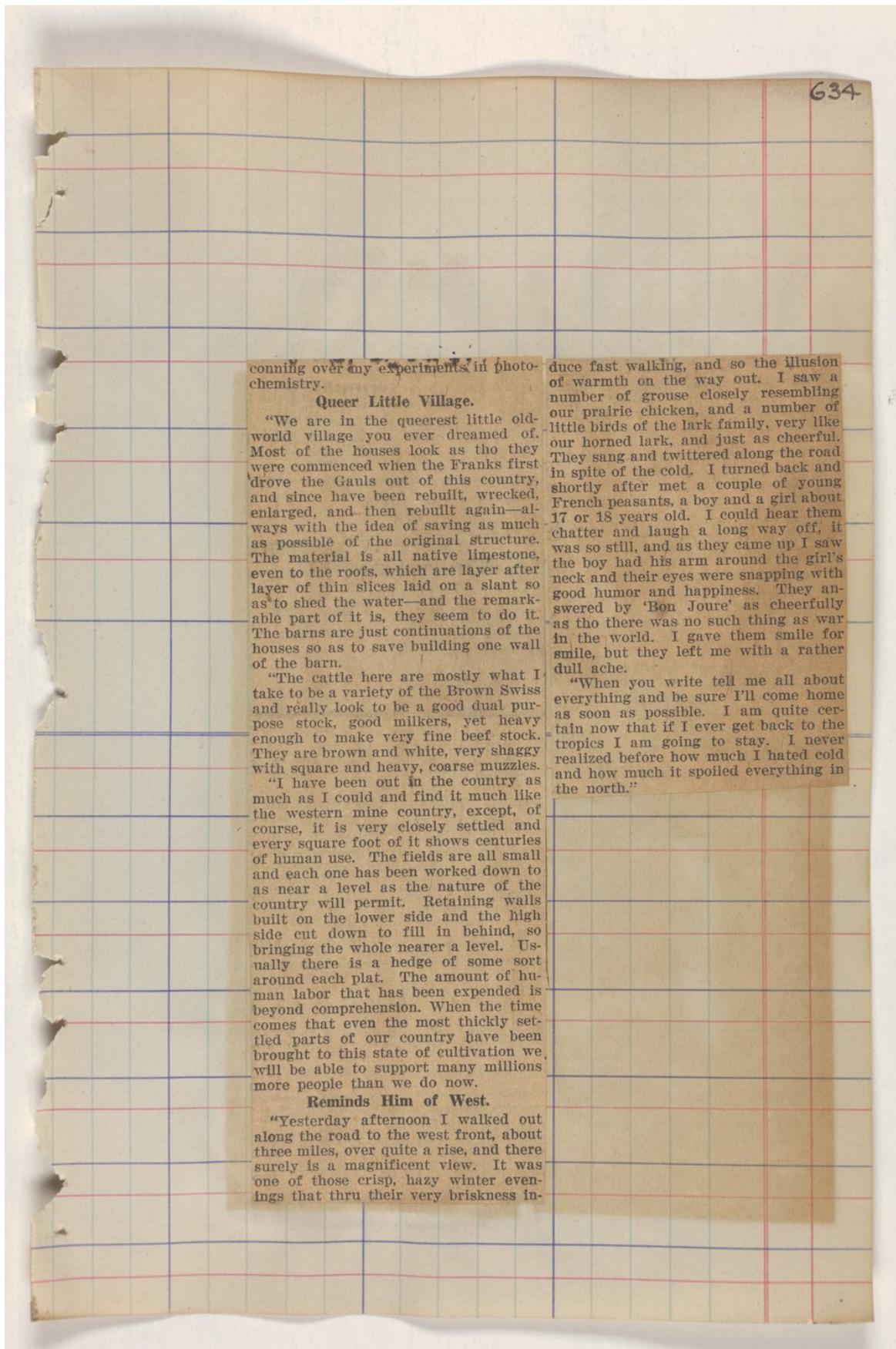
Here is another of those illimitable letters from the soldiers in France that are so welcome to the home folks. The following one was written by Scott Stambaugh and sent to his mother in Topeka. The young man's father is a patient at the Topeka State hospital, and for many years was a prominent lawyer at Abilene. Stambaugh writes:

"Well, here I am in France, as I have always said I would be—but hardly on such an errand. You know I used to preach that war was a thing of the past and that the white races were too civilized to go to war again. But here I am taking part in the most barbarous war of history.

Age Marks Everything.

"The most striking thing here is the great age of everything and the very complete way in which every resource is utilized. Even the poplars that border the roads and the willows on the stream banks, have their branches cropped every two years to furnish fagots, which is the chief fuel in this section. The mild red wine of this country would please you a great deal. They add nothing to the natural grape juice and the flavor is surely fine.

"In our trip here, which was of some length, I only succeeded in locating one of the old chateaus of which we have heard so much. But I would give my fool head to be turned loose in it with my camera and all the plates I could use. By the way, on the way over we had little to do and I put in the time



conning over my experiments in photo-chemistry.

Queer Little Village.

"We are in the queerest little old-world village you ever dreamed of. Most of the houses look as tho they were commenced when the Franks first drove the Gauls out of this country, and since have been rebuilt, wrecked, enlarged, and then rebuilt again—always with the idea of saving as much as possible of the original structure. The material is all native limestone, even to the roofs, which are layer after layer of thin slices laid on a slant so as to shed the water—and the remarkable part of it is, they seem to do it. The barns are just continuations of the houses so as to save building one wall of the barn.

"The cattle here are mostly what I take to be a variety of the Brown Swiss and really look to be a good dual purpose stock, good milkers, yet heavy enough to make very fine beef stock. They are brown and white, very shaggy with square and heavy, coarse muzzles.

"I have been out in the country as much as I could and find it much like the western mine country, except, of course, it is very closely settled and every square foot of it shows centuries of human use. The fields are all small and each one has been worked down to as near a level as the nature of the country will permit. Retaining walls built on the lower side and the high side cut down to fill in behind, so bringing the whole nearer a level. Usually there is a hedge of some sort around each plat. The amount of human labor that has been expended is beyond comprehension. When the time comes that even the most thickly settled parts of our country have been brought to this state of cultivation we will be able to support many millions more people than we do now.

Reminds Him of West.

"Yesterday afternoon I walked out along the road to the west front, about three miles, over quite a rise, and there surely is a magnificent view. It was one of those crisp, hazy winter evenings that thru their very briskness in-

duce fast walking, and so the illusion of warmth on the way out. I saw a number of grouse closely resembling our prairie chicken, and a number of little birds of the lark family, very like our horned lark, and just as cheerful. They sang and twittered along the road in spite of the cold. I turned back and shortly after met a couple of young French peasants, a boy and a girl about 17 or 18 years old. I could hear them chatter and laugh a long way off, it was so still, and as they came up I saw the boy had his arm around the girl's neck and their eyes were snapping with good humor and happiness. They answered by 'Bon Joure' as cheerfully as tho there was no such thing as war in the world. I gave them smile for smile, but they left me with a rather dull ache.

"When you write tell me all about everything and be sure I'll come home as soon as possible. I am quite certain now that if I ever get back to the tropics I am going to stay. I never realized before how much I hated cold and how much it spoiled everything in the north."

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Steinbring, Albert
Sterling, C.A.

Kansas City Star Topeka Capital
Nov. 15-1918 May - 4-1919

SAYS HE GOT FOUR GERMANS.

A Machine Gun Bullet Struck a Kansan in the Cheek.

Private Albert Steinbring, son of Mr. and Mrs. William Steinbring, Lake View, Kas., formerly an apprentice at the Santa Fe shops in Argentine, with the 137th Infantry, 35th Division, writes from France:

I am in the hospital, with a wound in the right side of my face, where I was struck by a German machine gun bullet. Some of the boys lost their lives, but they sure fought hard and did their share. The bullet hit me in the cheek and stopped at the nose bone. It cut a pretty good hole in my cheek. I was also knocked down twice by large shells. I expect to return to my company soon.

I don't know how the rest of the boys are, but I hope they killed their four, as I did.

THRILL OF A LIFETIME AT THE KANSAS GREETING

Musician With 137th Tells of the Experience.

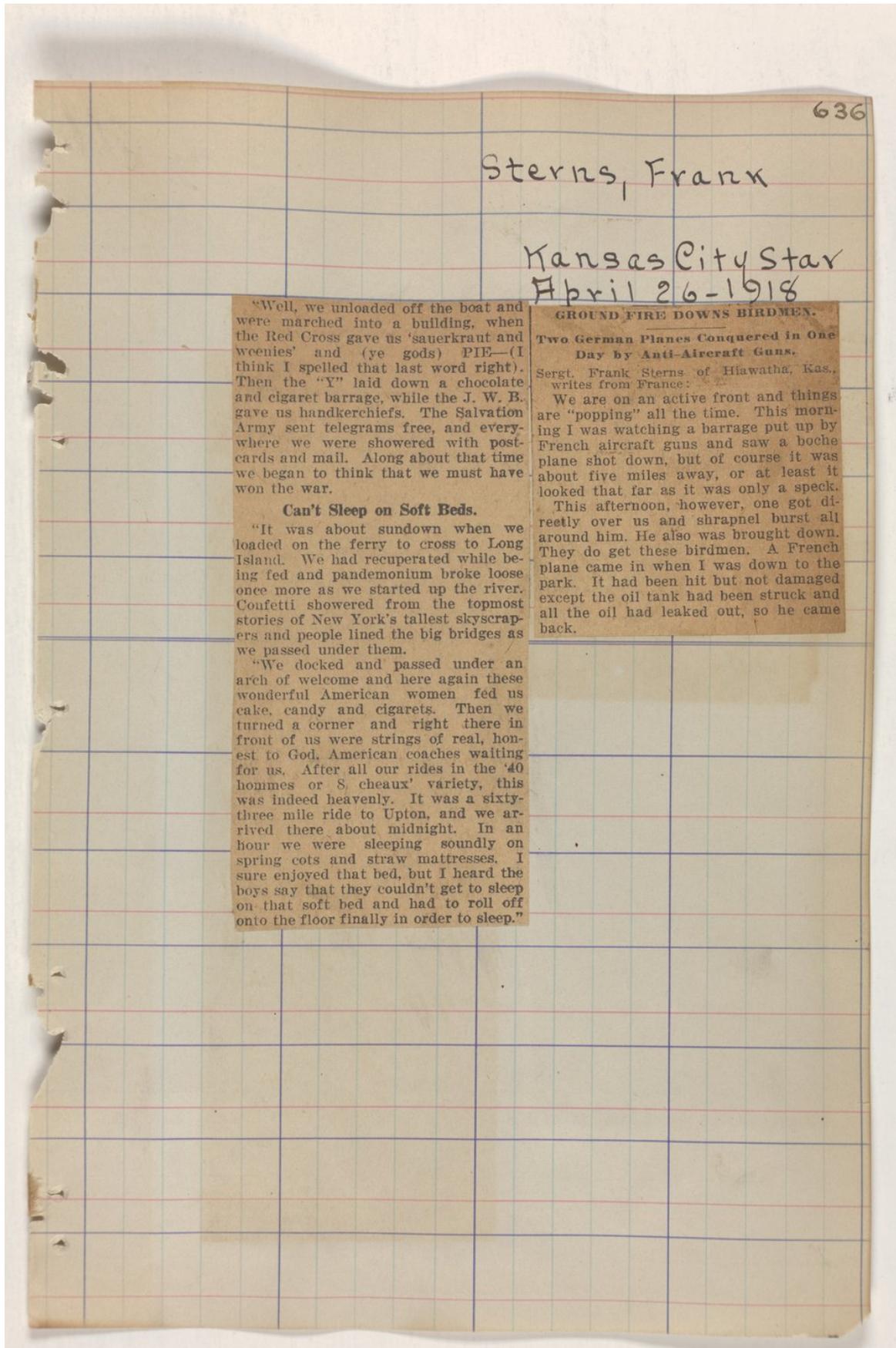
Every Man Yelled Until He Was So
Hoarse He Couldn't Talk; Then
He Waved His Hands.

While you are having the thrills of a lifetime welcoming the boys of the Thirty-fifth division, have you thought how the boys themselves must be feeling? Here is one of the first letters received in Topeka from a member of the Thirty-fifth, telling of the emotions with which the Topeka boys beheld the preparations to welcome them. The letter is from C. A. Sterling, a musician with the 137th infantry, who used to work in the office of the auditor of disbursements of the Santa Fe.

"We sailed from Brest, France, April 13, aboard the Manchuria, with 6,100 men on board," Sterling says. "After ten and a half days of pretty rough riding, we sighted land. No doubt you heard us yell when we first sighted the U. S. A. We didn't cheer, we yelled. I'll bet Topeka shook when we sighted the statue of liberty. Let me tell you that enthusiasm was about 900 per cent efficient then. In fact, we were so blind with our happiness that we almost failed to see the tug Lexington, carrying the Kansas welcoming committee, until it was directly alongside.

It Can't be Beaten.

"When I saw Arthur Capper and the 'Topeka's for You' banner—well, I just quit. What is the use of trying to keep up with a country that greets you like that? When we finally pulled into the pier at Hoboken I was so hoarse that I could not make a sound. But I kept opening and closing my mouth in imitation, for a man has to do something besides wave his arms.



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Sterns, Frank

Kansas City Star
April 26-1918

"Well, we unloaded off the boat and were marched into a building, when the Red Cross gave us 'sauerkraut and weenies' and (ye gods) PIE—I think I spelled that last word right). Then the "Y" laid down a chocolate and cigaret barrage, while the J. W. B. gave us handkerchiefs. The Salvation Army sent telegrams free, and everywhere we were showered with post-cards and mail. Along about that time we began to think that we must have won the war.

Can't Sleep on Soft Beds.

"It was about sundown when we loaded on the ferry to cross to Long Island. We had recuperated while being fed and pandemonium broke loose once more as we started up the river. Confetti showered from the topmost stories of New York's tallest skyscrapers and people lined the big bridges as we passed under them.

"We docked and passed under an arch of welcome and here again these wonderful American women fed us cake, candy and cigarets. Then we turned a corner and right there in front of us were strings of real, honest to God, American coaches waiting for us. After all our rides in the '40 hommes or 8, cheaux' variety, this was indeed heavenly. It was a sixty-three mile ride to Upton, and we arrived there about midnight. In an hour we were sleeping soundly on spring cots and straw mattresses. I sure enjoyed that bed, but I heard the boys say that they couldn't get to sleep on that soft bed and had to roll off onto the floor finally in order to sleep."

GROUND FIRE DOWNS BIRDMEN.

Two German Planes Conquered in One Day by Anti-Aircraft Guns.

Sergt. Frank Sterns of Hiawatha, Kas., writes from France:

We are on an active front and things are "popping" all the time. This morning I was watching a barrage put up by French aircraft guns and saw a boche plane shot down, but of course it was about five miles away, or at least it looked that far as it was only a speck.

This afternoon, however, one got directly over us and shrapnel burst all around him. He also was brought down. They do get these birdmen. A French plane came in when I was down to the park. It had been hit but not damaged except the oil tank had been struck and all the oil had leaked out, so he came back.

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Stevens, Francis J
Stevenson, Charles S

Topeka Journal
Nov-26-1918

Kansas City Star
Oct ⁽²³⁾ - 1918

HE SAW HENRY ALLEN

F. J. Stevens of Topeka Chatted With
Governor in a Ford.

Under date of October 26, Francis J. Stevens, with field hospital company No. 139, sanitary train 110 (Maj. Seth Hammel's company now in France) writes to his mother, Mrs. H. C. Stevens of 601 Morris avenue, among other things as follows:

"Today I saw Henry Allen. It is the first time since he was in our hospital down at Le Meul in the Vosges mountains. I was walking along a country road here on the way home after going to a neighboring town, which is about ten or fifteen kilometers from here. He was in a Ford Y. M. C. A. car and stopped, asking me if he could give me a lift. I said yes, and recognized him. I asked him if he knew dad. He said he did, which I knew he would, and he told me he was leaving tonight for a certain mythical country by the name of the United States of America. If I remember right, he said, I think a fellow by the name of Columbus discovered a country by that name, altho of that part of the myth I am not so sure, even tho they tell me his first name was Christopher. Well, Mr. Allen seemed very happy and he said he would see Dad and tell him he saw me.

"Tomorrow morning I leave with three other men in the company, i. e., Charles Hoyt, Dudley Riddle and Merrel Gage. We have a seven days' leave permit and the time is to be spent in a leave area in southern France. I expect to have an enjoyable time, to say the least. We are the first men to enjoy this privilege, so we feel pretty good about it. From all I have read they treat the boys on leave pretty good. I hope so. We will have all our expenses paid and won't have to spend any money except for pleasures. Real sport traveling on the government."

WAS IN ST. MIHIEL DRIVE

HUNS DISLIKED TO CANCEL LEASE, A
KANSAS CITIAN SAYS.

The Commanding Officer Was Only
Ten Feet From Major Bland
When the Latter Was
Killed.

Sergt. Charles S. Stevenson, engineer, formerly of 3028 Harrison Street, writes to his grandparents, Doctor and Mrs. R. S. Stevenson, Olathe, Kas.:

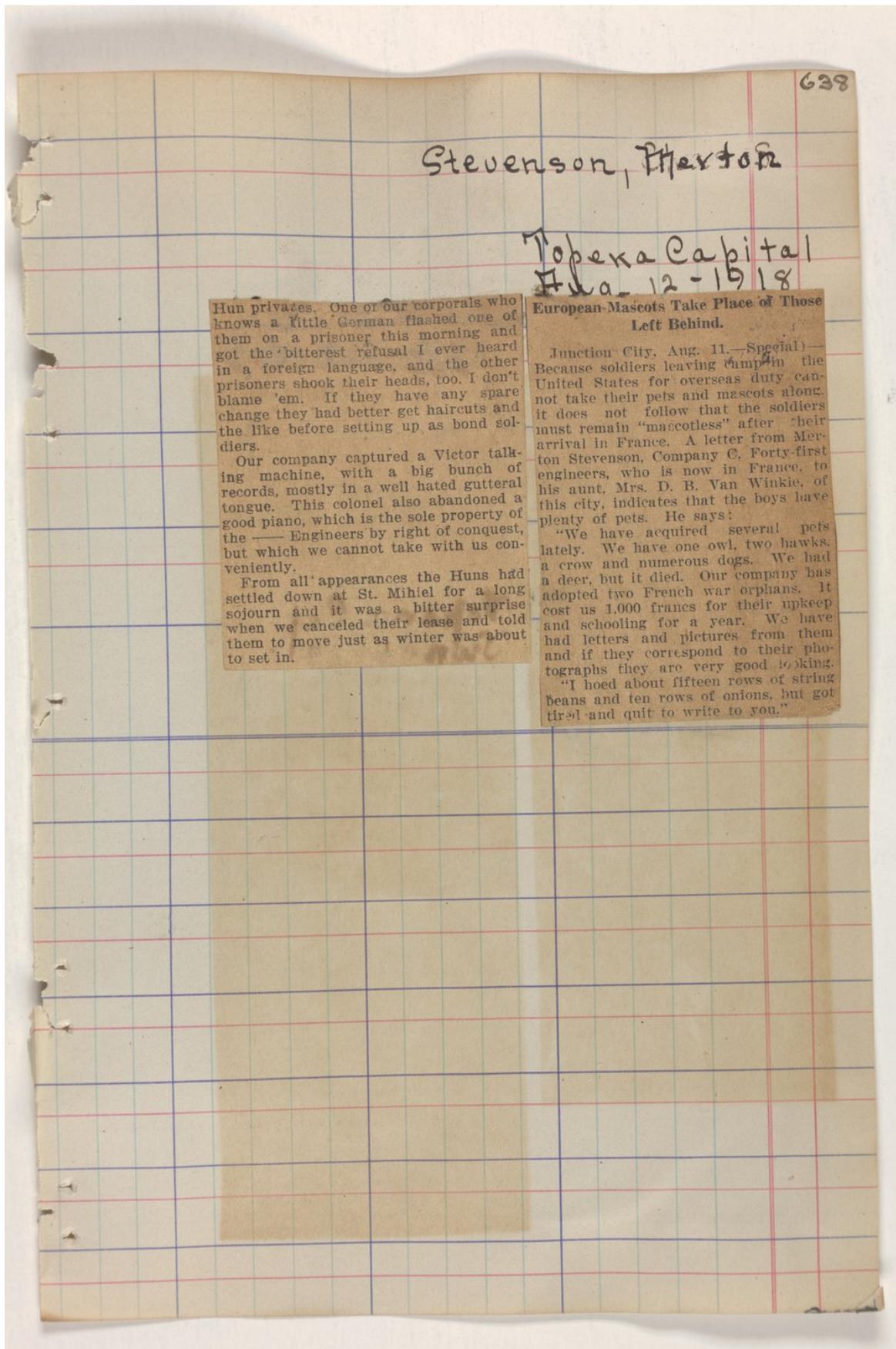
This is the seventh day of the St. Mihiel drive and I find myself sitting in a thick muddy forest with my knees and gas mask as a writing table. I went through my first real touch of war and came out with nothing more serious than the loss of some sleep.

It was a big drive, although small in comparison to many operations, but to us rookies it was a real battle. Machine guns, rifles, airplanes and tanks; everything you read about. We followed the first line (the attacking party) for twelve hours—and ours was a sort of an "after the battle" review. I saw all kinds of German trenches, barbed wire entanglements, busted houses, burning trees, deep shell holes, torn up railroad tracks, peaceful gardens and dynamited bridges. All kinds of German prisoners passed me on the way back. It was interesting—and to our side, highly satisfactory. Our company had only a few men injured—none from Kansas City.

Our commanding officer was only ten feet from Major Bland when the latter was killed.

At a German colonel's quarters, where we spent a couple of nights, I found some war bonds and a pad of application blanks for more, evidently to be used among the soldiers. I don't think they will ever be worth much, but may get something for them when we get into Germany, although I learn the further we advance the less they are worth. These applications for more bonds are not much of a hit among the

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Stevenson, Pherton

Topeka Capital
Hla - 12 - 15 18

Hun privates. One of our corporals who knows a little German flashed one of them on a prisoner this morning and got the bitterest refusal I ever heard in a foreign language, and the other prisoners shook their heads, too. I don't blame 'em. If they have any spare change they had better get haircuts and the like before setting up as bond soldiers.

Our company captured a Victor talking machine, with a big bunch of records, mostly in a well hated guttural tongue. This colonel also abandoned a good piano, which is the sole property of the — Engineers by right of conquest, but which we cannot take with us conveniently.

From all appearances the Huns had settled down at St. Mihiel for a long sojourn and it was a bitter surprise when we canceled their lease and told them to move just as winter was about to set in.

European Mascots Take Place of Those Left Behind.

Junction City, Aug. 11. (Special) — Because soldiers leaving camp in the United States for overseas duty cannot take their pets and mascots along, it does not follow that the soldiers must remain "mascotless" after their arrival in France. A letter from Meriton Stevenson, Company C, Forty-first engineers, who is now in France, to his aunt, Mrs. D. B. Van Winkle, of this city, indicates that the boys have plenty of pets. He says:

"We have acquired several pets lately. We have one owl, two hawks, a crow and numerous dogs. We had a deer, but it died. Our company has adopted two French war orphans. It cost us 1,000 francs for their upkeep and schooling for a year. We have had letters and pictures from them and if they correspond to their photographs they are very good looking. "I hoed about fifteen rows of string beans and ten rows of onions, but got tired and quit to write to you."

Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers

639

Stewart, Kenneth C.

Topeka Capital
Sept. 23-1918

THE BOYS GET EVEN.

"Kamerad" is a poor word for a Hun airman to shout, with his hands aloft, after that same Hun has pelted a bunch of Yanks with machine gun fire and dropped bombs, and just because things go against him, according to one Kansas boy. In a letter to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. A. B. Stewart, of Hays, K. C. Stewart, who is with the 117th ammunition train, graphically describes how his company treated a birdman who tried the "Kamerad" tactics, after losing a propeller, and coming down near the unit.

"What did we do?" asks young Stewart. "Well, just ask yourself that question if you were in our places. I guess he was hit about fifty times, but that wasn't enough, as he was the first one we had a chance to vent our anger on, after being worried by his guns for days and nights, and we literally cut him to pieces with our bayonets.

"This may not seem nice to you folks back home, but over here a man gets just like a savage, especially those who stay behind and are worried by airplanes and long-range guns without ever getting a chance to pay them back for what they do.

"The first day we pulled into the zone of advance about 5 o'clock in the morning. We took ammunition to the front the same morning and just as we returned a few boche planes came over, got our location and a long-range gun commenced shelling us at the same time the planes, were firing at us with machine guns.

"We were just eating dinner and we sure scrambled for the shell holes. Shrapnel hit one boy in the chest and a piece went thru both cheeks. We carried him into a shell hole and I gave him my first aid kit and then went for a stretcher bearer. We got him out all right, but I can't find out whether he is alive or not."

A graphic description of life at the front is given by young Stewart, who says that his train was attacked at least 100 times within one month by Hun airplanes in broad daylight. Five or six of them would come buzzing over, then dive down and shoot explosive bullets or throw small bombs and hand grenades at the boys. Several times they dismounted and loaded rifles, opening fire at the flyers. Only

once did they succeed in hitting one, and what happened to the aviator when he crawled out of his machine and hollered "Kamerad" is vividly described.

"We hit his propeller and he was forced to land," explains Stewart, "but it was the last time he ever landed anywhere unless he hit the place where we are putting as many of the Germans as we can as fast as we can."

The letter is marked with deletions by the censor and Stewart asserted that the only reason he was writing was because "one of those nice German 102's" came along and clipped him one in the leg and sent him to a hospital. The letter was written on August 14.

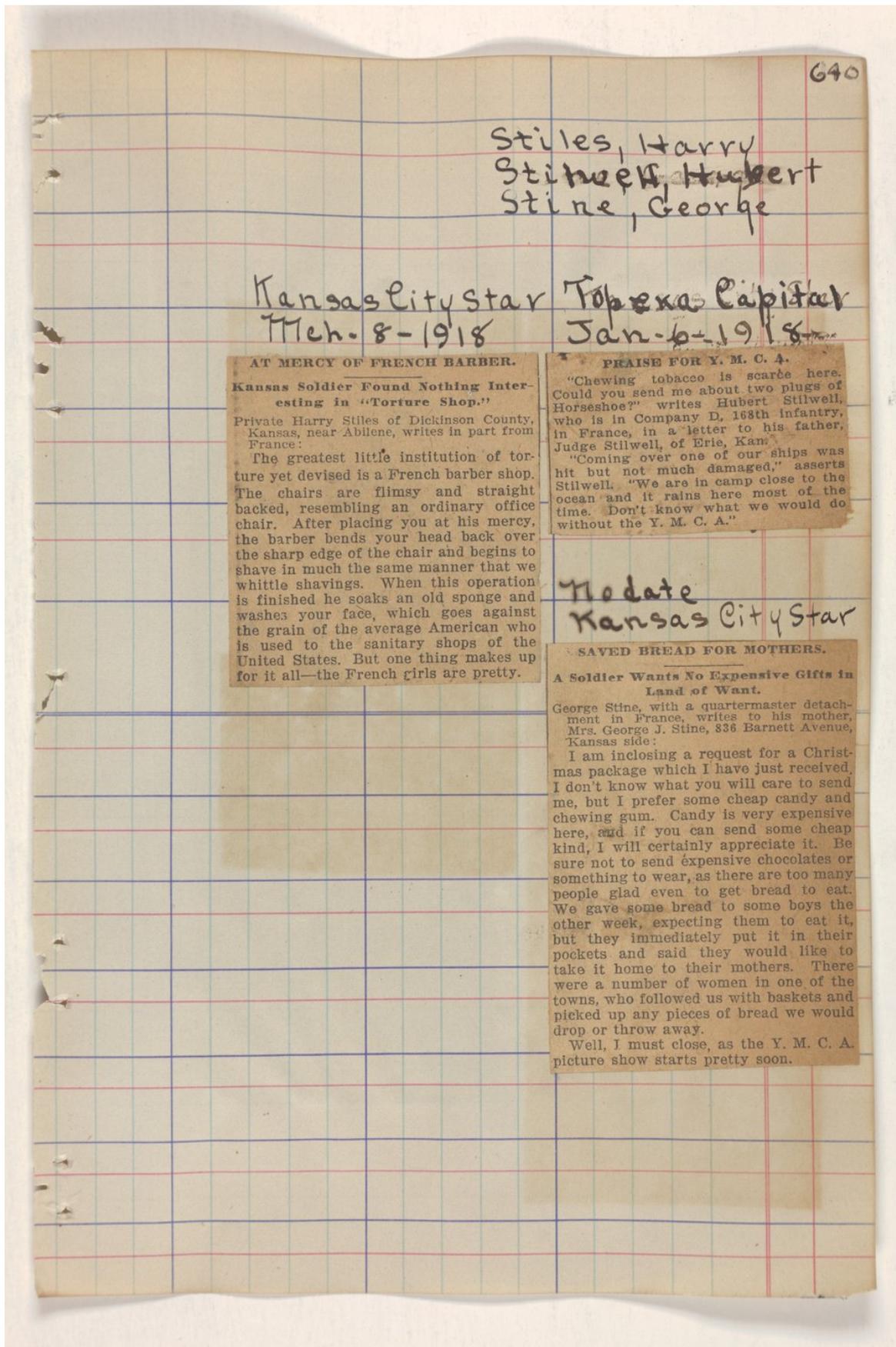
Topeka Capital
June 6-1918

CHOCOLATE IS SCARCE.

"We had a fine Thanksgiving dinner," writes Kenneth C. Stewart, a member of Calson company No. 2, 117th Ammunition Train, Forty-Second division, now in France, in a letter to his father, A. B. Stewart, of Hays, Kan. "All our meals are good, but I would like you to send me some chocolate when you can. It is very high over here—one and one-half to two francs a bar, or from 30 to 40 cents in our money. We do not get much sweet stuff and sugar is considered quite a luxury. Tell the boys we will be back next Thanksgiving."



Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers



Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers

641

Stivers, A. D.
Story, William

Kansas City Star
Mch. 22 - 1918

Topeka Capital
Sept - 14 - 1918

SHELLED, SNIPED AT, BOMBED.

"Interesting Time" at British Front
Reported by Capt. A. D. Stivers.

Capt. A. D. Stivers, assigned to the General Staff College in France, writes to a friend in Pittsburg, Kas.:

I have been over here for about a month with a British division on the front for instruction purposes. I have had a very interesting and very strenuous time. I have been shelled, sniped at, bombed by airplanes and everything except gased. I was entirely satisfied with the assortment. I spent some time in the front line where they were having raids often, but I can outrun anything that I have seen so far.

I am now way up in the air and in the coldest place in France. A wall around it was built by the Romans. The boche planes have a habit of drifting down this way with their blamed old bombs.

YANKS TOO ANXIOUS FOR CHANCE TO BLUFF FRITZ

Three Men Slipped Away and Hunted Fritziez Alone.

Hand Grenade Aimed at Americans Made Huns Holler When It Landed In Their Own Trenches.

Junction City, Sept. 13.—(Special)—About the only fault that the officers can find with the boys of Company C, of the old Third Kansas infantry, is that they are too anxious to "start something" with Fritz, according to letters from William Story to his mother in this city. Company C was organized here early in 1917 and after spending the winter at Camp Doniphan was sent overseas. They have been in the front line for some time.

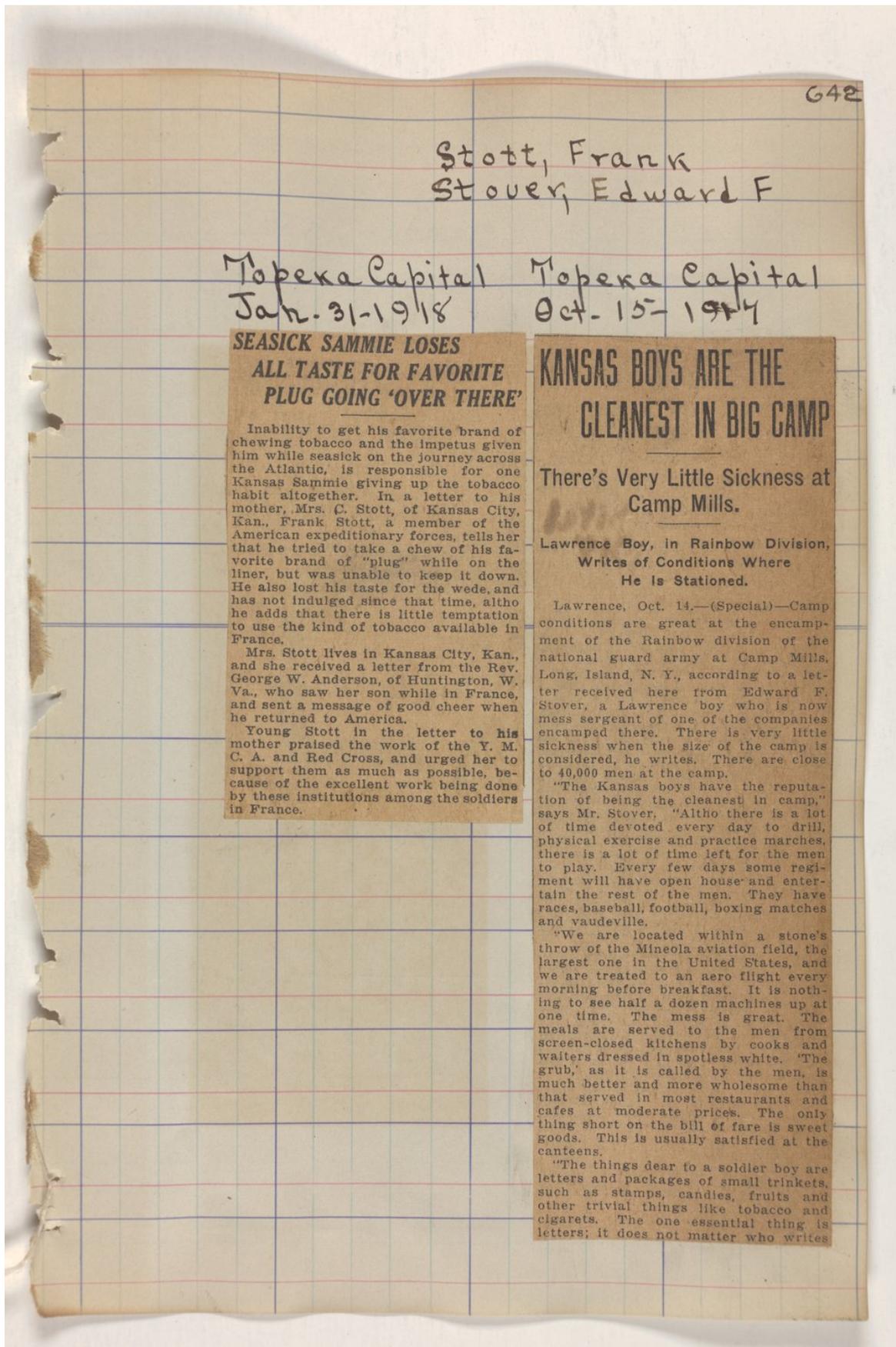
"It was real fun in the line," says the former Kansas guardsman, "but they took two or three of us off because we ran away a couple of times and went out hunting Germans in No Man's Land. They said that we were too anxious; that they would give us a job where we couldn't get to them.

"The boys have all got the pep and are a bunch of stickers. The other night 'Old Fritz' threw a grenade at us. It landed right at our feet but 'Cricket' picked it up and threw it back. It went off just in time. I don't think 'Fritz' likes grenades the way he hollered.

"The Germans got one of our men clean over to their wires and four of us had to go and help him back. We have got them bluffed at anything we start."



Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers



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Stott, Frank
Stover, Edward F

Topeka Capital
Jan. 31-1918

Topeka Capital
Oct. 15-1917

**SEASICK SAMMIE LOSES
ALL TASTE FOR FAVORITE
PLUG GOING 'OVER THERE'**

Inability to get his favorite brand of chewing tobacco and the impetus given him while seasick on the journey across the Atlantic, is responsible for one Kansas Sammie giving up the tobacco habit altogether. In a letter to his mother, Mrs. C. Stott, of Kansas City, Kan., Frank Stott, a member of the American expeditionary forces, tells her that he tried to take a chew of his favorite brand of "plug" while on the liner, but was unable to keep it down. He also lost his taste for the weed, and has not indulged since that time, altho he adds that there is little temptation to use the kind of tobacco available in France.

Mrs. Stott lives in Kansas City, Kan., and she received a letter from the Rev. George W. Anderson, of Huntington, W. Va., who saw her son while in France, and sent a message of good cheer when he returned to America.

Young Stott in the letter to his mother praised the work of the Y. M. C. A. and Red Cross, and urged her to support them as much as possible, because of the excellent work being done by these institutions among the soldiers in France.

**KANSAS BOYS ARE THE
CLEANEST IN BIG CAMP**

**There's Very Little Sickness at
Camp Mills.**

Lawrence Boy, in Rainbow Division,
Writes of Conditions Where
He is Stationed.

Lawrence, Oct. 14.—(Special)—Camp conditions are great at the encampment of the Rainbow division of the national guard army at Camp Mills, Long Island, N. Y., according to a letter received here from Edward F. Stover, a Lawrence boy who is now mess sergeant of one of the companies encamped there. There is very little sickness when the size of the camp is considered, he writes. There are close to 40,000 men at the camp.

"The Kansas boys have the reputation of being the cleanest in camp," says Mr. Stover. "Altho there is a lot of time devoted every day to drill, physical exercise and practice marches, there is a lot of time left for the men to play. Every few days some regiment will have open house and entertain the rest of the men. They have races, baseball, football, boxing matches and vaudeville.

"We are located within a stone's throw of the Mineola aviation field, the largest one in the United States, and we are treated to an aero flight every morning before breakfast. It is nothing to see half a dozen machines up at one time. The mess is great. The meals are served to the men from screen-closed kitchens by cooks and waiters dressed in spotless white. 'The grub,' as it is called by the men, is much better and more wholesome than that served in most restaurants and cafes at moderate prices. The only thing short on the bill of fare is sweet goods. This is usually satisfied at the canteens.

"The things dear to a soldier boy are letters and packages of small trinkets, such as stamps, candles, fruits and other trivial things like tobacco and cigarets. The one essential thing is letters; it does not matter who writes

Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers

643

Stratton, Jay W.

Kansas City Star
July 15-1918

them, but there must be letters. When the mail comes every man is there, and if he does not hear from some one you will find one boy with the blues.

"One day last week a lady passed one of the boys washing in soldier fashion his clothes. She asked him if that was the only way he had to wash them. The reply was in the affirmative. The next day he received a washing machine and wringer, with the compliments of Lillian Russell, Majestic theater."

SOLDIER LETTERS.

"HOW WE TOOK HILL NO —"

A KANSAS SIDE BOY TELLS OF AN AMERICAN CHARGE.

The War Will Continue Until America Ends It, Jay W. Stratton, a Former Carrier for The Star, Writes.

Jay W. Stratton, for five years a carrier of The Star in Kansas City, Kas., who later attended the Kansas State Agricultural College, and now with a field artillery regiment, A. E. F., writes:

Here's the way it looks to me: France and England are situated just like a football team on its own 10-yard line, without a punter. They can't afford to try a forward pass or any trick plays; a fumble would be too costly. All they can do is to get down and hold the line. As long as they can wipe out a division or two of boches by pulling back and pulling him out into the open it's cheap at the price. The way I figure it out it's up to America to put enough men into the field by next spring to start a march to Berlin. We can do it. That is, we can make the march if we have the men. The boches are good fighters, no denying that, but I have seen enough to convince me that we are better.

GAS THE MOST DEADLY.

When I was a kid I used to think it would be terrible to have a farmer shoot me with salt and bacon. Several years later that didn't seem so bad, but I just couldn't appreciate a bullet of

any kind. Then, when I joined old Battery B and learned a little about shrapnel that seemed about the worst thing imaginable. Then, I thought machine gun fire must be about the most deadly thing invented. After seeing the results of a few high explosive shells I felt sure the climax was really reached, but boy, there ain't none of them in it with gas.

Any of the others either hit you or miss you and, as the nigger said, 'there you is,' but gas—you never know about it. I've seen a horse eat grass in an area that had been gassed four days previous and the horse died eight days

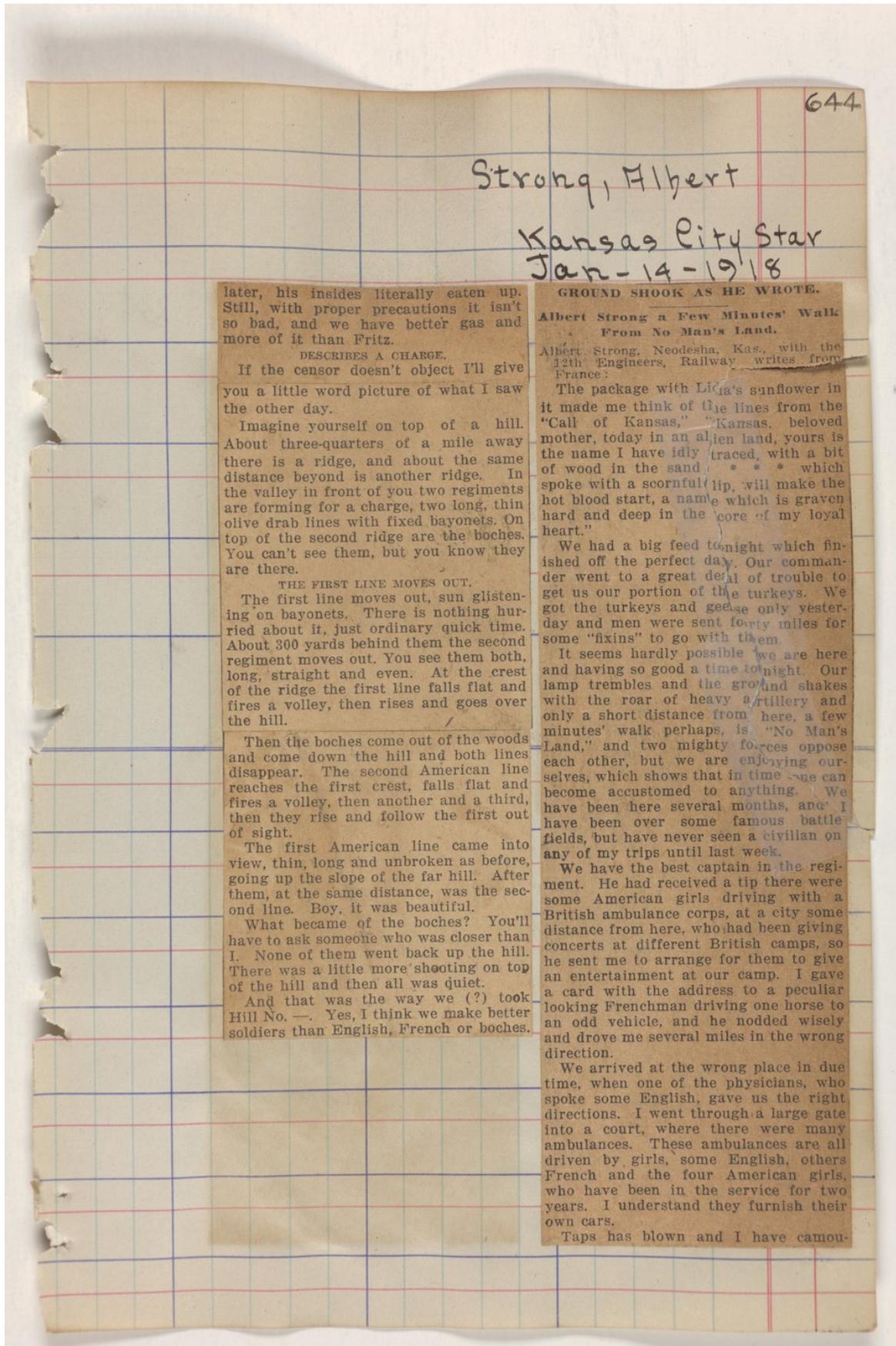
Topexa Capital
Jan-27-1918

FRENCH FINE SOLDIERS.

One could not tell that there was a war, was it not that almost every man one sees of military age is wearing a uniform, writes Edward F. Stover, formerly of the Poehler Mercantile company, of Lawrence, who recently sent a letter from France to a Lawrence friend, Stover, who is a member of the American Expeditionary force, writes:

One sees very few crippled soldiers on the streets compared to the number of good ones. The physique of the French soldier as a rule does not compare to that of our boys, altho some of them we see coming and going to the front are good looking men.

Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers



644

Strong, Albert

Kansas City Star
Jan-14-1918

later, his insides literally eaten up. Still, with proper precautions it isn't so bad, and we have better gas and more of it than Fritz.

DESCRIBES A CHARGE.

If the censor doesn't object I'll give you a little word picture of what I saw the other day.

Imagine yourself on top of a hill. About three-quarters of a mile away there is a ridge, and about the same distance beyond is another ridge. In the valley in front of you two regiments are forming for a charge, two long, thin olive drab lines with fixed bayonets. On top of the second ridge are the boches. You can't see them, but you know they are there.

THE FIRST LINE MOVES OUT.

The first line moves out, sun glistening on bayonets. There is nothing hurried about it, just ordinary quick time. About 300 yards behind them the second regiment moves out. You see them both, long, straight and even. At the crest of the ridge the first line falls flat and fires a volley, then rises and goes over the hill.

Then the boches come out of the woods and come down the hill and both lines disappear. The second American line reaches the first crest, falls flat and fires a volley, then another and a third, then they rise and follow the first out of sight.

The first American line came into view, thin, long and unbroken as before, going up the slope of the far hill. After them, at the same distance, was the second line. Boy, it was beautiful.

What became of the boches? You'll have to ask someone who was closer than I. None of them went back up the hill. There was a little more shooting on top of the hill and then all was quiet.

And that was the way we (?) took Hill No. —. Yes, I think we make better soldiers than English, French or boches.

GROUND SHOOK AS HE WROTE.

Albert Strong a Few Minutes' Walk From No Man's Land.

Albert Strong, Neodesha, Kas., with the 12th Engineers, Railway writes from France:

The package with Licia's sunflower in it made me think of the lines from the "Call of Kansas," "Kansas, beloved mother, today in an alien land, yours is the name I have idly traced, with a bit of wood in the sand, * * * which spoke with a scornful lip, will make the hot blood start, a name which is graven hard and deep in the core of my loyal heart."

We had a big feed tonight which finished off the perfect day. Our commander went to a great deal of trouble to get us our portion of the turkeys. We got the turkeys and geese only yesterday and men were sent forty miles for some "fixins" to go with them.

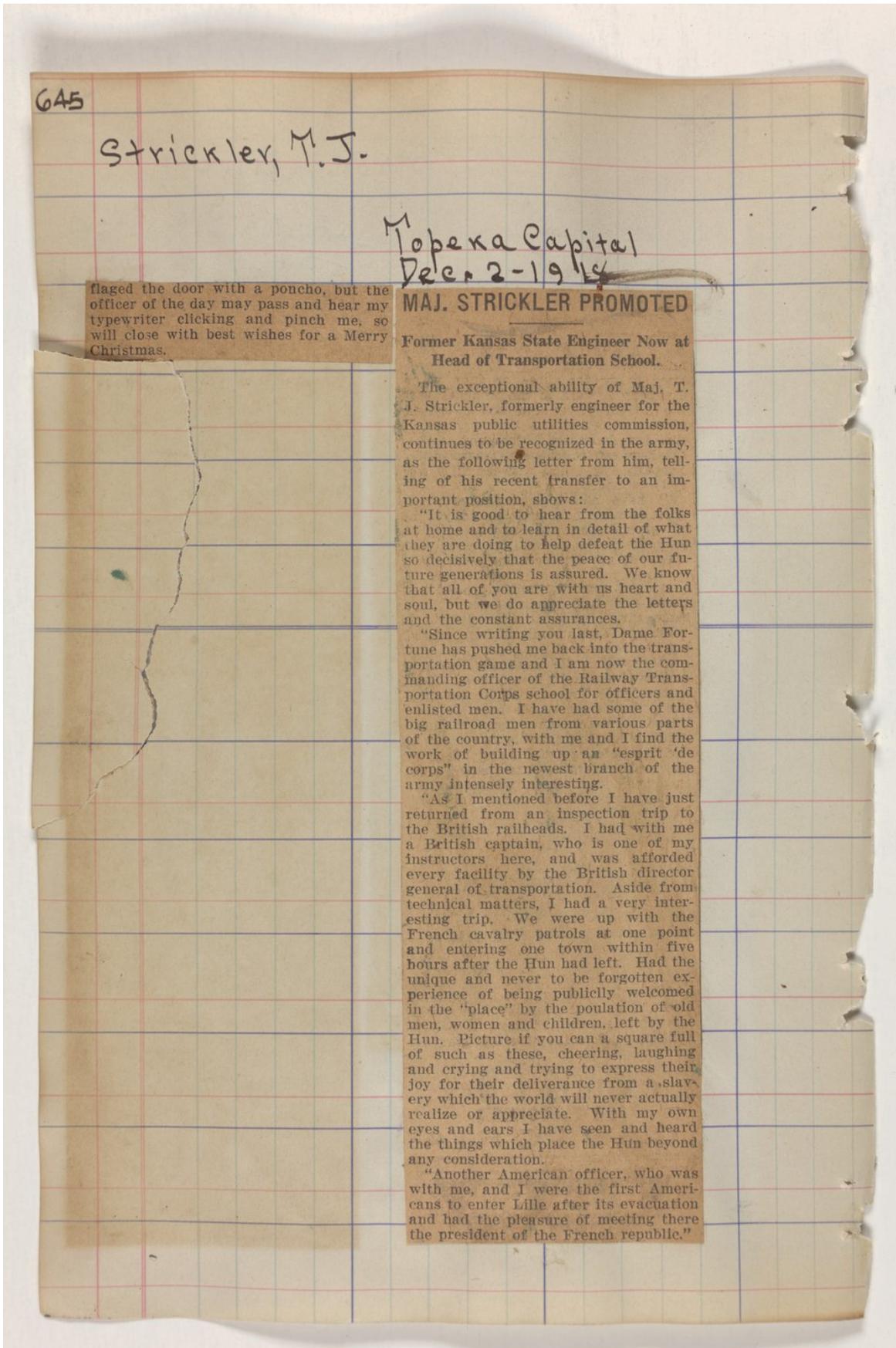
It seems hardly possible we are here and having so good a time tonight. Our lamp trembles and the ground shakes with the roar of heavy artillery and only a short distance from here, a few minutes' walk perhaps, is "No Man's Land," and two mighty forces oppose each other, but we are enjoying ourselves, which shows that in time we can become accustomed to anything. We have been here several months, and I have been over some famous battle fields, but have never seen a civilian on any of my trips until last week.

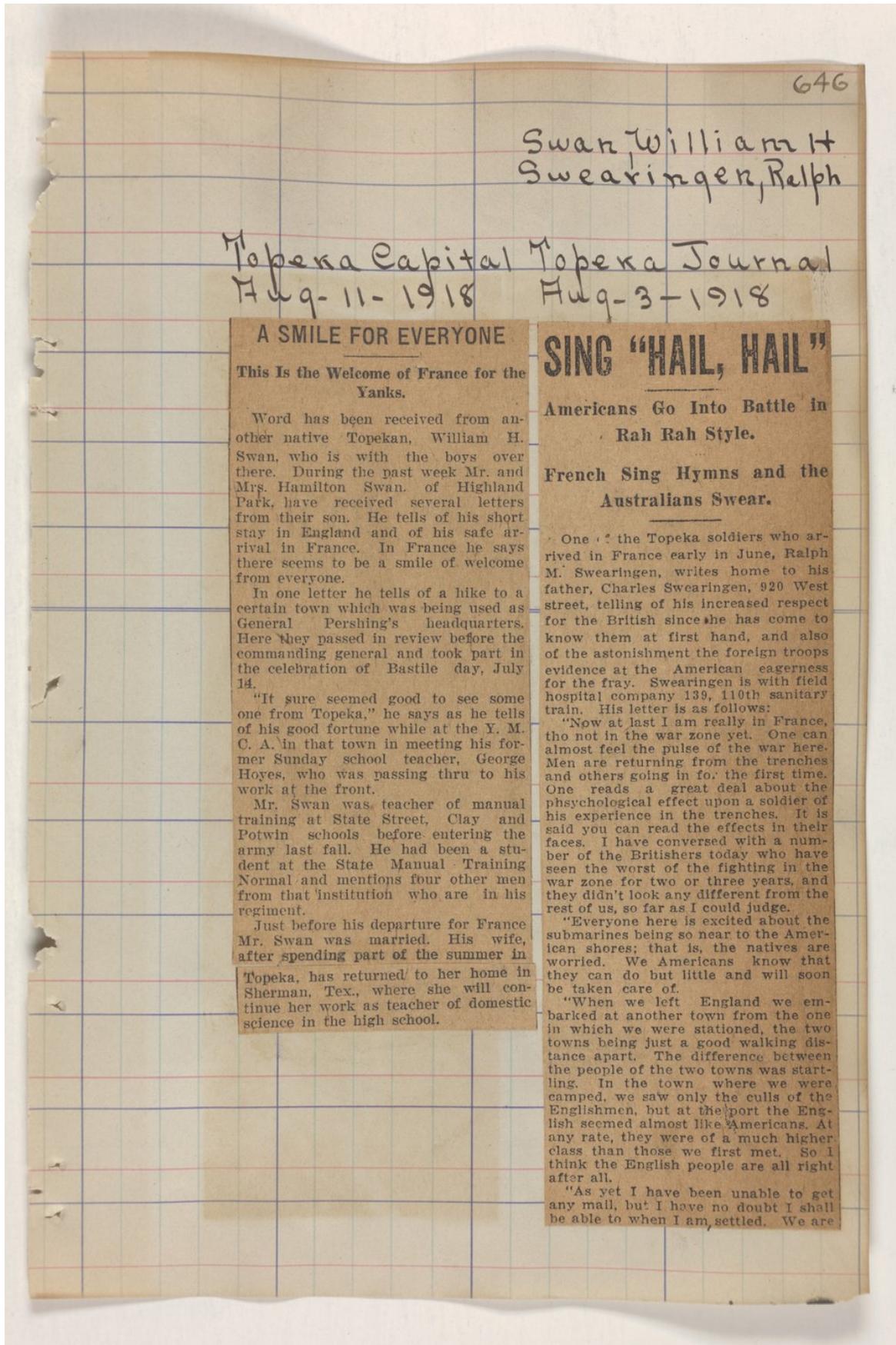
We have the best captain in the regiment. He had received a tip there were some American girls driving with a British ambulance corps, at a city some distance from here, who had been giving concerts at different British camps, so he sent me to arrange for them to give an entertainment at our camp. I gave a card with the address to a peculiar looking Frenchman driving one horse to an odd vehicle, and he nodded wisely and drove me several miles in the wrong direction.

We arrived at the wrong place in due time, when one of the physicians, who spoke some English, gave us the right directions. I went through a large gate into a court, where there were many ambulances. These ambulances are all driven by girls, some English, others French and the four American girls, who have been in the service for two years. I understand they furnish their own cars.

Taps has blown and I have camou-

Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers





646

Swan William H
Swearingen, Ralph

Topeka Capital
Aug-11-1918

Topeka Journal
Aug-3-1918

A SMILE FOR EVERYONE

This Is the Welcome of France for the Yanks.

Word has been received from another native Topekan, William H. Swan, who is with the boys over there. During the past week Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton Swan, of Highland Park, have received several letters from their son. He tells of his short stay in England and of his safe arrival in France. In France he says there seems to be a smile of welcome from everyone.

In one letter he tells of a hike to a certain town which was being used as General Pershing's headquarters. Here they passed in review before the commanding general and took part in the celebration of Bastille day, July 14.

"It sure seemed good to see some one from Topeka," he says as he tells of his good fortune while at the Y. M. C. A. in that town in meeting his former Sunday school teacher, George Hoyes, who was passing thru to his work at the front.

Mr. Swan was teacher of manual training at State Street, Clay and Potwin schools before entering the army last fall. He had been a student at the State Manual Training Normal and mentions four other men from that institution who are in his regiment.

Just before his departure for France Mr. Swan was married. His wife, after spending part of the summer in Topeka, has returned to her home in Sherman, Tex., where she will continue her work as teacher of domestic science in the high school.

SING "HAIL, HAIL"

Americans Go Into Battle in Rah Rah Style.

French Sing Hymns and the Australians Swear.

One of the Topeka soldiers who arrived in France early in June, Ralph M. Swearingen, writes home to his father, Charles Swearingen, 920 West street, telling of his increased respect for the British since he has come to know them at first hand, and also of the astonishment the foreign troops evidence at the American eagerness for the fray. Swearingen is with field hospital company 139, 110th sanitary train. His letter is as follows:

"Now at last I am really in France, tho not in the war zone yet. One can almost feel the pulse of the war here. Men are returning from the trenches and others going in for the first time. One reads a great deal about the psychological effect upon a soldier of his experience in the trenches. It is said you can read the effects in their faces. I have conversed with a number of the Britishers today who have seen the worst of the fighting in the war zone for two or three years, and they didn't look any different from the rest of us, so far as I could judge.

"Everyone here is excited about the submarines being so near to the American shores; that is, the natives are worried. We Americans know that they can do but little and will soon be taken care of.

"When we left England we embarked at another town from the one in which we were stationed, the two towns being just a good walking distance apart. The difference between the people of the two towns was startling. In the town where we were camped, we saw only the culls of the Englishmen, but at the port the English seemed almost like Americans. At any rate, they were of a much higher class than those we first met. So I think the English people are all right after all.

"As yet I have been unable to get any mail, but I have no doubt I shall be able to when I am settled. We are

Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers

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Swendson, Harry

Topeka Journal
Sept. 29-1917

now in 'billets,' but I would much rather be in a tent.

"The food is very short here. I do pity the 'Frenchies.' You can't realize there how the people here are living, and they are so blue about the war. But just wait until the American pep gets a good start, and Bill won't have any more chance than a snowball in Africa. Both British and French commend the Americans on their 'get there' spirit. They don't understand how we do it. When some of the troops are ordered into the fighting they begin to pray and sing hymns, the Australians swear, but the Americans cheer and begin to sing, 'Hall, Hall, the Gang's All Here.'

"All the work about camp is done by German prisoners. They seem well contented, better perhaps than under the eye of his majesty the Devil.

"Soldiers of all nations are here, and I have been busy finding out what they are and where they are from. Every country of the allies is represented here."

THIS YEAR OR NEXT

Brother of Topekan in France
Writes of Victory.

"Go to Rhine When Time
Comes"—Lieut. Swendson.

Cities in France are being destroyed by German guns, rebuilt by the French and English military and civilians only to be again destroyed, according to a letter received today from S. A. Swendson, in the Santa Fe hospital department, from his brother, Harry Swendson, a lieutenant with the British-Australian armies in France. The letter is censored. The writer is an American and expresses pleasure at the news that "my people are going to take a hand."

Swendson declares he has no doubt of the outcome of the war, "be it this year or next."

"At present," he says, "we are 'holding on' with enough supports to go to the Rhine when the time comes."

The letter in part follows:

"Dear Brother: I am very glad my people at have at last decided to take a hand in the game, for the sake of humanity and the right of existence for small peoples.

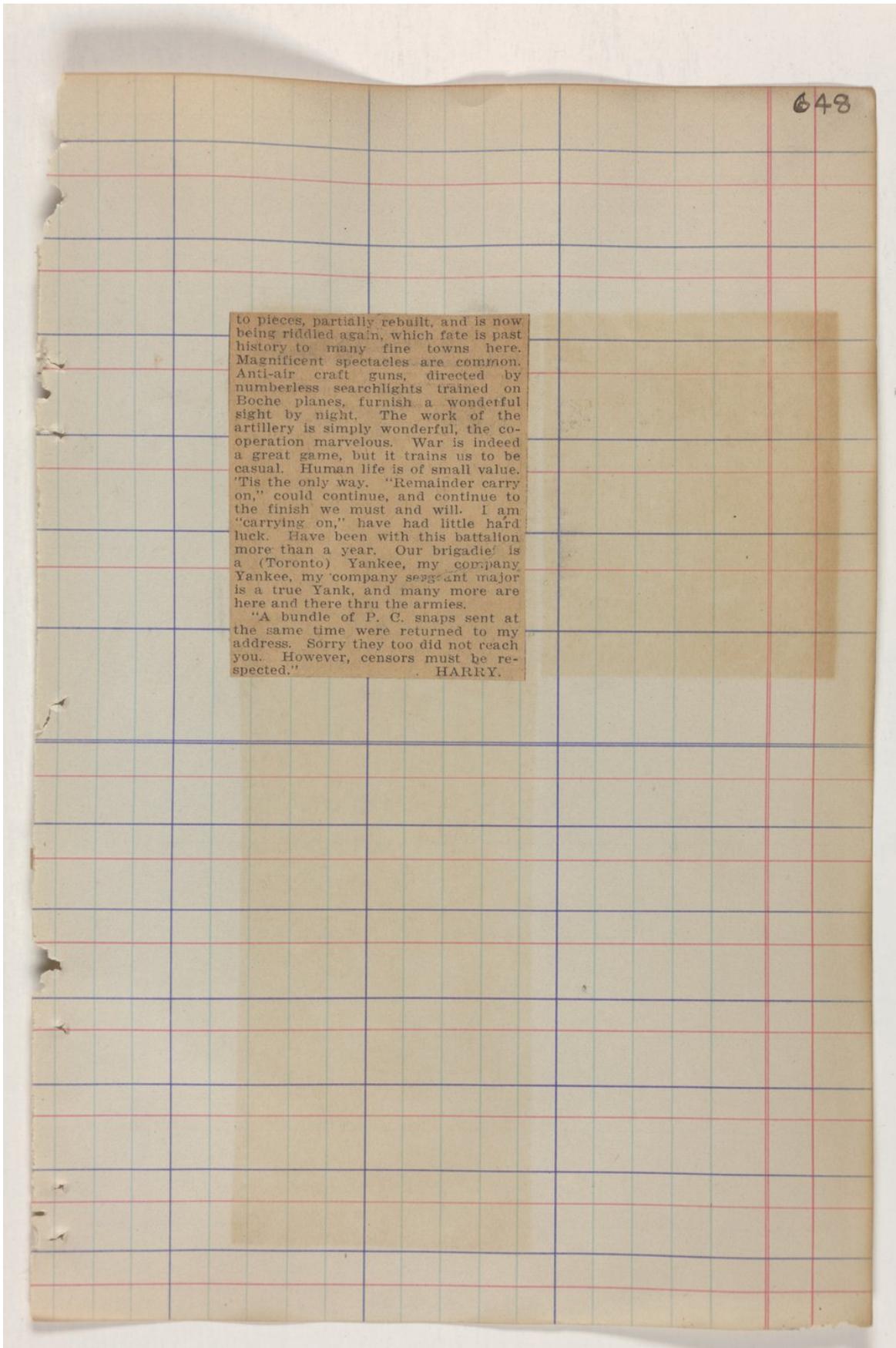
"We have in hand rather a large contract but one that has required attention for some time. Our father saw it coming when I was a boy. No doubt it will be satisfactorily completed in due course.

"Am pleased to learn that some of our boys discounted the draft and volunteered.

"Just now, we are in what was the heart of fertile Europe—very thickly populated, with towns and villages overlapping boundaries. To the north and to the south of us a big 'strafe' is on. At present we are 'holding' with supports enough to go to the Rhine, when the time comes. However, complications do arise in the handling of such masses co-operatively. I have no doubt of the ultimate outcome, be it this year or next.

"A large town just behind us has been receiving the particular attention of a very large long range gun for several days past. It was shot

Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers



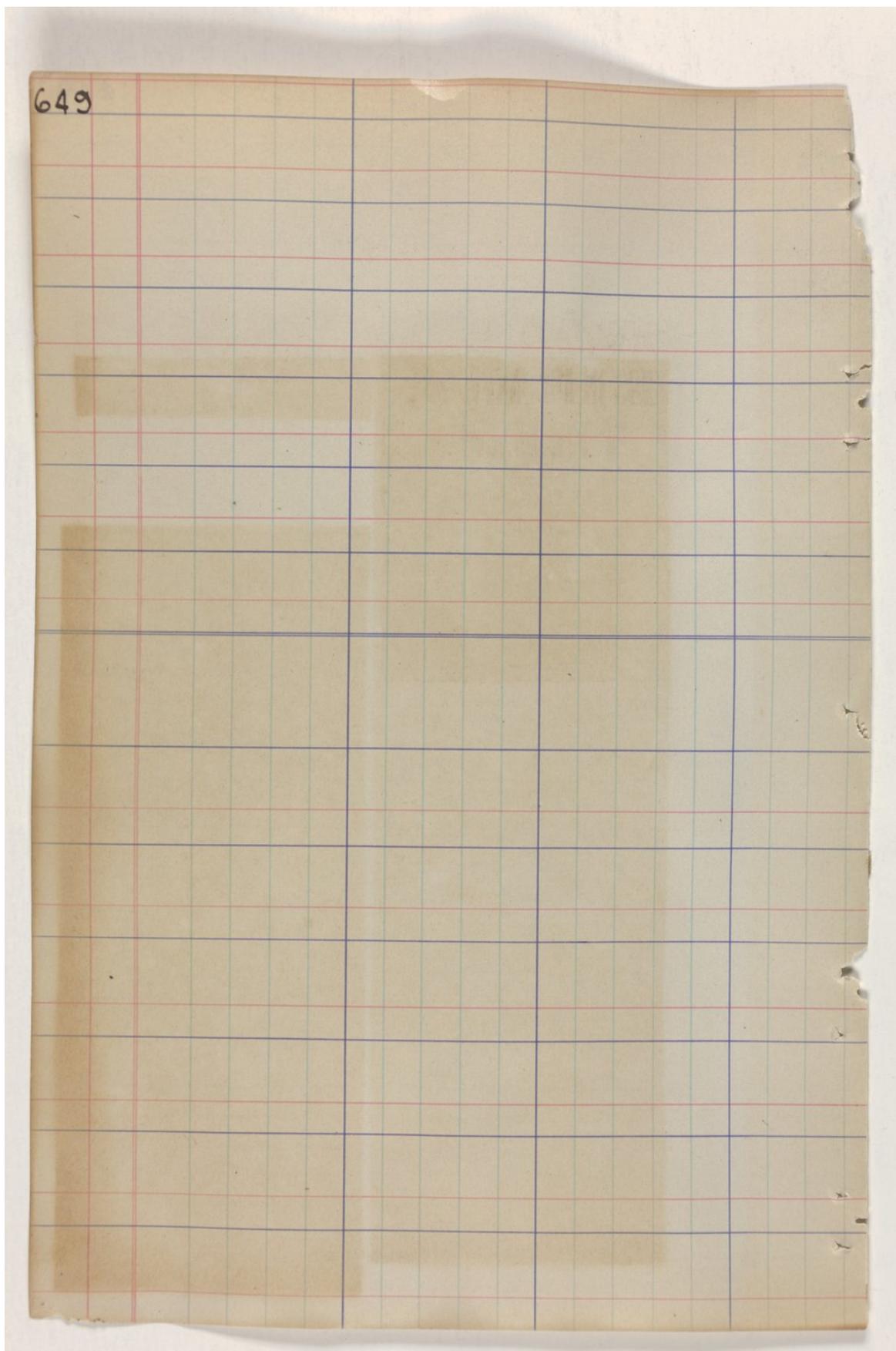
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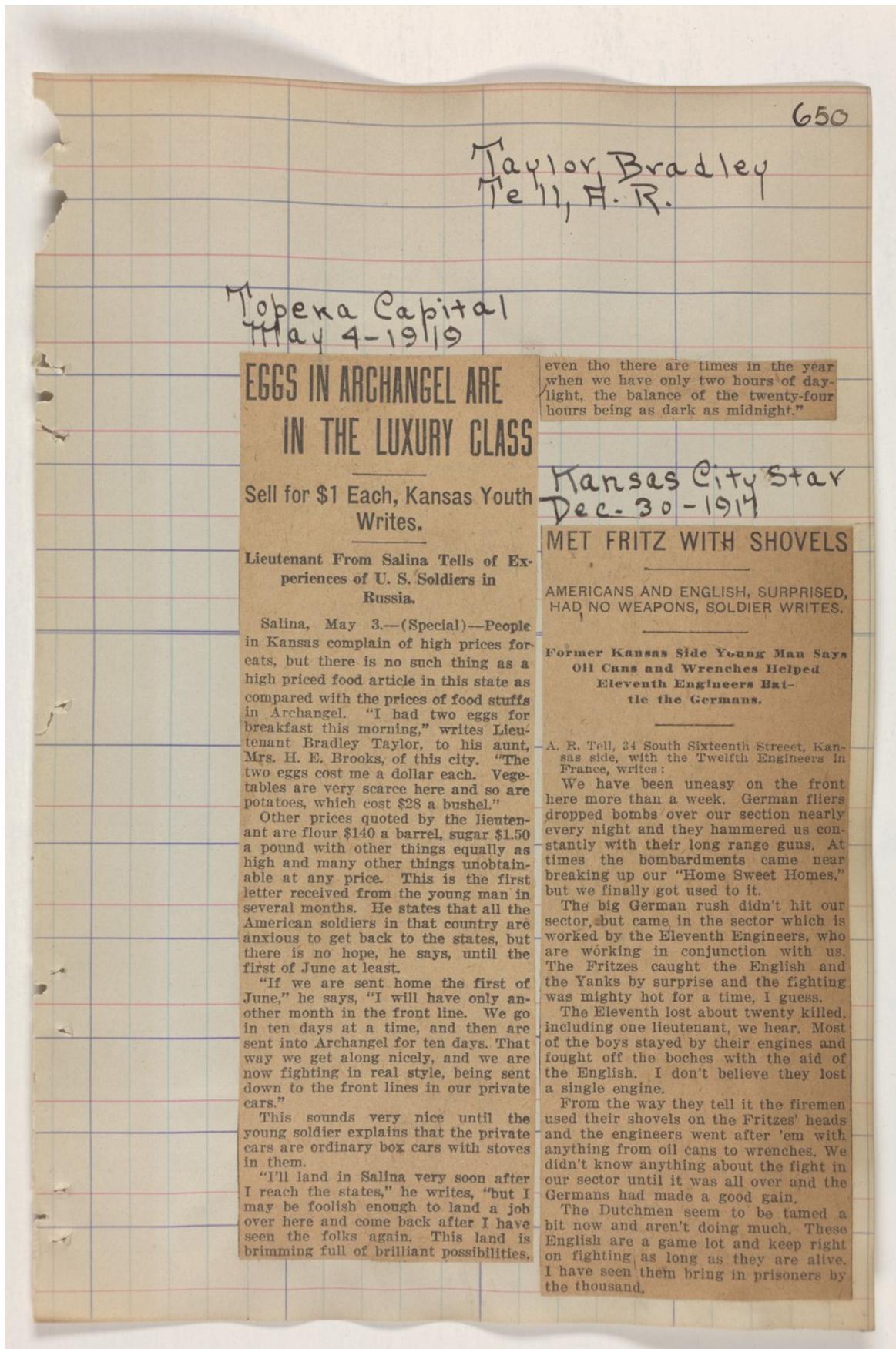
to pieces, partially rebuilt, and is now being riddled again, which fate is past history to many fine towns here. Magnificent spectacles are common. Anti-air craft guns, directed by numberless searchlights trained on Boche planes, furnish a wonderful sight by night. The work of the artillery is simply wonderful, the cooperation marvelous. War is indeed a great game, but it trains us to be casual. Human life is of small value. 'Tis the only way. "Remainder carry on," could continue, and continue to the finish we must and will. I am "carrying on," have had little hard luck. Have been with this battalion more than a year. Our brigadier is a (Toronto) Yankee, my company Yankee, my company sergeant major is a true Yank, and many more are here and there thru the armies.

"A bundle of P. C. snaps sent at the same time were returned to my address. Sorry they too did not reach you. However, censors must be respected."

HARRY.

Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers





650

Taylor, Bradley
Tell, H. R.

Tobena Capital
May 4-1919

**EGGS IN ARCHANGEL ARE
IN THE LUXURY CLASS**

Sell for \$1 Each, Kansas Youth
Writes.

Lieutenant From Salina Tells of Ex-
periences of U. S. Soldiers in
Russia.

Salina, May 3.—(Special)—People in Kansas complain of high prices for eats, but there is no such thing as a high priced food article in this state as compared with the prices of food stuffs in Archangel. "I had two eggs for breakfast this morning," writes Lieutenant Bradley Taylor, to his aunt, Mrs. H. E. Brooks, of this city. "The two eggs cost me a dollar each. Vegetables are very scarce here and so are potatoes, which cost \$28 a bushel."

Other prices quoted by the lieutenant are flour \$140 a barrel, sugar \$1.50 a pound with other things equally as high and many other things unobtainable at any price. This is the first letter received from the young man in several months. He states that all the American soldiers in that country are anxious to get back to the states, but there is no hope, he says, until the first of June at least.

"If we are sent home the first of June," he says, "I will have only another month in the front line. We go in ten days at a time, and then are sent into Archangel for ten days. That way we get along nicely, and we are now fighting in real style, being sent down to the front lines in our private cars."

This sounds very nice until the young soldier explains that the private cars are ordinary box cars with stoves in them.

"I'll land in Salina very soon after I reach the states," he writes, "but I may be foolish enough to land a job over here and come back after I have seen the folks again. This land is brimming full of brilliant possibilities,

even tho there are times in the year when we have only two hours of daylight, the balance of the twenty-four hours being as dark as midnight."

Kansas City Star
Dec-30-1914

MET FRITZ WITH SHOVELS

AMERICANS AND ENGLISH, SURPRISED,
HAD NO WEAPONS, SOLDIER WRITES.

Former Kansas Side Young Man Says
Oil Cans and Wrenches Helped
Eleventh Engineers Bat-
tle the Germans.

A. R. Tell, 34 South Sixteenth Street, Kansas side, with the Twelfth Engineers in France, writes:

We have been uneasy on the front here more than a week. German fliers dropped bombs over our section nearly every night and they hammered us constantly with their long range guns. At times the bombardments came near breaking up our "Home Sweet Homes," but we finally got used to it.

The big German rush didn't hit our sector, but came in the sector which is worked by the Eleventh Engineers, who are working in conjunction with us. The Fritzes caught the English and the Yanks by surprise and the fighting was mighty hot for a time, I guess.

The Eleventh lost about twenty killed, including one lieutenant, we hear. Most of the boys stayed by their engines and fought off the boches with the aid of the English. I don't believe they lost a single engine.

From the way they tell it the firemen used their shovels on the Fritzes' heads and the engineers went after 'em with anything from oil cans to wrenches. We didn't know anything about the fight in our sector until it was all over and the Germans had made a good gain.

The Dutchmen seem to be tamed a bit now and aren't doing much. These English are a game lot and keep right on fighting as long as they are alive. I have seen them bring in prisoners by the thousand.

651

Terrill, Edmund J.

Topeka Journal Topeka Journal
Nov-9-1918 Feb-8-1919

SERGT. TERRILL WRITES

Topekan Tells Thrilling Story of 110th Engineers in France.

In a letter from Sergt. Edmund J. Terrill, under date of October 7, to Mrs. Nelle C. Terrill of 1207 Tyler street, more information is given of the work of Company A, 110 engineers, to which Terrill belongs. He speaks of the business of following up the doughboys to build road for the artillery, of going into the battle of the Argonne forest as infantrymen and digging in under direct observation on the top of a ridge.

Terrill studied engineering at Kansas university, and was in the service of the Santa Fe before joining the 110 engineers. He was one of the first volunteers in Topeka when war was declared and was sent to Fort Riley, where he helped to survey the site of Camp Funston. He was at Doniphan last winter and went to France in April. His mother, Mrs. Nelle Terrill, teaches French in the high school, and is preparing a history of Kansas boys in the war.

An extract from the letter is as follows:

"We have just been thru our little bit of this hell on earth and are now back for a rest. I have heard about war, read about it and dreamed about it, and now I have been thru it, and it is hell. When you see your friends who have been your comrades for more than a year, shot down by your side then it makes you see red, you forget about any danger and only want to kill. We were in the fight for six days, the last two days we were acting as infantry and held a section of the front line. We have been thru pretty hard times the last week, and every one is worn out. We started the drive on a can of bully beef and sixteen hard biscuits. We had two meals brought up to us at the front which helped a lot, tho. When the drive started we were just behind the second wave, building a road for the artillery. After we got by No Man's Land we didn't have very much work to do as the roads were in fair shape. Thru No Man's Land, however, we had to build practically a new road as the ground was all shot to pieces, shell, mine holes and the like. Past No Man's Land the work was light, so we were on the dough boy's heels all the time. We were under shell fire of course all the time but not a very heavy fire. When we were used as doughboys we advanced two kilos thru an extra heavy German barrage and 'dug in' on the top of a ridge under direct observation. We lived in these holes for a day and two nights. Three of us were in a trench (hole in the ground) about four by six and three feet deep. It was raining most of the time and shells flying all the time, so you may be sure that we were all in when I tell you we sat down in the rain and mud and slept."

WHAT TROOPS DO

Sergt. Terrill Writes of Boys as War Is Over.

Topekan Tells News From Kansans in French Camps.

SHELL TOOK HIS WHOLE SQUAD

Corporal Light Cited for Bravery in Severe Action.

Two American Girls Were Great Treat for Regiment.

A letter from Sergt. E. J. Terrill, Company A, 119th engineers, son of Mrs. Nellie C. Terrill of 1207 Tyler street, now at Lerouville, France, tells a good bit about what the boys are doing now that the fighting is over.

"We are having awful weather, but as I am inside most of the time I do not notice it so much as the other boys. The regiment is trying to put on amusement for us by regimental 'home talent,' but it is hard to do enough of that to do any good. I am on the committee from this company to furnish amusement, but have been too busy to do anything with it, so turned it over to one of the other boys. We put on a show Christmas night that was real good. Our boys did a blackface singing and talking sketch with a few jokes on the officers and got by pretty well with it.

"We are back now on our old training work, only not so much of it. We have three hours drill in the morning and two hours work in the afternoon. I received your Christmas package all O. K. and was pleased with everything. We had a pleasant Christmas here, altho it could have been livelier. We had all the turkey we could eat. Mr. Eastman, the Y. M. C. A. secretary for this regiment, went to Paris in a truck and bought our dinner for us. By us, I mean the whole regiment. We sergeants have a separate mess. We have a little room in a shot up building, but fixed it up pretty for the occasion. We wired it with electric lights and then covered the walls and ceiling with evergreen. It did look real

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pretty. We had lady guests for two meals that day. Mr. Eastman had brought five American girls from Paris, and we had two of them. They were real nice American girls, and it was sure a treat for us to be able to visit with them. They seemed to enjoy it too. They had only been over for a short time, and had not been out of Paris before coming to our regiment."

Corporal Light Cited.

Altho previous newspaper mention has been made that Corp. John Light had been cited for bravery in action, the first hint as to the cause of this citation comes in a letter from Sergeant Terrill.

Corporal Light was in the second wave that went over the top on the morning of September 29. A shell got his whole squad. Altho he was wounded so badly himself that he was in the hospital from that date until after the middle of December, his wounds did not prevent him from carrying each one of his eight men back to the dressing station, as they were in worse shape than he was. He was then sent to the evacuation hospital and then to base hospital No. 89.

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Thatcher, John H

Kansas City Journal
April 6-1919

GIVES VIVID WORD PICTURES OF WAR SCENES IN FRANCE

Major John H. Thatcher Sees
the Humor as Well as
Pathos of World's Greatest
Trial.

Maj. John H. Thatcher, a Kansas City attorney, now with the 110th ammunition train of the Thirty-fifth division, has written some highly interesting letters to relatives, of his services in the world war. Following are excerpts from some of the letters:

At the Front—A boy from one of the doughboy regiments who is a liaison runner has just been talking with me and had an interesting souvenir of the fight we were last in. He was one of the infantry scouts sent forward in front of the advancing lines to draw the enemy's fire and thus locate the machine guns. It was, of course, a ticklish job for a youngster lately from a farm near St. Joseph, Mo. He worked his way forward, dodging from one shell hole to another, and finally when the boche shell fire became too heavy he ducked into a crater to wait a bit until things quieted down. He was astonished as he lay there to have a moist, friendly muzzle shoved over the rim of the crater—not the muzzle of a boche rifle, but of a boche dog. The creature wagged his tail in a friendly way and then crawled down into the pit with the soldier. He would lie flat as your hat when he heard a shell whistling, and after it burst he would jump up on the alert to see what had happened and where it had burst. It was one of the German "Dienst-Hunds" or service dogs. They are sent out with messages and occasionally with supplies for the wounded. He was thoroughly familiar with shell fire and knew just where

to go and how to behave when it was in the air. He made friends with my man and stayed with him until he was finally through with his mission and started back to the rear. He refused to go in that direction and no coaxing or blandishments could take him away from the German lines. The soldier, before he left, took off his dog collar and chain. It was all carefully numbered with his division and sector and branch of the service and a word that showed that he had been given the "Mylene test," a medical inoculation given to horses and animals. The heavy metal of the collar, the thoroughness of the system by which even that dog had been inoculated, tested, numbered, registered, trained and put into his groove in the great German war machine, was almost terrifying.

A Place of Peril.

December 10, 1918.—I am sitting in a little gem of a cafe with old paintings and Roman bas reliefs around men and the "pratron" bowing and scraping as he shows me his genuine Murillos and his coins and relics of the time of that gentleman who invented the Latin subjunctive and indirect discourse, "Vercingetorix," the only old Gaul who licked one J. Caesar several years ago and to whom there is a monument in the square here. A tall bottle of Chateau la Fayette occupies the right sector of my tactical position. I am threatened on my left by "Poulet" (unknown in the mud and cootie-ridden regions of Verdun), and my immediate front is menaced by a frontal attack of "Potage," "Canard," and "Patisserie et Fromage." It is indeed a critical situation calling for all that the field regulations and the drill regulations of F. A. and the maxims of Napoleon have to offer.

All of which, being simplified, means that I have been sent down as commandant of a section of 1,200 "permissioinaires"—seven-day furlough men—who are enjoying Uncle Sam's hospitality for a week at a choice French summer resort and former Monte Carlo in the Auvergne mountains, where they have clean beds and six course table d'hote dinners and movies and hot baths, all free for one blissful week, before they are returned to dug-outs and cooties and "canned Willie." I am police commissioner and censor and Father Confessor to 1,200 lively Americans and, if I survive, I will rejoin my regiment and receive membership in the Academie Francaise with

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the croix de guerre and the cordon d'honneur and all the rest—including the congressional medal. The five days under fire in the Argonne and the service at St. Mihiel, Verdun and the rest are as nothing to this.

Verdun, December 13, 1918.—Just back from a trip to the leave area. Maybe you think it was not a job to keep those husky young Americans under control. Feel pretty nearly ready for a leave myself. But I bore away from Mont Dore, the town we invaded, a statement from the commanding officer of the district that our cherubs behaved most angelically and my services were satisfactory.

When the Mail Comes.

But what I really started to write about was the wonderful batch of letters that I found awaiting me when I returned—a whole stack of them that made the major and Bourke wild with envy, each offering his services, as secretary and censor. Lordy! Lordy! What a treat! Everything! News clippings, three copies of a sweet little document, "Hershey's Milk Chocolate," all fresh and delicious. Then letters from absolutely everybody. It was a most rascally conspiracy—and I'm for it strong! I used to say that there were three occasions in life that made human nature unfold and soften and exhibit its generous side: Christmas, a funeral and a wedding. Now I add one more—a war! Well, thanks now, a heap, from the heart out! Those letters made a great homecoming for me when I got back to my shack in the desolate shell-raked woods of Verdun.

Speaking of cooties, I must tell you one of the trip that was delicious as a typical soldier stunt. When our men had had their long four-day trip down to the leave area and were lined up just ready to go to the promised land—good beds, clean rooms, table d'hotes, hot baths and all—a Gorgon suddenly stood in their path with medical insignia on his collar and went down the line demanding, before they went into those clean beds and those Elysian fields, to know who had cooties. Horrors! Visions of a fast fading paradise. At the very gates and then cast out because of an innocent etymological collection. Oh! no. Nobody had them! All had been "de-loused" before leaving, as required by brigade orders. There were only some fifty odd out of 1,200 that confessed ownership. These were ordered to report for baths and clean underclothes before they used the beds. When the crowds poured into the Roman baths and saw the great piles of attractive clean underwear and clean warm, wool socks and clean

shirts, their own travel-worn outfits were suddenly uncomfortable. They crowded up to get the new stuff. "Oh, no!" said the medico Gorgon, "these are only for men with cooties." Oh, that was it, was it? Divers of the crowd disappeared. There were consultations, market quotations, bartering and trading. Then divers and sundry ones trooped back. "We've got cooties," they shyly admitted. "Show 'em," said the doctor. Up came hems of undershirts. Sure enough, there they were—lively and educated. The new underclothes were issued. Instead of fifty there were some 200 who had 'em. But what the ruling price of cooties mounted to that day, I will never tell. It is a military secret.

In the Final Advance.

Verdun, Dec. 22, 1918.—Our regiment was in the final advance that was made towards Etain, here in front of us, but we were not up at Sedan, as some of your letters from home seem to have placed us. Our big party was in the Argonne forest, where we were under fire and had such a lively time for five days at Charpenry and Baulny. Have you found those two little towns on the map? They are just north of Varennes, where Louis XVI. was captured on his flight from Paris. We shall always remember Charpenry and Baulny. At the latter town our infantry of the 35th division were being mauled and enfiladed by cross-fire from machine guns and artillery, and our little battalion stood behind them in their second line trenches and supported them when they needed it most. It was the real artillery stuff. Just the thing we had lived for, and dreamed about—shells whistling over while our little Miss "Swazant Kanze" talked back most saucily. And when I had the chance to take our artillery wire forward up into the infantry trenches to establish the forward O. P., I had the greatest picture of the real battle scene that one could hope to see in a whole war. Machine guns with white puffs along the edge of the woods and barrages falling just in front of them, and men firing from the trenches and all that. Only I wish the blamed boche hadn't cut my wire with their 77s so that I could have had some fun adjusting on the beggars all by my lonesome. Well, that's all history now, and here I be, maundering about it already.

The "mess fund" sprinkled its generous torch over certain spots in this regiment on the 25th of last month. It was like the ghost of Christmas Present in the Christmas Carol. Our

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ration issue is an uncertain wheel of fortune. On Christmas eve the ball just about hit the double zero. The Christmas packages had not come through and the meat issue was just plain, ordinary, abominated Corned Willie. It isn't always that way, and we have plenty to eat now, but Christmas just simply wasn't in the Q. M. calendar, this year. And that was where Old Father Mess Fund just naturally walked out and enjoyed "hisself." I had a little chat with Harry Truman, and he sent some of his most trained chow scouts out to comb every nook and corner of this devastated land. Also I sent out my Irish sergeant major with a bunch of francs to find the elusive "oeuf" and "polulet" and vin rouge. Those boys walked twenty-eight miles and brought back eleven dozen eggs with them. Then the Battery D bandits dug up a large and corpulent lady pig of just the proportions to furnish "two rounds sweeping" on the battery table. You ought to have seen that mess hall! We had a Christmas tree with decorations of stars made out of old tin cans and tin foil off of cigarette packages and a chocolate bar for each man, and a khaki handkerchief and cigarettes and cigars. And a genius of a cook made cherry cobbles from some canned cherries we bought down at Bar-le-Duc. Picture it for yourself. A dingy little shack, tacked over with tarpaper to keep out the snow—an island in a sea of mud—but inside! Christmas greens, mistletoe, a piano snatched out from Lord knows what French billet. And crammed with singing and cheering American boys, thinly disguised as soldier-men—all smoking when they weren't stoking and Tommy Murphy singing in his melodious tenor, "Oh, How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning," and the tables loaded with roast pig and jam and beans and, at the supreme moment of climax—pie! One of the boys from headquarters had borrowed a violin from some poilu and made it sob in melodies of home and wives and sweethearts and kids, and all the rest, until the Battery D quartette had to step in with "Keep Your Head Down, Allemand" in order to restore the morale of the occasion. It was a real Christmas and nobody thought of suggesting that we were a long way from the firesides that—well, nobody spoke of them anyhow. The sob stuff is a long way down deep in the artilleryman's ego, and it doesn't get to the surface often—once in a while when the mail bag comes in, but not often.

An Improvised Theater.

Last Sunday night we heard there was a minstrel show from the 110th

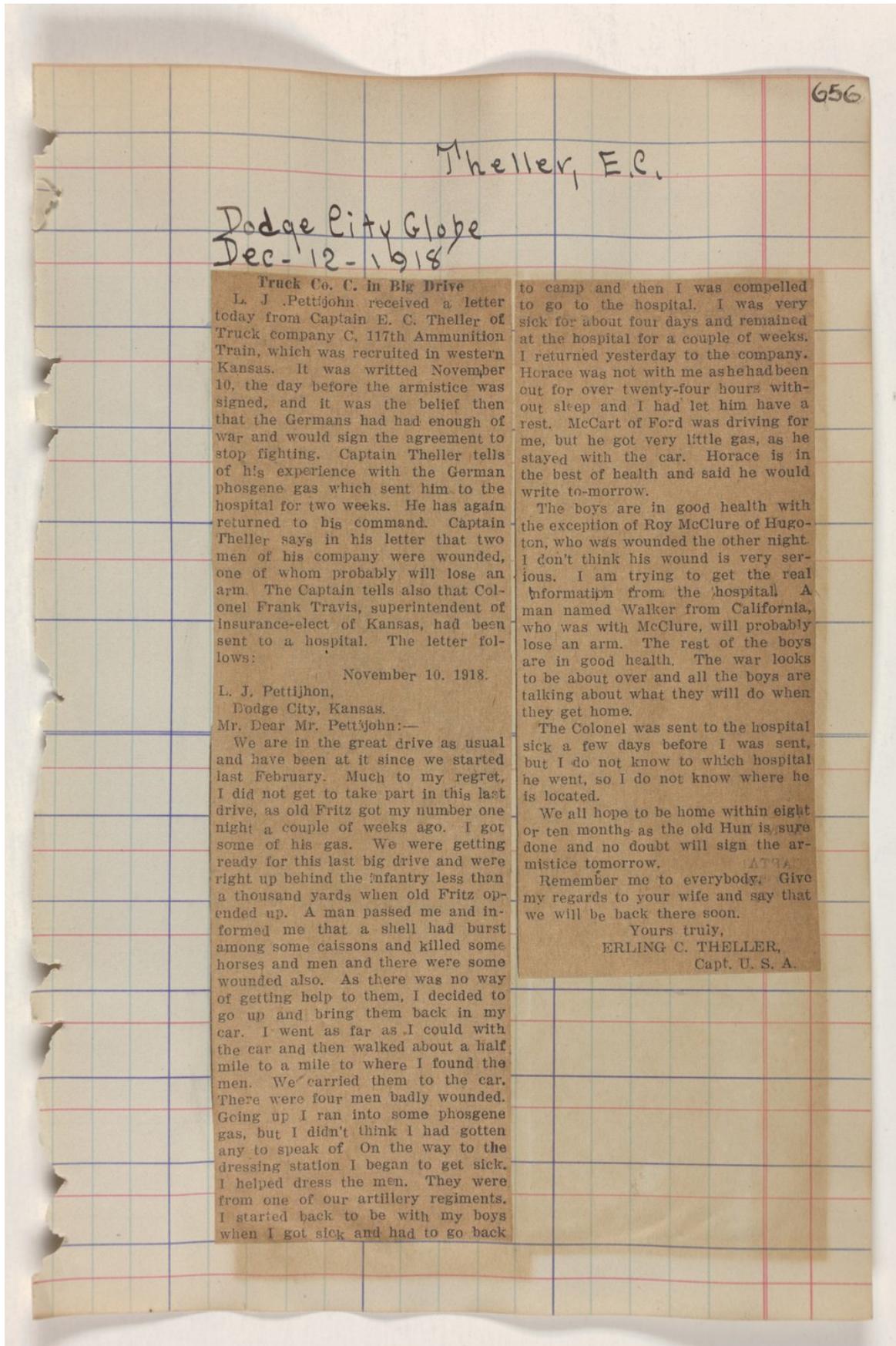
ammunition train wandering round loose in these barbed wire hills and we started out to capture it to cheer up our battalion. We found an old "foyer du soldat" shed—dirty, cold, dark, full of old straw from bed ticks and altogether unpromising as a home of Thespis. But we turned the three batteries loose on it and made a first-rate Muehlebach-Comedy-Club theater out of it between daylight and dark. Cleaned it out, wired it, got lights and power from headquarters, built a solid and substantial stage, put in stoves, benches, poster proscenium, curtain and "foots." Borrowed an old, half-wrecked piano, nailed two planks together for pedals and had a back drop and wings and three "sets." You'd never guess how much music there is in a cigar box guitar or a hack-saw hit with a padded hammer. Right there is where you have to hand it to the American kid soldier again. His fiendish ingenuity and freakish humor.

Over at Verdun, where the somber old Meuse flows through this historic ground, the other day two doughboys were put-putting up the current under the shell-scared walls lolling with magnificent ease in an old scow that they had raised from the mud and fitted with a castoff motor from a salvage dump. The French lined the bank and watched with the troubled look of a small pup with his head on one side trying to understand the antics of the pet coon. To these polite and polished allies of ours we must be a strange, uncouth, inscrutable tribe. This astonishing Western savage—who comes in an army of 2,000,000, raised over night, brushes aside all military precedent, fights like Hades for France, then turns and steals France's choicest furniture from billets for firewood, curses everything French when the price of eggs is raised on him, wounds the Frenchman considerable in his finer sensibilities by calling him "Frog," makes parodies on his marching song "Madelon," feeds and fraternizes with German prisoners, sneaks grub out of his mess line for friendless Russians on their way home, rides like a demon, curses like a maniac, helps the peasant at his plowing, attracts little children to him like a magnet and grins at everything! And on top of that he seems to have but one stern, unswerving ambition in life and that is to collect German souvenir helmets.

Am hoping to beat it for Faree and Nice tomorrow on my long awaited leave. If you hear of somebody swimming up New York harbor—that's me. I've just natcherly kept agoin' when I got to salt water.

Postal card, Jan. 27, 1919. — Now storming Italy on leave. Am looking out over the Mediterranean with a large bottle of Italian Capri wine in front of me. It's a terrible war.

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Theller, E.C.

Dodge City Globe
Dec-12-1918

Truck Co. C. in Big Drive

L. J. Pettijohn received a letter today from Captain E. C. Theller of Truck company C, 117th Ammunition Train, which was recruited in western Kansas. It was written November 10, the day before the armistice was signed, and it was the belief then that the Germans had had enough of war and would sign the agreement to stop fighting. Captain Theller tells of his experience with the German phosgene gas which sent him to the hospital for two weeks. He has again returned to his command. Captain Theller says in his letter that two men of his company were wounded, one of whom probably will lose an arm. The Captain tells also that Colonel Frank Travis, superintendent of Insurance-elect of Kansas, had been sent to a hospital. The letter follows:

November 10, 1918.

L. J. Pettijohn,
Dodge City, Kansas.

Mr. Dear Mr. Pettijohn:—

We are in the great drive as usual and have been at it since we started last February. Much to my regret, I did not get to take part in this last drive, as old Fritz got my number one night a couple of weeks ago. I got some of his gas. We were getting ready for this last big drive and were right up behind the infantry less than a thousand yards when old Fritz opened up. A man passed me and informed me that a shell had burst among some caissons and killed some horses and men and there were some wounded also. As there was no way of getting help to them, I decided to go up and bring them back in my car. I went as far as I could with the car and then walked about a half mile to a mile to where I found the men. We carried them to the car. There were four men badly wounded. Going up I ran into some phosgene gas, but I didn't think I had gotten any to speak of. On the way to the dressing station I began to get sick. I helped dress the men. They were from one of our artillery regiments. I started back to be with my boys when I got sick and had to go back

to camp and then I was compelled to go to the hospital. I was very sick for about four days and remained at the hospital for a couple of weeks. I returned yesterday to the company. Horace was not with me as he had been out for over twenty-four hours without sleep and I had let him have a rest. McCart of Ford was driving for me, but he got very little gas, as he stayed with the car. Horace is in the best of health and said he would write to-morrow.

The boys are in good health with the exception of Roy McClure of Hugoton, who was wounded the other night. I don't think his wound is very serious. I am trying to get the real information from the hospital. A man named Walker from California, who was with McClure, will probably lose an arm. The rest of the boys are in good health. The war looks to be about over and all the boys are talking about what they will do when they get home.

The Colonel was sent to the hospital sick a few days before I was sent, but I do not know to which hospital he went, so I do not know where he is located.

We all hope to be home within eight or ten months as the old Hun is sure done and no doubt will sign the armistice tomorrow.

Remember me to everybody. Give my regards to your wife and say that we will be back there soon.

Yours truly,
ERLING C. THELLER,
Capt. U. S. A.

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Thomas, Chester

Topeka Capital
Jan. 12 - 1919

VIVID WORD PICTURE OF ARGONNE FOREST BATTLE

Topeka Boy Held on to the End Despite Gas.

**Lieutenant Thomas Was in Artillery
That Supported Advance of Thirty-
fifth Division.**

The battle of the Argonne forest, and the experiences of soldiers who for hours work with gas masks, on, are told in "Dad's Christmas letter," which has been received by W. H. Thomas, from his son, Sec. Lieut. Chester Thomas, of the 128th field artillery, Thirty-fifth division. Chet Thomas is a Topeka boy, was educated in the Topeka high school and at the University of Kansas. He is a member of Siloam lodge of Topeka and of the Phi Delta fraternity at the university. The father, W. H. Thomas, 823 North Jackson, is the oldest conductor in point of service on the Rock Island in Kansas, and runs from here to Caldwell.

Thomas, who has had the good fortune of seeing many sides of soldier life, tells of an encounter in which destroyers got the best of the submarine. After attending gas school at Chaumont, he got out just in time to join his division in preparation for the St. Mihiel drive, where he was among the reserves.

Something Was Going On.

"We were headed for the big Argonne drive," Thomas says, "altho at the time we did not know it. As we drew near the front the roads were one mass of traffic. Mostly artillery, the road we were on was a mass of artillery, nearly twenty miles long. By this time we had a pretty good hunch that something was going to happen, and so did the Germans for they began to shell the roads.

"The night that we were going into



LIEUT. CHESTER THOMAS.

**Topeka Boy Gassed in Argonne Forest
Battle.**

position I got my first sensation of a shell falling real close. It was about 10 o'clock and the moon made it about as bright as day. The column was blocked by engineers who were repairing the road where it had been torn up by a shell, when all of a sudden they opened up on us. Shells were falling all about us and several fell within twenty-five feet of me. God sure had us by the hand that night for as near as I could find out, none of us were hurt. We all breathed a sigh of relief when we started moving again.

Record Concentration.

"During the night it clouded up and by morning it was foggy. Again we were lucky because we didn't reach our position until noon and it being cloudy, the Germans could not use their planes for observing us. In the afternoon we got our guns in place and everything ready for a good night's rest. We were mistaken here for they evidently got wind of where we were. We were shelled some with high explosives and in that way we had our first casualty.