

#15 Draftees Leave for Camp Funston

The first two men to be drafted were Charles O. McClaren of Lewis and Frank Carlson of Garfield who graduated from Kinsley High School in 1913. They left for Camp Funston on September 7. H. J. Wilcox, the editor of the *Kinsley Mercury* wrote the following:

"The call came for a man with some military experience and for one who can cook. These boys asked to be allowed to go first. This presents an opportunity for the public spirited citizens of the county to give these boys something to look back upon when they have reached the front. It is true of course that the public appreciated what these boys are doing and it is quite probably that the boys know it, but in view of what they are doing, a public acknowledgement seems a small thing to do. Then too, these are somebody's sons, some father and mother are sending their son to fight your fight and my fight. Let's give these fathers and mothers something, in part payment, to be proud of until the boys come home. Remember, parents, these boys did not claim exemption and it may be that this made it possible for your boy to spend a few more of what may be his last days with you at home."

Frank Carlson wrote the following letter on September 9, 1917 from Camp Funston.

"We arrived here at 2:15 p.m., September 8. As yet, everything that we have been required to do has been interesting. Upon our arrival, all Kansas men, likewise other states, were ordered off to a separate bunch. Then we were taken over to our barracks, where we indulged in a good cold shower bath. The rest of the day was spent in receiving mess kits, clothing and bedding. Also a few were given a physical examination. Very few are being rejected. Both McClaren and I are feeling fine and enjoying the experience. The officers are a fine set of fellows, not the regular army type, and we feel that we are being treated royally. Yours truly, F. a. Carlson, 353 Infantry (Kinsley Graphic, September 13, 1917)



The Carlson children, circa 1904.
Back row: Bert, Emma, Carl Edward; Front row: Frank, Nellie, Ester, Harry.

This picture of Frank and his siblings (c. 1904) is taken from the book **Honey Locust Ranch: a Kansas Epic** by Carl E. Carlson. Carl described Frank as being born with a smile, someone never seen with "either a frown or pout." Maybe that accounts for the sunny outlook in the above letter. Frank was the only one of the brothers who served in World War 1. He was a sharpshooter and was severely wounded. He will be appearing in this blog from time to time. Frank Carlson was his brother Harry's best man just one month before he reported to Camp Funston. I just finished reading an account of this wedding written by the bride, Avis Dungan Carlson, in her book **Small World – Long Gone**. It would just about take a war to top all the calamities of that wedding. Every bride that has one thing go wrong (and there always is one thing) needs to read the wedding chapter of this book to know how lucky she is.