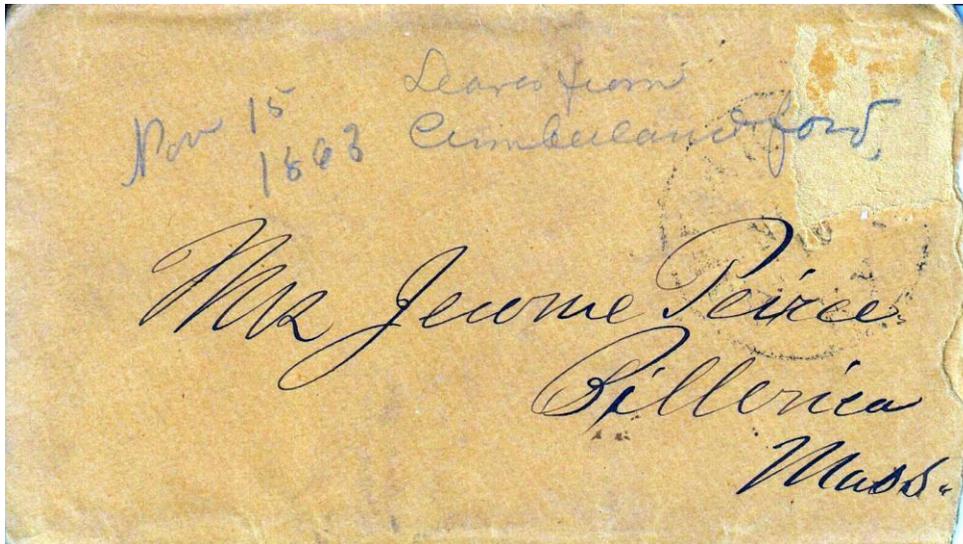


THE SERGEANT JEROME PEIRCE COLLECTION

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ENVELOPE



LETTER TRANSCRIPTION

Cumberland Gap, Ky. 15 Nov. 1863

My Ever Dear Wife,

In hopes I may find some means of sending this, I scribble a few lines. Since my last [letter] mailed at London, we have moved on nicely, fair weather and more tolerable roads. Camped at Barbourville, a pretty spot encircled by hills, but the village has the same dull (but for the war movements) and lazy look of all the towns. There I mailed a letter to Foster's and Joseph's folks.

Since leaving B. I have been repaid for much that is tedious and uncongenialing, the grand scenery. As you approach "Cumberland Ford" the hills are towering rocky and grand, and with the autumnal garb, present in solemn and shady look varied by the sunlight and altogether a feast of scenery not to be forgotten. The Cumberland River is about the size (in width) of the Concord [River] at B. [Billericia], perhaps not quite as wide, and in most places the hills shut close down to its banks just leaving room for the road which is rocky and in many places dangerous but so far we've come on without loss of a wagon or animal, the accidents being nearly all confined to a few citizens who drive a few of the teams and have 30 dollars per month, such as tipping over etc. and of course we consider ourselves pretty good teamsters.

Yesterday it rained furiously and I was in the saddle and got wet, this notwithstanding my rubber blanket which is a poor thing, but as good fortune would have it (and it seems never to desert me) the train was ordered to park at the Gap as the roads are full on the other side, beside some rebel bands and said to be disturbing things a little.

Today it is cloudy and damp but does not rain. Have just had dinner of bean soup, which was made good and together with a nice cup of coffee made by myself, relished "hugely".

And here let me tell you that I'm hearty and well, exceedingly, as I always am when moving, and the mountain air agrees with me muchly. Don't know when we shall reach the Regt. Can you think how strange it seems not to hear from the friends at home? The "pack mules" with the mail have passed us both ways several times and I thought now there are missives for me in some of them! But I feel as though you were all quite well and the good "right arm" still protected you in home quietude if it does me in these strange wanderings.

Can you look on the map and imagine what the "Gap" is? A rugged towering height with a huge rock on the left, on the very top (about the height of Tully at O. [Orange], the rock like a man's nose and like this while the lower hills represent a lower range nearer to us, and just below these, the road (the dotted line) begins the ascent. The "Gap" is between the 'nose' and the outlines on the right, and is about a mile and a half from us, altho it does not look half that. At different places on the hills about are fortifications and troops on the other side.

A little ways back we came upon a school house and quite a group of little folks and exceedingly pretty and intelligent. 'Twas recess and they came out to see us (as we were delayed a few moments), kept by a "man from down the river a piece." Geography, grammar, arithmetic, spelling and writing and was the most promising scene since coming into 'Kentuck' and made amends somewhat for the ruins of homes along the road, fruits of rebel raids. Forage is scarce and today (this A.M.) we've been putting the mules out to browse among the coarse brake, withered grass, etc.

Tell Joe I expect to know more about harnessing horses and have a faint idea what his trips to market are! And I think I have the advantage a little in schooling on rough roads and he can imagine me driving six mules team across the hills at the Gap over a road that would call a "Town Meeting" "right quick" in N.E. [New England].

"Life in an Army Wagon" has its novelties, and we are sure of a tent if the mules don't eat it up and there we light our candle and find a moment to read mail and eat also and write and think of home, which is the dear ray of sunshine throwing its cheerful light clear into the future.

I gathered once more a few leaves at "Cumberland Ford," which I enclose. 'Tis a tedious climb, and [there are] guards about or I would "essay" a trip to the top and see the rock where the three states notch, but I forbear, contented with the sight alone. Suppose you have all been to the old church and heard the word while I can only read and I have found time to do so and enjoy more and more! I got me a small cheap Bible at the Society Rooms in Boston and am reading the Prophet Isaiah.

Well, have I not been chatty this time? May this find you all well.

Love abundantly to each and all, and as ever your loving

Jerome

A kiss for Lu [Lulu] always.

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE (Josef Rokus)

As alluded to in the text, the letter includes a small, rough sketch of Cumberland Gap and the road he describes. Because the text and the sketch are intertwined, the sketch is not included in this transcription.