

THE SERGEANT JEROME PEIRCE COLLECTION

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DATE OF LETTER	Jan. 8, 1863
WRITTEN BY	Jerome
WRITTEN TO	Allie and Lulu
WRITTEN AT	Camp at Falmouth, Va.
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ENVELOPE



LETTER TRANSCRIPTION

Thurs Eve 8th Jan 1863

What shall I say to my Dear Ones tonight? Just done supper, of Baker's Bread and Molasses made from sugar, with tea, which tasted good! Am sitting here alone (J.H. is out). Everything moves on as ever, our friends have been and gone, and it all seems like a cheerful dream and I hope by tomorrow you will receive my letters sent by Foster and by Jos.

I sent the little tin pan for Lulu that I found in F [Fredericksburg]. I intended F [Foster] should have taken it but spoke to J [Joseph] to give it to him as you would get it sooner. They were very kind indeed to me and gave me six dollars before and F [Foster] seemed anxious that I should call on him for whatever I needed and in a spirit I know of real feeling. He appreciates my pluck in coming and will see me through whatever happens, and it relieves me to feel that whatever happens I shall, yes, and I believe we shall be remembered.

Spoke of you. Said he thought you would be in B. [Probably "Billerica"] again before long. I can but feel that you are sincerely regarded by them, but long habit I know makes them appear different sometimes but you must be to some things "a little blind" for I do think they mean well.

I find in conversation that F [Foster] and I agree in public matters more than formerly. I can tell you that the war experience is uniting people very much. And I find both of them were posted in the position here better than we, and anticipated the disaster, hence their indignation and I dare say it brought out remarks that some would call strong but they were right after all.

But I really feel that the clouds are breaking. Yesterday the news of the victories in the So. West came to hand. If they will "keep doing so" they will find Richmond a capital without a country, sure, for they have got either to leave here or be nabbed, and if they leave Virginia it's "all up". Such is the opinion of Captain S. and the best informed here.

Jos H. and I accompanied the friends to the depot. Alonzo R. went to Washington with them on furlough of four days. Expect him back tomorrow. After I closed your letter, dress parade came off. He made a fine appearance. It was his first appearance and all was well. And in his new uniform etc., he looked "every inch the soldier". His ambition is fairly up.

Yesterday, no, Tues., was a grand review of two divisions I believe. Was sorry that the folks could not have seen it. General Burnside was "in his pride", came galloping down the line among great cheering. It rained some and was quite cold. No overcoats. (Just as you see me in the picture. Only my belt's on and gun). So I couldn't see the hurrah so kept my voice. But the "big generals" are very considerate and dismiss us soon as possible.

The column was mile in length only in the shape of a letter L or like this:



The dot shows our position. The squares [are] General Sumner's and Burnside's headquarters, the larger one being Sumner's, which is a fine brick house, the other as fine a wooden one, painted white and must have been splendid estates before the war. It is one large plain without a shrub almost worn smooth by tramp of "armed men". The woods are nearly cut away for fire wood. There is a very extensive and beautiful view from this spot, Fredericksburg and Falmouth and the distant pine woods. And still more distant summits west. The "Old Dominion" will be indeed a sufferer by this terrible war.

Your "almanac" came to hand. I give you many thanks and the credit of being original in sending it. It will be very useful and acceptable. Jos H. is come in and looking it over.

Have had an abundance of reading of late. I send you two papers. The "Chronicle" is a good thing, a specimen of the Capital papers of the better class. The "Inquirer" I get once in a while.

Capt. and I exchange a good deal. He gave me Whittier's Poems, "Blue & Gold" edition from the Chaplain and have enjoyed them much. "My Soul and I" is a grand deep poem. How good it did seem to get a look and such a book amid such scenes. I loaned him the "Monthly Pilgrims Magazine" that Kate sent me. I mention this as an incident of our camp life, that you may know that I am not entirely deprived of my favorite pastime.

I put on my new flannels today. Found the pencil, sewed on the labels. All very nice and of course very comfortable and as grateful I trust.

Quite cool for two days past. I have kept my dress coat nice so I can "appear out" quite nice, when occasion requires. So I have not lost my pride you see.

Hope Lulu will get the toy for I love to remember the little darling in some way and I knew she would appreciate that. I thank her with a kiss for her kind intentions of presents, etc. Ah, but I could see her and you all, but not yet. And yet, how strong I feel assured that we shall yet meet.

Our mail doesn't come till "Tattoo", which will soon sound, so I will expect something before closing. Don't let me forget to thank her for her letter. I appreciate her position and feel that I'm not forgotten.

Had quite a dream this morning about Will. Perhaps I'll relate it sometime.
9 o'clock. Much mail in yours of the 4 Jan. received. Thanks for the stamps. Will answer
more particular before long. Good night.

As ever your,
Jerome

Don't stick your stamps to the paper.

Jos H. received a letter. Your state aid was sent up to Jan 1st \$8.29.

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES (Josef Rokus)

NOTE 1: The location from where the letter was written is not indicated. However, based on letters prior to and after this one and the history of the Army of the Potomac, it was written while the 36th Massachusetts Regiment was camped at Falmouth, Virginia, across the Rappahannock River from Fredericksburg, Virginia.

NOTE 2: The "friends" or "folks" referred to in the letter were Jerome's brothers Foster ("F" in the letter) and Joseph ("J" in the letter). They visited the camp of the 36th Massachusetts Regiment briefly starting on January 4, 1863, per Jerome's letter of January 5, 1863 (Letter No. 57) The Unit History includes the following comment pertaining to the time the regiment was encamped at Falmouth: "There were a few Massachusetts visitors at our camp."

NOTE 3: Joseph Peirce, who was born in 1820, was the father of Joseph H. (Jos. H. or J.H.) Peirce. Foster Peirce was born in 1812. For reference, Jerome was born in 1830.

NOTE 4: The "J. H." or "Jos. H." that Jerome referred to in this letter was Joseph H. Peirce and was the son of "Brother Joseph." (See NOTE 3) He was, therefore, a nephew of Jerome. He enlisted as a private in Orange, Mass., on August 4, 1862, at age 18. Jerome also enlisted in Orange on the same date, but as a corporal. Jerome was 31 years old at the time. According to the Unit History, Joseph H. Peirce was taken Prisoner of War at Pegram Farm, Virginia, on September 30, 1864, (See also Letter No. 227) and he was later exchanged. He was discharged on June 21, 1865.

NOTE 5: The "tin pan" mentioned in the letter is also mentioned in Letter No. 57 as follows: "I send a little pan that I found over in F. [Fredericksburg] have mentioned before for Lulu. She can make a cake."

NOTE 6: According to John Hennessy, Chief Historian, Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, the "large brick house" that is mentioned in the letter and that was the headquarters for General Edwin Sumner during the Battle of Fredericksburg in December of 1862 was almost certainly the Phillips House. It is generally presumed that Gen. Sumner also had his headquarters at Chatham Manor at some point during the battle, but if he did, it was for only a brief time. The Phillips house burned a few weeks later. Also, the "fine wooden" house mentioned in the letter was likely the Hoffman House, which also no longer stands.

NOTE 7: Major General Edwin Vose Sumner (1797 – 1863) was the oldest field commander of any Army Corps on either side during the Civil War. Sumner fought in the Black Hawk War, in the Mexican–American War, on the Western frontier, and in the Eastern Theater for the first half of the Civil War. He led the II Corps of the Army of the Potomac through the Peninsula Campaign, the Seven Days Battles, the Maryland Campaign, and he commanded the Right Grand Division of the Army during the Battle of

Fredericksburg. He died on March 21, 1863, at age 66, a few weeks after this letter was written, while awaiting transfer.

NOTE 8: By the "disaster" he referred to in the letter, he almost certainly means the Union Army's defeat at the recent Battle of Fredericksburg.