

## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers

### Section 8, Pages 211 - 240

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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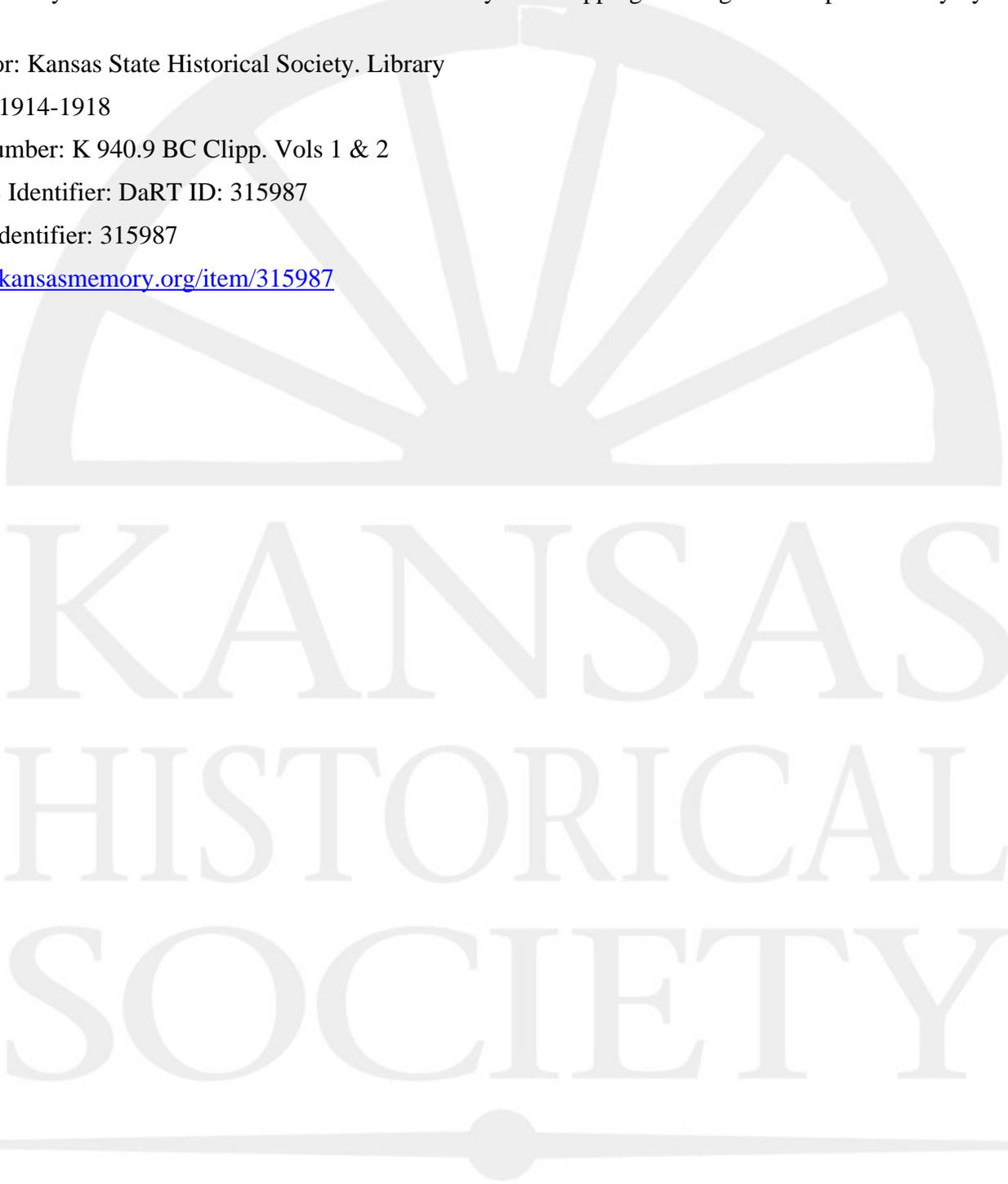
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## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers

208

Hayes, Raymond  
Haynes, Charles

Olathe Mirror  
Oct-18-1914

Topeka Journal  
Oct-26-1918

From Raymond Hayes,  
Ft. Sill, Oct. 10, 1917.

Mrs. Alda Hayes,  
Dear Mother: I received your letter and was sure glad to get it. Some of the boys were sure worried because the mail was so slow, and even telegraphed home, asking why they did not write. It is always that way when an army moves though.

Well, we sure keep on the move down here, but I like it fine. Especially my own job which is Senior or head mechanic. I go to a mechanical school every afternoon and will learn a great deal if we only stay here long enough. We will probably be here all winter. We are under strict orders here. They will not allow anyone to take pictures and if any one is caught taking pictures or out with a camera on the reservation they are arrested and the camera taken away from them. I do not know if they read our letters or if they are censored. There will probably be some of it marked out if they censor it. I try not to write anything that I think they would mark out but it is hard to tell what not to write. Well we sure are getting right down to business now. It is not like it was on the border last summer, but it sure will make good men out of some of the boys if they are in long enough. Well I guess that will be all this time.

Yours truly,  
RAYMOND L. HAYES.  
Camp Doniphan, Ft. Sill, Okla.  
Co. D, 137 U. S. Inf.

### FRENCH GRATEFUL

Charles Haynes Writes of Re-occupied Villages.

Says Inhabitants Looked at Americans With Awe.

### HEARD THEY COULDN'T FIGHT

Topekan Was in the Big Advance of July 17.

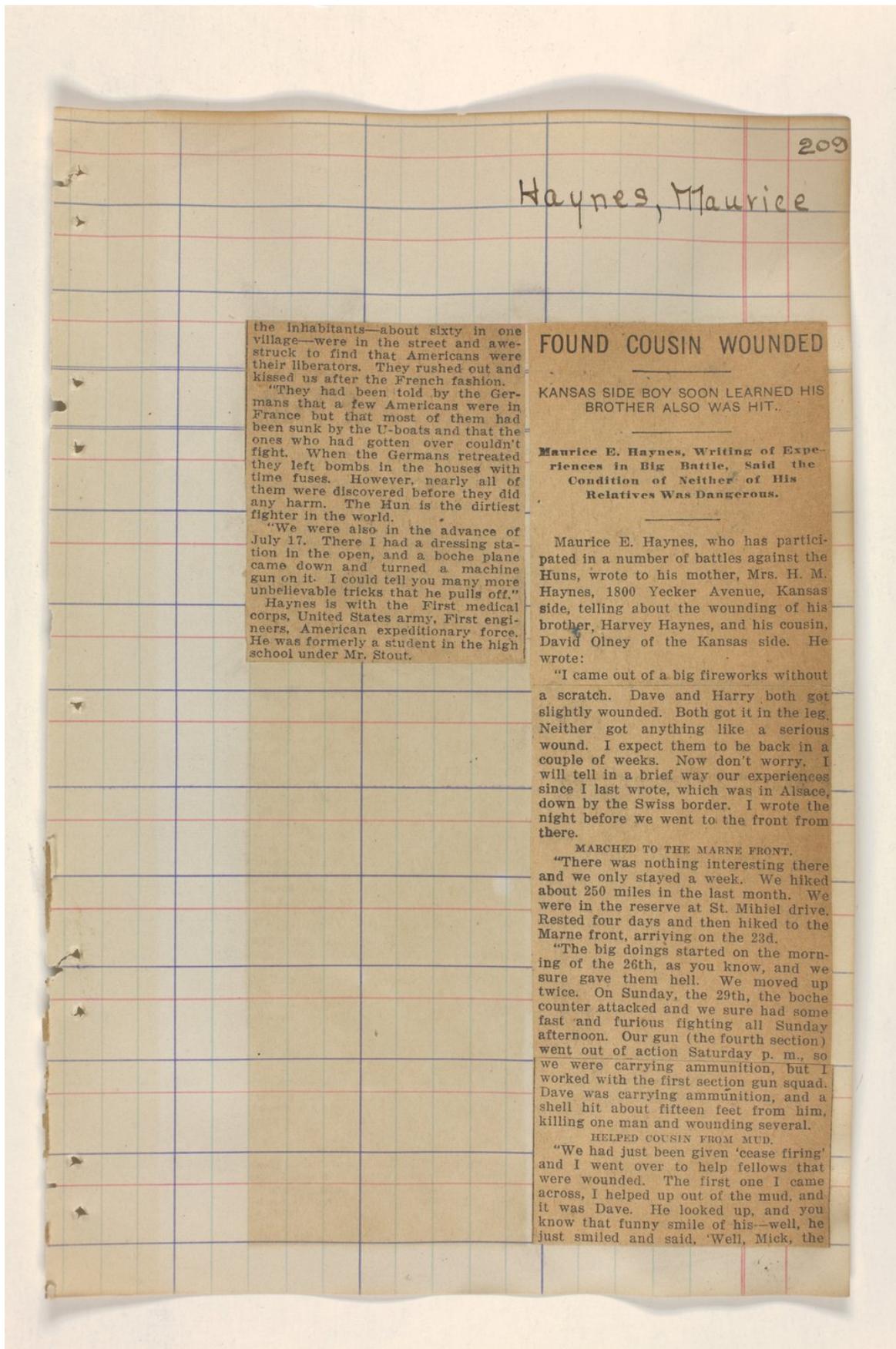
Germans Left Bombs When Forced To Retreat.

A. J. Stout is the recipient of a foreign letter written on the blank side of some German postcards. The letter is from Charles Haynes, of the Haynes family of Polk street. Haynes belongs to the engineering corps of the army, and in one of the advances of the American troops, a village fell into their hands that had been occupied continuously by the boches since 1914. A German first aid station was entered by the Americans, and among the articles they found was a supply of stationery, including the field postal cards on which Haynes' letter was written.

Haynes writes: "The boches were occupying the village at 8 a. m., and at 10 a. m., I had my dressing station established in their first aid station. Of course you have seen in the papers what the Americans did up here. I am with the First Engineers. It is our pleasant duty to build bridges for the first lines of infantry to cross on, and large bridges for the artillery to go over on. And then we act as reserves to be called in if we are needed. So you see we have a pretty warm time of it occasionally.

### French Aro Grateful.

"We have taken some villages that have been in the German hands since 1914. Some French civilians were still there, and we were the first Americans they had seen. I never saw such grateful people in all my life. By the time we had the Huns out of the way



209

Haynes, Maurice

the inhabitants—about sixty in one village—were in the street and awestruck to find that Americans were their liberators. They rushed out and kissed us after the French fashion.

"They had been told by the Germans that a few Americans were in France but that most of them had been sunk by the U-boats and that the ones who had gotten over couldn't fight. When the Germans retreated they left bombs in the houses with time fuses. However, nearly all of them were discovered before they did any harm. The Hun is the dirtiest fighter in the world.

"We were also in the advance of July 17. There I had a dressing station in the open, and a boche plane came down and turned a machine gun on it. I could tell you many more unbelievable tricks that he pulls off."

Haynes is with the First medical corps, United States army, First engineers, American expeditionary force. He was formerly a student in the high school under Mr. Stout.

### FOUND COUSIN WOUNDED

KANSAS SIDE BOY SOON LEARNED HIS BROTHER ALSO WAS HIT.

**Maurice E. Haynes, Writing of Experiences in Big Battle, Said the Condition of Neither of His Relatives Was Dangerous.**

Maurice E. Haynes, who has participated in a number of battles against the Huns, wrote to his mother, Mrs. H. M. Haynes, 1800 Yecker Avenue, Kansas side, telling about the wounding of his brother, Harvey Haynes, and his cousin, David Olney of the Kansas side. He wrote:

"I came out of a big fireworks without a scratch. Dave and Harry both got slightly wounded. Both got it in the leg. Neither got anything like a serious wound. I expect them to be back in a couple of weeks. Now don't worry. I will tell in a brief way our experiences since I last wrote, which was in Alsace, down by the Swiss border. I wrote the night before we went to the front from there.

#### MARCHED TO THE MARNE FRONT.

"There was nothing interesting there and we only stayed a week. We hiked about 250 miles in the last month. We were in the reserve at St. Mihiel drive. Rested four days and then hiked to the Marne front, arriving on the 23d.

"The big doings started on the morning of the 26th, as you know, and we sure gave them hell. We moved up twice. On Sunday, the 29th, the boche counter attacked and we sure had some fast and furious fighting all Sunday afternoon. Our gun (the fourth section) went out of action Saturday p. m., so we were carrying ammunition, but I worked with the first section gun squad. Dave was carrying ammunition, and a shell hit about fifteen feet from him, killing one man and wounding several.

#### HELPED COUSIN FROM MUD.

"We had just been given 'cease firing' and I went over to help fellows that were wounded. The first one I came across, I helped up out of the mud, and it was Dave. He looked up, and you know that funny smile of his—well, he just smiled and said, 'Well, Mick, the

## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers

210



TOP, DAVID H. OLNEY; CENTER, HARVEY M. HAYNES, JR.; BOTTOM, MAURICE E. HAYNES. HARVEY HAYNES AND OLNEY WERE WOUNDED.

damned Dutchman got me that time, and just laughed. He was not hurt very bad. Just a piece of shell in the calf of his right leg. I started him to the dressing station, as he could walk all right, and went to help the others.

"The other man died before we could get to him, as his arm was shot off and he had a big wound in the left side. Harvey was there at the battery position about a half an hour before; he was driving a team hauling ammunition. They had just left the battery and were going back up the road about a half mile from us when Jerry opened up. Their bunch lost six horses and seven men wounded. I did not see myself, but was talking to several of the men who were there since then. Harvey got hit with a piece of shell in the right leg, but nothing serious.

#### TWO MEN WERE KILLED.

"They were taken to the hospital. Altogether we had two men killed and about twenty-five wounded. We were in a position in a valley and were being shelled from three directions, with no cover.

"The Thirty-fifth division sure lived up to its reputation, though there were quite a few casualties.

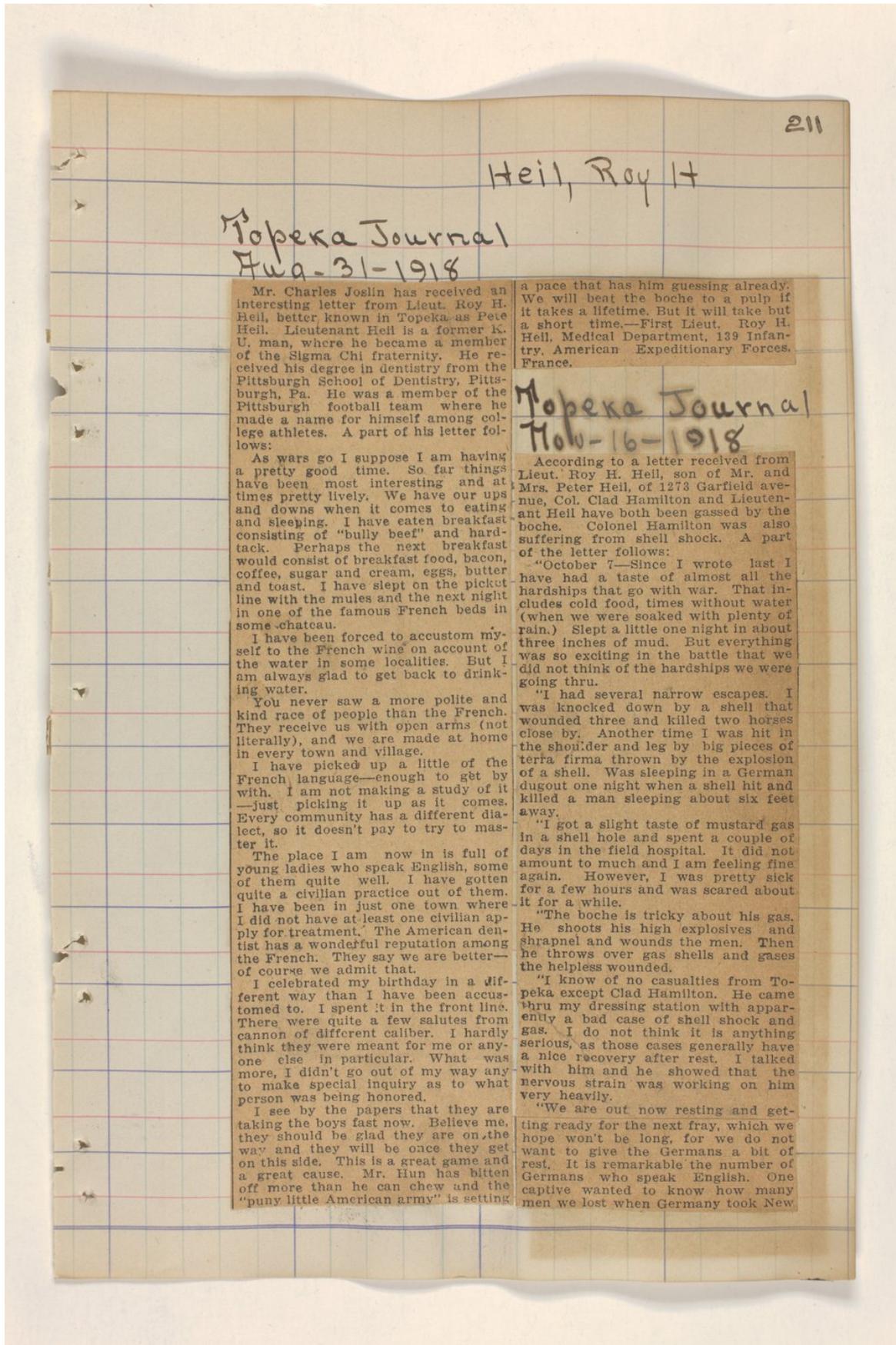
"I don't know whether we will get another crack at Jerry or not, as they seem to have him going pretty good. But don't think he is all in, as he seems to be well fed and clothed. He has bread, jam, butter, canned milk, heavy blankets, and seems to have plenty of ammunition, but, of course, he was going towards his base of supplies. We were evidently up against the Prussian Guards and Bavarians, which are said to be his best fighting troops.

"I will close, with love to all.

"MAURICE E. HAYNES."



## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers



211

Heil, Roy H

Topeka Journal  
Feb-31-1918

Mr. Charles Joslin has received an interesting letter from Lieut. Roy H. Heil, better known in Topeka as Pete Heil. Lieutenant Heil is a former K. U. man, where he became a member of the Sigma Chi fraternity. He received his degree in dentistry from the Pittsburgh School of Dentistry, Pittsburgh, Pa. He was a member of the Pittsburgh football team where he made a name for himself among college athletes. A part of his letter follows:

As wars go I suppose I am having a pretty good time. So far things have been most interesting and at times pretty lively. We have our ups and downs when it comes to eating and sleeping. I have eaten breakfast consisting of "bully beef" and hard-tack. Perhaps the next breakfast would consist of breakfast food, bacon, coffee, sugar and cream, eggs, butter and toast. I have slept on the picket line with the mules and the next night in one of the famous French beds in some chateau.

I have been forced to accustom myself to the French wine on account of the water in some localities. But I am always glad to get back to drinking water.

You never saw a more polite and kind race of people than the French. They receive us with open arms (not literally), and we are made at home in every town and village.

I have picked up a little of the French language—enough to get by with. I am not making a study of it—just picking it up as it comes. Every community has a different dialect, so it doesn't pay to try to master it.

The place I am now in is full of young ladies who speak English, some of them quite well. I have gotten quite a civilian practice out of them. I have been in just one town where I did not have at least one civilian apply for treatment. The American dentist has a wonderful reputation among the French. They say we are better—of course we admit that.

I celebrated my birthday in a different way than I have been accustomed to. I spent it in the front line. There were quite a few salutes from cannon of different caliber. I hardly think they were meant for me or anyone else in particular. What was more, I didn't go out of my way any to make special inquiry as to what person was being honored.

I see by the papers that they are taking the boys fast now. Believe me, they should be glad they are on the way and they will be once they get on this side. This is a great game and a great cause. Mr. Hun has bitten off more than he can chew and the "puny little American army" is setting

a pace that has him guessing already. We will beat the boche to a pulp if it takes a lifetime. But it will take but a short time.—First Lieut. Roy H. Heil, Medical Department, 139 Infantry, American Expeditionary Forces, France.

Topeka Journal  
Nov-16-1918

According to a letter received from Lieut. Roy H. Heil, son of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Heil, of 1273 Garfield avenue, Col. Clad Hamilton and Lieutenant Heil have both been gassed by the boche. Colonel Hamilton was also suffering from shell shock. A part of the letter follows:

"October 7—Since I wrote last I have had a taste of almost all the hardships that go with war. That includes cold food, times without water (when we were soaked with plenty of rain.) Slept a little one night in about three inches of mud. But everything was so exciting in the battle that we did not think of the hardships we were going thru.

"I had several narrow escapes. I was knocked down by a shell that wounded three and killed two horses close by. Another time I was hit in the shoulder and leg by big pieces of terra firma thrown by the explosion of a shell. Was sleeping in a German dugout one night when a shell hit and killed a man sleeping about six feet away.

"I got a slight taste of mustard gas in a shell hole and spent a couple of days in the field hospital. It did not amount to much and I am feeling fine again. However, I was pretty sick for a few hours and was scared about it for a while.

"The boche is tricky about his gas. He shoots his high explosives and shrapnel and wounds the men. Then he throws over gas shells and gases the helpless wounded.

"I know of no casualties from Topeka except Clad Hamilton. He came thru my dressing station with apparently a bad case of shell shock and gas. I do not think it is anything serious, as those cases generally have a nice recovery after rest. I talked with him and he showed that the nervous strain was working on him very heavily.

"We are out now resting and getting ready for the next fray, which we hope won't be long, for we do not want to give the Germans a bit of rest. It is remarkable the number of Germans who speak English. One captive wanted to know how many men we lost when Germany took New

## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers

212

Hendrickson, Guy E

Topena Capital  
Feb-17-1918

York and Philadelphia and he was sincere about it. The kaiser tells them the reason they haven't more men on the western front is because a lot are in America fighting. We couldn't make another one believe we were Americans. He said we were English and that all the Americans in France had been killed off."

### FRANCE IS SUFFERING BUT SHE IS NOT AFRAID

Troops Are Confident They Can  
Whip Huns.

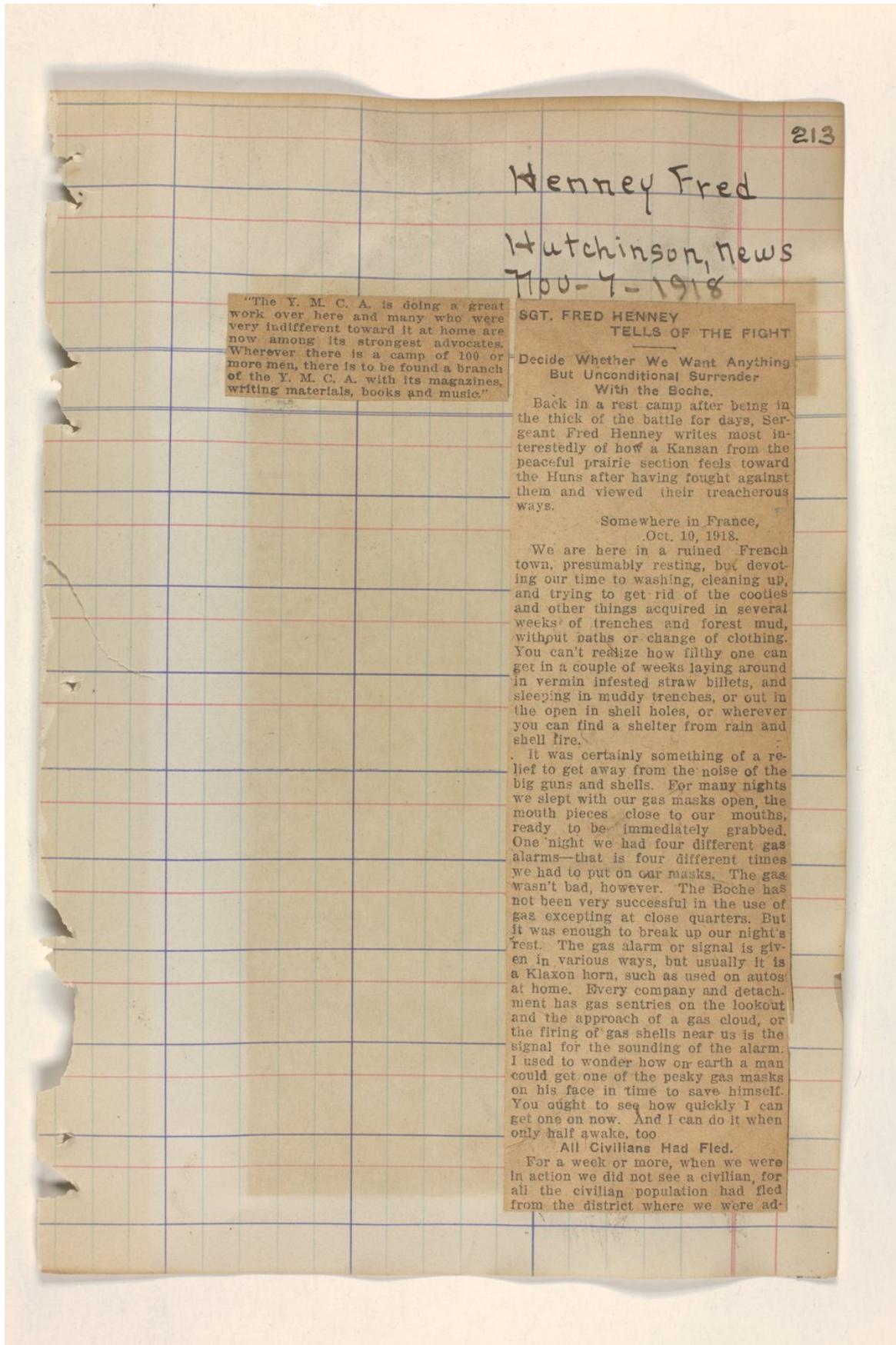
Kansas Youth Says American Soldiers  
Can Be Seen Everywhere  
in France Now.

Atchison, Feb. 16.—(Special)—According to a letter received today from Guy C. Hendrickson by his relatives here, France is suffering in silence, but absolutely fearless of the Germans or of the ultimate outcome of the war. Hendrickson is with the Tenth engineers in France, a regiment made up of the best officers of the United States forestry department and men who are thoroly familiar with all the work of the lumber trade. His letter says in part:

"France at this time presents a scene of great activity. While I do not know the exact number of American troops over here, one can scarcely go to any part of France without seeing them. Considering the comparatively short time since the United States entered the conflict, and the apparent state of unpreparedness existing at the time, the work already done and nearing completion is indeed wonderful.

"While the Russian collapse and the Italian retreat have made the outlook seem darker, the French were never more confident and enthusiastic than now, and they do not fear any attack the Germans may make. They are working with the determination to win and every man, woman and child is doing his or her bit to help out in the great struggle. While there is scarcely a home that has not been touched by death in the past three years, I have yet to see a single person in tears. They may be heartbroken but they are not giving away to the feelings.

"One thing that has particularly impressed me in France is the complete utilization of every resource. Scarcely a foot of ground can be found that has not been cultivated. I've seen mountain sides being cultivated that in the states would hardly be considered fit for sheep pastures. Every little twig and brush is made use of for fuel. One of the reasons for the fine appearance of the forests is that no dead limbs or brush are to be found, this all having been gathered up and used.



213

Henney Fred

Hutchinson, News  
Tlu-7-1918

"The Y. M. C. A. is doing a great work over here and many who were very indifferent toward it at home are now among its strongest advocates. Wherever there is a camp of 100 or more men, there is to be found a branch of the Y. M. C. A. with its magazines, writing materials, books and music."

SGT. FRED HENNEY  
TELLS OF THE FIGHT

Decide Whether We Want Anything  
But Unconditional Surrender  
With the Boche.

Back in a rest camp after being in the thick of the battle for days, Sergeant Fred Henney writes most interestedly of how a Kansan from the peaceful prairie section feels toward the Huns after having fought against them and viewed their treacherous ways.

Somewhere in France,  
Oct. 10, 1918.

We are here in a ruined French town, presumably resting, but devoting our time to washing, cleaning up, and trying to get rid of the cooties and other things acquired in several weeks of trenches and forest mud, without baths or change of clothing. You can't realize how filthy one can get in a couple of weeks laying around in vermin infested straw billets, and sleeping in muddy trenches, or out in the open in shell holes, or wherever you can find a shelter from rain and shell fire.

It was certainly something of a relief to get away from the noise of the big guns and shells. For many nights we slept with our gas masks open, the mouth pieces close to our mouths, ready to be immediately grabbed. One night we had four different gas alarms—that is four different times we had to put on our masks. The gas wasn't bad, however. The Boche has not been very successful in the use of gas excepting at close quarters. But it was enough to break up our night's rest. The gas alarm or signal is given in various ways, but usually it is a Klaxon horn, such as used on autos at home. Every company and detachment has gas sentries on the lookout and the approach of a gas cloud, or the firing of gas shells near us is the signal for the sounding of the alarm. I used to wonder how on earth a man could get one of the pesky gas masks on his face in time to save himself. You ought to see how quickly I can get one on now. And I can do it when only half awake, too.

All Civilians Had Fled.

For a week or more, when we were in action we did not see a civilian, for all the civilian population had fled from the district where we were ad-

## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers

214

vancing. The Germans had been there for four years and had ruined everything. Fine cities and beautiful little towns were masses of ruins. When I say ruined towns you can hardly appreciate what it means. These towns are solidly built up—the houses being built close together and abutting on the streets, there being few dooryards, and no yards between houses. All were built of brick or stone—mostly stone. All that is left now is heaps of rubble stone, with here and there a crumbling wall. You can find hardly a place with a roof on it. Shell holes have torn up streets; churches, public buildings, schools, everything in ruins, and even trees broken off, monuments shattered, and the wells and drinking fountains polluted. We have to carry our water with us in water carts for it is not safe to drink the water from wells where the Boche has been, for he poisons the water.

We have found the most cunning devilry everywhere. Our boys are great for souvenirs, but it is dangerous to pick them up, for the most innocent looking German bayonet sticking in the ground may explode a mine when moved. We found places after places where mines were set, which could have been put off had our men picked up innocent appearing souvenirs along the road side. Every precaution was taken to prevent it. The Boche blew up the roads and bridges everywhere as we advanced, but our engineers soon rebuilt them.

### Transport Division Complimented.

By the way, quite a compliment was paid to our transport—the Supply Co. of our regiment—by one of the division inspectors, after the recent battle. He declared that our transport was the first to get ammunition and rations up to the fighting line, and that we got up the farthest with them of any of the transports. Our fellows did fine work, and didn't let the constant shelling of our trains, or the blowing up of bridges and roads interfere with their work. And, we came through fine, too. Not a man scratched, and our only loss one team and wagon blown up.

You may think it odd, but I wasn't able to sleep the first night we were back here in the rest area, because of the quiet. We had been sleeping so many nights with the big guns booming around us and the shells making such a din, and had gotten used to it, and it seemed so unusual to be away from the noise that I could not easily get to sleep. And, I suppose,

the after-effect of the week or more of strain had something to do with it. We had all been on such a strain that after it was over we felt the effect. But I am all right now, and as soon as I can get some new clothes and clean clothes will be ready to go back to the line. We are all needing new clothes now, for wading through barbed wire entanglements, and plunging through thickets and crawling around in shell holes and trenches is not the best thing in the world on clothing.

Well, I am back in the regimental office again. Almost ever since I have been in France I have been detached with one of the battalions as supply sergeant for the battalion, but now the regiment is all together again and Capt. Barr, our commander has reorganized things somewhat. I have been put in charge of the office work, which is much more pleasant than to be scouting around in the timber and hills with a battalion supply train. It will give me a better chance to write you more regularly, too, for I have often been without paper and envelopes or any chance to write while in the field, and now I will be in touch with such. Sergt. Ralph Wainner will have charge of the regimental rations; Sergt. Ralph Clark will handle the quartermaster property—mainly clothing—and Sergt. Bob Noonan will be in charge of the ordnance issues. In the office with me is Sergt. Jas. Adkinson as my assistant. Helping Clark is Sergt. Ritterhouse and Corporal Wheeler. These are all Hutchinsson men except Wheeler, who is from Pretty Prairie.

### How the Men Live.

You would smile to see how we have to live. While our regiment is presumably billeted in this town, there are only ruined buildings and the men are having to live in pup tents, or in such ruins as they can find shelter in. My home is in a straw stack. I found a hay rack, put a paulin over it, and it makes a bed for four, two in the upper berth in the bed of the wagon and two in the lower berth, under the wagon. It is fairly snug and warm, and anyhow is dry. As it rains nearly all the time this is something. We eat our meals out of doors, having an open field kitchen, and it is not at all unusual to see the men crouching under a tree to try and keep the rain off while eating their meals the best they can. But while we are stopping around in deep mud, cold and wet and miserable, all are making the most of it.

## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers

215

We are looking forward to having our band concerts again. The band instruments were left at N—, a big town near here when we went up on to the line, as the bandmen were too busy acting as stretcher bearers to have time for music. But now they have sent for their instruments and we'll soon have music again. Frank DeNino, a Hutchinson bandman, who is a sergeant, stayed at N— with the instruments.

Lt. Harvey Rankin, of Hutchinson, is now a captain, having just been promoted, and now commands Co. M. Lt. D. J. Wilson, who also is to become a captain, has been sent back to his old love, Co. E. He has been with the Supply Co. Capt. Bonney, our regimental adjutant, has been promoted to major. There will be a lot of changes and promotions now that we are back for re-organization.

### How Prisoners Surrendered.

I am writing this letter piece meal, a chunk now and then when I get time, so if it sounds disconnected you will know why. I hear a lot of interesting stories from the boys regarding the prisoners they took in our recent battle. We were up against the Prussian Guard division, one of the finest in the German army, and the prisoners were fine looking men. I saw hundreds of them being brought in, and all were a scowling, bitter looking set of fellows. But they were taken prisoner without much trouble. When our boys would rush at a machine group hidden behind bushes a machine gun nest—as we call a machine gun group hidden behind bushes—they would fight as long as their guns would shoot but once the gunners were overpowered they'd give up. They would throw their hands up and shout "Camerad". One of the interesting sights of the battle was to see Kansas boys, mere striplings, proudly marching down the pike escorting twenty or thirty prisoners each, and generally making an officer carry his pack. That breaks their hearts. These Boche officers are very proud and they surely hate to be forced to carry anything. One Boche major was ordered to help carry a litter with some wounded German privates. He refused, and was promptly shot down. You asked me whether we shoot our prisoners. No, Kansas soldiers are more humane than that, but many prisoners were shot by our men because they treacherously tried to assassinate their cap-

tors. I have read time and again of this savage treachery but never could believe all I heard until now. One of our sergeants told me of this instance that he himself saw. A machine gun nest was taken and the gunners were holding their arms above their heads and calling "Camerad" as usual. As our boys went up to take the prisoners one of them jerked his foot and released the spring trigger of an automatic gun and shot down several of our men. There were four prisoners who were not taken alive. Our men made short work of the treacherous bunch.

### "Hell, I'm From Kansas."

Another case of the kind that was related me by a corporal was a Boche officer who held his arms up with the usual plea. That is, he held one arm up but protested, in broken English that the other arm was wounded and could not be raised. One of the men caught a glimpse of an automatic in the palm of the supposedly wounded arm, and he remarked; "All right, I'll just give you another," and shot him through the "wounded" arm, fixing him right. It was another Boche officer, a major, who protested in fair English against being forced to surrender to an ordinary buck private. "I am a major, a major of the Prussian Guard," he declared "Hell, I'm from the Kansas National Guard," retorted a Larned boy who prodded the major in the rear with his bayonet and marched him off.

I saw piles and piles of machine guns, automatics, small field pieces and heaps of ammunition that our regiment captured and which was left piled along the road. Our men returned from the battle field, on our way back to the rest area laden with souvenirs. Our wagons were decorated with Boche signs taken from buildings and road crossings, printed in German, of course. The men bore Boche helmets, pistols, belts, field glasses, and a little of everything.

It was the most interesting and exciting time I ever had. Of course, it was trying. For five days and nights we worked almost constantly with hardly any time for rest or sleep, and very little to eat for there was no chance to cook anything. We carried canned bully beef, a loaf of bread and the like and ate when we had a chance.

Our division covered itself with glory and our regiment was one of the first over the top, through the

## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers

216

Topeka Capital  
April - 13 - 1919

wire, across the trenches and went as far as any through the Boche lines. They say we took more prisoners than any of the others, but this was due perhaps to our being the first to advance, and the first day's push netted more prisoners than the others, the Boche simply took to his heels, fighting only rear guard with machine guns, and moving his main body away as fast as he could. We have been in rest now nearly a week, and are looking forward to the next chance we'll get at the Boche. The papers say the kaiser has asked for a truce and a peace parley. We hope he'll not get it. We want to keep on smashing him and that the only parley over peace will be the one at the trial of the kaiser and his aiders and abettors on the charge of common murder. I'm as anxious to come back home to my dear ones as anybody can be, but I'd rather stay here fighting another year than to let up and only half finish this job. I want to see the kaiser smashed forever while we're at it.

### About Some of Our Boys.

As soon as I can get some clean underwear I'll get rid of the darn bugs, but in the meantime they're not very pleasant. All the folks that you and I know who are in this regiment are safe and well, so far as I know. A lot of my friends were killed and wounded, but none that you know. Pegues was away at school and missed the battle. Dr. Kirkpatrick I haven't seen since the fight, but I think he's all right. I hear only words of highest praise for his brave conduct dressing the wounded. All the doctors worked like heroes and nearly all of them were shot, gassed or shell-shocked. Eustace Smith came through with flying colors, scratched but O. K. "Doc" Klippel is all right. Saw Sergt. Houston yesterday. He's O. K. Tell Capt. Noonan that Bob is all right. He was in the thick of things, helping deliver ammunition, but came out without a scratch. None of our ammunition or ration train men in our regiment were hit.

FRED.

## ALL FEELING PASSES IN VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

Henny Writes of the 35th and  
the 89th.

**Tried in Battle, They Know and Understand—137th Infantry Less Than  
Half Kansas Now.**

Battle—the "valley of the shadow"—has wiped out all feeling between volunteer and drafted men, which was noticeable at the time the Thirty-fifth National Guard division was at Camp Doniphan and the Eighty-ninth National army division was at Camp Funston.

This is the story of how the change came about, as seen by Fred Henny, in civil life the city editor of the Hutchinson News, who has served thru the war as regimental supply sergeant in the 137th infantry.

### How They Felt About It.

Mr. Henny writes to a Topeka friend:

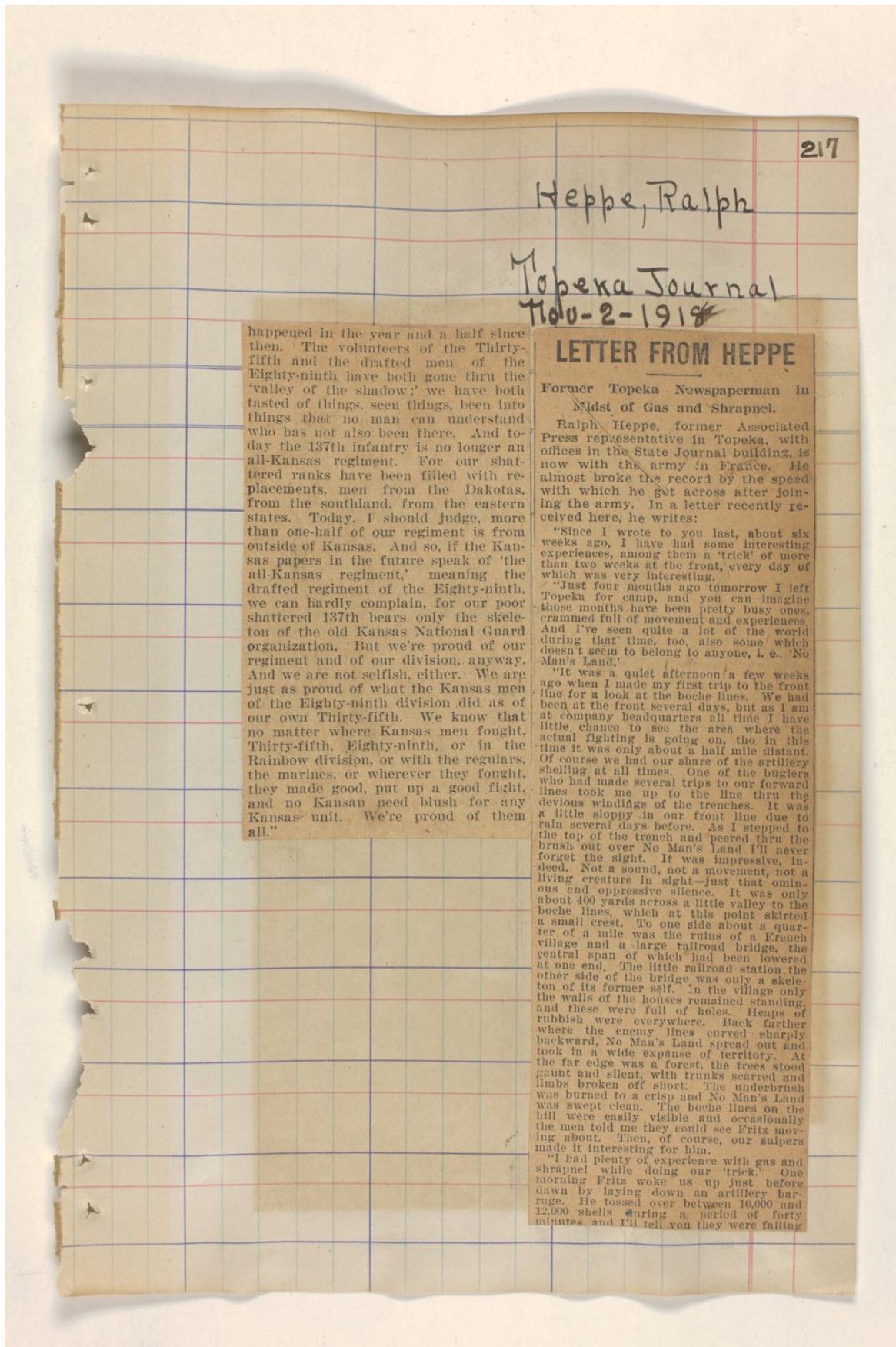
"As you may know, when this division was at Camp Doniphan the Kansas papers were paying a good deal of attention to the drafted division at Camp Funston. They constantly referred to the Kansas drafted regiment at Funston as 'the all-Kansas regiment.' We rather resented that, as the 137th infantry, our regiment, was also an all-Kansas regiment, being composed exclusively of Kansas men of the old First and Second Kansas National Guard. We naturally felt that the volunteers from Kansas were entitled to at least as much consideration as the men who were drafted—I'll frankly have to admit that we were strongly prejudiced in favor of the volunteer—but at any rate we felt the folks back home should give us an equal shake, and so when the Kansas papers played up strongly the drafted regiment at Funston as 'the all-Kansas regiment' you can understand how we felt about it.

### Replacements Exceed 50 Per Cent.

"But that was ages ago. Things have



## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers



217

Heppe, Ralph

Topeka Journal  
Nov-2-1918

happened in the year and a half since then. The volunteers of the Thirty-fifth and the drafted men of the Eighty-ninth have both gone thru the 'valley of the shadow,' we have both tasted of things, seen things, been into things that no man can understand who has not also been there. And today the 137th infantry is no longer an all-Kansas regiment. For our shattered ranks have been filled with replacements, men from the Dakotas, from the southland, from the eastern states. Today, I should judge, more than one-half of our regiment is from outside of Kansas. And so, if the Kansas papers in the future speak of 'the all-Kansas regiment,' meaning the drafted regiment of the Eighty-ninth, we can hardly complain, for our poor shattered 137th bears only the skeleton of the old Kansas National Guard organization. But we're proud of our regiment and of our division, anyway. And we are not selfish, either. We are just as proud of what the Kansas men of the Eighty-ninth division did as of our own Thirty-fifth. We know that no matter where Kansas men fought, Thirty-fifth, Eighty-ninth, or in the Rainbow division, or with the regulars, the marines, or wherever they fought, they made good, put up a good fight, and no Kansan need blush for any Kansas unit. We're proud of them all."

### LETTER FROM HEPPE

Former Topeka Newspaperman in  
Midst of Gas and Shrapnel.

Ralph Heppe, former Associated Press representative in Topeka, with offices in the State Journal building, is now with the army in France. He almost broke the record by the speed with which he got across after joining the army. In a letter recently received here, he writes:

"Since I wrote to you last, about six weeks ago, I have had some interesting experiences, among them a 'trick' of more than two weeks at the front, every day of which was very interesting.

"Just four months ago tomorrow I left Topeka for camp, and you can imagine those months have been pretty busy ones, crammed full of movement and experiences. And I've seen quite a lot of the world during that time, too, also some which doesn't seem to belong to anyone, i. e., 'No Man's Land.'

"It was a quiet afternoon a few weeks ago when I made my first trip to the front line for a look at the boche lines. We had been at the front several days, but as I am at company headquarters all time I have little chance to see the area where the actual fighting is going on, tho in this time it was only about a half mile distant. Of course we had our share of the artillery shelling at all times. One of the buglers who had made several trips to our forward lines took me up to the line thru the devious windings of the trenches. It was a little sloppy in our front line due to rain several days before. As I stepped to the top of the trench and peered thru the brush out over No Man's Land I'll never forget the sight. It was impressive, indeed. Not a sound, not a movement, not a living creature in sight—just that ominous and oppressive silence. It was only about 400 yards across a little valley to the boche lines, which at this point skirted a small crest. To one side about a quarter of a mile was the ruins of a French village and a large railroad bridge, the central span of which had been lowered at one end. The little railroad station the other side of the bridge was only a skeleton of its former self. In the village only the walls of the houses remained standing, and these were full of holes. Heaps of rubbish were everywhere. Back farther where the enemy lines curved sharply backward, No Man's Land spread out and took in a wide expanse of territory. At the far edge was a forest, the trees stood gaunt and silent, with trunks scarred and limbs broken off short. The underbrush was burned to a crisp and No Man's Land was swept clean. The boche lines on the hill were easily visible and occasionally the men told me they could see Fritz moving about. Then, of course, our snipers made it interesting for him.

"I had plenty of experience with gas and shrapnel while doing our 'trick.' One morning Fritz woke us up just before dawn by laying over between 10,000 and 12,000 shells during a period of forty minutes, and I'll tell you they were falling

## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers

213

Herndon, W.K.

like hailstones. I stood outside the dug-out for the last fifteen or twenty minutes of the concert, listening to the scream of the shells and ducking into the dugout when I heard one coming close. One can tell pretty accurately about where the shells are coming by the sound they make. Not a man was scratched, and as Fritz didn't follow up his little action it was all wasted powder for him."

Kansas City Star  
June 18-1918

### PRAISE FOR 117TH TRAIN

KANSAS UNIT MAKES A FINE RECORD  
IN FRANCE.

In Helping to Stop the Present German Offensive Many of the Men Worked Forty to Fifty Hours Without Stopping.

Capt. W. K. Herndon of the 117th Kansas Ammunition Train wrote to Mayor John H. Fezler of Rosedale in reply to a cablegram telling of the big oversubscriptions of the folks at home to the third Liberty Loan. Captain Herndon lived in Rosedale and recruited six companies for the Kansas train in that city and Greater Kansas City. The letter in part:

I received your cablegram some two weeks ago, and I was unable to answer at that time, as on the afternoon I received it we were holding a reception on this front for Fritz and was entirely too busy to try to answer at that time.

We were very glad indeed to know that Rosedale had doubled its subscription to the third Liberty Loan, and we realize that the folks at home are with us and will do everything possible to bring the war to a successful termination.

On last Sunday, "Mothers' Day," we had our first church services since we have been in France. A chaplain was recently assigned to the ammunition train, and he had charge of the services. Spare moments during the day were devoted to writing letters home.

H. J. ALLEN TALKED TO MEN.

Henry J. Allen, whom you no doubt know, came 250 miles to be with the Kansas boys on Mothers' Day and to talk to them again, and the meeting, to say the least, was attended by an appreciative and attentive audience. The boys were all very glad indeed to have him talk to them again, remembering the fine talk he gave us in Camp Mills last year on his arrival from the front. Mr. Allen now has charge of all the Red

Cross work on the front, which includes our prisoners in German prison camps. He has established a large warehouse in Berne, Switzerland, and has stored there enough food for ten thousand prisoners for six months, and he has also made arrangements with the German government whereby our prisoners are allowed to receive two 10-pound packages of food each week. Also in connection with the warehouse he has a large bakery from which American prisoners are allowed to receive white bread. American troops on the front and American prisoners in Germany are the only soldiers or civilians in Europe who are eating white bread today.

Also, through the efforts of Mr. Allen, our prisoners are allowed to write three letters and six postal cards a month, and I am sure that our boys who have fallen into the enemy's hands will receive better treatment than the prisoners of any other nation. The scope of Mr. Allen's work in France is wide, and the boys from Kansas are proud of the fact that such a worthy representative from their good state is at the head of this noble work.

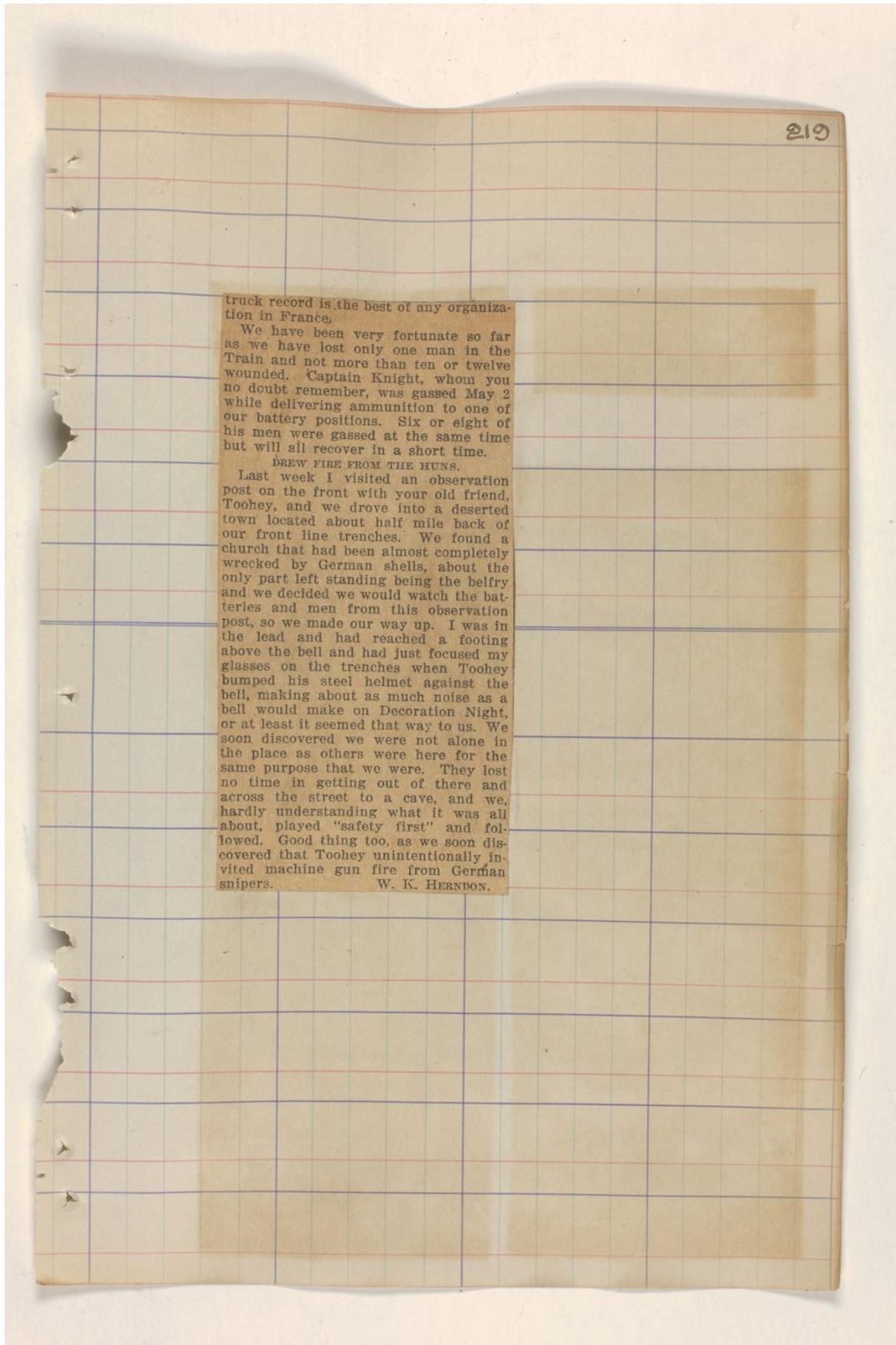
PRAISE FOR THE TRAIN.

The 117th Ammunition Train is the only distinctively Kansas organization that will ever be in France to represent our state, for, as you know, the other state troops have been consolidated with the troops of other states, and with the exception of this division there will be no other troops ever arrive in France from separate states. After the recent *coup de main*, the 117th Ammunition Train was mentioned in orders, which read as follows: "The 117th Ammunition Train has constantly exhibited a tireless energy and spirit of hearty co-operation in every emergency that is worthy of the highest praise."

Some of our men worked from forty to fifty hours without rest.

I was talking last night with Sergeant Naylor and he had been in the saddle for fifty hours and the only sleep he had in that time was the little he could get while riding, and I am sure that was not very much, as the roads were being shelled practically all the time. All the Rosedale boys are in fine condition physically and are, with the exception of one or two, I believe, non-commissioned officers, and are making good. Leslie Hagaman and Walter Angus were transferred last week to the Ordnance Department and are attached to our train for duty and both have been made non-commissioned officers. Their duties consist principally of supervising the repair of automobiles and trucks. Our

## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers



219

truck record is the best of any organization in France.

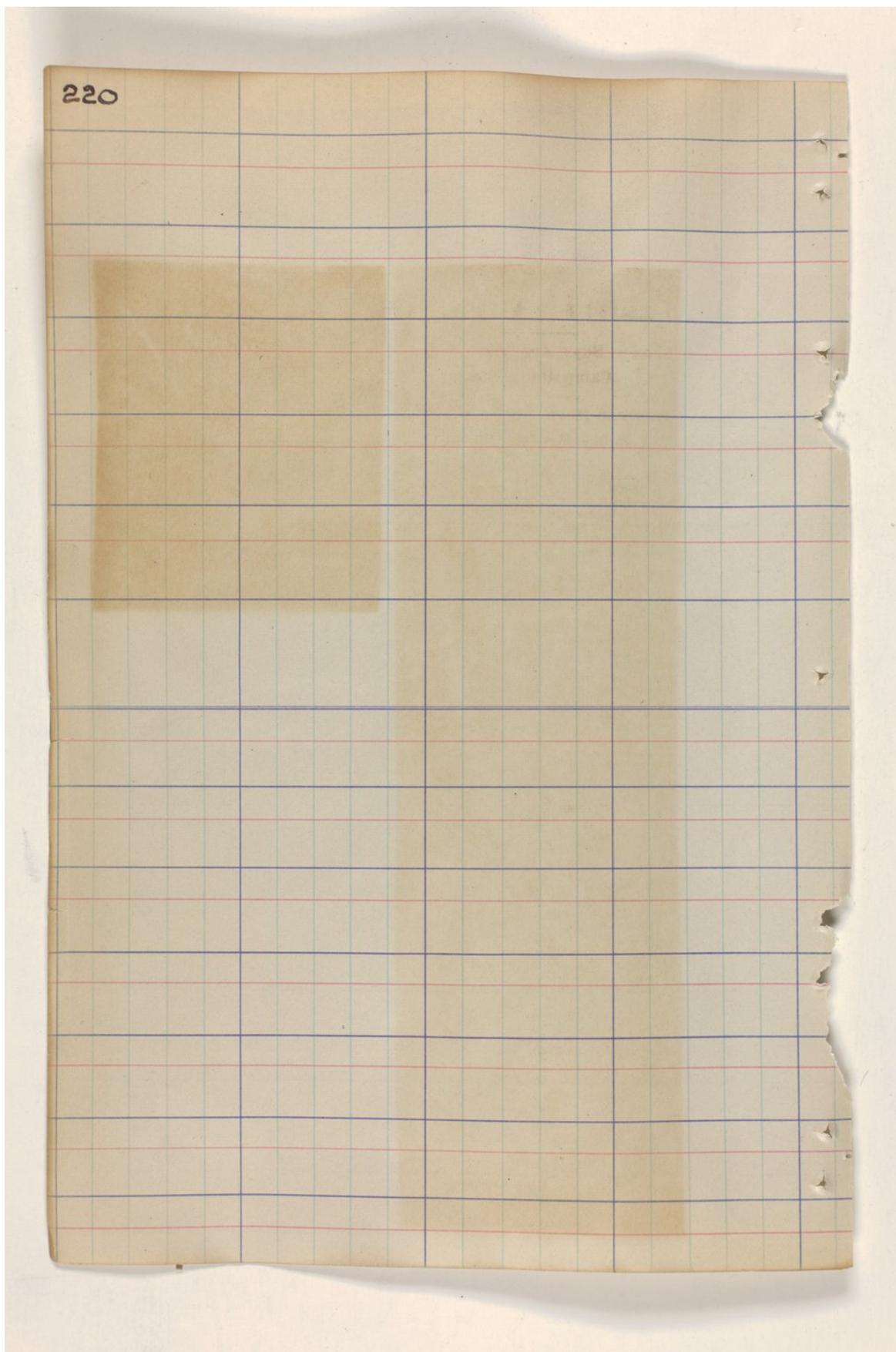
We have been very fortunate so far as we have lost only one man in the Train and not more than ten or twelve wounded. Captain Knight, whom you no doubt remember, was gassed May 2 while delivering ammunition to one of our battery positions. Six or eight of his men were gassed at the same time but will all recover in a short time.

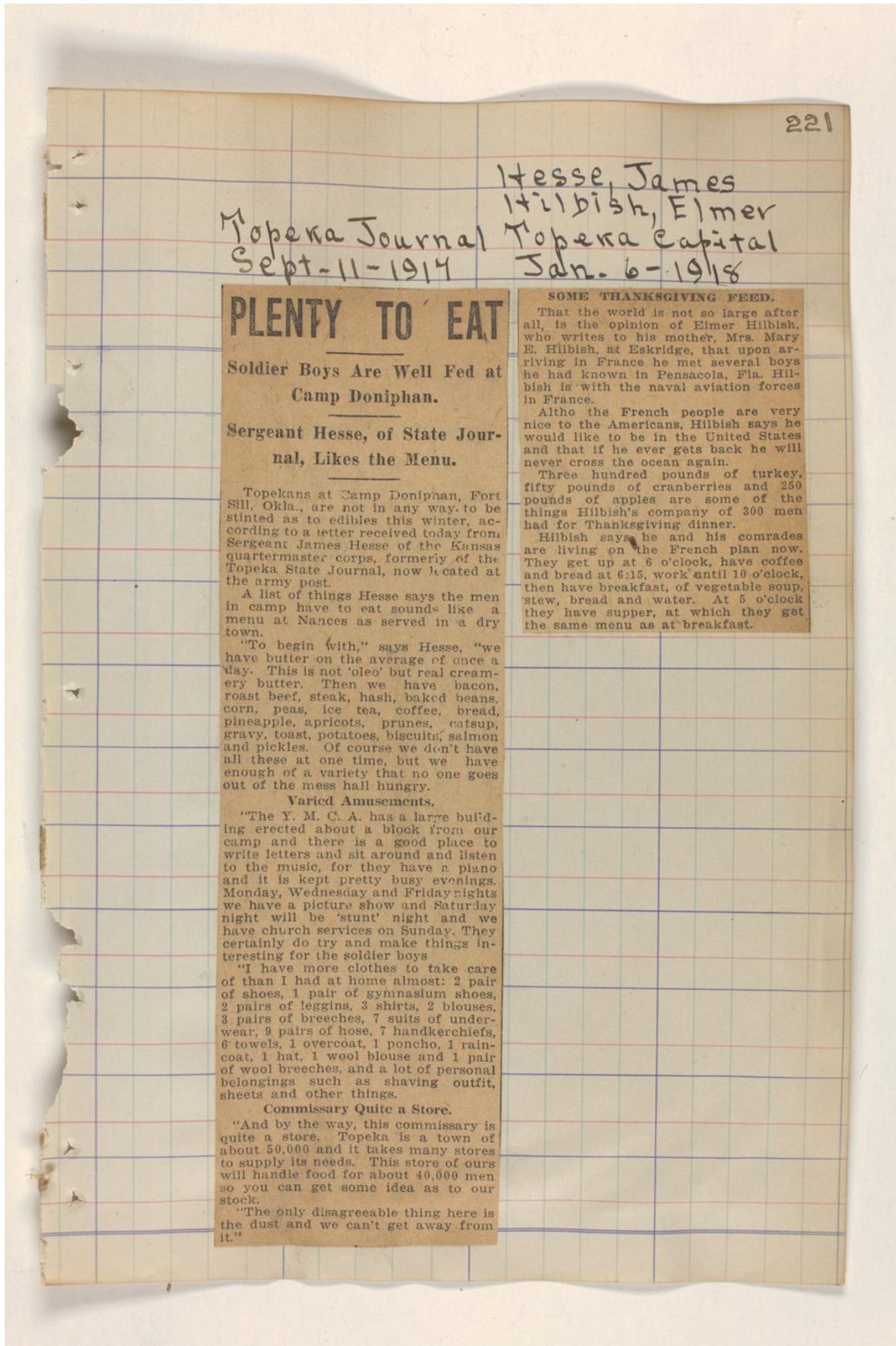
#### DREW FIRE FROM THE HUNS.

Last week I visited an observation post on the front with your old friend, Toohey, and we drove into a deserted town located about half mile back of our front line trenches. We found a church that had been almost completely wrecked by German shells, about the only part left standing being the belfry and we decided we would watch the batteries and men from this observation post, so we made our way up. I was in the lead and had reached a footing above the bell and had just focused my glasses on the trenches when Toohey bumped his steel helmet against the bell, making about as much noise as a bell would make on Decoration Night, or at least it seemed that way to us. We soon discovered we were not alone in the place as others were here for the same purpose that we were. They lost no time in getting out of there and across the street to a cave, and we, hardly understanding what it was all about, played "safety first" and followed. Good thing too, as we soon discovered that Toohey unintentionally invited machine gun fire from German snipers.

W. K. HENDON.

## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers





221

Hesse, James  
Hilbish, Elmer  
Topeka Journal Topeka Capital  
Sept. 11 - 1914 Jan. 6 - 1918

### PLENTY TO EAT

**Soldier Boys Are Well Fed at Camp Doniphan.**

**Sergeant Hesse, of State Journal, Likes the Menu.**

Topekans at Camp Doniphan, Fort Sill, Okla., are not in any way to be stinted as to edibles this winter, according to a letter received today from Sergeant James Hesse of the Kansas quartermaster corps, formerly of the Topeka State Journal, now located at the army post.

A list of things Hesse says the men in camp have to eat sounds like a menu at Nances as served in a dry town.

"To begin with," says Hesse, "we have butter on the average of once a day. This is not 'oleo' but real creamery butter. Then we have bacon, roast beef, steak, hash, baked beans, corn, peas, ice tea, coffee, bread, pineapple, apricots, prunes, catsup, gravy, toast, potatoes, biscuits, salmon and pickles. Of course we don't have all these at one time, but we have enough of a variety that no one goes out of the mess hall hungry.

#### Varied Amusements.

"The Y. M. C. A. has a large building erected about a block from our camp and there is a good place to write letters and sit around and listen to the music, for they have a piano and it is kept pretty busy evenings. Monday, Wednesday and Friday nights we have a picture show and Saturday night will be 'stunt' night and we have church services on Sunday. They certainly do try and make things interesting for the soldier boys.

"I have more clothes to take care of than I had at home almost: 2 pair of shoes, 1 pair of gymnasium shoes, 2 pairs of leggins, 3 shirts, 2 blouses, 3 pairs of breeches, 7 suits of underwear, 9 pairs of hose, 7 handkerchiefs, 6 towels, 1 overcoat, 1 poncho, 1 raincoat, 1 hat, 1 wool blouse and 1 pair of wool breeches, and a lot of personal belongings such as shaving outfit, sheets and other things.

#### Commissary Quite a Store.

"And by the way, this commissary is quite a store. Topeka is a town of about 50,000 and it takes many stores to supply its needs. This store of ours will handle food for about 40,000 men so you can get some idea as to our stock.

"The only disagreeable thing here is the dust and we can't get away from it."

#### SOME THANKSGIVING FEED.

That the world is not so large after all, is the opinion of Elmer Hilbish, who writes to his mother, Mrs. Mary E. Hilbish, at Eskridge, that upon arriving in France he met several boys he had known in Pensacola, Fla. Hilbish is with the naval aviation forces in France.

Altho the French people are very nice to the Americans, Hilbish says he would like to be in the United States and that if he ever gets back he will never cross the ocean again.

Three hundred pounds of turkey, fifty pounds of cranberries and 250 pounds of apples are some of the things Hilbish's company of 300 men had for Thanksgiving dinner.

Hilbish says he and his comrades are living on the French plan now. They get up at 6 o'clock, have coffee and bread at 6:15, work until 10 o'clock, then have breakfast, of vegetable soup, stew, bread and water. At 5 o'clock they have supper, at which they get the same menu as at breakfast.

## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers

222

Hileman, Charles D

Baxter Springs News  
1100-8-1918

To Mr. and Mrs. C. O. Hileman  
Kelley Field, Nov. 2, 1918.

Dear Ones at Home:

How is everyone at home by this time? I hope fine, for this letter leaves myself and dear old Kelley Field in the finest of condition considering the circumstances that now exist.

You wanted to know something of the life that we boys live in camp. Well, there is only two points of view in which to look at it; naturally optimistic and pessimistic and thank God that the majority and practically all of us look at it in the former way, which is the only way. Some people have the idea that by being with multitudes of men that we boys can become vulgar and stale hearted. Now, that is absolutely impossible, for the purest and most intelligent men of today are the men that Uncle Sam has trained. Of course there are men who cannot see the advantage of good citizenship and fellowship, but the dear old Y. M. C. A. is our home and nothing can take its place but the homes we left behind and are coming back to so unexpectedly that who are awaiting our return. The Y here is furnished with instructors in every branch of education and all we have to do is attend regularly in order to accomplish the knowledge we prefer.

Kelley Field is no ordinary camp but is the largest and most efficient aviation field on this side and thought to stand as the largest in the world, and therefore we can certainly be proud of the official statement from the headquarters of southern department which expresses our field as the cleanest camp in the U. S. from disease, according to size, and that is pretty good.

The weather here is simply grand at the present but it was a pretty hard task to get used to it as it is usually

very dry and hot.

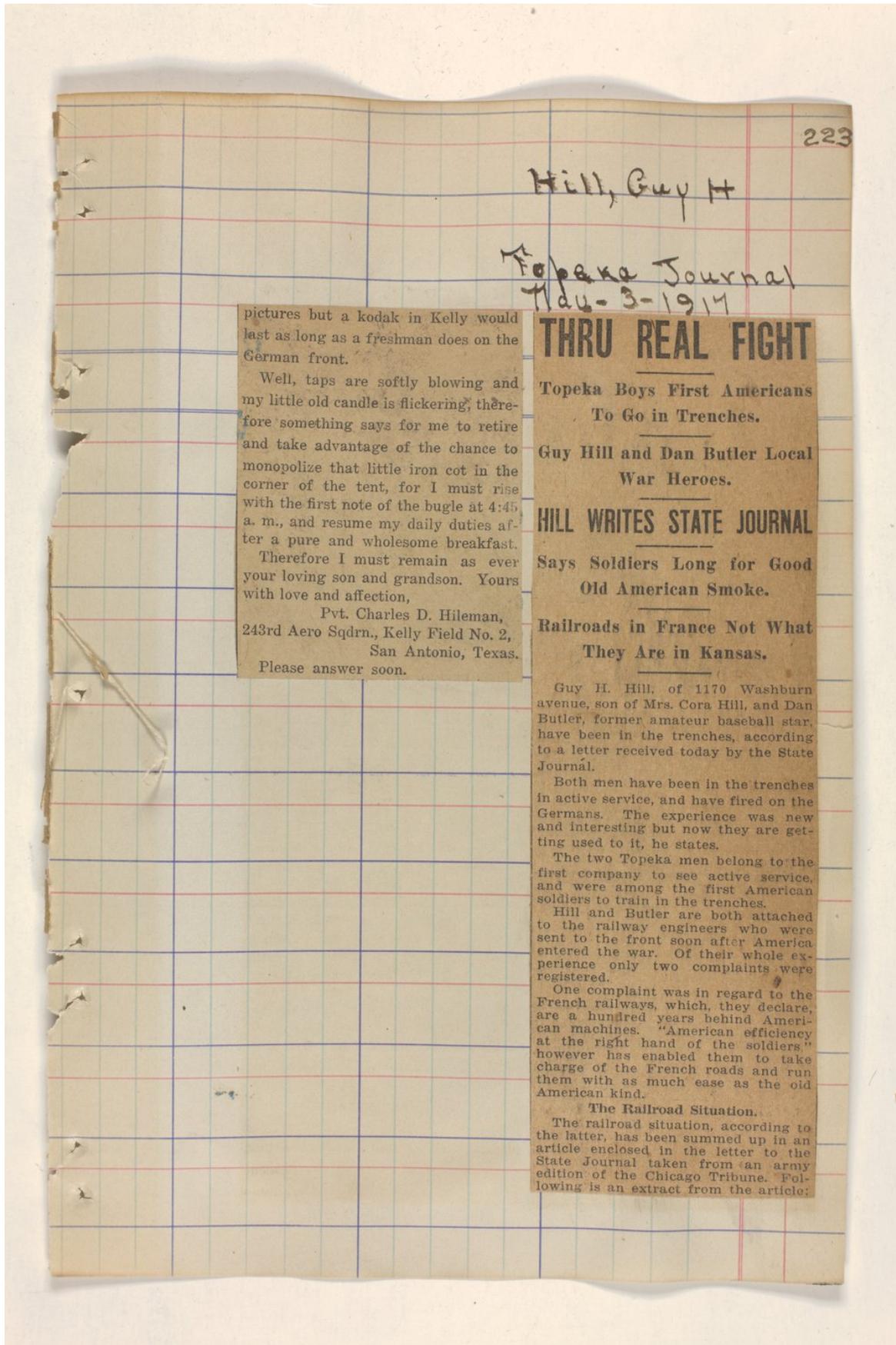
Now for mess. Well; all I can say is that any one who could kick on our chow is certainly some pessimist for we get the most healthful food that one can possibly eat and it is cooked by our comrades in the most sanitary kitchens in the U. S. today. I know you bet your life for I get my turn on K. P. just the same as the rest. (K. P.—Kitchen Police.)

How about waste? Why, the bread that is wasted in Kelly in one day wouldn't amount to enough to keep a mosquito in existence, therefore, it isn't Camp Kelly to blame for the insects that we put up with down here. And if other garbage was noise it wouldn't amount to the drop of a pin in a boiler factory, therefore, the cleanliness and sanitary rules of Camp Kelly expressed by all of the express companies in the U. S.

I might say that I would love to see my time come for overseas' duty but wherever Uncle Sam wants us is where we are wanting to be for there is where we can be of the most service to him, therefore, we are going to make the best of our enlistment (while we have a chance).

Well, I could tell some interesting things about Kelly but remember that I am in the Air Service U. S. Army and the general principles of interest are also of interest to the Hun, therefore all I can say is that flying is certainly the life if one is built of the right courage, but it sure takes self confidence to go through the nose dives, tail spins, lops and to fly upside-down. Say, that is some excitement. Now, I don't mean to insinuate that I am piloting a ship; no, not at present, anyway, but remember that the ships down here carry two passengers. I would love to send you some

## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers



## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers

224

The French railways have been found in excellent condition. The natural resources, from which they have drawn in the construction of roadbeds has enabled them to bring quickly their right-of-ways up to first class condition for heaving traffic. The rails and ties are of the best and the motive power is in good condition. While the coupling features of the cars are decidedly different from those of American railways and the handling of the engines is somewhat different, it has been found that the American boys can quickly overcome these difficulties and it was only a matter of a few days riding with their French comrades until they were able to assume the operation alone.

The men are quartered in good barracks, which are provided with portable heating stoves and are quite comfortable even though they were very hastily constructed. Upon arrival at headquarters it was found necessary to build roads and provide more adequate facilities for washing and drinking water but these things have now been provided and remedied.

### French Tobacco "Punk."

The second complaint was against French tobacco which Hill declares is not the least bit palatable and is very hard to roll. Hill and his comrades in the trenches have heard that the United States is soon to send some "good old Bull Durham and Prince Albert" to them. The boys are all eagerly awaiting the arrival of the first tin of American tobacco, he says.

The French language, too, received a gentle slap from Hill in his letter. By talking with both hands and with the use of a translation book, the soldiers can make themselves understood, he states.

Following is the letter received by the State Journal, which was marked as "Soldier Mail" and bore the countersignature of the censor, dated October 15, 1917:

"Dear Editor:

"I received a copy of the good old home paper, the State Journal, the other day sent me by my mother and I do not believe that the paymaster would have been more welcomed. I even read the ads and enjoyed them.

"There is another boy from Topeka in my company. Dan Butler is his name, and he will be remembered there in the amateur baseball world. We have very little time for the national pastime here, as we are now working at our various occupations.

"The railway equipment here is a hundred years behind the times but the great American efficiency is always at our right hand and the boys soon became accustomed to the engines and handle them now as we did our own at home.

"We are patiently awaiting the arrival of our American engines which we hear are now on the way.

### French Are Nice.

"The French are very nice to us and are congenial and do everything to make us at home. The language is very hard to 'compre' but by using both hands and a translation book we can manage to get by.

"We have the honor of being the first regiment in active service and have had several interesting experiences but we are getting used to it.

"I noticed that the Americans were getting ready to send us some tobacco. We sure would appreciate some good old B. D. or P. A. The French tobacco is not the least bit palatable and is very hard to roll.

"I wish I could tell you of our trip and where we are located but that is strictly against orders and you know 'We're in the army now' and I want this to go.

"I wish that you would give my regards to Harvey Parsons and any other of my friends (if I have any) and I would like to see a copy of the good old paper that has the list of the draft in it.

"Trusting the old town is keeping her standard up in this great cause, I remain,

Yours Sincerely,

"GUY H. HILL,

Co. F, 13th Engineers."

"Rv. A. E. F. via New York."

## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers

225

Hittle, Sidney W.

Spring Hill New Era  
Jan - 14 - 1919

Another "Dad's Christmas letter" received in Spring Hill, was from Sidney W. Hittle, son of Mr. and Mrs. S. A. Hittle. Private Hittle is stationed with the A. E. F. in France.

Dear Daddy:—Well, as this day is set apart for all soldiers to write home to their fathers, so to pass the time away I thought I would drop you a line. Yes, all letters mailed to fathers today are what they call "Daddy's Christmas Letter." I have heard that all such letters are not to be censored. Don't know for sure though. They said we could write most anything we wished to, so here goes.

As I have never been permitted to tell what ship I came over on and the date of our landing, I will now give you a brief history of it.

The morning of September 19th at 12:40 o'clock, just after midnight we put our packs on our backs and walked about four or five miles to the boat landing which we reached just after daylight. We carried the pack all that time. At the boat landing we boarded a ferry which was ferried down the Hudson river some 30 miles to Hoboken, N. J. We landed about noon. It was there we boarded our ship. We ate our dinners and stayed on the ship all night as they were not yet ready to start on the trip as the ship was not quite loaded with products for us boys and the Allies.

On September 20th at 6:30 o'clock p. m. we left Hoboken. Tug boats pulled us out of the harbor. This was done in order that they could dodge the underlaid mines in the harbor. These mines were laid by the United States so as to keep any German vessels from getting in.

About dusk we sailed by the Statue of Liberty on Long Island and it was beautiful scenery.

That night about midnight nearly everyone began to get seasick—In other words they began to feed the fish. I got sick but didn't bring up anything but a mouth full or two, and was soon O. K. again.

I was lookout on the ship. This was done to spy out all submarines. I was on duty one hour and off seven hours. There were hundreds of lookouts.

The name of our ship was Argumenden. It was a German ship at one time. It was captured from them while in New York harbor when war was declared. It belonged to old Bill Kaiser himself and before its capture it was called the Kaiser Wilhelm the 2nd.

Daddy, you remember how you were telling me about the size of ships you saw on your trip to California? At that time I could hardly believe they were so large as you told me, but when I saw the large ships in the harbor, I then had to believe it sure enough.

This ship was a four stack steamer. It had its own bakery and printing press on it besides its cargo of food stuffs for the Allies. She required 1,000 men as a crew such as sailors and the like, which already belonged to her crew.

Our unit was all put on the fourth or bottom deck. My bunk was on compartment O, deck four bunk sixteen and was right at the side of the ship, far below the water line. We had ship drill twice a day. This was done in order that if the ship was torpedoed that every man knew just where to go to his place, where

## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers

226

his life-boat or raft so he could escape from the upper deck.

We were attacked only once while coming over. It was while I was on lookout between 11 and 12 o'clock, when it happened. Our ship had six naval guns, four of which were six inch, the other two were four inch guns. As soon as it was reported that they had seen something, they began shooting. About four shots were fired. Also two or three shots were fired from the American ship which came along with us. Some said this thing was a submarine, some said it was a whale, and others said it was something else. At any rate no torpedo ever hit our ship.

We reached the seaport named Brest, France, on the 29th day of September, about noon. We were eight and one half days on the water. We did not leave the ship until Tuesday, about 10 o'clock. We remained in Brest until the morning of October 14th then we came to Lemans. We lost two nights sleep. We came in box cars, too. They had 40 of us to each car and there were 25 or 30 cars. When we got to LeMans we were all reclassified and the medical men sent away from there.

Before I was assigned to the Company I am now with there were about 450 of us camped just a short distance from here. While there in camp we were all casuals. Finally some were transferred to the Ambulance Co. No. 330 and some were transferred to the LeMans base hospital where they do work there looking after the sick and wounded from the front. Although I am not struck on this country whatever, I am satisfied right here if we have to stay here any length of time, I don't want to have to make another move if possible until we are billed to go home.

We have a good company with a dandy major, captain and lieutenant. We all sleep and stay in tents, and that is healthy for all of us. But don't misunderstand me and think I

think they are better than a house to sleep in.

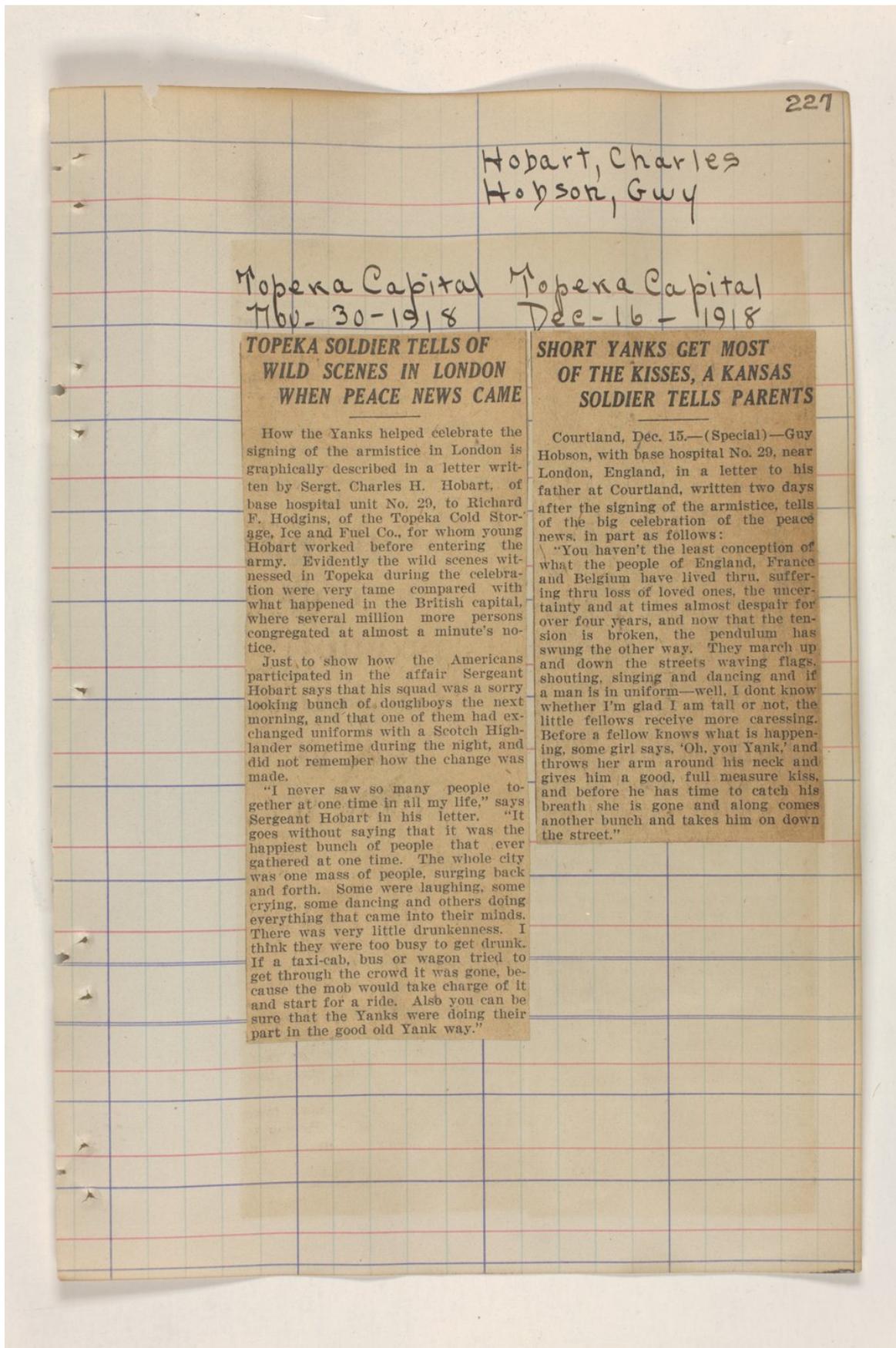
Be as it may, I am still trusting in God that he will soon return me to where I have spent my boyhood days.

Daddy, for what some have gone through over here, I am not boasting at all, but I have been blessed and have been exceedingly lucky so far. Some of the boys have had to sleep in those pup tents night after night, rain or no rain. I don't know whether the Lord has been with me or not but I think he sure has.

I have always had food, raiment and shelter ever since I have been in the army. Of course there has been times that our food stuffs were a little short but have never went to bed hungry. I have just now something like 210 francs, which will last me a good while yet, even if I don't get paid regularly. I have only been paid once since I arrived in France. If lots of the boys had had the money I have or have had, they would have been broke long ago, as there is lots of gambling done in this man's army. I have seen so much smoking that I am completely disgusted with it. I am glad I don't use it. Everybody tells me that I ought to be glad I don't use it. One can buy all the rum, beer and any kind of drinks you care to buy if you just have the money. But such don't bother me at all. I have said it and I say it now, that I am more than proud of my raising. I have heard people say that one cannot live a christian life in the army. But as trials and persecutions will come I find it makes one more strong in the faith than before. Nevertheless God is the nearest and dearest friend in every time of need.

Well, as I am going down town this p. m., I will close. Hoping to see you all in the near future, I am as ever,

Your only beloved son,  
PVT. SIDNEY W. HITTLE



227

Hobart, Charles  
Hobson, Guy

Topeka Capital  
Nov-30-1918

Topeka Capital  
Dec-16-1918

**TOPEKA SOLDIER TELLS OF  
WILD SCENES IN LONDON  
WHEN PEACE NEWS CAME**

How the Yanks helped celebrate the signing of the armistice in London is graphically described in a letter written by Sergt. Charles H. Hobart, of base hospital unit No. 29, to Richard F. Hodgins, of the Topeka Cold Storage, Ice and Fuel Co., for whom young Hobart worked before entering the army. Evidently the wild scenes witnessed in Topeka during the celebration were very tame compared with what happened in the British capital, where several million more persons congregated at almost a minute's notice.

Just to show how the Americans participated in the affair Sergeant Hobart says that his squad was a sorry looking bunch of doughboys the next morning, and that one of them had exchanged uniforms with a Scotch Highlander sometime during the night, and did not remember how the change was made.

"I never saw so many people together at one time in all my life," says Sergeant Hobart in his letter. "It goes without saying that it was the happiest bunch of people that ever gathered at one time. The whole city was one mass of people, surging back and forth. Some were laughing, some crying, some dancing and others doing everything that came into their minds. There was very little drunkenness. I think they were too busy to get drunk. If a taxi-cab, bus or wagon tried to get through the crowd it was gone, because the mob would take charge of it and start for a ride. Also you can be sure that the Yanks were doing their part in the good old Yank way."

**SHORT YANKS GET MOST  
OF THE KISSES, A KANSAS  
SOLDIER TELLS PARENTS**

Courtland, Dec. 15.—(Special)—Guy Hobson, with base hospital No. 29, near London, England, in a letter to his father at Courtland, written two days after the signing of the armistice, tells of the big celebration of the peace news, in part as follows:

"You haven't the least conception of what the people of England, France and Belgium have lived thru, suffering thru loss of loved ones, the uncertainty and at times almost despair for over four years, and now that the tension is broken, the pendulum has swung the other way. They march up and down the streets waving flags, shouting, singing and dancing and if a man is in uniform—well, I dont know whether I'm glad I am tall or not, the little fellows receive more caressing. Before a fellow knows what is happening, some girl says, 'Oh, you Yank,' and throws her arm around his neck and gives him a good, full measure kiss, and before he has time to catch his breath she is gone and along comes another bunch and takes him on down the street."

## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers

228

Hockstedler, Guy A

Grainfield Cap Sheaf  
May 3 - 1918

### From Camp Meade

The following letter written by a Gove county soldier boy to a friend here was handed in for publication:

Camp Meade, Md.,  
April 23, 1918.

Dear Friend:

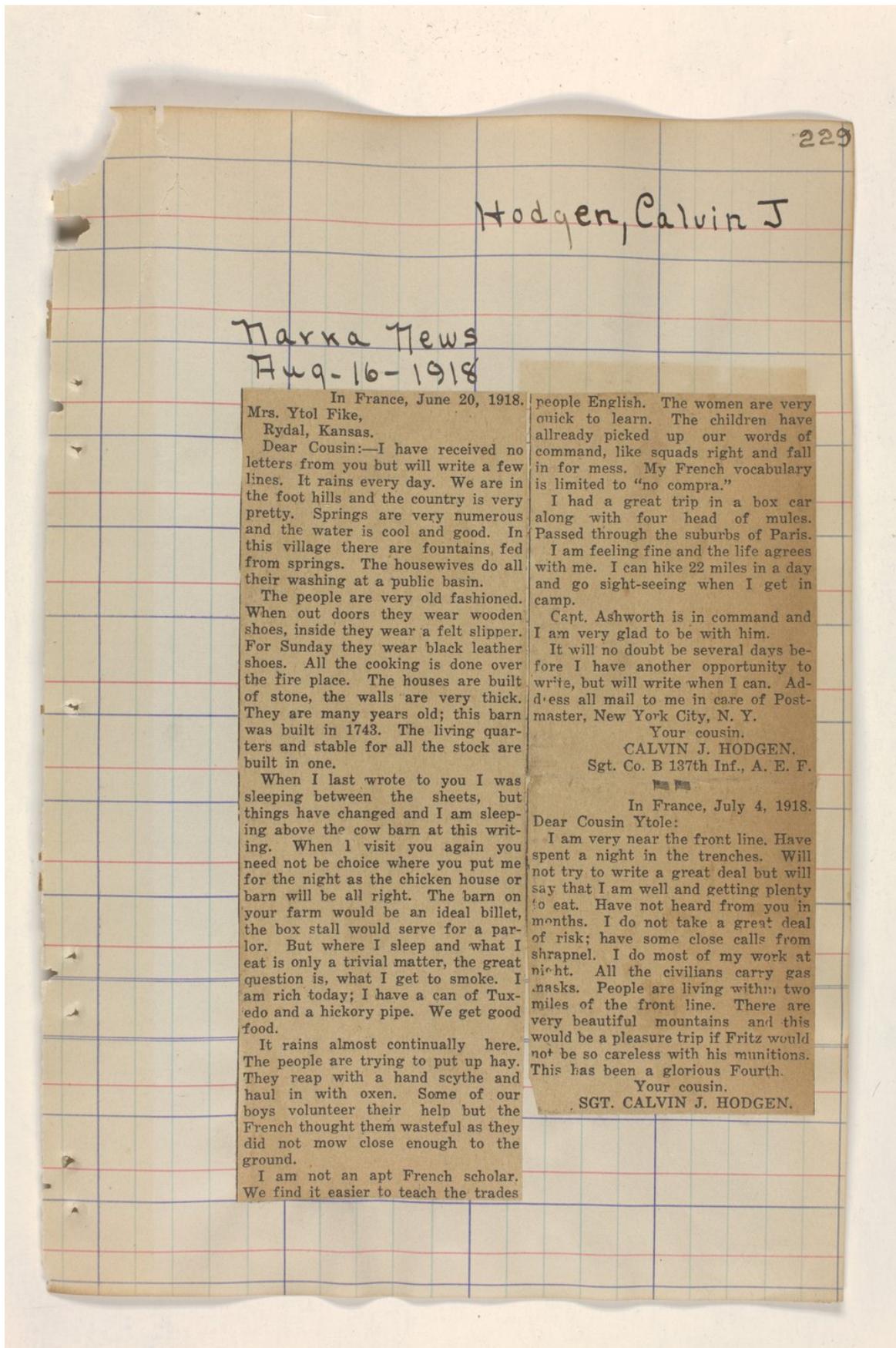
I take the liberty of addressing this letter to you to show how the soldiers from your home feel about the third Liberty Loan.

If you have bought or will buy one fifty dollar bond I will receive 1 trench knife, 5 rifles grenades, 14 hand grenades.

One one-hundred dollar bond will clothe me and feed me eight months. One one-hundred dollar bond and one fifty-dollar bond will clothe and equip me for overseas service. Three one-hundred dollar bonds will clothe me and keep me in France for one year. Some subscriber to the Liberty Loan may know that he has made the above possible. If you have purchased to your greatest extent pass this to some one else. Every one needs some one behind providing the money and the tools. I am going across; you, please, come across.

Yours truly,  
Guy A. Hockstedler.

## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers



229

Hodgen, Calvin J

Marna News  
Aug-16-1918

In France, June 20, 1918.  
Mrs. Ytol Fike,  
Rydal, Kansas.

Dear Cousin:—I have received no letters from you but will write a few lines. It rains every day. We are in the foot hills and the country is very pretty. Springs are very numerous and the water is cool and good. In this village there are fountains fed from springs. The housewives do all their washing at a public basin.

The people are very old fashioned. When out doors they wear wooden shoes, inside they wear a felt slipper. For Sunday they wear black leather shoes. All the cooking is done over the fire place. The houses are built of stone, the walls are very thick. They are many years old; this barn was built in 1743. The living quarters and stable for all the stock are built in one.

When I last wrote to you I was sleeping between the sheets, but things have changed and I am sleeping above the cow barn at this writing. When I visit you again you need not be choice where you put me for the night as the chicken house or barn will be all right. The barn on your farm would be an ideal billet, the box stall would serve for a parlor. But where I sleep and what I eat is only a trivial matter, the great question is, what I get to smoke. I am rich today; I have a can of Tuxedo and a hickory pipe. We get good food.

It rains almost continually here. The people are trying to put up hay. They reap with a hand scythe and haul in with oxen. Some of our boys volunteer their help but the French thought them wasteful as they did not mow close enough to the ground.

I am not an apt French scholar. We find it easier to teach the trades

people English. The women are very quick to learn. The children have already picked up our words of command, like squads right and fall in for mess. My French vocabulary is limited to "no compra."

I had a great trip in a box car along with four head of mules. Passed through the suburbs of Paris.

I am feeling fine and the life agrees with me. I can hike 22 miles in a day and go sight-seeing when I get in camp.

Capt. Ashworth is in command and I am very glad to be with him.

It will no doubt be several days before I have another opportunity to write, but will write when I can. Address all mail to me in care of Postmaster, New York City, N. Y.

Your cousin,  
CALVIN J. HODGEN.  
Sgt. Co. B 137th Inf., A. E. F.

In France, July 4, 1918.

Dear Cousin Ytole:

I am very near the front line. Have spent a night in the trenches. Will not try to write a great deal but will say that I am well and getting plenty to eat. Have not heard from you in months. I do not take a great deal of risk; have some close calls from shrapnel. I do most of my work at night. All the civilians carry gas masks. People are living within two miles of the front line. There are very beautiful mountains and this would be a pleasure trip if Fritz would not be so careless with his munitions. This has been a glorious Fourth.

Your cousin,  
SGT. CALVIN J. HODGEN.

230

Holcomb, A.E.

Topexa Journal  
Jan. 11 - 1919

### TELLS OF BATTLE

Silver Lake Soldier Writes of  
Horrors of War.

Rain, Wind, Darkness, Bullets  
and Death Groans.

ALL THESE WERE ABOUT HIM

The Hills Spit Fire and the  
Heavens Rained Steel.

Boys Going to Front Always  
Thought of Home.

Sergt. A. E. Holcomb, of Silver Lake, of the 110th sanitary train, 35th division, has written to Mrs. Holcomb, giving her a sketch of the battle line in France before the coming of peace. His letter is, in part, as follows:



Sergt. A. E. Holcomb.

"It was dark, rainy and cold. The mud splashed with a sickening sound about us. We could hear the groans of dying horses. The medical men were speedily working carrying the wounded back to the dressing stations, sometimes as far as several kilometers. Few realize the killing fatigue of that work.

"The infantry had halted for a short space to wait for the barrage to move on. The hills spit fire and the heavens rained hot steel; the air was filled with stinging devils from machine guns, and poison gas crept along the ground. Occasionally a hand grenade flashed thru the underbrush; balls from snipers' rifles cut the twigs close by. Rain and wind came from the north, chilling us to the bone. The earth quivered beneath us as tho its foundations were being torn away, and overhead the air scout circled. The English 'Gray ghost,' or tank, plowed its way thru the evergreens on the side hill, looking for machine gun nests and sniper posts. Star shells and flares were racing thru the sky.

#### Most Important Work.

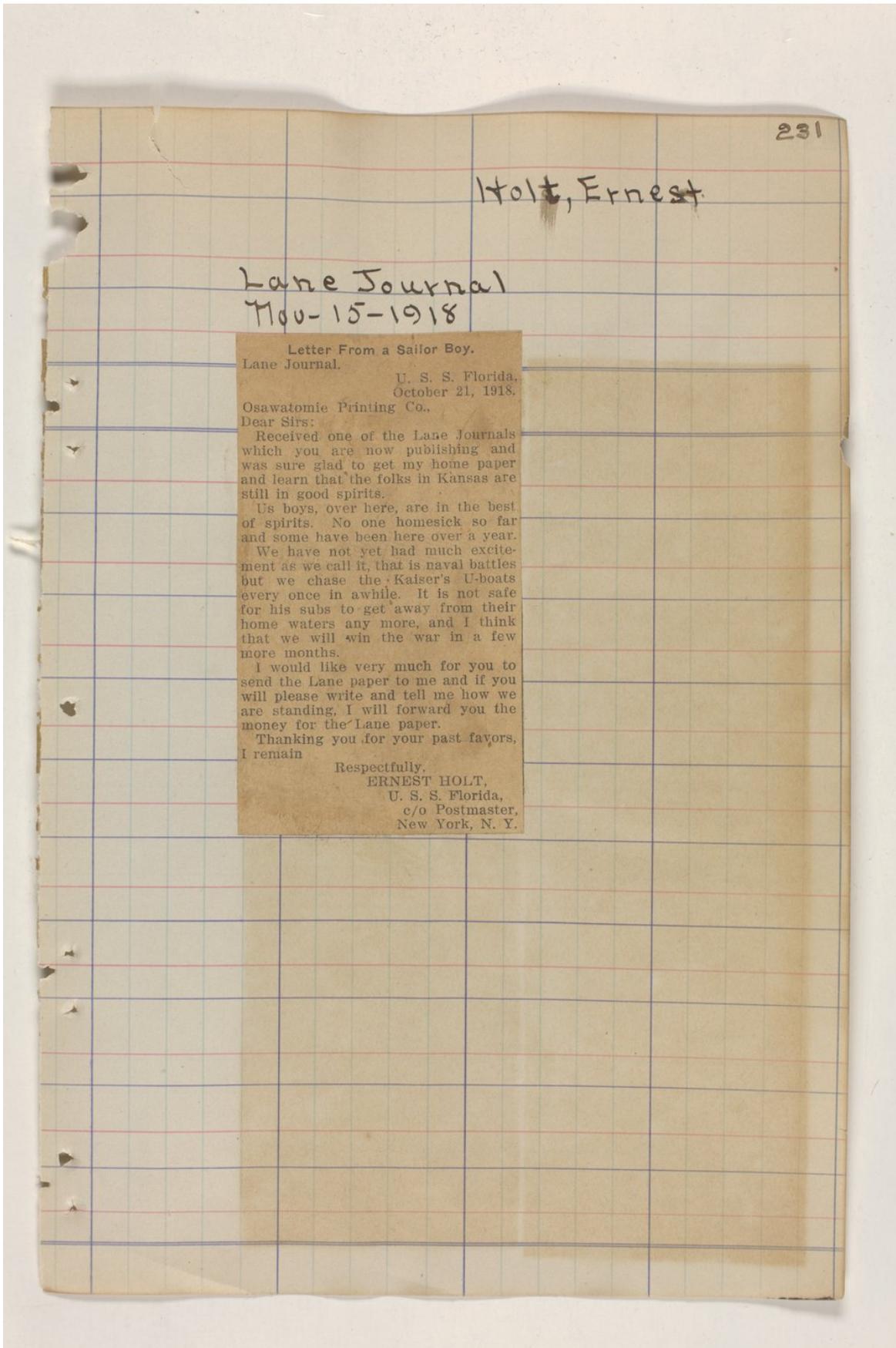
"Behind a small knoll stood a small group of men with charts, field telephones and other instruments. One man of special importance stood apart from the others, facing the line of advance. About his shoulders was a water soaked cape, and his shoes were caked with mud. The hearts of the men were full of admiration for these grim men who were pushing forward the lines, and the boys who carried out their orders were holding true to the path of the plain builder and all the fathers of our republic.

"While the men are on their long marches or preparing for the fight, their thoughts are always of home. Boys who were timid at school, are over here shelling, bombing, killing with bayonets and trench knives. They are men now, crushing the spiked helmet and the iron fist, liberating the starved people of Belgium and restoring to France her beautiful fields.

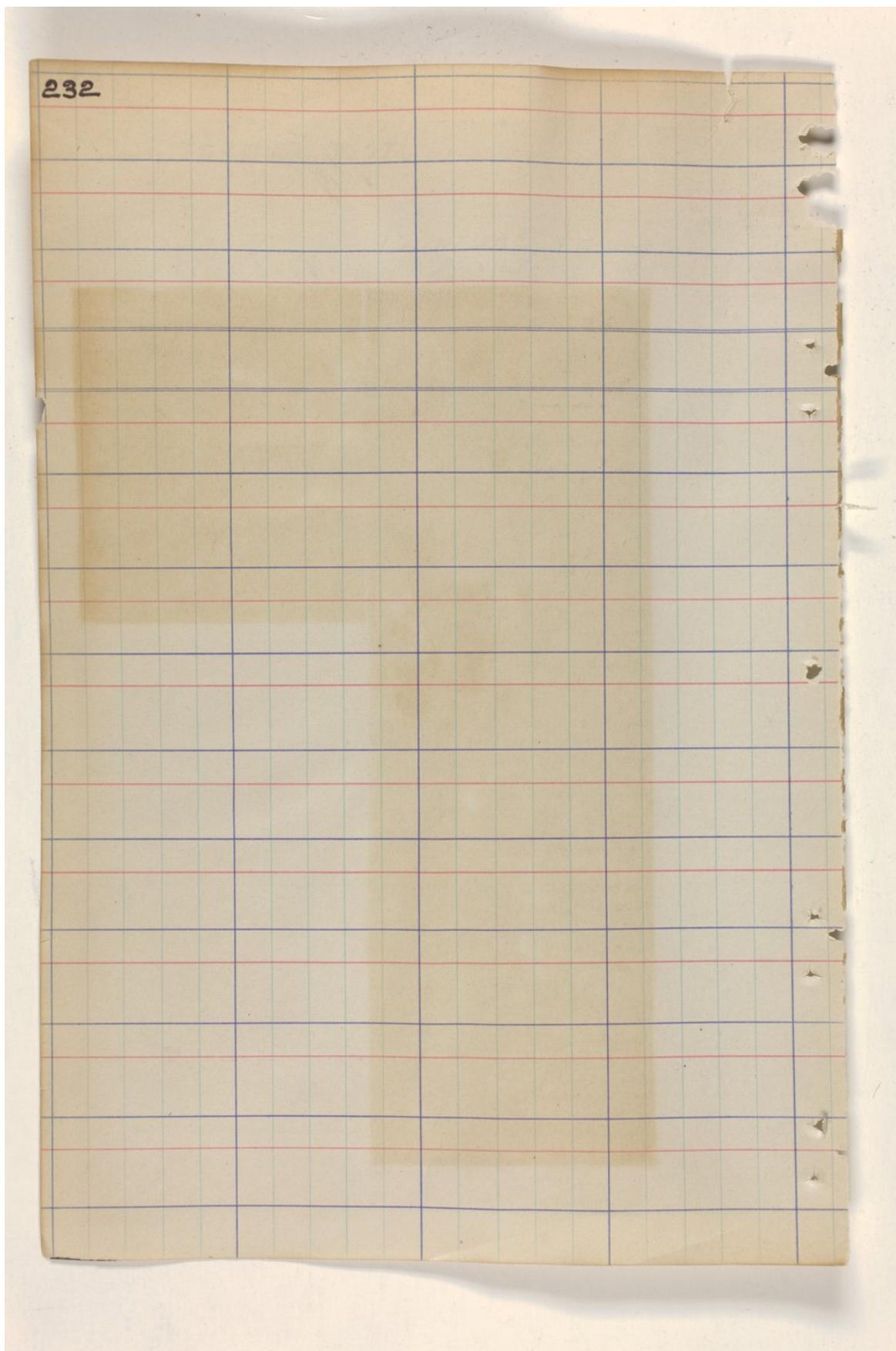
#### Help Returned Soldiers.

"The fighting man is going to have a pull to get on his feet again when he gets back home, unless the folks back there give him a lift. The college student, the young business man and the laborer, each must necessarily have help in readjusting his life when he gets back home. And it is worth the effort. If the civilians at home will give their help to the returning soldier, we will all feel that we have been paid for our sacrifices of money and time and life."

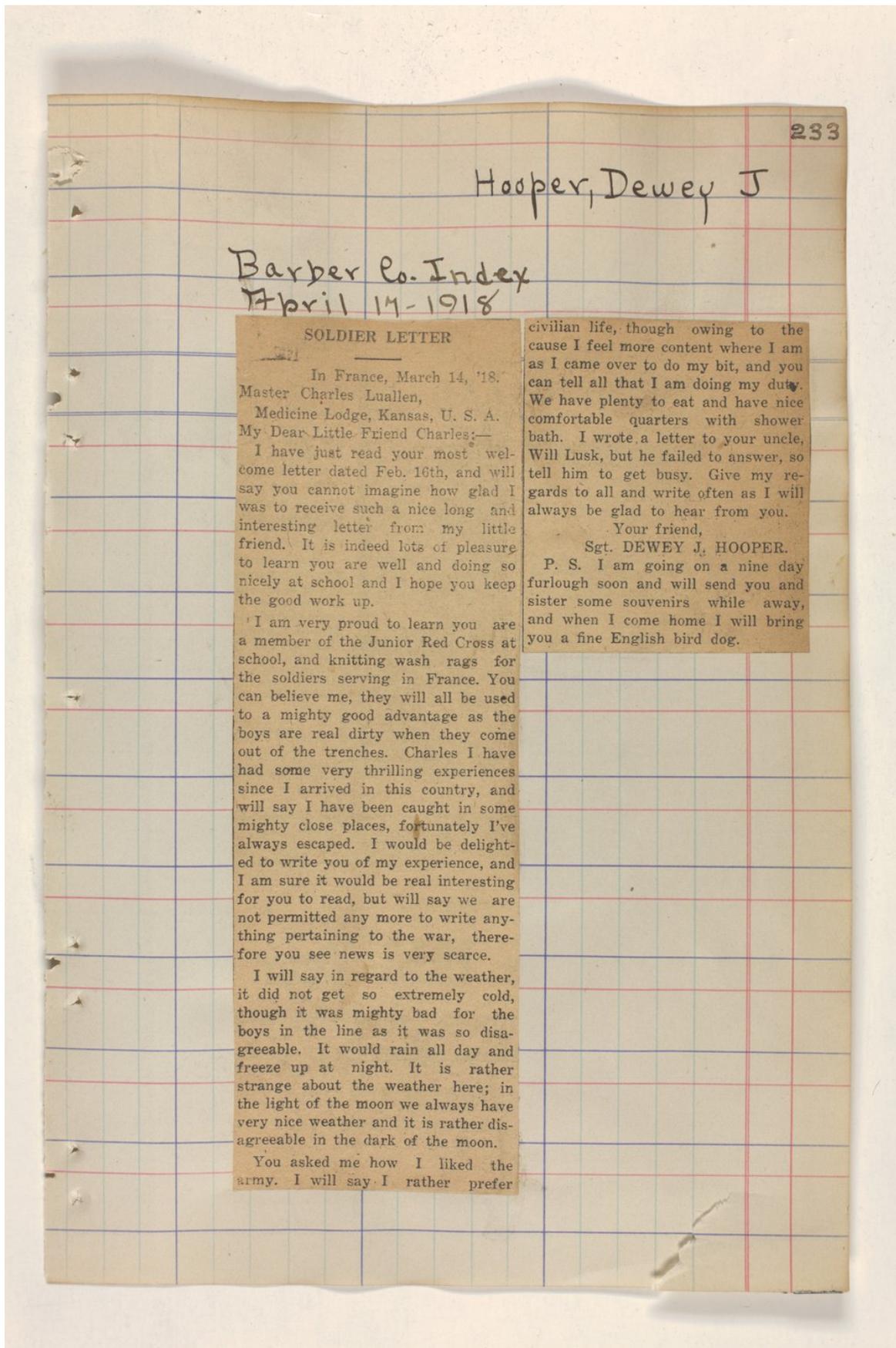
## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers



## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers



## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers



## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers

234

Hope, Clifford R

Topeka Journal  
Dec. 16-1918

### WANT TO COME HOME

Lieutenant Hope Tells of Feeling of  
Boys Now in France.

Lieut. Clifford R. Hope, 340th Infantry, overseas, has written a letter to his aunt, Mrs. C. E. Van Horn, 1215 Mulvane street, telling of the spirit of the soldiers in France, now that the war is over.

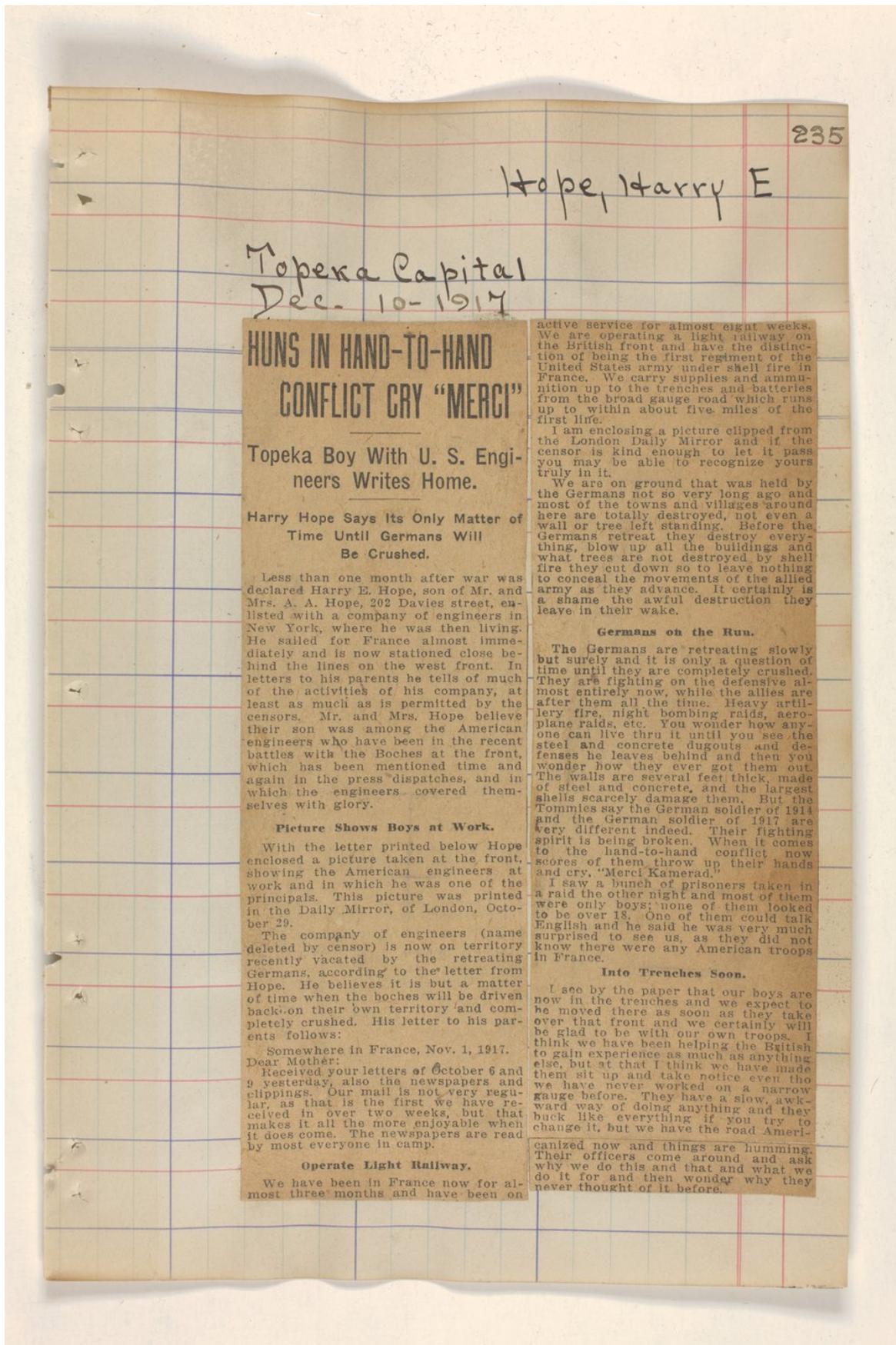
"We all hope that the peace conference will be short and snappy," he writes. "Of course in any event it will be months before we get back in the good old U. S. A. Our Y. M. C. A. picture show ran a film showing the Statue of Liberty the other night and the boys nearly went wild. They all say that it won't be necessary to build a fence around the States to keep them in when they get home."

Speaking of the signing of the armistice, Lieutenant Hope said: "France is certainly celebrating her great victory. Until the armistice was signed I hadn't seen a French flag flying anywhere but now every house floats one, as well as the other allied colors and among them the old Stars and Stripes is mighty conspicuous. There is nothing too good for an American in France now. The day the armistice was signed this place resembled an international madhouse. The American, French, Italian and English troops made a wild mob when they became scrambled."

Lieutenant Hope is a graduate of the Washburn law school. He was given a commission of second lieutenant in the first officers' training school at Fort Riley and later was promoted to first lieutenant.



## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers



235

Hope, Harry E

Topeka Capital  
Dec. 10-1917

### HUNS IN HAND-TO-HAND CONFLICT CRY "MERCI"

#### Topeka Boy With U. S. Engineers Writes Home.

##### Harry Hope Says Its Only Matter of Time Until Germans Will Be Crushed.

Less than one month after war was declared Harry E. Hope, son of Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Hope, 202 Davies street, enlisted with a company of engineers in New York, where he was then living. He sailed for France almost immediately and is now stationed close behind the lines on the west front. In letters to his parents he tells of much of the activities of his company, at least as much as is permitted by the censors. Mr. and Mrs. Hope believe their son was among the American engineers who have been in the recent battles with the Boches at the front, which has been mentioned time and again in the press dispatches, and in which the engineers covered themselves with glory.

##### Picture Shows Boys at Work.

With the letter printed below Hope enclosed a picture taken at the front, showing the American engineers at work and in which he was one of the principals. This picture was printed in the Daily Mirror, of London, October 29.

The company of engineers (name deleted by censor) is now on territory recently vacated by the retreating Germans, according to the letter from Hope. He believes it is but a matter of time when the boches will be driven back on their own territory and completely crushed. His letter to his parents follows:

Somewhere in France, Nov. 1, 1917.  
Dear Mother:

Received your letters of October 6 and 9 yesterday, also the newspapers and clippings. Our mail is not very regular, as that is the first we have received in over two weeks, but that makes it all the more enjoyable when it does come. The newspapers are read by most everyone in camp.

##### Operate Light Railway.

We have been in France now for almost three months and have been on

active service for almost eight weeks. We are operating a light railway on the British front and have the distinction of being the first regiment of the United States army under shell fire in France. We carry supplies and ammunition up to the trenches and batteries from the broad gauge road which runs up to within about five miles of the first line.

I am enclosing a picture clipped from the London Daily Mirror and if the censor is kind enough to let it pass you may be able to recognize yours truly in it.

We are on ground that was held by the Germans not so very long ago and most of the towns and villages around here are totally destroyed, not even a wall or tree left standing. Before the Germans retreat they destroy everything, blow up all the buildings and what trees are not destroyed by shell fire they cut down so to leave nothing to conceal the movements of the allied army as they advance. It certainly is a shame the awful destruction they leave in their wake.

##### Germans on the Run.

The Germans are retreating slowly but surely and it is only a question of time until they are completely crushed. They are fighting on the defensive almost entirely now, while the allies are after them all the time. Heavy artillery fire, night bombing raids, aeroplane raids, etc. You wonder how anyone can live thru it until you see the steel and concrete dugouts and defenses he leaves behind and then you wonder how they ever got them out. The walls are several feet thick, made of steel and concrete, and the largest shells scarcely damage them. But the Tommies say the German soldier of 1914 and the German soldier of 1917 are very different indeed. Their fighting spirit is being broken. When it comes to the hand-to-hand conflict now scores of them throw up their hands and cry, "Merci Kamerad."

I saw a bunch of prisoners taken in a raid the other night and most of them were only boys; none of them looked to be over 18. One of them could talk English and he said he was very much surprised to see us, as they did not know there were any American troops in France.

##### Into Trenches Soon.

I see by the paper that our boys are now in the trenches and we expect to be moved there as soon as they take over that front and we certainly will be glad to be with our own troops. I think we have been helping the British to gain experience as much as anything else, but at that I think we have made them sit up and take notice even though we have never worked on a narrow gauge before. They have a slow, awkward way of doing anything and they back like everything if you try to change it, but we have the road Americanized now and things are humming. Their officers come around and ask why we do this and that and what we do it for and then wonder why they never thought of it before.

## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers

236

Howard, Arthur

Baxter Springs News  
Nov. 8 - 1918

We are having very cool weather with lots of rain. The nights are very chilly, but each of us has five blankets, so we manage to keep warm. Oh, yes. I forgot to tell you about our kodaks. They were taken from us on the way over. We are not allowed to take any pictures. If we were only allowed to take pictures we could certainly get some fine ones. Well, I must close. Love to all.  
HARRY.

SOLDIERS' LETTERS

LETTER FROM HOWARD

Arthur Howard Writes a Good Letter from France to His Parents, Mr. and Mrs. W. P. Howard

In France.

Dear Folks:

Received a letter from Papa today and was glad to hear everybody still kicking.

I am feeling fine and getting fatter every day, also seeing lots of new sights.

It is getting colder over here but I can't be bothered. I have plenty of good warm clothes. The only thing we are not allowed to do is to carry a stove around in our pocket or anything like that.

They sure raise lots of cabbage and sugar beets in this country.

The grass seems to stay green over here for a long time. It is still green. I think the reason is the air is full of moisture and does not dry up like it does in Missouri.

Mother, I am going to bring you home a pair of wooden shoes and see how you like them. Ha, ha. Everybody over here wears them. Four or five of these people coming down the road sound like a young steam engine.

Yesterday was Sunday and I celebrated by working all day. My barber chair was two horses and my mirror case was a wooden bench and my running hot water was in a drinking canteen as cold as the D—.

Say, I wrote you about a Christmas package in my last letter, but am now sending you a coupon self ad-

## Letters from Kansas Boys, World War I Soldiers

