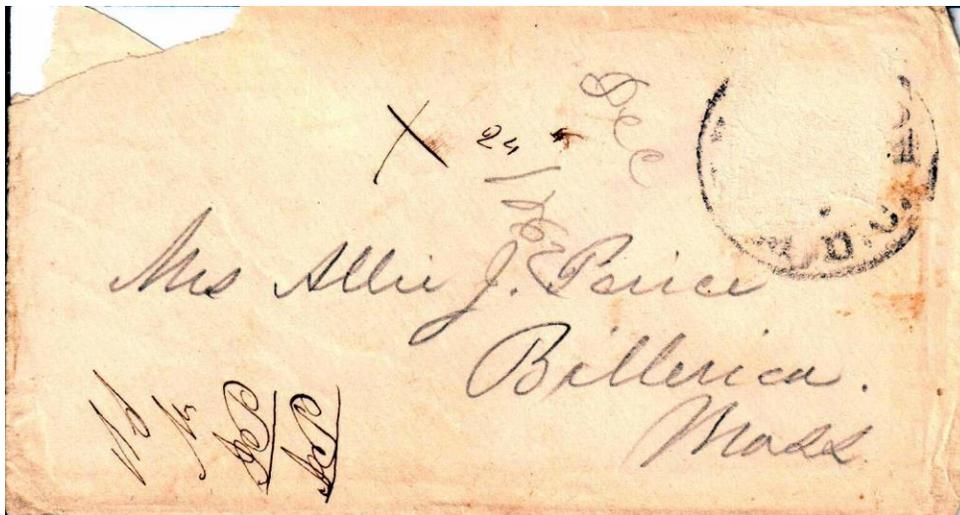


THE SERGEANT JEROME PEIRCE COLLECTION

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ENVELOPE



LETTER TRANSCRIPTION

Monday Eve, 22^d Dec 1862

My dear sister, my very dear Abbie:

Tis a mild, fine evening, with scarce a sound to disturb--a most *favoured hour*, something of the olden time, when I sat in my chamber in the *Corner house* years ago, and *dreamed away* the hours, knowing little or nothing of Care or anxiety. Am all alone in my tent with a *cheerful fire* burning, in a *fireplace*, made of *sods* by own hand! The Brigade is on picke[t] *duty*, my tentmate gone. Have just finished supper, and by my candle have read over you[rs] of last *Tues.* and also one from Allie written at Foster's[.] But to your letter. Your estimate of my nature, and deeds I feel most *sensibly* are are [sic] *undeserved*. I have indeed seen little of this world's *wealth*, but, a certain leisure from real care, and a most bountiful feast of intellectual enjoyment, "beyond Compare" has been mine, and how my mind has *lived* upon it in my wandering experience here in the army!

But what shall I say, my Sister? The fiery ordeal, which has doomed so many to an honored grave, or languishing pain, has passed, and I am still saved! There was a time indeed when, it seemed the "waves had gone over me" but now, I exclaim "Bless the Lord oh my soul" Thou has been our refuge, a very present help in trouble[.]" Dear Abbie, the past week seems like some *strange dream*, when a

certain *fearful vagueness* baffles all attempts to relate it. You have seen some account of the battle. The first bombardment, and burning of the City was on Thurs 11th. We we[re] in line all day near our Camp, waiting for the Pontoon bridges to be laid, which the enemy tried to prevent, and it was that, that drew the fire of Artillery and the ruin of the City. Of course we witnessed it all, never to be forgotten, a mile of *batteries* raining shot and shell for hours, creating a peculiar smoky lurid appearance, of an indescribable kind, while a bright *sunlight* Contended with the "rolling din", like an *angel face* trying to *conceal*, or appease the wrath of man. But *Friday*, what a day! Passed into the City in the A.M. and remained all day, massed with a whole division, on the *Levee* by the river. There was firing from our batteries more or less, thro' the day, and in the P.M. the rebel artillery open upon us for a short time causing some *huddling, and running*. several shell exploded near us, wounding several, and one shot struck in a garden near me while I was looking over the scenes in the houses, when I made, *more than a "double quick"* movement for my post nearby, but found them taking it "very cool", as indeed they did, which Called forth a remark to that effect from Col *Lesuire* [sic] whose Regt lay near us.

A stormed and sacked City is a thing to be seen, not described! Such bewildering *confusion*, such a *chaos* of all things pertaining to *house*, or *shop* keeping! Houses riddled in all possible directions, furniture smashed, books, bedding, crockery, *keepsakes*, scattered in and out of doors, while the soldiers were each trying to carry off some memento of the scene. *books* were the favorite item with many, but many were compelled to return them, on trying to pass the bridge. Our Capt lost a Copy of "Hyperion" (from Mayor Slaughter's house) which his *waiter* tried to bring away, not thinking to conceal it.

It was horrible to see the destruction and pillage. Scarcely a house escaped the ruin, the finest and highest suffering *most*, while the large warehouses for storing *tobacco*, in the Central part of the City, were burned. Sat early we were marched out of the City about a mile, on a ravine, and still near the river, with *bluff* protecting us, and there we waited, with anxious thought, while the battle raged, first on the Right nearest to the City. Soon the enemy began to reply, and soon the Centre and Left joined, while the heavy guns from the other bank of the river, added to the thunder, the shot passing over us. This was the great day, near us, and we learned the *sound of battle*. If I could only sit and *tell you*, but I cannot write all that passed without, and *within*, those long hours. That night, just before dark, were [sic: we] were marched to the top of the bluff where we remained till early (3 oclk) in the

[Page or pages missing]

Love to all Jerome

Wedns P.M. 24th Dec 1862.

Have been very busy for the last few days, and have just sat down in my tent "*Turkish fashion*" to offer a few lines to my dear ones at home. My last letter to you was mailed last *Sat.* and yesterday, no day before yesterday. received yours written from Foster's and *today Came the best*, safe and sound, and it was just the thing and will be of great service, and many thanks for the same. I found no *pencil* with it, but I suppose it was done up at the *clothing Store* (Jacobs & Deane), so you Could not put it in. I looked over the *wrapper* also. I think if one *end of all bundles* was left *open*, the postage would be *less*, for bundles have Come to the boys, much *cheaper*, and quite as much in bulk too.

You spoke of *Socks*. I didn't look carefully. I *do* need *one pair, only*, and a little *yarn*. lost all I had in our "*Skedaddle*" the other day, over the river, besides my *gloves* that Albert S. gave me, (I wrote him a few days since but no reply as yet) but I have sufficient covering for the hands. The weather is variable, but on the whole very *favorable*. yesterday was very *warm*, like *Spring*, but we had to stand in mud and water, three or four hours for ["Division Inspection", by Gen *Sumner*. He spoke of the "terrible place" to stand and said "We ought never to have been put there." I hope it bodes some improvement in future. I admire him, or his appearance, and manners very much.

There is much of sameness in life now, in camp. Have been fixing up our tent, built a *chimney* of sods, which by heat becomes quite hard, have a nice *fireplace* inside, two thirds as wide as the whole end of the tent, while the entire end is sodded up, two small logs laid inside to press the cloth back. many have raised them and some dig down, but our[s] is Cosey [sic] and "warm as toast," while Cedar Boughs give it quite a cheerful appearance, and we get candles (mostly of the sutler), so we try to live as *human as possible*, and are really comfortable. There have been some "tough" stories told. I hear of ones sufferings—*rags*, Cold &c. but I do think *we*, at least, Considering the immense Army[,] fare very well indeed. The "slack" negligent kind suffer, as they will anywhere, but we can keep nice and comfortable. have plenty of good reading and yesterday two or three *boxes* Came to members, and there was some "giving in" but much stuff was spoiled as most of them have been sometime on the way. Had a nice letter from *Jamestown*, since my last. All well, and I should think happy. They all think a great deal of Hannah's *husband*, said he was going to write me (Sarah wrote for all.) There is strong talk of Winter Quarters"--don't know yet. Don't think we shall "*advance*" at any rate. Should like to say more, but can't just yet. I mean about the war and matters generally, for my *opinions* and *notions* and [sic: are] *taking shape somewhat*, as is every soldier whom we meet, and there's some strong talk *at Washington*. You would be astonished to know the Conversation that goes on between the *pickets*. = Eve. Candle light. Have be[e]n *to supper*. *Rice* and *molasses*, and a very little *Coffee*. Eat too much and so you must excuse me if I[']m dull the rest of my letter.

If I could only be there to talk all this *over*. The *Rebs* seem to *regret* seeing our men slaughtered the other day and say they wish both would *Stack arms*, and leave Messrs *Lincoln* and *Davis* to settle it, and this is the way *brave men treat each other*, exchanging papers &c[.] Oh it is wicked, damnable! I must speak it. Hope you had a good time at Foster's, and the City. Allie, I don't *wonder you are lonely*. never did, and trust you will find *hope strong*. I am so well and hopeful perhaps I am not considerate enough for you. forgive me if I am so. Let it comfort you that I am now *comfortable*—have good food, fire & clothes, excellent *health* so that I fill the new *best plump*, and I *work* every day *harder* than I did at home, chopping wood, getting *water*, and getting meals, and read some, but have not lear[n]ed to *love army life*, nor do I forget my home, but only keep as *busy as possible* to make time pass as quickly as possible.

Just think, "night before Christmas"! I hope little Lulu will get the *box* for her present; the *vest* is mine I suppose! —

Last Sunday. Cold enough. Some friends from, Brookfield, I believe—clergymen—spoke a few moments to us. Monday I was alone—worked on the tent. the Reg^t was in "picket", yesterday & today,

busy as mentioned. "Atlantic" not arrived, or clothes. Will Come all right, by and by probably when this is "sealed and delivered." the "letter box" is opposite our tent. Jos H. s[t]ill here, *thinking* I suppose. all is very still. Wrote Allie on *Monday*. Have not seen Alonzo R for some days to speak. Both of us very busy—shall try and see soon. H's position will necessarily prevent my seeing him quite as often. Was glad to know his father and Wessel were safe.

How did things seem on your visit to R? Did you see the *Lorrys*?

I must close for I am quite tired, and will add something for my *Lulu*. Wish I could kiss her. Don't *crowd* her *mind*. Keep her a *child*, as much as *possible*.

Have not answered Will's last, for lack of time. I send the closing part of a letter from Henry P[e]irce. Is'nt [sic] he a fine penman for one so young? Am all out of *Stamps* and Ink, but if I can have a good *black* pencil Can do nicely.

Give much love to all the folks. Tell Father I shall get to be tough enough for a *farmer* sometime! I like the "*Ploughman*" very much. Its new Editors I think have improved it.

As ever Your Affectionate
husband

Jerome P.

*[The lines between here and the sketches are in the hand of Henry Peirce.
The rest of the sheet contains a note from Jerome Peirce to his daughter.]*

not find much news in this letter but the fact is I have not a great deal on hand. But it is getting late and I must close[.] give my love to Alonzo, and cousin Joe if you see him and remember me as your

affectionate nephew

Henry S Peirce.

[Sketch No. 1]

[Sketch No. 2]

My darling little Lulu,

Papa has tried to draw the "little house" he lives in, that Aunt Abbie told you about. The picture no 1. is the outside. see the *smoke* coming out of the Chimney? the rough notches on the back side, are the *sods*, which Cover the end. The little dots are the buttons, that fasten the cloth together, for it is most all Cloth, with a few *sti[c]ks*[,] one in *front*, like *[Sketch No. 3]* which is the *frame* and fine lines to show how the cloth goes over them.

Two upright sticks on the back side to hold up the chimney (as one Could not come down in front.) No 2 Shows he fireplace inside of the tent. We sleep feet towards the fire, pine and cedar boughs packed down outside (and in) so I sleep very warm with Cousin Jos. Henry. Knapsack, what I keep *clothes* in. *Haversack*, what I keep *vitals* in tin plates, spoons, and a little *bit of a tin toy pan* for little Lulu sometime (found it in the street over the river) mustard box, with *salt* in now[?], a little bag of sugar & Coffee. So you see I have a *closet* and *Cupboard* but they lay on the *floor*, and do not *set up* as at *Grandma's*. Papa's tired, and must send a kiss & good night[.] Mama will talk to you more about it. There's some pretty pine trees grows near papa's house, and on the left of the picture, No 1[,], you see the *wood pile* got today, while the *Cloth door* is partly open. if you Could peep in you would see papa writing this, and the "*twinkling* little stars" outside. Goodnight, and may the good Angels keep you with *mama* for your loving Papa.

J. P.