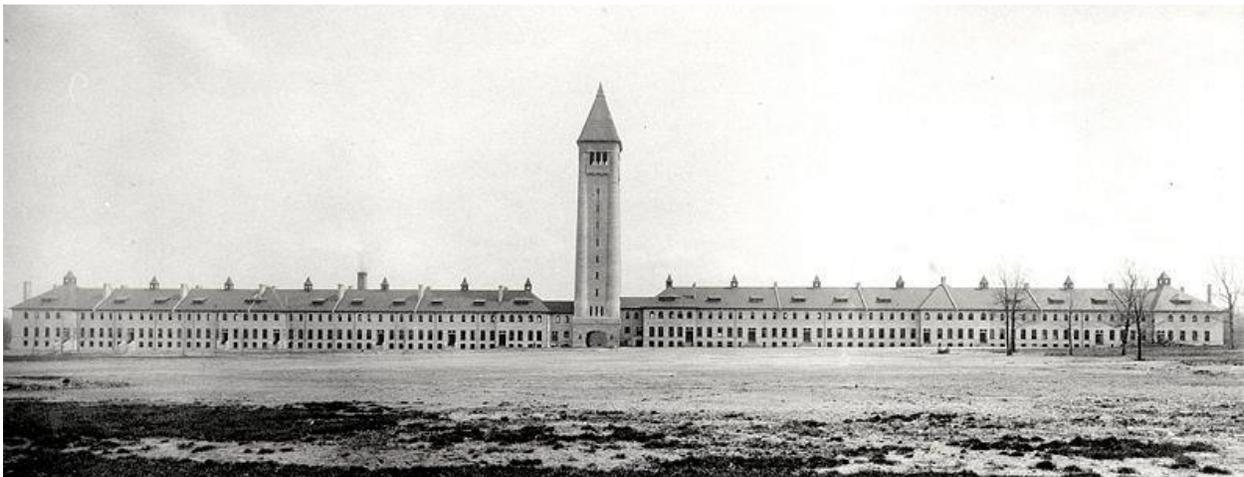


#51 A. P. Hann writes from the Crossing

Doing research can sometimes be a challenge. Today's post involves a letter from Augustus P. Hann to the editor, James M. Lewis, of the Kinsley *Graphic* which was published on February 14, 1918. I had come across A. P. (Gus, Gust) several years ago when I was researching the literary women of the area. He and his widowed mother, Ila Taylor Hann, had come in 1908 to Edwards County where her father, James D. Taylor, and brother, E.D. Taylor, were prominent ranchers and business men. It took me quite a while to figure out that a Kinsley lawyer and founder of Jetmore by the name of Thomas S. Haun had divorced his wife in order to marry Ila in May, 1911. Thus, Mrs. Hann became Mrs. Haun. If that was not confusing enough, finding out about Gus was made more difficult when his name was misspelled "Hahn" in the Kinsley *Mercury*. If you are into genealogy research, you know that name spelling can cause problems.

Augustus Phillip was born to Ila and Louis J. Hann on December 15, 1888 in New Jersey. Gus' father died in 1897 which probably helped bring about the move when Gus was twenty years old. In July, 1912 Gus married Nellie in Houston, Texas. They came back to Kinsley where he set up a poultry farm. By 1917 he was working for the post office when he registered for the draft on June 5. He was number 12 of the 708 men who registered in Edwards County. In July, the numbers for the order of the draft were drawn in Washington, D. C., and number 12 was the 541st number drawn. Despite having this high draft number, the August 16 issue of the Kinsley *Mercury* reported that "*Gust Hahn, Assistant Postmaster, of the Kinsley Post Office, has been accepted as a candidate for a commission in the U.S. army and leaves the 25th of this month to begin his work in the school for officers at Ft. Sheridan, Ill. There is little doubt in the minds of those who know Gust that he will meet the requirements, however, stringent they may be.*"



During World War I Fort Sheridan served as an induction and training center for the midwest region.

The November 29 issue reported that "*The many friends of Gust Hahn were deeply gratified, though not at all surprised, to learn from telegrams sent here that he had been granted the commission of second lieutenant. This paper predicted that Mr. Hahn would have no trouble in getting a commission for Uncle Sam never misses an opportunity to place responsibility on a man who is qualified to carry it and it is the ability to concentrate his mind on the intelligent management of his own affairs that made this honor possible. Gus will arrive on Thursday morning to eat Thanksgiving dinner with relatives. His wife who has been with friends in Texas will join him here.*" Nov 29, 1917, Kinsley *Mercury*

Three months later, he wrote this thoughtful letter back home.

My Dear Jim

No matter what one thinks when we go into a thing, it is always lots different than it looks. We talked about it being a long time until we could hear from each other, and believe me it has seemed like months to me since I said good bye, to all of you, and all that is near and dear to me, except the cause that brought me here on this wild storm-ridden, and still magnificent ocean. I hope it may be my lot, to return to all of you and tell you about it. It is indeed an experience of a life time and were it not for the fact that a torpedo may decide at any moment to make us vacate in its favor, it would be a very pleasant life indeed. We have nothing to do but ride, how many miles we have gone has long since failed to be of interest. The prime factor now is how long will be before we see some land. Once in a while we see a ship at a great distance, but very seldom close in on one. Have been on board twenty one days today without getting our feet on land. Most of the fellows take it as a matter of course, which is the best way, but some have an awful time wondering and surmising and fretting, because things do not suit them. It has been very cold a couple of times. Altho it was fine while we were in the Gulf Stream. We are learning a little French, but I have an awful time making my mouth believe that it was ever meant to be twisted up in that manner. I think that I shall have to talk with my hands or get a new mouth. The room steward on this boat was a Belgian. The Germans carried away his mother and two sisters, when they took Antwerp, and killed his wife. He has three little bits of tots. We have several sailors that have been on torpedoed ships, and it looks a great deal different when one learns that all the things that we heard really did happen. Well Jim I don't suppose I ever before sat down and wrote letters, that I didn't know whether they would ever get mailed or not. But I am sure doing it tonight. But I am not regretting it. I would hate to "go out" without getting a whack at the Huns. But if such is my fate that it will have to be. Now course all my life, there have been lots of things that I have regretted and at a time like this you feel them that much worse. But Jim I am glad I am here; this is America's battle. It is our war, as much as anybody's and I cannot help but believe I will get through it alright. I hope you have all managed to keep well, I am feeling fine. Just a little blue once in a while. We get wireless news every day and I understand it has been very cold in the States, I hope you had a good snow along with it, to help out in another year's wheat crop.

Any time you think it is a joke about Uncle Sam's gunners being good shots, you miss it. These sailor boys played around with a barrel the other day that was floating around out here in this pond in a way that would make a strong man sick. Believe me there isn't money enough in the world to tempt me into a barrel they are going to use for a target. Well it is getting pretty late now. I understand we will be limited in the amount of mail that we send. If such is the case my letters will be few and far between, but whenever you can, write me. I will be glad to hear as often as I can.

Sincerely, Gus