

THE SERGEANT JEROME PEIRCE COLLECTION

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WRITTEN BY	Jerome
WRITTEN TO	Allie
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ENVELOPE



LETTER TRANSCRIPTION

Crab Orchard, Ky. 9th Sept/63

My Dearest Wife,

'Tis evening and by a candle I send a few words to my dear ones at home. What shall I say? Yours of [the] 2nd so full of joyous anticipation with thought of soon meeting me made my heart ache as I thought of the uncertainties and disappointments of a soldier's life and this I know will be so to you and find it hard to talk about.

Orders came just now that we must 'forward' tomorrow morning and the prospect is we must give up the thought of meeting for the present. It grieves me, dear Allie, to tell you this but let us hope that the future will show that it was all for the best, altho we may not quite see it. From some unaccountable reason the papers which was to send me with others home do not come to hand. The brigade commander does not understand it and probably the officers, Capt. Holmes and Lieut. Hodgkins, will return to the Regt. We can only think it is because we're moving so far and the difficulties of communication.

Had a talk with Alonzo. He is in the dark of course. The order was from headquarters in regular official order and we must call it one of the strange things of war and army life. I had hoped for a

delightful meeting but I have become accustomed to almost everything but I know how disappointed you will all be, but we did not think such things would be, as the others were receiving conscripts. Alonzo thinks we may yet, even at Knoxville, receive some word. It is "official" and must be answered some way. I hope you will see some good meaning to it, as I am trying to, and still hope on that our forward movement will presage an early close of the war.

We have got a long march before us. Let it comfort you to think how well I have always been and now I am in most excellent health and very hopeful and if we can help bring an end I feel as tho I could still march a long way.

Alonzo is in fine spirits and feels as I do but very many of our poor boys will have to stay behind. I expect we've a 160 miles before us but it is to be made as easy as possible, marching about ten miles a day which leaves the P.M. and night to rest and finally I hope we shall strike the great line of R[ail]road at Knoxville which will seem nearer home than here, almost.

My dear Allie, this is the hardest letter I have had to write since I came out but everything looked so square and fair I could but speak confidently so do try and be resigned and believe that a happy meeting yet awaits us which may be longer for the waiting.

Had a nice letter from Mr. Herring. Enclosing one from H. Hoover. He has had an easy time. Jos. H. recd. a nice letter from Nellie. Tell her he appreciates it and that he is worthy of it. His ambitious and kindly attentions will do ever so much for him. I am only happy to share my part of the letters with him. Indeed, we read each other's. Continually, army life has been a benefit to him decidedly and he thinks everything of the General.

It is dark and the crickets are singing while Mr. Stevens and another soldier boy are enjoying a game of Euchre.

Wrote sister Kate two days ago and Geo. today. Shall send a few lines to Murray with Hoover's letter in return.

Ben is well and sympathizes with us in this disappointment, all the more as he has had such a delightful meeting with his wife.

I must bid you goodnight. I hope you have not told Lulu, the darling. She little knows, but like her we must think of the Good Father who has so wonderfully preserved us. Oh Allie, when I think of what I have passed thru, I cannot mourn us but only say "all is well" and the future full of blessing and so I believe.

Love to all and a goodnight kiss and the entire love of your Jerome.

Direct letters the same as ever and write often and tell the friends to. I shall write often. Shall be moving for 2 days probably.

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES (Josef Rokus)

NOTE 1: Otis W. Holmes, from Milford, Massachusetts, enlisted as a Sergeant at age 27 on September 8, 1861, in the 25th Massachusetts Regiment. He was transferred as a First Lieutenant to Co. F of the 36th Massachusetts on August 12, 1862, and then to Company B of the 36th on May 2, 1863. Holmes died in Harewood General Hospital, Washington, D.C. on June 23, 1864, of wounds received in action near Petersburg, Virginia, on June 17, 1864.

NOTE 2: William H. Hodgkins, from Charlestown, Mass., enlisted as a 22-year-old private in July 1862. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant in October of that year, received steady promotions, and was mustered out with the 36th Massachusetts Regiment as a brevet major. He was the principal author of the Unit History of the regiment titled *History of the Thirty-sixth Regiment Massachusetts Volunteers. 1862-1865* which is now available on-line on Google Books.

NOTE 3: 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 4: 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.