

Fort Vancouver, Wash. Ter

28th Jan, 1856

My dear mother:

I am glad to have another opportunity of writing before the departure of the mail steamer. The mails have been on rather irregular schedule, depending on the uncertain arrival of the boat which is uncertain, however only as regards the exact time; it is sure to come and go twice a month.

The mail as I said in my last letter written a day or two ago had been announced closed but owing to information since received as to it's time of arrival of the steamer the mail has been reopened. I said when I first wrote from this place that I would shortly be in quarters as good as I occupied at Old Point. I have possession of those quarters now but continue to sleep in camp in my tent, believing that commanding officers of companies ought to show the ... to their companions.

The drilling and dress parades and all the pomp and circumstance go on just the same as at Fort Monroe..

I am very sorry to lose Guthrie who has gone to Stillicoom with Company I<sup>a</sup> ? and his own company under Lt. Col Casey. Col Casey, at Guthrie's request, applied for my company instead of G but could not get it. I know nothing about the future disposition of our regiment except ~~as~~ our headquarters will be the Dalles. I have been too busy since arrival to call on the ladies but have visited Mrs. Lugenbeel, Mrs. ? and daughter and Major ? and family. Mrs. Winder who is just like one of our own people at home with all those qualities which most adorn a woman--modesty and simplicity ~~that might be expected~~ has not quite as much elegance perhaps as might be expected. I still admire Steptoe as much as ever and Lugenbeel keeps his promise of being all right--his wife reminds me of my cousin whom I have often told you I was the proudest of, the Misses Gover and his little daughter of about six years all completely won my heart.

We are not quite so far out in the woods as you might perhaps think from looking at the map and estimating the number of miles from Maryland



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since we receive the mail/ once in two weeks and have the Hudson Bay Company's depot here ~~which~~ which supplies us with all necessities in the way of boots, blankets and smoking tobacco.

As soon as we entered the mouth of the Columbia River Col. Wright and Col Steptoe who had both kept to the dignity of segars up to that time brought out their merschaum pipes and segars are amonst the memories of the past.

Nannie, my dear sister, my constant companion while at home, my usual companion when aboard, much less ~~sister~~ sister and Kate and Mary all of whom I so much love and my brothers and nieces can not quarrel with me for writing to you in profusion--or for loving you if it is possible to make the compassion more than all.

Ever, most affectionately yours J.J. Archer.

Half past twelve--good ~~night~~ <sup>Night</sup> but half past twelve here, owing to the distance west, is four o'clock in the morning in Baltimore so that I owe you an apology for waking you at such an unreasonable hour to say good night in the morning.



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My dear Bob:

I wrote to you from the bay of Panama and suppose that of course you received my letter. We arrived in San Francisco on the 12th inst.. Immediately on my arrival I went to see Oliver Thomas. He was not expecting me and seemed very much delighted at our meeting. He gives rather a gloomy picture of the condition of things and of the prospects of seekers of fortunes in California. As for himself and his own prospects he is satisfied but has abandoned the thought of making a fortune.--Olly was with me all the time I could remain ashore during four days of my stay at San Francisco.

When we arrived at San Francisco Gen. Wool the commander of the Pacific Department was absent in Oregon and had left orders for the 9th to proceed at once to Fort Vancouver--when we arrived at Vancouver which was on the 20th inst Gen. Wool had gone back to California expecting to meet us at San Francisco in which event he would have detained us in California until late enough in the spring for the troops to take the fields. Had we remained we should have had the benefit of a delightful climate and comfortable quarters for the men.

The rgt. is at present encamped on the parade ground--it was four days before boards could be had for flooring the tents but now we are quite comfortably fixed--we may stay where we are all winter or we may go further up to the Dalles at the Dalles also we would have to encamp but the weather although considerably colder than here is much dryer and more suitable for living in tents--Major Rains said yesterday that it rains ~~ten~~ ten days here for one at the Dalles.

I have seen nothing as yet of the country except the islands and the banks of the river. I have not yet seen a thousand acres of cultivated land and all the timber of the hills is fir tree, that of the islands is fir, cottonwood and birch. The principal part of the town of Vancouver consists of the buildings of the Hudson Bay Company--this is the



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furs and has been a place of considerable trade with the Indians. Major  
Haller is stationed at the Dalles, he came down a day or two since to sit as  
one of a board of examiners some new appointments to the fourth infantry  
and is here now. Two of the young officers who were to have been examined  
received notice yesterday that the board would adjourn one day to give them  
an opportunity tonight, that they would not pass on account of objections  
to their moral character. The want of sufficiently good moral character  
consisting in the fact of their having got drunk several times at the post--  
one of them behaved very badly , going to a ball of the non-commissioned  
officers and getting drunk and acting in such a manner as to ~~make~~ break up  
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(To Robert H. Archer)



Fort Vancouver, Washington Territory  
12th February, 1856

My dear mother:

We are still encamped here but have made ourselves comfortable. All the tents are floored with thick fir boards, slightly ~~are~~ raised on ~~cleaving~~ <sup>??</sup> above the ground--the weather has become mild with less frequent rains and has assumed the appearance of springtime.

We continue drill twice a day except when prevented by rains with the same routine of dress parades as at Fort Monroe--every Tuesday we have a dance at the officers mess room and every Sunday Major ~~Deas~~ Rains reads the Episcopal church services for the benefit of all who desire to hear it.

I have not as yet visited any of the neighboring country which I am told is worth seeing, except the valley of the Willamette river, (pronounced Wil-am-et, accent on the 2nd syllable,) which above Portland expands to the width of twenty thirty and even places forty miles and is populace and very fertile. It is famous for the excellence of its fruits producing pears, apples, peaches etc. ~~and~~ of lucious taste and large size than other parts of the world. These are shipped to the fruit markets of San Francisco.

Yesterday by the express from Fort ~~Stallacoom~~ <sup>steilacoom</sup> and Olympia I received a letter of welcome to Washington Territory ~~by~~ from Tilton, the surveyor general whom I hope to see soon as he is expected here in his other capacity of adjutant general of the territory to muster two companies of volunteers.

I have not heard from you since the 15 January at San Francisco and for fear I may not hear again I will mention that I have recently been informed that in future no letter not fully prepaid will be transmitted through the postoffice and that the postage between the Pacific and Atlantic coasts is ten cents.

I am listening for the gun which is to announce the arrival of the



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steamer from San Francisco with <sup>its</sup> tidings from the east which I love as a Persian worshipper of the sun. Ever affectionately yours J.J. Archer.

Feb. 15-- I left my letter open <sup>in</sup> order to continue it up to the last moment but the steamer from San Francisco remained but two hours from the time of arrival so that I can only say all well.

With love to all

Yours affectionately

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Fort Vancouver, W.T. March 7 1856

My dear mother:

I was delighted to receive letters from Nannie, Mary, Kate and <sup>(?)</sup> by the last steamer, good affectionate letters with the breath of home fresh upon them. Never let them fail to write. I am always looking anxiously for their letters. No excitement of Indian campaigns or changes of scenery can make me for a moment forget the ~~dear~~ dear ones at home. Why does not Sister H. Write. Is it possible that she cannot see to do it? I am afraid my dear mother that I ought not to have left you but I hope it is all for the best that I may return to you and I will not give up the hope, however impossible it may ~~seem~~ appear to you, that whenever I do return it will be for good. Do not think because I look back so fondly at all I have left behind that I am dissatisfied with my position for I assure you that apart from my regret at our separation everything is agreeable to me. Of course we are all tired of our long delay at Vancouver occasioned by a variety of circumstances over which Col. Wright has no control but this period of inactivity is fast drawing to a close and we are now under marching orders. Capt. Augur of the 4th Infy. has left with his company for Fort Orford on Oregon coast. Capt. Wallin's company of the 4th and Fletcher's and Woodruff's company's left this morning for the Dalles and will be followed

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tomorrow by mine and Paterson's and the next day by Winder's and Bowman's and the day after by Dent's. There are already at the Dalles two company's of the 4th Infy. under Maj. Haller and Capt. Russell, one of dragoons under Bvt. Maj. Fitzgerald and one of artillery under Lt. Piper ??? Last night we had a grand ball at a new unfinished building just erected for dragoon quarters--all the ladies of the garrison of whom there are eighteen, two young pretty and accomplished ladies from Astoria (Misses Adair) and the ladies of the Hudson's Bay company were present. I have seldom seen as pleasant a party. We ~~leave~~ leave all the ladies at Vancouver. I must now stop for a moment to go and inspect the clothing of my company and see that each man is provided with ~~everything~~ everything for the campaign.

Cascades W.T. 11th March

1856

We left Vancouver on the 8th (Saturday) at 10 o'clock a.m. by the steamboat [Perhaps Belle] Bella and arrived at the Cascades about sundown--encamped for the night and next morning marched across the portage a distance of six miles and again encamped. Col. Wright and his staff who came up from Vancouver with me left yesterday morning with Company C for the Dalles. I am to follow tomorrow

When I had my first experience of baking bread--in the Mexican campaign--the troops were supplied with rations of biscuit or soft bread but when we left Vancouver I had for my company only one day's rations of bread, the rest of flour. Captains Winder and Bowman ~~also~~ arrived this morning with their companies. The weather at ~~the~~ Vancouver since 20th Feb. was like our April, but the nights and mornings here are cold.

Throughout the day it is warm enough to sit in our shirtsleeves and today I enjoyed a delicious bath in the Columbia river. The scenery at this point is very grand--the river falls sixty feet in a distance of 1 1-2 miles and the mountains on each side rise almost perpendicularly to the height of from 1,500 to 2,000 feet. I am encamped on a little peninsula formed by the Columbia and the windings of a creek which empties



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about 150 feet above the river and a quarter of a mile distant from it. It has quarters for three or 400 men. Two inches of snow fell here. There are two Co's H, (Guthrie's) and D or J under Lt. Col (Casey) I go to Ft. Steilacoom on Puget Sound. Maj. Haller is stationed at the Dalles.

Cascades, W.T.

11 March

Dear Mother:

Left Vancouver on the 8th by steamboat, Bella and arrived at the Cascades. Camped and marched across the portage a distance of 6 miles and camped. Col. Wright and staff left on Sunday with Co. C for the Dalles.

March 12

The Steamer Mary, on which we traveled, is as big as a ferry boat. We set out but returned last night to wait for better weather. The boat is loaded with our mules. It travels only about 3 miles an hour upstream. It is 40 miles from the Dalles.

16th March

Fort Dalles, like Vancouver, is no fort at all. Only a few houses on the side 1 mile from the river, sufficient to accommodate three companies.

General Wool visited Vancouver since we left and made a change in Col. Wright's assignments. He has sent Dent and Fletcher's companies to Steilacoom. We will now be en route to Walla Walla but for want of wagons.

The place called the Dalles but it is really two miles below the dalles. I went a mile to the Catholic Church to see the Indians at devotions. The sermon was in the Chinook.

into the river about a hundred yards above me.

Cascades W.T.

12th March 1856

The steamer Mary, about as big as the ferry boat that plies between

Havre de Grace and Port Despoit returned last night.

~~The~~ owner who wanted to wait for better weather in order that he might ~~tow~~ <sup>pull</sup> up a flat boat with mules tried to make me believe that she could not ascend the river against the strong head wind but my tents are already struck and all my baggage piled up on the wharf and by his contract with the quartermaster she is subject to my order and I will be off in an hour.

Fort Dalles, Oregon Territory

16th March, 1856

My Dear Mother:

Left the Cascades <sup>at</sup> 9 1-2 o'clock on the 12th inst and steamed along up at the rate of about 3 miles an hour our slow progress giving ample opportunity to observe the scenery--nothing meets the eye through the whole distance of forty miles but mountains, rocks and water and grand and even sublime as it is I confess that I grew weary of it. I should have been pleased to see occasionally some cultivated slopes and farm houses some little sign of civilization or of the possibility of cultivation. It is impossible to keep an interest in the sublime for so long a time. I had had nothing else since I left Vancouver. Even a change to the ridiculous would have been an agreeable variety. If you will take up Ossian and attempt to read it straight through without a single interruption you will be able to appreciate the weariness of the voyage on the volumbia.

Fort Dalles like Fort Vancouver is no fort at all, only a few houses on the side of the mountain, 1 mile from the river, sufficient to accommodate about three companies.

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This place is called the Dalles but is really two miles below the Dalles -- the name dalles signifying a narrow passage between perpendicular banks. At the Dalles proper you can throw a stone across the river.

18th March, 1856

Our first three nights at the Dalles were cold and water froze half an inch thick in my tent, since then there has been a constant strong wind blowing from the west filling the air with clouds of fine dust. The westerly winds blows without intermission from this time until the rainy season commences in the autumn.

Major Lugenbeel desires to be particularly mentioned to you.

Capt. Woodruff and Lt. Carr send their greetings to Nannie--Carr desires me to say to her that he much regrets his inability to stop even for an hour in Baltimore and especially to say to her that he will take excellent care of ~~me~~. He has, on his application, been permanently transferred to my company and I find it a great relief and very agreeable after being so long without a subaltern to assist me. Day before yesterday, (Sunday) Harvie and I went about a mile to the Catholic Church to see the converted Indians at their devotions--their sermon and hymns were delivered in Chinook language. I am to acquire some knowledge of it as it is to Indians west of the Rocky Mountains what the French is to England although there are many distinct languages amongst the various tribes the Chinook is spoken by all.



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( have not yet had occasion to use my mess chest--it will be brought into use however as soon as we leave the Dalles. I was invited to join each of the messes which have been established here by 4th inftry. and dragoons and as the dragoons mess consisted of only Maj. Fitzgerald, and Lt. Davidson, Carr, Col. Steptoe, Dr. Randolph and I, found ~~was~~ it a very pleasant little dinner table society. The officers of the other companies of the rgt. each have their separate mess in camp. I postponed the trouble of housekeeping until compelled to it by necessity, although Carr is anxious that we should try some experiments in getting up meals for ourselves in camp. Soldiers are the ~~only~~ only servants to be had here I have an excellent one whom I never once spoke to on the subject. He just naturally took it up. He would even warm up my tent and fix my fire, watch for me to take off my boots which he would seize upon while my back was turned, carry off and bring back nicely blacked. He would watch me leave my tent and as soon as I was gone make up my bed, fold my clothes and arrange trunks, camp stools etc in the most systematic manner. I often pretended to be asleep when he comes in to wake me up to reville, to amuse myself with his soft gentle way of doing it--more like putting me to sleep than waking me up.

Give my love to all. If I have time I will write to uncle Herman whom I regret that I did not see before I left.



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