

THE SERGEANT JEROME PEIRCE COLLECTION

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WRITTEN BY	Jerome
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ENVELOPE



LETTER TRANSCRIPTION

Camp at Columbia June 1st, 1863

My dearest Wife,

Once more quietly in camp! And how sweet it seems, after what has transpired for the last few days, to be quietly in my tent and send you another messenger.

My last was written at our halt at Breedingsville. The first halt where I commenced the "Morgan Expedition" was Cadysville. It is quite hard to tell where you are here, the people have such a queer way of giving information.

We remained at C. [Cadysville] till about 4 P.M. Sat., when the order came to march for our camp, at C. [Columbia], distance some 14 to 17 miles and we started off by a different road and at a rapid rate.

Had not gone far when the distant thunder and sharp lightening denoted a shower approaching. We pushed on faster than ever, and while in the dense woods it broke upon us fearfully, and soon wetting us to the skin, almost in spite of our rubber blankets, and the roads must be seen to be appreciated! Mud deep and slippery, and with the stony unevenness made the most fatiguing affair we

ever experienced. Halted about 7 o'clock to make coffee in an opening in the woods where a solitary log house received the officers, while we, in the wet. Continued to start a fire and soon had a steaming cup of what is to us the very elixir of life! Started off again in an hour, quite refreshed. A little more rain and finally it came out moonlight, and we pushed on, on through mud, up hill and down, stopping two or three times, till we reached the river near our camp, when we dashed in almost knee deep, and crept on under the rocky ledge, till we came to the road and the lights in camp told of hot coffee again! You folks at home can hardly realize the scene of that night thru the forest, two regiments and a battery of artillery, struggling thru the mud and over the breakneck road.

Well, we finally got dried off a little and asleep.

Yesterday, felt tired and lame but kept busy about little things, mending, a little washing. Towards eve. got a new pair of pants and fixed up, and called on the Adj. [Adjutant] Alonzo, who stood all this bravely and seems improving on the work and in this case he had a hard time for 'twas almost impossible for a horse to keep his feet, and a fall in his case, would have been very serious, but he is true metal and has a career before him. You should see his "Monthly Report," [he was] making up last eve., neat and fine in every part.

He is in fine spirits, and like all who have been absent, glad to be again with his Regt.

There are indications that we will move towards "Cumberland Gap" before long, and we are ready any moment. An alarm was made last night about twelve, and pickets thrown out creating quite a stir in camp. Some Rebel spies running the pickets.

Had a chat with some of Morgan's gang our cavalry having captured eight while we were out at "Breeding[s]ville". They were merry fellows, well fed, and dressed in light or Kentucky brick colored fabric and most superbly mounted on stolen horses, which were of course taken from them and they [were] marched off to Gen. Welsh's headquarters at C. [Columbia]. The 11th and 12th Ken. [Kentucky] Cavalry, with "Woolfert's Rangers" are an institution here, and pick up a great many, as they come over the River (the Cumberland) to "forage." They give us the name of being the fastest marchers that ever they saw and we are on the best of terms.

Your letter with Mary's and Mother's done me much good, and I trust you will remain well and happy as possible.

I am exceedingly glad that you are so "young" etc. and take my absence so well. I understand you, and so do the friends, so don't put on any gloomy faces that folks may credit you with more feeling for your absent partner, for I am well and in good spirits, and that you are the same is a subject of rejoicing.

It is very warm this morning but we [are] under great trees that would do you good to look on and a fine stream nearby for bathing, and this morning we had boiled ham for breakfast, a great treat. Pepper too is now a regular ration, and you would have been amused to see me making some "cunning" little bags to hold it, so I have a bag of black and red pepper, and a bottle of salt. Perhaps I have told you this many times.

Had a nice chat with Ben E. [Edmands] last eve. and he left my tent, as I commenced this to write "his." He was quite interested, as I was, in your little adventure with the good Irish Woman. Surely she has much to be thankful for, if a son of hers is still alive in the "Seventh", a fighting regt. of the smartest kind.

'Tis a sad thing of Aunt W's grandsons but such is war.

It seems to be thought here that Vicksburg is taken. The Col. had papers last eve. that seemed to leave no doubt of its capture. According to that [paper] five bloody battles were fought between Jackson, Miss. and V. [Vicksburg], when Pemberton surrendered unconditionally, with some 30,000 prisoners and 100 pieces of canon. But we've learned to temper our hopes, and "wait," but I trust 'tis true and "out West" you know they "go in to win."

Rec'd. papers yesterday, the Journal from Hattie with some pipe stem candy and confectionery is a treat here. You know I didn't used to think much of it at home but like other things, it is a craving here. Don't get much however.

We are expecting to be paid off soon, and that is what brought us to camp I expect.

Well Allie, how do you do? I can imagine you quite at home and happy at Albert's. My best regards to them. How I would like to see my school day friend Maria and her two jewels! Surely, "time," thou workest wonders! I fondly hope we shall be together by and by with the little ones together also, and then will we not have somewhat to speak of!

Am quite recovered from the effects of the march.

Shall write Billerica soon. Hope for a mail today and, if so, will add a word.

A word to the friends as ever.

A kiss and most affectionately your husband
Jerome

There is an endless variety of green leaves here but few flowers. I send a few to Maria. Those in the paper band are beech and black walnut. The others, I don't know.

Have just pinned a big "Beetle Bee" of most splendid golden hue. Shall go to Ben E. with it. He is "great" on natural curiosities of all sorts.

My inkstand is a beauty. Came done up in a Program of Exercises of the Sabbath School Anniv'y [Anniversary] with Murray's handwriting on it. Was it the one you sent?

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES (Josef Rokus)

NOTE 1: Columbia, Kentucky, is located approximately 90 miles south-southwest of Lexington, Kentucky. Breedingsville and Cadysville, Kentucky, do not appear on today's map of Kentucky.

NOTE 2: Morgan's Raid (or Expedition) was a diversionary incursion by Confederate cavalry into the northern U.S. states of Indiana and Ohio during the Civil War. The raid took place from June 11–July 26, 1863, and is named for the commander of the Confederates, Brig. Gen. John Hunt Morgan. Although it caused temporary alarm in the North, the raid was ultimately classed as a failure.

The raid covered more than 1,000 miles, beginning in Tennessee and ending in northern Ohio. It coincided with the Vicksburg Campaign and the Gettysburg Campaign, and it was meant to draw U.S. troops away from these fronts by frightening the North into demanding their troops return home. Despite his initial successes, Morgan was thwarted in his attempts to re-cross the Ohio River and eventually was forced to surrender what remained of his command in northeastern Ohio near the Pennsylvania border. Morgan and other senior officers were kept in the Ohio state penitentiary, but they tunneled their way out and took a train to Cincinnati, where they crossed the Ohio River to safety.

The activity described in this letter pertaining to Morgan's "expedition" preceded what is now considered to be the timeframe of the main raid, i.e., June and July 1863, which Jerome would not have known about, of course, when he wrote this letter on June 1, 1863.

The Unit History notes on Page 45 that at the end of May and in early June, "It was understood that we were in pursuit of Morgan's guerillas."

NOTE 3: The "Alonzo" Jerome referred to in his letters was Seth Alonzo Ranlett. Ranlett enlisted in Co. B of the 36th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment as a Private on July 24, 1862, at age 22, and he was from Charlestown, Massachusetts. He was promoted to First Sergeant on August 27, 1862, and was

commissioned as a First Lieutenant on December 1, 1862. On December 17, 1862, he was appointed Adjutant of the Regiment. He was mustered out "on account of physical disability from disease incurred in the service" on February 20, 1864.

Ranlett was born on March 18, 1840, in Charlestown, Massachusetts, and he died May 21, 1905, in Newton, Massachusetts. Ranlett's wife was Ellen Peirce Ranlett, with a date of birth of March 22, 1842, and a date of death of January 12, 1914. They were married on January 21, 1864. Ellen Peirce was one of the children of Foster Peirce and his wife Catherine Abby Beaman. Also, Foster Peirce was a brother of Jerome.

Therefore, the Ellen that Jerome mentions in his letters was one of Jerome's nieces, and starting on January 21, 1864, Alonzo was the husband of one of his nieces.

NOTE 4: The "Mary" referred to in this letter was almost certainly Allie's younger sister, Mary Frances Jaquith. She was born in 1841, while Allie (Albinia) was born in 1834.

NOTE 5: Benjamin B. Edmands enlisted as a Private at age 27 from Brookline, Massachusetts, and he was subsequently promoted to Corporal. On January 20, 1864, he was discharged from the 36th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment for promotion as a Lieutenant in the 54th Massachusetts Regiment of Volunteers.

NOTE 6: The news of the surrender of Vicksburg by the Confederate army was premature, since the Confederates actually surrendered on July 4, 1863. Soon after this letter was written, the 36th Massachusetts moved to Vicksburg in support of the siege of that city.

NOTE 7: Hattie was Allie's younger sister. Her complete name was Harriet Walker Jaquith, and she was born in 1845. The information about her on ancestry.com indicates that she probably died in 1930.