

THE SERGEANT JEROME PEIRCE COLLECTION

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WRITTEN BY	Jerome
WRITTEN TO	Allie
WRITTEN AT	En route from Newport News, Va. to Cincinnati, Oh.
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ENVELOPE



LETTER TRANSCRIPTION

Transcriber's Note: This letter consists of several short letters or notes written by Jerome over the period from March 22, 1863, to March 27, 1863, while the Regiment was travelling from Newport News, Virginia, to Cincinnati, Ohio. They were probably all mailed together. The postmark on the envelope that probably contained all the letters reads Cincinnati, Ohio, and is dated March 27, 1863.

Sunday Mch [March] 22nd, 1863

Prospect of clear weather. Snow disappearing. Reading in the moving. Received my "Warrant" of Corpl. dated Aug. 28th 1862. Prepared for inspection.

P.M. Orders came to "Pack up" and soon marched to the landing. Eve. [evening] before dark went on board Steamer "Kennebec". Remained at the pier til morn. [morning] of ...

Mond. [Monday] 23! Left N.N. [Norfolk News] about 5 A.M. with steamer "Mary Washington" which had on board two or three of the Lieut., Capts.

Cold and chilly. Remained a few moments at the Fort and soon got orders for Baltimore. Saw the big "Union Gun" a little way off, outside the Fortress.

Towards noon. More mild, very pleasant. Made some coffee, washed up and feel decidedly better. Read in "Othello" this A.M. All quiet on board and prospects of a pleasant trip. A thousand speculations as to our final destination.

Tues. March 24th 1863.

Arrived at Baltimore at 3 ½ o'clock. A good trip. Remained on board til about 5 o'clock P.M. when went on board [railroad] cars and started for the "West". So at last we are going "West!" It is said we are to report at Louisville, Ky.

The Color Guard Messrs. Whipple, Co. C, Crafts, Co. B, Boyden, Co. E, Hartwell of Co. A, Avery of Co. K and Sergeants Perry of Co. D, and Putnam of Co. C, color bearers. A 'gay' time in prospect! An iron [railroad] car and excellent accommodations. 36th on one train. "Relay House". "Ilchester" and "Ellicott's Mills" before dark. All fine views on the "Patapsco" [River]. Beautiful scenery. Retired.

Wedns. March 25th 1863.

Arose at daylight and soon at "Harpers Ferry" where we had hot coffee. Marched thru the ruins of the Armory buildings to get it. Sad looking ruins but one of the finest mountain and river views in all the S. [South] and makes one feel like fighting for the country. High rugged rocks, broad and rapid rivers at this point. Still onward to Martinsburg where I felt indignant at the scenes of ruins of fine bridges and railroad buildings. A fine country and frequent pickets and troops guarding [rail]road. 126th N.Y. Regt.

A.M. Soon touched the Potomac [River] again. A grand stream, deep rocky cuts, and wild scenery of the "Blue Ridge". Next station "Hancock".

Noon. Ate dinner of soft bread (received at Harpers Ferry), molasses and cooked pork. Grand scenery along the Potomac and the mountains. Passed thru the tunnel about ¼ of a mile thru. The other trains in sight. Go very swift sometimes. 20 cars in our trains.

P.M. 3 o'clock. Cumberland, Md. Quite a large place. Canal. Flour mills. Several churches, etc. surrounded by mountains. 175 miles from Baltimore. Fair weather. Mailed a letter home. A little past 4 P.M. Continuation of grand mountain valley and river scenery, the finest of the North.

About dark. At Piedmont. Had coffee, nice and hot. At "New Creek" a few miles back, and pleasant chat and general good time. 14th Va. Regt. on guard duty, loyal and hearty fellows. Piedmont is near the coal region, quite a town but very dusty. Singing, chatting and taking notes all day. Still on the "Potomac" but the Alleghenies begin here. A solemn mountainous region. River rapid and still quite wide. The four trains have met and a stirring scene, so many troops moving. So much for a grand Rail Road! Shall be detained here for an hour. So ends this day. Shall lose much of interest in night riding.

Jerome

Thurs. Mch. 26, 1863

Noon, at "Central Station" where we stopped about an hour. At Grafton this morn., where we took the 'Virginia Central' R[ail] Road. Snowstorm Cornwallis. Wild scenery and several tunnels. Still snowing 2 P.M. A wilderness.

About 5 P.M. We just arrived at the Ohio River at Parkersburg. All well.

Love as ever

Jerome

Fri. Mch. 27, 1863

Co. B Boys sitting about on knapsacks writing, chatting and Ben Edmands nearby reading Shakespeare.

A few moments later went on Hurricane deck, boat stops at "Catlettsburg" the first town in Kentucky, at the mouth of the "Big Sandy" River. Sun out but very chilly. Fine deck view of the country. P.M. Closed a letter home.

Fri. Mch. 27, 1863

Went on board the steamer "Boston", a fine large boat last eve. Shocking accommodations on lower deck, horses, and finally a "coaling up" this morn about 4 A.M. drove us into the engine room where dust and racket reigned supreme. Got coffee and went up to the grand Saloon where Co. B are quartered. It is still and where I am writing. Expect to stop at Cincinnati for the present at least. Scenery on the River monotonous, but the stream broad and quite full. Boat moves very swift.

Fri A.M. 27th Mch. 1863 Ohio River on board steamer "Boston"

Well, my dear ones at home, does it seem as though we are so far separated? What a strange fortune that I should be sailing down the grand Ohio! I have taken a few notes along as I could for in the confusion and excitement of travel we make sad work of letter writing, but you will know that I am well and only a little fatigued from the effects of travel.

Had quite a comfortable trip on the [railroad] cars. 380 miles from Baltimore to Parkersburg VA. at the mouth of the "Little Kanawha". From there to Cincinnati is 280 or so miles. Have been out on the Hurricane Deck this A.M. We are now opposite Portsmouth, Ohio where we shall touch. Quite a large place. (You must follow me by looking on the map).

No. [Noon] We passed on amid cheers and a salute from a small gun on shore. The Scioto River comes in here and the union [is] quite wide and picturesque. The banks of the river are hilly and a little ways back from the river but level at the banks.

'twas quite cool in the morning but a little warmer, nearly noon. I can give you but a poor account of my travels at present. It seems like a dream and I think of you at home constantly and long for a mail. Don't know when we shall get one. Various rumors as to our destination. I presume the papers at home have it as well as I can inform you. Some think that we shall stop at Cincinnati and others that we will proceed to Louisville. Expect to reach C [Cincinnati] tonight and hope we shall for we hope to be settled and get rested for we need it. Have coffee twice a day and a new kind of hard bread, very nice too as far as that goes. All's well.

I mailed you a letter at Baltimore and a line at Cumberland. A lad kindly offered to put it in the [Post] Office. Hope you get it.

J. H. is well. Has not written much since we started. Cannot write, only you for the present, and am out of stamps and money. Hope to see the paymaster soon.

The people are glad to see us here and all believe in a speedy close of the war, for the Rebels are in terrible straits for everything.

Well Allie what do you think? Are you well? Hope I shall get a mail in C. [Cincinnati] for it seems a long time since I have heard from home.

P.M. Have just had dinner and returned to the deck. The drummers are practicing but I thought I want to add a word so to get the letter for mailing. I will write you from the first halt and sometime will give you more.

Please tell the friends to be patient. It is hard to write at all, so much noise and confusion from sightseeing. Shall try to keep well and you must keep up good spirits, for I feel as tho' I should be with you before a very long time.

All are in good spirits and have enjoyed the trip very much. Surely I am seeing something of the country. Love to each and all. Write me often, direct to Washington at present and we shall get them all right. Hope you will be able to read my scrawls. I have enjoyed my little Lu's picture ever so much, if I had yours!

As ever you own loving
Jerome

I send you some pieces of muslin I picked up in Fredericksburg and had them in my dress coat pocket ever since. Perhaps little Lu would like them.

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES (Josef Rokus)

NOTE 1: According to the Unit History, on March 23, 1863, the men of the 36th went by steamer to Baltimore and then by train freight cars, outfitted with rough board seats, to Parkersburg, West Virginia, and then again by steamer to Cincinnati, Ohio, and on to Lexington, Kentucky. They remained there, except for a short assignment back to Cincinnati to deal with possible riots during an election. Those riots never materialized.

NOTE 2: Jerome was undoubtedly mistaken as to which unit he observed on guard duty. The 14th Virginia Volunteer Infantry Regiment was an infantry regiment raised in Virginia in May of 1861 for service in the Confederate States Army. It fought with the Army of Northern Virginia from Seven Pines to Gettysburg, served in North Carolina, then saw action in Drewry's Bluff. The 14th participated in the Petersburg siege and ended the war at Appomattox.

He likely observed the United States 14th Infantry Regiment, which also served in the Civil War. The regiment was retained after the Civil War and has seen service as a light infantry regiment in the Boxer Rebellion, World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, and subsequent military operations. During the Civil War, the regiment was part of the Army of the Potomac and saw its first combat action in the Peninsula Campaign. It later fought at Antietam, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Wilderness, and Petersburg.

NOTE 3: The several men of the 36th Massachusetts Infantry Battalion mentioned in the letter are all listed in the Unit History as being in the companies which are referred to.

NOTE 4: Benjamin B. Edmands enlisted as a Private at age 27 from Brookline, Massachusetts, and he was subsequently promoted to Corporal. On January 20, 1864, he was discharged for promotion as a Lieutenant in the 54th Massachusetts Regiment of Volunteers.

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 he was, therefore, Jerome's nephew.