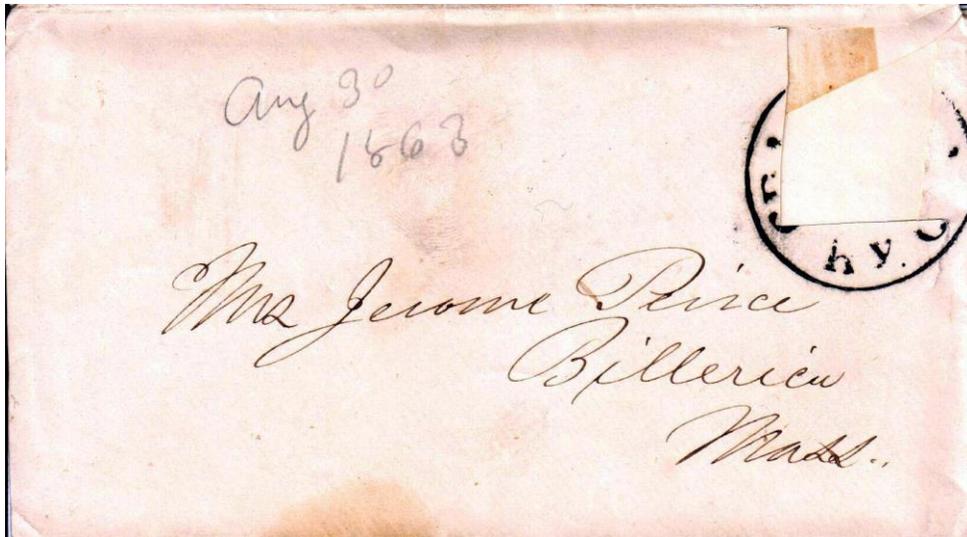


THE SERGEANT JEROME PEIRCE COLLECTION

LETTER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	156
DATE OF LETTER	Aug. 30, 1863
WRITTEN BY	Jerome
WRITTEN TO	Allie
WRITTEN AT	Crab Orchard, Ky.
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ENVELOPE



LETTER TRANSCRIPTION

Camp [???)
"Crab Orchard" Ky Aug 30, 1863

My dearest Wife

Another "move" and all is confusion, smoke from burning rubbish, clinking of axes and hammers etc., and on the Sabbath day too. Left "Nicholasville" Camp on Thursday marching three days to this place, a distance of 28 miles. Got along pretty well, a little tender-footed. There is quite a village here, famous as a "watering place", mineral springs etc., but there is little to indicate it. Our camp is in the edge of a wood, near the main road but 'twas terrible dirty, and it keeps a great number of men busy "policing" and burning up stuff so that the whole air is full of smoke which is hard on eyesight. It is the most un-sabbath like day I have seen for a long time, and I am wishing so much that a mail would come bringing your precious messages. The mail has to be "arranged" at every new camp, so I can't tell when I shall receive one or when this will go. An ambulance has to carry it to "Camp Dick", then by stage.

(The Lieut. has just called and wants my help on the "Muster Rolls." [I] have been at work considerable for a few days, and do you think (to you) they call me a good writer!)

Mr. Stevens has gone and I can finish. I am so confused from the stir, that it seems a wrong time to attempt a letter. We have remarkable cool weather, so much so that we felt quite cold last night, and a severe frost about the camp. Our tents are raised up, and sticks and leaves for bedding so as to keep clear of the cold ground.

Did you receive the books I sent home? and my letters? Alonzo is back looking after the sick. Don't know when he will come up, soon no doubt. Hope he will bring the papers that will send us home. I sometimes fear some disappointment, but all is "red tape" and delay in the Army and we've become somewhat used to it.

Took a short walk with Ben E. this morning, and I expect he went to church, as there is one nearby. Work prevented me from attempting the same thing. But I have thought much of you today, and I do hope you are all well.

Mond. P.M. Was called away again yesterday and have been very busy writing as before mentioned, besides, no mail went out yesterday. Saw today that a mail goes out at ½ past 4 o'clock this P.M. so I will try and close this.

Am very well, but I never found it so hard to "get the hang" of a camp as this. It is hard to get my mind settled and feel like writing as you will think when you receive this.

Our chaplain is sick at the last camp, and no services yesterday and with "Muster Rolls" you may know I had a confused day. Wrote last night till after "Taps", and made out one of the neatest looking rolls there was, so said the Lieut., only think of it! This morning at nine o'clock we were "mustered in" for pay, and I expect accounts are to be closed up for the year. Shall overrun my allowance but could not help it and take care of myself. We ought to be allowed 60 dollars, and only 42 is. Don't know yet just how I shall come out.

Alonzo returned last eve. but has been so busy writing, I haven't had time to talk with him. A mail is on the way, but shall not get it till Division PM [Postmaster] comes up. We are getting a good ways from supplies and everything is unsettled. Have a little fresh meat and the people bring in apples.

Saw the "East Tennessean", Mr. Markam today, the one I mentioned who suffered so much and his family when we were at Middlebury. He has been home since, and everything is destroyed about his place. His family is still at M [Middlebury]. There were many refugees about here, and Ben told me a sad story of a poor woman he met yesterday as he went, or attempted to attend church. No meeting, so he walked about and came upon her selling pies. He bought some. [She] has eight children and she has to support them as best she can. Her husband died from the effects of an eight days forced march just before the battle of Shiloh, and the pension doesn't reach her case. It is a sad story of these fugitives, and I trust [General] Burnside will soon liberate them.

We still continue to clean up camp and may stay here some time. It is very cool nights and we have shut up our tents and lay on leaves. Have been collecting a few more for my bed. Sun is out warm today. There are but few sick now, and I hope those left back will soon come up. The country we are camped in looks some like the neighborhood of Fox Hill in B. only the trees are larger, and the hill not so high, which is back of the camp, facing about N.E.

Don't know when the "Conscript errand" will come off. The papers don't seem to be forthcoming just now, so I keep up a hoping as you must.

I want so much to get letters from you. Expect folks will be on the return from the mountains etc. and shall hear from them soon.

What shall I write? If I could see you, should talk endlessly, but I find it hard to say anything, for camp and field life is one story and you know it by heart. How is Lulu? Does she eat apples? Wish I could send her one in a letter. Uncle Ben was delighted with her little present, and sends all manner [of] affectionate regard[s] to her and you for your kindly remembrance of him. He is very well indeed.

Who would have thought, Allie, one year from the day we were "mustered in" as a Regt. (the 27th Aug) we marched with only a hundred men for duty and I should be one of them! Where are the

other 900?! Comparatively few of them are dead, and most of them will come up “after a time”, but such is “field service”.

Crab apples abound here, and from this the name of the place. Have not “got at” cooking much yet, so can’t amuse you by my experience in that line. I wander about uneasy, able neither to read or write, but shall do better when a mail comes. Mr. Stevens is writing to his family.

Lucy spoke of sending me her picture. I wish she would, no doubt it will come safely, and you are to have it finally. Forgot to tell you [that] I bought the knapsack, and two pairs of nice socks that belonged to Hiram Woodward. My knapsack was badly worn out, and I saved from the Gov. [Government] price. Shall be supplied for cool weather.

How is Abbie? and all the friends and girls? I’ll remember Laura S. soon. Hope Louisa and Lucy have done well, and hope too that their husbands will not have to come to the Army. You did not mention about Joe. Is he coming out? There is talking about me, so call this a letter, and be sure it bears the love of your ever affectionate

Jerome

Love to all.

TRANSCRIBER’S NOTES (Josef Rokus)

NOTE 1: The following information about the events at the end of August 1863 is taken from the Unit History.

August 27th: At half-past five the regiment was on the march, a large number being left behind, too weak to march. We passed through Bryantsville at half past nine o’clock A.M., and when the halted for a rest at ten o’clock, it stacked 98 muskets. One year ago this day, the 36th Massachusetts was mustered into the United States service, 1,040 strong. At 11 o’clock we went into camp at Camp Dick Robinson, where the regiment was encamped in the spring.

August 28th: We were early on the march, and a very hard one it was for what was left of the regiment, and that was not much. We marched 11 miles, passing through Lancaster with colors flying, and the regiment stacked 68 guns when it halted at noon four miles beyond Lancaster. This bare fact seems to render needless all further comment as to the condition of the regiment. It was no longer a regiment but a worn and weary band, a squad of each company struggling on, fighting bravely against fatigue, heat and illness. But what was now left may well be called the very heart and soul of the 36th, men who had never flinched, who had borne all, thus far, cheerfully and bravely, with indomitable spirit. Very many were gone, but enough still remained to guard the colors, to escort them on many a long and weary march, and carry them in the front of many a battle yet to come.

August 29th: The march was continued about six miles to Crab Orchard, where the regiment encamped in the edge of a wood and remained there until September 10th.

NOTE 2: The name of the camp where Jerome was located when he wrote this letter could not be deciphered. It might have been named after a person. Searching the letters just prior to and after this letter, as well as the Unit History for the time around August 30, 1863, did not provide any clues.

NOTE 3: The “Camp Dick” referred to in this letter was Camp Dick Robinson which was a large Union Army organizational and training center located near Lancaster in rural Garrard County, Kentucky. The camp was established on August 6, 1861, despite the protests of Governor Beriah Magoffin, a strong secessionist and Southern sympathizer. It was located about halfway between Cincinnati and the Cumberland Gap, and was about 30 miles from Lexington, Kentucky. It was constructed on the farm of Captain Dick Robinson, a strong pro-Union supporter. The post served as a rallying point for local

loyalists, as well as for Unionists who had left their homes in eastern Tennessee in order to enlist in the Union army. In 1862, the Confederate Army seized the camp and renamed it "Camp Breckinridge," in honor of Confederate general and former U.S. Vice President John C. Breckinridge, a native Kentuckian. The advance of the Union army into the region forced the Confederates to abandon the camp, and Federal troops regained its possession for the remainder of the war. After hostilities ceased in 1865, the camp was phased out of existence.

NOTE 4: Edwin Stevens enlisted age 39 as a Private from Orange, Massachusetts, on August 4, 1862. He was killed in action at Campbell Station, Tennessee, on November 16, 1863.

NOTE 5: 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 6: The "Ben" or "Uncle Ben" referred to in this letter was Benjamin B. Edmands. He enlisted as a Private at age 27 from Brookline, Massachusetts, and he was subsequently promoted to Corporal. On January 20, 1864, he was discharged from the 36th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment for promotion as a Lieutenant in the 54th Massachusetts Regiment of Volunteers.

NOTE 7: Second Lieutenant Hiram C. Woodward enlisted at a relatively old age of 40 on July 31, 1862, from Orange, Massachusetts, and served in Co. H of the 36th Massachusetts Regiment, as did Jerome. He died on August 10, 1863, at Camp Dennison, Ohio, a few days before Jerome wrote this letter. He had been assigned temporarily with Jerome to work in the small smallpox hospital at an earlier camp. The "hospital" consisted of a regular tent physically located some distance away from the main camp to help minimize the spread of infection.

NOTE 8: Abbie (Abigail) Jaquith 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.