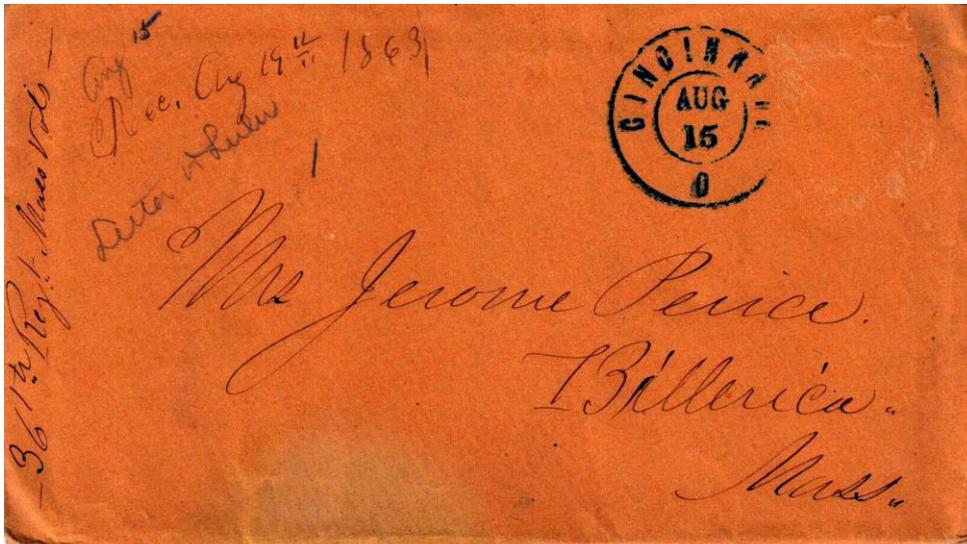


THE SERGEANT JEROME PEIRCE COLLECTION

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| WRITTEN BY | Jerome |
| WRITTEN TO | Allie |
| WRITTEN AT | Covington, Ky. |
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ENVELOPE



LETTER TRANSCRIPTION

Covington, KY 15th Aug 1863

My ever dear wife,

Tis a lovely morning. I will improve it early in sending you another missive. You will hear of my arrival here as I wrote you Wedns. and sent the books to FP&Co. [Foster Peirce & Co.]

We expected to move further south immediately but orders came to remain here and we moved up half a mile to a very pleasant place where a large camp is established for the present. The Licking river is in front and beautiful hills beyond some shade trees here and there. We don't know how soon we shall move, but are improving the present fast and "resting up."

How can I express the relief we feel to lay full length under our shady shelter tents once more with no enemy in front and no dreaded "fall in" to fear. You know for a long time it has been one continual strain on the nerves and time and I think now what wretched affairs my letters must have been.

The box and letters came yesterday by Dr. Chase. Various little things came and were most timely and acceptable. Tea, soap, ginger, pepper, fine needles, thread, stationery, etc.

Your letter speaking of Chelsea pastures, visit to the beach with Mr. Clark etc. etc. and I was so glad that you find friends and even in the anxious hours some little gleam of sunshine and above all that there are some who appreciate the soldier and what we are passing thru with. Ah, Dear Allie, whatever selfishness we may witness and it can't be any worse than the villainy practiced in the Army. The future will do us justice and our sacrifices, anxieties, heartaches will have their true value. I have refrained as much as possible from complaining but of many doings that are perpetuated in service were justified at headquarters. No government allowing such things could be worth fighting for. Many abuses are unavoidable but there has been such a reckless disregard of life and even the slightest comfort of the men in this last campaign that I cannot wonder that many are totally reckless and care not if they only get out of it. I wish and pray that the President and those in authority could know and right things, but with a military man at the head what would a poor soldier's word amount to? With many this feeling that the wrongs are not regarded or covered over by rival officers etc. makes them desperate. But for poor me, I have lived tho so far how God only knows.

There is a history to be written and so much that can never be told! But the graves all the way from Vicksburg to this place have a peculiar language to us who have shared and witnessed it all. This morning it is announced that General Welch, commander of our Division is dead very suddenly of fever. Colonel Leasure will succeed, I suppose. Used to command the old 3rd Brigade, a good man.

But enough of this anarchy and bad government are worse than all and we must trust to the future which seldom fails to right things.

A big back mail came last eve. Your [letters] of the 24th July (8th in July) came. There is the 9th missing yet. The Register came too containing (inside) the doings at the alumni [at] Cambridge spoken of by Abbie in a former letter. Very fine addresses, Dr. Walkin's oration in particular. So I have an abundant supply of [reading] matter. We are eagerly listening for the news from Charleston and hope all will end well. Was not Colonel Shaw and his men heroes? I can but think what a vast revolution is at work in our land and my belief in the future glory of the country purged of the foul demon slavery is such that hides in a great measure, or tempers at least, the thousand ills we are subjected to.

But I am once more in camp and you I trust with regaining health and spirits are also under the old shade and [???] of home enjoying with the friends some measure of quiet and hope.

I say little of what can't be avoided but Allie I feel keenly the necessity that separates us and subjects you to separate labor but in these times all have their burden of sorrow and trial and I feel that many are worse off than we. I feel that you have friends who seem to make the load as light as possible and I know that they feel for the soldier and for those who desire to avoid the field. They must settle

with their own consciences their sense of justice to those of us who are bearing the heat and burden of the hour and what future generations will meet out to them. For myself I can endure awhile longer and see if our land is worth fighting for.

Your dress must be very nice and pretty and I should just like to take the old place by your side and see how you would compare with your soldier husband. Would you take me with my soiled (not ragged) clothes? I shall brag a little and tell you that I never allow myself to be shabby. Am expert at the needle and thimble and so manage to keep account and have a care for that is one road to promotion.

Dress Parade last eve for a long time. The first rather tame and we felt that some were not. It is estimated that 100 men are gone from the Regiment that will never be with us again, dead and disabled. Our flag will appear next time with "Vicksburg and Jackson" inscribed upon it, but there will some associations that will speak not of glory.

But I have one narrow escape to record in that affair (at Jackson). While we were in the woods on a side hill near the Rebel battery some sharpshooters had a position and as I had moved away from a little bush where I had been chatting with Captain Hastings "zip"! came a rifle ball cutting off a twig just breast high and exactly where I stood an instant before.

It don't sound well to "talk" on paper but I recollect I felt "strangely" as the deadly missile passed me (I had layed down) and thought I was still saved for something. If we meet, can tell you many things that look like a "special providence" and show you how much we have to be grateful for.

Had another letter from Orange (Mary) expressing anxiety for Jos. H. of not receiving his letters. It is strange. He says he has written often. Letters from his folks don't come to hand like the others and I can't understand why such a fatality attends their writing. He is here, alive, well and full of talk and like his old self again. Tents with me.

If you write to O. [Orange] mention him for they seemed quite concerned about him. As I said before, I write them regularly every two or three weeks. Every effort should be made to have letters to him, often and regular for he needs such help a good deal and can't bear disappointment of that kind like many. And I pitied him for he has no letters for him in three mails back.

The mail goes today at noon. Hope to receive a reply soon. Ben E. is well and is trying to get his wife here and I hope we shall remain long enough for it. I know of some others I wish was visiting nearby! Everybody is away in the country it seems. Alonzo is [well] and received a letter from Ellen at Jefferson Hill. She seems quite down.

Let me know of the books, etc. Letters to Abbie and Lucy (sister) goes with this. Love to each and all and I am [??] for letters from B. Is Mr. Salloway or Gilman going to war? You see I've written a "pretty" letter, all ink this time.

Take a kiss for self and Lu and my heart's best. [Changed per letter] Love always and get well soon for your

Jerome.

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES (Tom Neubig and Josef Rokus)

NOTE 1: Contained two envelopes. One large one addressed to Mrs. Jerome Peirce, Billerica Mass, postmarked Aug 15 Cincinnati O[hio]. Handwritten on side: 36th Regt. Mass Vols. Also handwritten Rec(eived) Aug 19th 1863. Also included was an unstamped smaller envelope with no postmark to Miss Lulu S. Peirce, Present.

NOTE 2: Colonel Robert Shaw commanded the first all-black regiment (54th Massachusetts). At the Second Battle of Fort Wagner, a beachhead near Charleston, South Carolina, on July 18, 1863, he was

killed in the Union loss. The Confederates buried him with his troops, as an intended insult for leading black soldiers, since other officers' bodies were returned.

NOTE 3: In the Brigade's Unit History, the index on page 4 corrects the spelling of General T. Welsh's name (not Welch). Welsh was promoted to Brigadier General of volunteers after successful performance at Antietam in 1862. He commanded the 1st Division of the IX Corps, sent west to Kentucky, and then to Mississippi where he served under Grant during the Siege of Vicksburg. Upon the surrender of Vicksburg, he marched with Sherman to Jackson, Mississippi. He contracted malarial fever during the campaign, and died in Cincinnati, Ohio on August 14, 1863.

NOTE 4: Col. Daniel Leasure (1819 – 1886) commanded the 100th Pennsylvania Regiment, and for a while he commanded the Third Brigade. (The 36th Massachusetts Regiment was part of the First Brigade.)

NOTE 5: The Register was a fairly common name for newspapers and journals in the 1860s. But no reference to a "Register" newspaper in the Boston area could be found.

NOTE 6: The reference to Cambridge probably refers to Harvard College.

NOTE 7: The "Ben" referred to in this letter was Benjamin B. Edmands. He 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 8: 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 9: Abbie (Abigail) Jaquith was Allie's younger sister. Abbie was born in 1836, and she died in 1915. Allie (Albinia) was born in 1834, and she died in 1920.

NOTE 10: Foster Peirce was one of Jerome's older brothers. The 1850 U.S. Census listed him as being born in 1812, living in Charlestown, Massachusetts, and being in the furniture business. It is interesting to note that when that census was taken, Jerome, then 19 years old, was living with the Foster Peirce family, with his occupation being recorded as a "gilder."