

THE SERGEANT JEROME PEIRCE COLLECTION

LETTER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	201
DATE OF LETTER	Mar. 11, 1864
WRITTEN BY	Jerome
WRITTEN TO	Allie and Lulu ("My ever dear wife and little one")
WRITTEN AT	Camp near "Mossy Creek" E. Tenn.
NUMBER OF PAGES	6
TRANSCRIBER	Jack Phend
TRANSCRIPTION DATE	Aug. 10, 2018

ENVELOPE



LETTER TRANSCRIPTION

Camp near "Mossy Creek" E. Tenn. Fri. 11 Mch. [March] 1864

My ever Dear Wife and little one,

How shall I begin another chat with you? There is just now so much to think of. Have been quietly in camp now for some days, but this morning early came the word, "Move again tomorrow," and there followed the usual preparation and I have been so busy fixing for the same.

But first let me tell you that I have rested up to some purpose and feel more like my old self. The last letter or two was sober and I fear caused you more anxiety than it ought to altho' I have suffered in the last movement from Knoxville from sore feet for lack of proper shoes and boils but I am so glad to tell you that all is improved now. Have a good pair of Army shoes, the best thing under the sun, for marching. Got them within a day or two, feet are quite well, boils ditto and then the nice long home letter of Feb. 15 came to hand the other eve. and the three "Ploughmans" last eve. with the "Register" which comes regularly. Also a nice letter from Will and Hattie of 20th inst. One from [E???] P. and so you

see I ought to be better. Tonight no doubt I shall have one from your dear self and I would like to see it before closing this, but mail goes at 3 o'clk and I must not risk the chances of the 'morrow.

And again last eve. came the knapsacks all safe. You can hardly realize at home how much we think of them, especially after we've learned how to load and carry them and as I caught sight once more of my little "Cowper" Bible, sewing bag, portfolio, I felt home again "all right." This a.m. have sewed all the time making a new sugar bag, salt ditto, and a big "reticule" like to put the little things in so I can catch them if I have again to abandon the knapsack.

Of our future movements I shall not attempt to say much again. Towards Bristol, they say, to Morristown and "Penns Station", from there I hope we shall cut for Tazewell, Cumberland Gap and North, but of course all is uncertain. I suppose the truth is our communications are open. Bridge at Strawberry Plains repaired and everything, so supplies can come forward and now we take one more step and that is all we can divine. We are yet sanguine of coming North, but we're not yet wanted there and are of use here. The poor little 9th A. C. [Army Corps] are now a terror to the Rebs and are worth any 5000 of the best troops hereabouts and that is speaking modestly.

Rations are not yet all we could ask in variety or quantity, altho' when actually on the move, we have plenty of hard bread, pork, and some "dried beef" as we call it from the fact that its driven along with the Army till it is poor enough, "dried on the bones." For health we need beans, rice or once in a while, desiccated vegetables, which is a big thing when we've time to cook it, as I have twice yesterday and today. Soak and boil some two hours, then fry in fat with dissolved hard tack, making an excellent "hash." Then have I not given you enough about victuals? Well, it is a serious thing here in E. [East] Tenn. and you want to know something about it.

Spring is coming rapidly here, is come indeed. Birds are singing sweetly and the weather is more like our April, rain every day almost, then warm sunshine, as it was, and is, today, while the wind is sighing thru the trees as I've heard it in old P.V.! Dear old spot with its inmates! How much I live with you! I call you to mind in your new dress you spoke of very kind in Nellie's [Nellie's letter] and becoming to you, I think. And little Lulu! What would she say if she could peep in and see her Papa sitting here writing as fast as he can surrounded by the city of little tents, my tin plates and dishes by my side and all that. Such is life with us both.

I mentioned the last letter of yours, 21st Feb., and how much good it done me, and I hope your poor head will not ache so much. Abbie's [letter] (the 15th [Jan.] letter) spoke of you being sick with it. The letter was late a little. I do hope this will find you in a state to reciprocate my more cheerful mood, and I trust both of us will find the future brightening.

News is not altogether favorable, but I am firm in the belief that a few more months will be bright with promise. I trust the politicians will not block the wheels by their wranglings about who shall be next President. Many of the 'boys' are returning to the Reg't. and one Co. has one 'Raw Recruit' from Northfield (a good fellow). Co. B has two or three fine little men and some come up, so our Reg't. looks quite full.

Ben and I have our long confabs as usual. He's had most an excellent picture of his wife, 'Amy', last eve., one of the finest timings I ever saw, taken just as she had on a pleasant smile. A 'Milliniotype' [Melainotype] or some such name, on tin, but rich in shade, life like and expressive, very. He of course was delighted. She has left the "Patridges" [Partridges?] and gone to live with a family of "Cranes". Ben laughs considerable of the birds with whom her lot is cast but he thinks the change from "Patridge" to "Crane" will be for her benefit. She takes music lessons, etc. etc. and I expect is a great favorite.

But how of home? Does it begin to look like spring yet? Suppose you hear from Worcester and all about the house hunting, housekeeping etc., etc. and how much I thought of our early beginnings in that line. And what an eventful "since"! It seems as 'tis I had lived 20 yrs. since then. This War makes all things seem so vast and strange. But time flies and it will not be long before we shall enter upon the

third year of our service. The time passes swiftly with me and if I can only have health and plenty of letters, papers, etc., how it will pass!

You all speak of how Lulu loves books etc. You will not need to urge her and I hope her physical health will keep pace as I judge it will if she is any as her father was. She little knows how much I long to clasp you both once more to my heart and feel that I am indeed a husband and father once more. 'Twould do your heart good to see us taking out and looking at the pictures of our dear ones. Ah, don't feel that we grow cold midst the rough scenes of the field and camp! Far otherwise!

Saw letters from Orange of Jos. Henry's. See him almost every day. Hannah and Preston were still there, and they had written to you, Mary and the boys (some of them). I write them as often as I can and they are very kindly in response. [They] have recently visited Mr. Ballou and made him a present, etc. of which you have heard no doubt.

By the way, Capt. Sawyer is discharged from the service on account of disability and gone home. Had a valedictory letter from him at Covington, (Ky.) hospital a few days since. I did not think we should see him again. Talk gives Brigham of Co. "I", now at home recruiting, as our next Capt., late 1st Lieut., an agreeable, talented fellow and Davis that went home with us as Lieut.

Wrote Will and Ben Haynes yesterday or day before. Don't receive anything from Foster's family or Alonzo yet. No cards. 'Tis strange but I can't think them neglectful. We've been so situated with my poor feelings added that I haven't written half I'd like to. Lucy and Sarah (Jamestown) owe me letters yet. Mr. Clark I owe and hope he'll, bear with me. Hope Mr. Sulloway has mine with the note to you 'ere this. A poor affair, but I valued his and felt I must reply some way immediately. Regards to him always. Letters will be highly esteemed from him.

I presume I shall omit something I ought to say. If I don't answer questions or refer to things, you must know, lay it to surroundings, for there is always more or less confusion going on. Col. Joslin's name is among those escaped lately from Richmond Prison.

Will tells of an anticipated visit by and by at W. [Probably "Worcester"] Hope you will go and have a good time. Would we not enjoy it together! By the way, they mentioned sending a piece of cake in a box with the letter and I didn't think to speak about it in my reply. Tell them it has not yet come. Hope it will, but I don't know about it ever coming as the mails are limited to clothing and letters, papers etc., but hope it will come, and I shall appreciate it.

It seems Joe was at home when you wrote. Does he live in L. [Almost certainly "Lowell"] and how comes on the business and who has father got with him? Tell me all about matters. Hope you visited Mrs. Eva B. with Frank. Am glad to be remembered by my B. [Probably "Boston"] friends as you mention. Bear me in mind to them in return. And now a word of thanks to Mother and all the family who write me. Frank, too. His letters are very welcome indeed. Will write as often as possible, as I think of you constantly.

It is getting mail time and I must close. And you know full well how I close with my best love to you and a father's kiss for the little darling Lulu. I never tire of hearing of her little ways and sayings, and I should like much to get into the "egg house" for a little while. Eggs are a myth here. Got a breakfast the other morning at a farm house for a little coffee. Had salt and fresh pork, fried, biscuit and molasses, and some kind of coffee, not Army, tho'. The man said grace before partaking. That was on the way to Strawberry Plains, a tiresome time.

One of the boys in Co. B has "*Wordsworth*," a small vol., his short pieces. I hope Lulu will learn by heart, sometime "*We're Seven*" and "*Sale of the Pet Lamb*," beautiful, both of them. Give me those opening lines of Keats' "*Endymion*" sometime.

Tomorrow, I may be on the march, maybe in camp, but love abundantly to all. And

Ever your loving husband and father,
Jerome

Have abundance of stationery for the present, which I shall keep with me in future.

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES (Jack Phend and Josef Rokus)

NOTE 1: Per the Unit History: December 20, 1863 – April 6, 1864. The regiment moved numerous times in eastern Tennessee, including in the Knoxville area, before being ordered to move by train, by way of Baltimore, to Annapolis, Maryland, where it arrived on April 6, 1864.

NOTE 2: Based on other letters, P.V. is almost certainly “Pleasant Valley” a place close to home in Massachusetts where Jerome and Allie apparently spent some pleasant times together.

NOTE 3: William Cowper (1731 -1800) was an English poet and hymnodist. He wrote a number of anti-slavery poems and his friendship with John Newton, who was an avid anti-slavery campaigner and who wrote “Amazing Grace”, resulted in Cowper being asked to write in support of the Abolitionist campaign. Cowper wrote a poem called "The Negro's Complaint" which rapidly became very famous, and was often quoted by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., during the 20th century civil rights movement.

NOTE 4: A “reticule” is a small handbag, often used by women, made of a netted fabric and usually having a drawstring.

NOTE 5: Desiccated vegetables were vegetables that had been dried to preserve them. They were reconstituted with hot/boiling water.

NOTE 6: “Melainotype” is another term for a tintype or ferrotype photograph. It is made by creating a direct positive on a thin sheet of metal coated with a dark lacquer or enamel and used as the support for the photographic emulsion. Tintypes enjoyed their widest use during the 1860s and 1870s, but lesser use of the medium persisted into the early 20th century.

Note 7: The assumption that “L” refers to Lowell, Massachusetts, with “Joe” being Joseph Jaquith, is based on the following. In his letter dated March 5, 1864, Jerome used a flyer advertising the roofing business that Joseph Jaquith was engaged in for one page of that letter he sent to Allie. As indicated in it, Jerome was short of stationery when he wrote it. Allie’s maiden name was Jaquith, and the Joseph Jaquith referred to in the flyer is almost certainly Allie’s brother Joseph who was born in 1842. The flyer advertises a patented elastic roofing material to fireproof and waterproof roofs as well as roofing cement for pointing chimneys, etc. by a company located on Warren St. in Lowell, Massachusetts. Joseph Jaquith is listed as the “Agent” of that business.

NOTE 8: The “Jos[eph] Henry” Jerome referred to in this letter, and frequently in other letters as “J.H.” or “Jos. H.”, was almost definitely 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. According to the Unit History, Joseph H. Peirce was taken Prisoner of War at Pegram Farm, Virginia, on September 30, 1864 and was later exchanged. He was discharged on June 21, 1865. The relationship between J.H. and Jerome could not be determined with absolute certainty; however, it is very likely that Jerome and J.H. were cousins.

NOTE 9: Rev. Levi Ballou was the pastor at the church in Orange, Massachusetts, that the Peirce family attended and at which Jerome had been the “Sabbath School Superintendent” before he enlisted.

NOTE 10: According to the Unit History, Captain Christopher Sawyer was discharged for disability on February 19, 1864, confirming the information in this letter. He had enlisted as a captain at age 28 from Templeton, Massachusetts, on August 22, 1862, and had been assigned to Company H, the same company Jerome served with.

NOTE 11: According to the Unit History, Lieutenant William F. Brigham enlisted at age 23 from Marlborough, Massachusetts. He was discharged for disability on January 20, 1865.

NOTE 12: "We Are Seven" is a poem written by English poet William Wordsworth (1770 – 1850) and published in his *Lyrical Ballads*. It describes a discussion between an adult poetic speaker and a "little cottage girl" about the number of brothers and sisters who dwell with her. The poem turns on the question of whether to count two dead siblings as part of the family.

NOTE 13: The poem he refers to as "Sale of the Pet Lamb" by William Wordsworth is actually titled "The Pet Lamb."

NOTE 14: "Endymion" is a poem by John Keats first published in 1818. "Endymion" is written in rhyming couplets in iambic pentameter. Keats based the poem on the Greek myth of Endymion, the shepherd beloved of the moon goddess Selene. The following are the first few lines of the poem that Jerome asked Allie to send him.

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.