

THE SERGEANT JEROME PEIRCE COLLECTION

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WRITTEN BY	Jerome
WRITTEN TO	My dear ones (Allie and Lulu)
WRITTEN AT	Cumberland Gap, Ky.
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ENVELOPE



LETTER TRANSCRIPTION

"Cumberland Gap", Ky
19 Nov 1863

Once more my dear ones I send a few words from the wagon.

Time drags slowly away and still I don't see the Regt. or hear from home. A month tomorrow since I left you.

I wrote you how we arrived here Sat. [Saturday] noon last in the middle of rain, etc. and so we remained till yesterday morning when we went to the top of the Gap and unloaded our rations. A wild rough climb I assure you. A winding rocky road hundreds of feet above the valley to a little level place where the commissary stores are kept. A good deal of stir is manifest here, rumors of fighting at Knoxville, Burnside falling back etc., etc. and they are fortifying the heights in addition to what is already there and yesterday they are sending to the top a small rifle battery. Col. Bowman is here [as] Chief of Artillery. Spoke with him several times. Signal lights by night etc., etc. and things look ominous but all may still be well. None of us can get beyond the Gap at present, so I don't know when I shall see the Regt. and yet I cannot say that you can send letters here yet. Saw Lieut. Hodgkins too (with Co.

[Company] B). He said Alonzo was on a 30 day furlough (met him in Worcester). Should return at the expiration of that time. I am in hopes to see him and get letters by him if perchance I cannot get to the Regt.

Time hangs rather heavy but I make the best of it. I am reading over occasionally your last letter to me at Long Island, the only one I have, and a little 'Cowper' (I found in Cincinnati) and I should suffer if it were not for them.

Expect my term of service as mule driver is about up as we shall probably report "upstairs" (at the Gap) soon and await our chances to go forward.

'Tis a grand place for scenery, hills on hills accumulate. Went to the top of the highest points yesterday where the pieces of cannon are planted and I saw away down into "Dixie" towards Tenn., Virg. and Kentucky, behind us an ocean of mountains with the "Cumberland" range looming up above the rest, while the winding roads up the peaks immediately about us looked more like pictures I have seen of "Gibraltar" as indeed it is.

Hear no definite news, only what some stray citizen or officer may report and they don't agree very well. I hope Burnside will not have to fall back here. If we lose possession of E. [East] Tenn. the people will have much to answer for in not better sustaining by reinforcements promptly.

There are rumors that the main body of Lee's Army is coming this way and that they are making desperate efforts to drive us out entirely, etc. but time alone can decide.

But I gladly and often turn to you at home and imagine you all so busy and I trust well. I suppose it is beginning to look "coldish" with you. 'Tis not very cold here but chilly, just a few flakes of snow the other day which just silvered over and gave a beautiful touch to the lofty hills behind us. But rain and mud and the elements here at present, and then it will come out sunny and warm as it is this morning.

Have been cleaning up my gun and unpacking my things a little this morning in prospect of a change. Whittled out a finger ring of laurel root, much in vogue for pipes, rings, etc. among the boys. Looks like birds eye maple and is pretty and tough. 'Tis large, something like this, (for the little finger.) Do you think it becoming?

My wagon mates are gone and I am all alone in the wagon among malt or rather empty corn sacks, bags of oats, guns, blankets, etc., etc. and the general "litter" of an almost empty army wagon, with my open knapsack close by my side while lots of wagons and still more of mules having had their breakfast and still and dozy, and such is life just now, and so the days go by that bring my term of service a little nearer its close.

Forgot to mention my birthday. Did you think of it?

Was at Barboursville, Ky 30 miles back where we stopped for a day and got some forage, corn.

We see a little of the people about here. They are principally women on horseback with corn bread to sell or perhaps a few apples, and poor at that. Have not purchased much. Army rations still holding out.

How does Lulu 'come on' with her learning and lessons? How much I want to hear from you but I know 'tis not your fault but "all is well." I hope and I can at least write to you and you must share in a measure with the rest, for paper is scarce here, so I cannot write each separately.

Love to all. Am in good health.

Accept once more the best love of your husband

Jerome

The mail was stopped here the other day for the present but I don't expect it is allowed to be opened. [???] will send to the Regt. for the present.

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES (Josef Rokus)

NOTE 1: 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 2: A small sketch of the ring mentioned in the letter is include in the letter.