

## THE SERGEANT JEROME PEIRCE COLLECTION

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### ENVELOPE

This letter has no envelope associated with it.

### LETTER TRANSCRIPTION

Jamestown Kent[ucky] June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1863

Dear Friends "at home"

Your letter (Mary's and Mother's) the other day (with little Lulu's, dear little one, I will not slight you!) while our Regt. were "scouting" some fifteen miles from Columbia and I assure you it made me feel happy, seeming as it does so far from home. What should we do but for the faithful mail carrier?

Well, since then have been very busy and seen some severe hard marching and a speck of war once more!

Last Sat. P.M. about 4 P.M. started for the camp finding no rebels in force tho the cavalry captured six of Morgan's guard, well dressed gray fellows who did not seem to take this fortune very sadly but I hope they'll be dealt with so as not to trouble us again.

Marched thru rain and mud and deep woods, only a log house occasionally to show of human habitation. Made coffee between 7 and 8 o'clk and then pushed on almost at "double quick" till midnight when we arrived at Columbia once more, weary, footsore and wet but soon had coffee and "turned in" to a sound sleep. This ended our chase after Morgan.

Sunday had a great day but Monday P.M. the word came to move again and about ½ past 3 we started off with three days rations and marched all night stopping for coffee as usual. Came 23 miles [to] this place. We felt like abused men but we had not been here but a few moments when crack! crack! crack! went shots from the woods around us and soon our pickets and cavalry came galloping in and the Rebels after them. We formed in line of battle but it seems they "caught a tartar" for no sooner did they see us than they 'skedaddled' and were soon out of the way, leaving one prisoner and two breach loading rifles. They say our timely arrival saved the town from a "raid" altho there were parts of three other Regts here but we happened to be all ready.

A vigilant picket is kept on but all has remained quiet and we have got nicely rested up and ready for another move. Expect we shall push forward to the Cumberland River, which is only four miles from here, where on the other side it is expected the enemy are in force.

We are camped in a thin growth of large trees, very uneven. Our tent line is on a ridge. I am tenting alone and have everything for this stop at least. Just as I please. We have reduced everything to light order. I carry only two rubber blankets and half tent which serves for shelter and bedding. One

rubber and half tent making the former and there is a tall coarse grass here which takes the place of straw and much better which serves for a bed.

Jamestown, like all the "county seats", is a small village with a great square Court House in the center and streets leading from each side out of town but all of them do not resemble our stirring N.E. [New England] towns much.

Have had a good deal of showery wet weather for some days and the roads are terrible but we are becoming a "tough set" and expect to be able to accomplish almost anything.

We are changed into the 1<sup>st</sup> brigade with the 17<sup>th</sup> [and] 27<sup>th</sup> Mich. Regts. with the 45<sup>th</sup> Penn and Edwards battery, 3<sup>rd</sup> Regulars, all of which is here with a large force of cavalry of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Ken[tucky].

There seems to be good news from the southwest, capture of Vicksburg etc. but we receive all news with caution altho we think it is true and our movements are connected with it.

We are now a good ways from communications and hear little news but hope all is going well.

Had a letter from Frank stating that he expected soon to be at home. I hope this will meet him there alive and well, but we boys have something yet to do.

I need not tell you how much I think of home and all connected with it. Lulu's letter was quite pretty. Tell her Papa takes long walks, hears a great many birds sing which always make him think of her. She is a good girl to think so much of Papa and I always try to send her some little thing to remember me by. Will send some leaves this time. There is a great variety of shape[s] here and the woods are very grand. Such immense trees, oak, blk walnut, white wood, and such splendid beeches! Much larger and taller than in N.E. [New England] making a great show of fine timber and to the sentimental eye and ear comes up the thought [of] Bryant's lines "The groves were God's first temples".

How is Abbie? Heard she was going home and I hope she is recovering and will send me a line once more.

Expect soon to hear of the "boys" return. Write me often as I am on the move. Cannot write all I would like to for we have to catch our rest in the daytimes and all times as we shall have to march nights frequently. But it is the time of all others when to have letters from home meet us. When we stop seems a benediction indeed.

I am in excellent health and growing stronger. Have no camp or guard duty to perform but find 'fixing' from wear and tear of clothing and such things keep me busy much of my time.

Will you send me in a letter a skein of light and black linen thread, only a little at a time as I keep just as little of everything on hand as possible and get along. The black that I have is rotten and not worth much.

Sent a letter to Allie on Monday at Chelsea. Shall write again soon.

I forgot to mention that our Col. is acting brigade commander. Alonzo R. (adjutant) is bearing the campaign finely and seems building up on his rough experience for we have had some of the hardest times we ever saw within the last few weeks.

Give much love to all friends and share with them what I would gladly write.

A kiss for Lulu. She little knows how I want to see her, but good angels keep her and you all.

With the love of

Jerome P

## TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES (Josef Rokus)

NOTE 1: The "Morgan's Guards" mentioned in this letter were part of a Confederate cavalry unit led by Brig. Gen. John Hunt Morgan. Morgan and his men are best remembered for the infamous raid they made into Northern territory, soon after Jerome wrote this letter.

Specifically, Morgan's Raid was a diversionary incursion into Indiana and Ohio from June 11 until July 26, 1863. It 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 his 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 raid was ultimately classed as a failure.

NOTE 2: The phrase “to catch a tartar” means “to encounter or be forced to reckon with someone or something that proves more powerful, troublesome or formidable than one expected.”

NOTE 3: In reference to his mention of Vicksburg, in May and June of 1863, Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's armies converged on Vicksburg, Mississippi, and entrapped a Confederate army under Lt. Gen. John Pemberton. On July 4, Vicksburg surrendered after prolonged siege operations. With the loss of Pemberton's army and this vital stronghold on the Mississippi, the Confederacy was effectively split in half. Obviously, when Jerome wrote this letter on June 3, 1863, the surrender of Vicksburg was still a month away. However, he also notes that “we receive all news with caution.” As a matter of fact, the 36<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts would participate in the final stages of the Siege of Vicksburg.

NOTE 4: “The groves were God's first temple” is the first line of the poem titled “The Forest Hymn” written by William Cullen Bryant. Bryant (1794 – 1878) was an American poet, journalist, and long-time editor of the “New York Evening Post.”

NOTE 5: 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 6: The “Alonzo” Jerome referred to in his letters was Seth Alonzo Ranlett. Ranlett enlisted in Co. B of the 36<sup>th</sup> 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.