

THE SERGEANT JEROME PEIRCE COLLECTION

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WRITTEN BY	Jerome
WRITTEN TO	Allie
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ENVELOPE



LETTER TRANSCRIPTION

Wednes[day] 4th March 1863 (Newport News)

My dear Wife,

Expected to be on guard today, but evening to Brigade drill and chilly weather. Dismissed till tomorrow morn at reveille (6 o'clk). So here we are J. H. and myself writing.

Have nothing, yes, a little something to record. Day before yesterday received a good letter from Bro. Ballou of O[range]. Will send it to you after answering and last night or P.M. late a box came from O[range]: apples, brown bread, donoughts, cookies and 2 pies and some dry articles, such as pepper etc. All very nice of course and causing a brief indifference to Army rations.

Our drills and guard duty are fully organized and we have little time to write for we can hardly get our things out before the bugle sounds for something as follows. 6 o'clk a.m. Reveille, very soon after Police Call when all clean up the street, ½ past six Surgeon's Call, or Sick Call, 7 Breakfast Call, ½ past 8 drill an hour, ½ past ten Battalion drill (the whole Regt.) an hour, 12 dinner call, ½ past one drill call again, 3 p.m. Bat[talion] drill till 4 p.m., 5 Dress parade, 6 supper, 1/2 past 8 "Tattoo", 9 Taps lights

out and add to this the recalls from drill drummers call and you form an idea of what we hear of the bugle.

I catch a few moments to read for all this or write. Am in the midst of "Love's Labor Lost" (Shakespeare) and keep up testament reading, following you and Abbie in your readings as much as possible. So you see I am quite busy and have little time to entertain sad thoughts for I am excellently well.

Yesterday P.M. was on fatigue duty that is "boss" of cleaning up our parade ground in front of our camp. Cut down several firm peach trees, filling up the holes and leveling the effects of a ambulance camp. This P.M. from 1 to 4, brigade drill, 3 Regt. Well don't you feel tired?

Now to your letter, for I am writing over it, and first I am grieved that you have to work so hard and [for] such poor for remuneration. I would I could relieve you some way but I am a soldier and trying to get ahead by all honorable means and if I am doomed to remain long in the service I shall advance if possible for the pay's sake and I trust with an honorable and patriotic ambition added and I know if there is any show, the officers are my friends as you will see the Captain is.

I wish to mention one thing. You may think I think of only my reading, etc. but I am determined to deserve promotion but it is only thru peril and work or the death or incompetency of others that we can gain it. But be assured what can be done to add to my work or pay I shall do.

You speak of Aunt Wyman. [Abbie] did not mention that she was seriously ill, but have expected it for sometime. Have heard nothing from Alonzo since my last [letter]. Shall hear tomorrow I think. By the way I wish to say that I mailed the little box yesterday. Put 4 stamps on it. Hope it will prove enough and that it will reach you safely for I took real pleasure in making and filling it. You can improve the looks very much by rubbing some sweet oil on it with a cloth. Don't put it where it will heat suddenly for the wood was damp when I made it and the contents wet or were. Let it season gradually and it will not be so likely to be loose. I have some other shell specimens that I would like to send home but don't know if I can.

Have not heard from Suffolk. May today as the mail comes early P.M. and here let me tell you to direct [your letters] to Newport News via Fortress Monroe as they come one day sooner.

Shall try and answer Miss Waldo's letter today and will send it (hers) if I do. You will please keep her letters and our friends' [letters] out of the family for awhile.

The bugle is sounding for Reg. [Regimental] Inspection but we (J. H. and I) don't have to go, so we are alone in the tent, he writing home.

Among other things in the box was some wedding cake I suppose Lottie's.

I want to inquire what you done with that jack knife. Curiosity. I cut at Orange ball in block and did you manage not to break it?

The Orange boys are all in good health and always return the same.

Had a letter from Mr. Stevens the other day. He was still in the hospital in Re, not fit to return to the Co. [Company] and desiring his descriptive list. He'll manage to get home after a while.

By the way, there is a brother of Geo. Burdett in Co. B, a fine pleasant fellow, but sick and yesterday got his papers and will get a discharge I guess. Heart complaint [???] etc. Has a faint remembrance of you he thinks. He is the image of Geo., his brother.

I forgot to mention that we are getting disciplined. Have to come out with boots blacked (when on guard), brasses shined up and you don't know how nice your Jerome looks now that he doesn't have to do cooking. I don't think you could see much change. My beard is out and dulling, will reduce me in flesh.

Hattie I believe asked if we had amusements in camp. We have bull playing, jumping etc. and cards some. I do little of either, as you know my taste for shared moments.

But it is a lively cheerful scene generally. It is cold and bleak here now and seems much like the weather in Boston.

My darling Lulu, where is she? Does she have a nap daytimes? I wish I could see her. Don't pray tell her of her qualities.

Sund. [Sunday] eve. heard the band play in another brigade. There is a little drummer boy of 13, no father. He is very modest and pretty. One of the [???] who seems to have the case of [whom it is] said "He's a good boy and don't grow old!" So let it be with her [Lulu]. Don't make her [Lulu] "grow old". His name is Jimmy Moores.

As ever wish a kiss for you both.

Your loving, Jerome

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES (Tom Neubig and Josef Rokus)

NOTE 1: The term "tattoo" comes from the early 17th century Dutch phrase "doe den tap toe" ("turn off the tap"), a signal sounded by drummers or trumpeters to instruct innkeepers near military garrisons to stop serving beer and for soldiers to return to their barracks.

NOTE 2: 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, Jerome's nephew.

NOTE 3: Rev. Levi Ballou gave the sermon at the funeral service sermon held for Jerome, ten days after this letter was written, on Sunday, June 19, 1864, in the church in Orange, Massachusetts, where Jerome had been the "Sabbath School Superintendent." Rev. Ballou made reference to several letters that Abbie had shared with him. The following is an excerpt from that sermon.

"Again, he writes his companion [his wife, Albinia or Allie], only 12 days before he fell, and after describing the place where he then was, as reminding him much of certain localities where they had in former days conversed and strolled together. He adds that by the movements of the army, "It looks like a fearful future for some." He asks, "Shall we be spared the last fearful conflict?" "We hope all will be for the best." He then speaks of his darling child to whom he sends some flowers which he had culled for her to keep to remember Papa and in closing says, 'I hope to see you again soon.'"

This collection of letters also includes two letters sent by friends of Jerome and Allie to Rev. Ballou in early June of 1864 that were read at the funeral service.

Rev. Ballou's sermon was obtained with the help of the current minister at the First Congregational Parish Church in Orange from the Rare Books Department of the Hesburgh Library of the University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana, which has all of Rev. Ballou's papers.

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: Edwin Stevens enlisted at age 39 from Orange, Massachusetts, on August 4, 1862, the same date that Jerome enlisted. He was killed at Campbell's Station, Tennessee, on November 16, 1863.