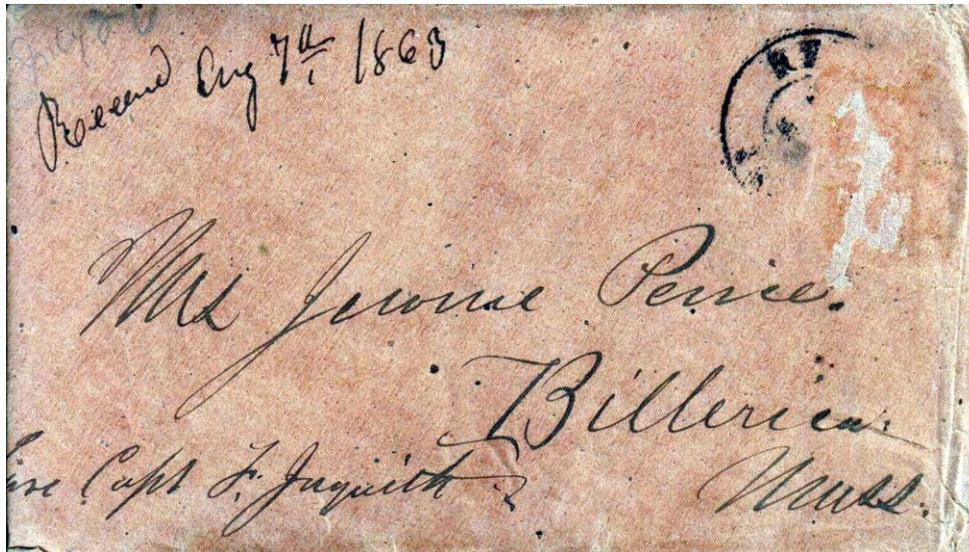


THE SERGEANT JEROME PEIRCE COLLECTION

LETTER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	143
DATE OF LETTER	July 26, 1863
WRITTEN BY	Jerome
WRITTEN TO	Allie
WRITTEN AT	New Milldale, Miss.
NUMBER OF PAGES	8
TRANSCRIBER	Ben Raterman
TRANSCRIPTION DATE	Oct. 18, 2018

ENVELOPE



LETTER TRANSCRIPTION

New Milldale, Missi[ssippi] Sunday P.M.
July 26th 1863

My ever dear Wife,

How shall I tell you the relief I feel to be again quietly in camp and to get breath that is not tainted with either dust or gunpowder? We left here the P.M. of the 4th and ever since it has been one incessant strain on the strength and you will receive some hasty account of it perchance taken at different places. We went for work in light marching order. "Ruf and ready" was the word every moment.

Well, it is another Sabbath, a lovely one, quite warm this A.M., but now P.M., we are having a gentle cooling shower. Fri[day] I had just closed your last letter and marked a headboard for poor Buxton when the order came, "Detailed for the Varioloid Hospital!" I trust you will not be alarmed at this for I am in good health and constantly in the open air with plenty of means to bathe and take every

precaution and I have no fears, but shall try and do my best for the poor fellows. I tell you just how things are and we must trust to the same good hand that has led me so far in health and safety.

Capt. Hastings of Co[mpany] 'I' is the chief, having just recovered from a light case. A most excellent, genial and Christian man. H.C. Woodward is the other and we three are the "attendants". The 'Hospital' is nothing more or less than our shelter tents pitched high up from the ground and about fifty rods from the camp near the woods, a very pleasant spot.

Yesterday the patients, fifteen in number, were removed and [the] orders came to cleanse and clean up so P.M. was a busy time. Expected the regt. was to move (Dr. Tyler is here talking) but, lo, this noon came a fresh case from Co. 'C' and when the thing will end we don't know.

We are having an easy time at present and yesterday got our "Descriptive List", a doc[ument] which enables us to draw our pay wherever we may be and what all detailed men receive.

On the whole, after such a road-weary time as I have had of late, I feel quite as well off and yet we all desire first and last to get back north. But we must wait, wait patiently, for the end and am I not having an experience? How much I could tell you if I could only be with you, that I cannot even think of. I think of much when on the march or when in my tent abed and I think I will surely speak of that in my next [letter] and then when duties come, all's gone.

Abbie tells me, and you too mentioned it, that Aunt Wyman has passed on. Well she is at rest. I fear I shall never have any opportunity to see any of her relatives about Yazoo City as we shall doubtless leave here as soon as the case will allow and [as] for the Rebels in this state, they seem to be scattered to the four winds.

It is a strange scene here at Jackson. I mentioned how the soldiers "foraged", "confiscated" ([in] polite terms!). All along the country you see books among other things. A man will take them a little ways and get tired and away it goes for the next one. Fine libraries seem to be the great thing with the first classes here, and choice books are easily obtained. I am now writing on a copy of Mrs. Hemans poems, same edition that sister Kate has. Shall try and get it home but hardly expect to. Got Lulu's book in the same way. We have a stray vol[ume] of the Waverly Novels, fine large edition. Also Sparks' "American Biography" and so on. Account books, letters, Masonic records, etc. etc. without number, [are] scattered through the camps. And such is war! May I never participate in another!

But what of home and all the dear ones there? And what of the public affairs? We have had glowing accounts of the fighting in Penn[sylvania] and a victory over Lee and then comes a "modification". How we pray that he may be totally destroyed and an end come to this most wicked affair. To stand at the graves of our boys and think of it, the heart aches.

Poor [Augustus] Bliss. I seldom or never felt so sad towards one who was not a relative. He was beautiful in death, fair as marble but, oh, the aching hearts at home. He was always dutiful and prompt and kept clear of the vices of Army life but his work is nobly done and it is well. He lies nearby at the edge of the woods where the birds are singing and noble trees wavering over him.

We have one of our Co. down with the varioloid, a severe case, Corpl. Sawin of Westminster, another fine fellow.

But I was talking about home and I need not tell you how much my mind dwells there and if we remain quietly here by the sick how eagerly the mail will be watched. No excitement of the march, nothing but frailty for companions, as the men don't come here any more than possible, of course.

I was much surprised and grieved at Dr. Willis' death and he must be a great loss to the community and we feel as tho a friend had gone.

The funeral services here are necessarily simple and brief. A rough box is all for a coffin. The chaplain recited an appropriate Psalm and prayer and slowly the 'boys' move back to camp and all of earth is closed with the weary soldier boy!

But I am growing tired and perhaps sad. I have spoken freely, Allie, because I know you will wish to know the truth and will have the fortitude to bear all. War and its horrors are a family theme now and

many shadows are abroad all over our land, and we must look at and keep a hopeful spirit. I feel that I am being schooled, for what I cannot tell.

I hope to receive another mail before we leave here. Shall feel very anxious to hear from you and about Lulu. Give her a kiss for Papa. Tell her I shook hands with a little Mississippi girl the other day. She was very pretty. We were resting beside the road at "Cameron's Plantation" (the last halt) and she came out with her father, for she looked like him. Could not quite understand her name but it sounded like On-lulu. Told her she had shaken the hand of a Mass. man and her father said the one she loved best, next, of course, to her parents, was a Mass. lady from Fall River, who was her teacher but [she] returned home when the war commenced. Told [her] of my little Lulu but she went bounding off after her papa.

I sent you in my last (of last Fri[day] 24th) Mr. Gerry's poem in dialogs between mother and child with some little cuts from the same paper.

Tell Abbie and other friends I will write soon. Excuse the looks. Campaigning is hard on writing materials.

Ben E. is well. Shall not see much of him for the present.

Now, Allie, keep up good heart and don't let imagination add perils. Danger in some form is our lot and I have become used to it. Shall take the best care of myself possible and write as often as I can.

Give love to all. Have not seen Alonzo for two days.

Accept with the entire love of your husband,
Jerome

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES (Josef Rokus)

NOTE 1: The following excerpt from the Unit History (Page 71) describes the conditions in the Regiment toward the end of July 1863. "On July 23rd at eleven o'clock AM, after a march of fourteen miles, [we] arrived at the old camp at Milldale. The condition of the regiment at this time was miserable indeed. Sixteen cases of small-pox and varioloid, three being officers, were under treatment, and the regimental hospital was filled with sick. The adjutant's morning report of July 24th was as follows: 6 officers and 98 men present sick, 63 men absent in hospitals, and 25 officers and 343 men present for duty. It was a season of general depression among all, and the only thing to relieve the gloom was the prospect of a speedy departure for the North, an event most anxiously awaited and desired."

NOTE 2: In reference to Jerome making a headboard for "poor Buxton," the Unit History states that Charles W. Buxton died of disease on July 23, 1863. He had enlisted at age 18 from Phillipston, Massachusetts, as a Private and was assigned to Company H, the same company that Jerome served with.

NOTE 3: The term "varioloid" was a common 19th century name for smallpox, but in the following century, the term would be used more specifically to describe milder forms of the disease that occurred in previously vaccinated individuals.

Smallpox was a devastating disease. On average, three out of every ten people who contracted it died. Those who survived were usually left with scars, which were sometimes severe, and some were left blind.

The basis for vaccination began in 1796 when an English doctor, Edward Jenner observed that milkmaids who had gotten cowpox did not show any symptoms of smallpox. However, widespread vaccinations did not occur until considerably later.

During the Civil War, it was standard practice to physically separate the men who had contracted the disease in an area away from the main part of the camp to prevent its spread.

NOTE 4: According to the Unit History, both of the other two “attendants” who worked with Jerome in the “Varioloid Hospital” died from illnesses not long after this letter was written. The exact causes of death are not specified in the Unit History; however, it is possible that they contracted smallpox while caring for the smallpox victims as described in this letter.

“Capt. Hastings” was Christopher S. Hastings. He joined the Union Army at the relatively advanced age of 48 from Berlin, Massachusetts, on August 22, 1862. He died at the Mound City, Illinois, General Hospital on Sept. 8, 1863. According to the Unit History, “He was the senior officer, in years, in the regiment, and was universally respected. His age exempted him from military service, but he obeyed the instincts of patriotism and yielded his life at his country’s call. His fellow citizens bestowed upon him important trusts, which he fulfilled with rare fidelity. He was a brave, cheerful, patriotic man, winning the affection of men, who regarded him as a father.”

“H.C. Woodward” was Hiram C. Woodward. He also enlisted at a relatively old age, i.e., 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.

NOTE 5: The “Dr. Tyler” mentioned in this letter was Warren Tyler, who joined the Union Army from North Brookfield, Massachusetts, on August 21, 1862, as an Assistant Surgeon of the 36th Massachusetts Regiment. He resigned on October 20, 1863. He was subsequently appointed as an Assistant Surgeon in the 57th Massachusetts Volunteers Regiment, but he declined the commission.

NOTE 6: Felicia Dorothea Hemans (1793 - 1835) was an English poet. Her works appeared in nineteen books during her lifetime. After her death, they were republished widely, usually as collections of individual lyrics and not the longer, annotated works and integrated series that made up her books.

NOTE 7: In writing about the “glowing accounts of the fighting in Pennsylvania and a victory over Lee,” he was referring to the Battle of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, which resulted in a decisive Union victory on July 3, 1863.

NOTE 8: Augustus E. Bliss enlisted as a Private at age 18 from Orange, Massachusetts, on August 4, 1862, the same date that Jerome enlisted. He died of disease on July 24, 1863, at Milldale, Mississippi.

NOTE 9: Harrison P. Sawin enlisted from Westminister, Massachusetts, at age 21. He died of disease on November 24, 1862, at Knoxville, Maryland.

NOTE 10: The “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 11: 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.

NOTE 12: 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.