

THE SERGEANT JEROME PEIRCE COLLECTION

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WRITTEN BY	Jerome
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ENVELOPE



LETTER TRANSCRIPTION

Newport News 21st Feb 1863

My ever dear Wife,

Yours of the 13th came last eve. and how much I wish you and Lulu were here! Yes Allie, I wish you were here and for the first time could I feel willing you should look in upon us just as we are, for we are now nearly in order a camp superior to "Camp Wool" at Worcester.

Wedns and Thurs were severe days, rain and all that could make camp life disagreeable, excepting mud, sand instead, but a change has come. Thursday eve the tents came, all new and while they hold five but as yet we have only four in ours. The streets are all laid out uniform, 8 tents on a side, 27 feet wide (the street), sidewalks and the street rolling just as they do at home in the cities.

At the foot the cooks are cooking in future. A little farther the orderly Sargt.'s tent beside in the centre of the Regt. is the six tents facing each other for and sergeant major, the center. On the marks  and when all handsome and comfortable camp. Such as I should like to welcome you to. Our tents we can stand up in and keep neat.



building a log tent. Will do the down is the Capt.'s tent, with him. And still farther in the rear colonel's quarters and "staff", surgeon, chaplain, adjutant, quartermaster and the Col. in end thus, trees set by little completed will be a very

The weather is now beautiful. Sun shines warm, a realization somewhat of the 'Sunny South'.

Took a ramble (and a bath) yesterday by the shore and gathered some curious stones and shells which I shall send home sometime in a little box made [on] the rainy day with my knife alone. I send it, or will, to little Lulu. The shells are mostly of the oyster species and with water and the sun upon them look very pretty. They will answer for a beginning of a little cabinet and the box for the jewelry. I wish you would take sweet oil and rub it up nicely. It will be quite handsome. It served to while away the dreariest hours I have seen in camp. I picked up the pieces between here and the river and so you will have a memento of this camp. There are also some leaves! "Hock" they call them here but are the old English "Holly" so Ben E. says and so often mentioned by the Eng. [English] poets. Have I sent any home before? Will send some in this letter. The brown one in the box I picked up on the beach colored by the sea and I thought 'twould look well in a wreath. I don't know exactly when I shall send the box. The Capt. thinks I had better send it by someone. Perhaps we shall make up a box and send to Orange by Express. But I mention these items as I think of them now.

I will send an extract or two from the "Register" which I desire kept for Lulu and please make her a 'scrap book' of reading suitable and pictures which will be equal to bought books and much cheaper. Get a good shaped book, cut out every other leaf, etc. Keep all the pretty little pictures, wood cuts, etc., like those in the paper I sent her. You will understand. I often think of my childhood and of the little things which cost nothing and yet make a world to childhood.

Now Dear Allie, let me tell you how much good your letters do me. What more can I ask to "keep and sustain" me in whatever comes than such letters as yours and Abbie's? I now feel that you are preparing to bear and prepare in the only sure way for what is before us and to know that Lulu is such a comfort. I knew it would prove so and you may be sure I am trying hard to keep myself as worthy as possible of such ones to love and remember me! And if I am not permitted to see you at present you can feel that I am passing life not all in vain and the place will be in keeping with all that is elevating in feeling.

The beautiful scenery here, regularity and discipline, which will be instituted as soon as the camp is fairly completed, will leave time for improvement which I shall improve by all means. Shall have choice reading, means for keeping neat, bathing, etc. make up a fine camp and next to home. Our Lieut. thinks we shall be here for some time.

Have read Romans 14th this morn. It's a favorite chapter with me and your acct. of the services were very interesting and with Abbie's letters make something far better than Sabbath services because I can enjoy them quietly and not surrounded by the various moods and countenances. For these are all my own sweet comfort and if necessary I can steal away and enjoy them daily.

I read and passed to the Captain your note and he has promised to reply, and will. He is busy most of the time and you must be patient. I think he feels for all those who are at home and is a fatherly man to the whole company. You have done "all right" in writing him and he will do for all what he can. There is scarcely a man in [the] regt. so much of a gentleman and kindly as he is.

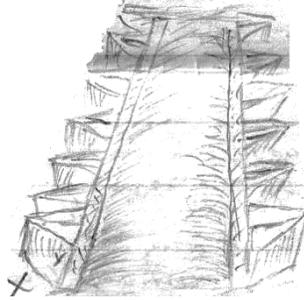
Called on the acting Ajut. [Adjutant] this morn. and spoke with the Col. about Alonzo. Have not heard from Foster's folks since your last two or three letters. They look to me for news from him and I

wish they would keep me posted often for they get about all they hear from me. I hope he is mending and that we can hear something decidedly better soon. Company B has some reports from him occasionally but I don't think they are reliable, very.

The next tent to us is H. Mayo's with Smith, W.H., Goddard, Ward and Harris. One tent is on the front corner left as you enter the street, this x sketch but will give you an idea of the street.

Had a game of euchre last eve, Frank of the "Color Guard" and J.H. A nice time. time than I can help tho in that way. Will close

P.M. Now Dear Allie, can you tell what Just as I was seated in my tent eating dinner and beef broth, who should come with Corp. Knowles of Co. B just from Charlestown and letter in it from Miss Waldo, stationery and a Monthly Journal, a pretty pair of wristers. Shall have to send them home as I don't need them now (For next winter I hope to wear them at home.) and a nice long letter which I will send you sometime. Also a nice letter from Abbie and C.F. Smith! Have I not something to defend?



Craft and another Corpl. Shall not spend any more later in the day.

a benediction I have had? of toasted bakers bread Penn, Co. A, but young gave me a package with a

Knowles says a week ago today, no, yesterday, Alonzo not expected to live and Foster and Ellen had gone to Washington but three days afterwards nothing had been heard from them. Sad, sad time.

Well Allie, am one full of strange scenes and changes! And here I am improving time writing outdoors, back of our tent, by a little fire stewing some dried apple for supper. 'Tis very pleasant and I wish so much you could see the sunny side of soldier's life.

Asked the Capt. if I could get a "Pass" to go to Suffolk. Said he'd see the Col. Wish I could, but fear not, furloughs are talked of again. Don't know what will come of it.

Expect to begin drill and other duties on Monday which will keep us moving and I am willing for we feel better to keep doing.

I send some verses to Lulu 'Jessie'. I have acted upon the sentiment of the last verse since I've been out here and find it excellent.

We have Dress Parade now at 5 P.M. Have to shine up our brass buttons, etc. and, as we all have good clothes, make a fine appearance.

I have not written as I would like to this time but feared that tomorrow would be interrupted so I have done something.

I have mentioned that papers, thread, etc., toothbrush all came safe. Had the misfortune to lose the toothbrush during the rainy days when everything was in confusion. Could you send me another and I will be more careful.

A little later. Just saw the Capt. Tried to get some more shells for my box but couldn't find any such as he wanted. Has been busy. Is now giving out clothing. Will answer your note by and by. Be patient.

Have looked over your letter and wish I had done better. I often dream over the past days, my better days no doubt. Would I could be "translated" to them but I trust we shall grow better and enjoy so much in writing. Like you, I feel more of our lover days, and I shall feel stronger for duty by your interest in the "one thing" to sustain us, for I assure you I am more in thoughts serious and enjoy so much in my bible. But there is so much to confuse one here! 'Tis hard to write connectedly.

I opened to the 80th Psalm, just see how appropriate it is to our situation. Was just interrupted and must close immediately.

As ever, yours with love to self and all abundantly from your

Jerome

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES (Josef Rokus)

NOTE 1: According to the Unit History, "On February 10, 1863, the 36th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment moved to Newport News, Virginia, where it remained in camp until March 22, 1863."

NOTE 2: "Wristers" are a warm, knitted covering for the wrist.

NOTE 3: Abbie (Abigail) 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 4: 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 5: The "J. H." that Jerome referred to in this letter was Joseph H. Peirce. 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 Letter No. 227) and he was later exchanged. He was discharged on June 21, 1865. Joseph H. Peirce was the son of Joseph Peirce, one of Jerome's brothers, and was, therefore, his nephew.