

THE SERGEANT JEROME PEIRCE COLLECTION

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ENVELOPE



LETTER TRANSCRIPTION

Newport News 26th Feb. 1863

My own dear Wife,

'Tis P.M. Have just come in from Co[mpany] drill and will send a few lines and will tell you why not but a few lines, 'tho you know I always 'string out' quite a letter.

Well just as I got ready to write you yesterday, Corp. S[awin] looked into our tent and said I could get a pass to go to Suffolk! (I had mentioned the subject before.) so I posted off at once. Got the Major's (Goddell), (Col B[owman] is at home.) signature, also the Brigade Officer (Col. Leasure) and started off in fine spirits this morn.

Left N.P. [Newport] at 8 am "all right" but alas when arrived at Fortress Monroe no "passes" for soldiers beyond there! Well I've been here in the Army long enough to know there are many slips between Provost Marshalls and the place you wish to see. So ends my attempts to see Frank and Will. Came directly back here where I arrive at dinnertime. The trip was very pleasant, got a sight of a few ladies, citizens and saw once again the beautiful Bay. Also ran upon young Merrill of Charlestown who

was taken prisoner at Harper's Ferry in the N.Y. Artillery. You remember Mr. Merrill the tailor in C[harlestown], his oldest son.

Matters are moving on here. Had a Grand Review yesterday by Gen. Dix. A magnificent affair. 20,000 troops, the whole Corps, and we had a much better opportunity of seeing them, and I never saw so fine a display as they were all well clothed and in good spirits and a fine day.

It is to be an animated scene here. Now Co[mpany] and Battalion and Brigade drills every week and almost every day in the week. The 2^d Brigade is now on drill closely with a full band, and I can hear the officers giving orders as I sit here.

But I must send you something. I did expect to write from Suffolk.

It was thought there was fighting on the Blackwater [River] Tues(day) eve. Could hear firing but have not ascertained yet any particulars.

I received yours of the 19th (15th letter), also one written the 15th and numbered which I believe I have answered.

Have had a severe storm here last Sunday, snow and ending in rain and Tues. noon our tent blew over with a good many others. I was sitting eating bread and applesauce (we have dried apple regularly) and the sight was comical in the extreme for many were doing as many different things. Corpl. S[awin] was writing and his whole affair, portfolio paper, half written letters were scattered for quarter of a mile, and much stationery spoiled. I didn't dare attempt writing that day. Read all day, papers, Shakespeare, Testament, Adam's letters, etc. etc. and thought very much of my dear ones at home!

Have strolled about considerable on the beach. Have some curious specimens I wish I could send home. Ben E. is quite an enthusiast in collecting sea mosses. I send you one piece or two you may take your choice and send one to Abbie at his request with his regards. They are gathered by dipping the paper into the water, sliding under the moss and gathering up slowly, keeping the form of the specimen, and then pressing them in an old book. They will adhere to the writing paper and appear as you see like a nice painting. Don't attempt to pull them off of the paper, trim it, the paper, if you wish and keep them in a book. I shall gather some more with him sometime if we can find time.

It storms here more or less here every few days or hours and we can't be absent from camp but a short time.

I fear there is little hope for Alonzo R. [Ranlett] Expect to hear today or evening from you and I trust [from] him also. It will be a blow to many and I feel that I cannot say anything but only wish they may bear up under it all. Surely we're all born but not buried and know not our share of sorrow and trouble. There is much that I cannot write, as I think A's [Alonzo's] sickness which makes it sad to think of. A strange fatality seems to linger about Co. B for the Lieut. Col. (Capt. Norton that was of [Company] B) is at home very sick and there seems a prospect of quite a change of officers in the 36th.

Had a religious meeting in our street last eve., speaking, singing and prayer.

Just as I got here it was "fall in for mail call!" How I jumped out of our tent! And how delighted I was to get a dear good letter from your precious self, Ed Peirce with "Lady of the Lake," from E.P. several stamps, and a paper from friend Murray. I must close for I feel I must answer briefly E.'s letter for we have to mail all letters by 5 P.M. and subject to so many interruptions.

I have to work fast and I often regret that I am compelled to send such unfinished letters, but be assured they are fondly read and re-read and after a while I hope I expressed something that may cheer and comfort you, but at least tells that I love you all deeply as ever and my best moments and feeling are yours.

Will refer more to your last [letter] in my next. Thanks and love to Mary.

Am very sorry I could not go to Suffolk but such are the regulations of the Army.

Ed writes that Alonzo is a little better, but fears he may be into consumption.

Thanks for your stamps, am well supplied now. Edwd. P has been very attentive to me of late. Will send his letter next time, if not this. Must go to headquarters and tell them the news.

Kiss for my Lulu. Would I could see her! If she is only a good girl, and loves and minds her mother 'twill make Papie very happy.

Health excellent good and ever
your loving husband
Jerome

Excuse the looks of this paper. An accident of the Camp Newport News sand. Will tell you when I send the box.

Be patient and you will hear from the Capt. He is very kind to me.

No. 4 N.P. [**Transcriber's Note:** This is probably Jerome's sequential letter identification number. N.P. is probably Newport.]

My regards to Mr. Galloway.

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES

NOTE 1: Corporal Farwell Sawin was 31 years old when he enlisted as a Corporal from Westminister, Massachusetts, on August 11, 1862, i.e., seven days after Jerome enlisted. On August 9, 1863, he died of disease at Vicksburg, Mississippi.

NOTE 2: The Regimental History indicates that General Dix, the commander of Fortress Monroe, reviewed the 9th Corps on February 25, 1863. During the six weeks at Newport News, the History states: "much attention was given to regimental, brigade and division drills. About five hours each day were devoted to these exercises, and they were of great value in perfecting the discipline and adding to the efficiency of the regiment." (p. 34)

NOTE 3: The Adams letters may refer to the correspondence of John and Abigail Adams, one of the Founding Fathers and second President and his wife. Over 1100 letters from their courtship through his political career were saved and published. The Adams lived in Quincy, Massachusetts, 10 miles south of Boston, while the Peirces lived in Billerica, about the same distance from Boston but northwest of Boston.

NOTE 4: The reference to "Lady of the Lake" could refer to several written materials. Ben Jonson, an English playwright in the 17th century wrote a play by that name. Sir Walter Scott published a narrative poem by that name in 1810. "Lady of the Lake" was an enchantress in the legends of King Arthur.

NOTE 5: A provost marshal is the head of the military police in a camp

NOTE 6: Consumption, now known as tuberculosis, is a disease cause by bacteria that usually attacks the lungs. At the turn of the 20th century it was the leading cause of death in the U.S. It was known as the "Great White Plague" due to the extreme paleness of those affected.

NOTE 7: The Blackwater River flows from Petersburg Virginia into Albemarle Bay. For a time during the Civil War, it was the dividing line between Union-occupied territory and Confederate Virginia.

NOTE 8: Sea moss, often referred to as Irish Moss, is a species of red algae, varying in color from light and dark green, to red, purple and white. It is a type of seaweed, ranging up to eight inches in length.