

Fort Simcoe, W.T.

2d December, 1856

My Dear Bob:

I don't know whether or not you ever received my letter I wrote to you from the Isthmus of Panama and from Vancouver or from my first camp on the Nachess river last May.

I would be perfectly satisfied if I could exchange any one of the officers here for you so that I would have you with me . I know you would not be satisfied with less than captain or less than command of a company.

The situation of Fort Simcoe is quite pretty, being an oak grove about ten acres at the head of a valley of some 10 or 15 miles in width.... about midway between the point where the Simcoe and Topnish come down through gorges of the mountains and enter the valley and about 30 miles from the point where having joined there after about eight miles they empty into the Yakima. Our little grove is watered by three never failing springs. of finest water.

It is slightly elevated above the valley, all of which with the mountains on each side we have a full view for thirty miles yet in this whole distance there is not a tree to be seen except in our little grove and in two similar groves to the right and the fringe of trees along the Simcoe and Topnish which are however too distant to be distinguished. All the timber in the country is either the pine which is ~~found~~ found on the top, the slopes and in the gorges. The mountains are high enough for the snow to rest upon during the greater part of the year, thus affording moisture necessary for the willow, birch, alder and cottonwood which fringes the water course.

We get our timber for building from a gap in the mountains two miles back. The game in the country is grouse, of which there are four varieties , the daumming (?) pheasant, such as we have at home, the pine grouse which nearly resembles it but is inferior in brilliancy of plumage and boldness of flight, the sage hen, about the size of a large chicken cock and the

the prairie chicken, a little larger than the pheasant. The flesh of both the sage hen and pheasant grouse is dark and not very strong.

I have not seen the *Daumming* (sic) grouse this side of the Cascades but there are plenty of them between that and Vancouver which is all a well wooded country. There is, as you know a tradition amongst us at home that the red foxes are not "aborigines" of the country but that they were imported into Maryland a long time ago. This may have been true for our eastern states but they are not likely to have been imported into this country.

One was caught alive the other day by our Indian interpreter and brought into camp. It was a veritable old fashioned red fox.

I enclose to you two feathers, one from the wing and one from the tail of a fletcher that you may observe closely the difference in color.

3rd Dec, 1856

The winter is at last upon us. On the 20th of last month we had a fall of snow 14 inches deep which I suppose will lay on the ground all winter. The weather is becoming intensely cold. I had to thaw my ink before I communicated with you and it freezes in my pen as I write so that I have to hold my pen to the candle to melt it although there is a big fire just in front of my tent.

Woodruff's Co. arrived here on the 21st in the midst of the snow.

Thursday, Dec. 4, 1856

While I stopped writing a few minutes to warm my fingers last evening the ink again froze in the inkstand and I concluded to lay by my pen until morning. This morning I find the weather a good deal milder. But Thursday there was more snow.

Lt. Myers who has been absent from the company since Oct 5 arrived with the expressman. They encountered snow in the mountains two and a half feet deep when it was not drifted. The direct route to the Dalles soon will be impassable but there is another by the Yakima

river which we hope to keep up our communication with you.

Tilton's brother is one of the expressmen. ~~He~~ He was here two weeks ago and staid in my tent with me.

Guthrie wrote me by last mail that all is quiet there (on the Sound) as far as the Indians of the territory are concerned but that he had a brush with a party of Northern Indians from British Columbia who were committing depredations in his neighborhood. He drove them off but he says they have committed numerous acts of hostility along the Sound and that the steamer, Massachusetts had gone in pursuit of them and it was surmised had an engagement with them. It was also surmized tha they were about making an attack on Capt. Pickett at Bellingham Bay. Those northern Indians are very numerous and warlike and Guthrie seems to anticipate a lively time. All is quite and peaceful this side of the Cascades.

We are still busily engaged in building and preparing materials. For the last month we have a saw mill at work with horse (or rather mule power) which has superceded the whip saw we had ben working with. With the exception of one or two citizen carpenters all the labor of building the post is done by the soldiers. Every man of whom is for that purpose on "extra duty" in the quartermaster department. Company F (Woodruff's) and G (Late Bowman) went into quarters last Sunday. My company and Co. C (Patterson's) will get in by next Sunday, sure. The officers will get into ~~quarters~~ quarters about a week later. Each officer will have for the winter one room about the size of a tent. When our quarters are all finished however, which will not be before next fall, we will have ample room. Each captain will have a separate one-story house with a hall and three rooms on the first floor and a back building for kitchen and servants' room. Each lieutenant will have the same except that the quarters of two lieutenants will be under one room. In the meantime we will be very glad to

get the scantiest quarters where we can have shelter.

Capt. Woodruff, who arrived the second day after Maj. Garnett left, will command the post until Garnett's return.

I occasionally get a letter from Oliver Thomas. From what he tells me I should think San Francisco the last place in the world for a young man to start to make a fortune or even to live in. He writes me that he saw in the Hartford paper that Henry was supporting Filmore, the "Know Nothing" candidate for presidency. I was very sorry to hear it for I know he always desires to be right and I think he made a vast mistake, not that Filmore would not make a national president as he did before if elected but because he would not be elected and the defeat of Buchanan would result in the election by the flash republican congress of the infamous Fremont.

We are as yet uninformed as to the presidential election and are looking for the returns by the next steamer with great interest. Give my love to little Henry.

(letter addressed to Robert H. Archer of John Eldon ??? Hartford,
a brother.)

Fort Simcoe, W.T.

4th December, 1856

My dear mother:

I doubt verymuch that the communication will be kept open. The quarters will be ready and I will move my company into them next Sunday.

Garnett left for the states, 19th ulto. Woodruff arrived with his Company on the 21st and will command the post until Garnett's return in the spring. Lt. Myers who has been absent from my company since Oct 5 came in with the expressman 2nd inst.

There are now at this post eight officers, Capt. Woodruff, Lts.

Frazer, Douglass, Howard, Allen, Carr, Myers and I. As yet our messes are separate as they necessarily were in the field, the officers of each company forming one distinct mess. But as soon as we get into quarters all our arrangements are made for uniting into a single mess to include all the officers at the post.

People at home are verymuch to blame who do not write to the absent ones.

Lt. Douglass came to my tent yesterday with a letter from his sister, the first since he joined us at Old Point. I never saw a child so delighted with an orange as he was with that letter. He held it up and waved it in front of me and showed me a flower she sent and made me smell it and acknowledge that it was sweeter than any flower I ever saw and talked about her and the letter and looked happy and forgot all about how shameful it was for her to neglect writing him for so long and then tell him she had not time before

Shot

Fort Simcoe, W.T.

14th Dec., 1856

My Dear Nannie:

Congratulate me, I moved into quarters yesterday evening and hope in a few days when I shall have become used to living in a house, to be quite comfortable. We did not get in a day too early. Two thirds of the men of my company were frost bitten before they got in--just one week ago--and nearly all the officers including myself are more or less frostbitten.

I have learned a remedy for it however, so complete that I am not sorry to have suffered a little for it. It has entirely cured every person here and you must lose no time in communicating it to Alice if she is again a sufferer from chill blains. Here it is:

Stir salt and fresh ashes into boiling water, bathe the feet from 10 to 20 minutes. The bath should be used as hot as the feet can bear it.

The winter I have been telling you so much about is now on in earnest. Ever since the 20th when there was a fall of 14 inches of snow. It has snowed three times a week and the snow is between three and four feet deep.

5 Jan, 1857

I was interrupted in my letter on the 14th ulto by the return of two of the men who started with the pack train for the Dalles on 7 Dec. The train was forced to turn back on the 10th, made a fresh start by the south which the men at the Dalles said could always be traveled. The result is that about 120 horses after being completely broken down have been abandoned in the snow while the packers pushed on toward the Dalles on snow shoes. The two men who returned were much exhausted by hunger and fatigue and badly frostbitten. We have not heard from the rest of the party neither have I heard of the expressman who left with our letters on 5 or 6th December, there being no communication with the Dalles since then. I think it very doubtful that you will receive this. The snow is five feet deep here in the valley and must be deeper on the mountains--the Indians however have undertaken to carry in our mail on

shoes and if they succeed will I trust bring back glad tidings from the east where all my treasures are.

Christmas passed off very quietly here but two days afterwards we were stirred up a little by a letter from Father Pandosi of the Catholic mission dated from the friendly Indian camp at Silla (Selah) fishery announcing that Skaloom, Kamaiakin and Showai had crossed the Columbia river with a large party of Walla Walla, Keluses, Spokanes and Nez Perces and were advancing to attack the post. We had no doubt of the genuineness of the good father's alarm and although we did not believe we were going to be attacked we had some lively ???(undecipherable) for our cattle fifty head of which and about 20 horses had been sent 25 miles down the valley to graze in charge of 4 herders and a guard of six soldiers.

Capt. Woodruff the commander immediately dispatched 20 men on sleds to bring back the herd but they arrived too late. Skloom with only 14 men had captured the herd and the chief herder 2 1-2 miles from the guard and were 35 horses gone(sic) before the detachment reached the camp of the guard. It was impossible to overtake them.

A letter from White, the herder, explained how it happened. The cattle which he neglected to bring up to the guard at night had been captured and driven off in the evening and when he went out alone in the morning to look for them he was waylaid and made prisoner. You may think it strange that we sent the cattle so far but we have only forage for 12 mules and the snow is now from 3 and 4 feet deep.

There is no sort of chance of any attack by hostile Indians. The most they will attempt will be some safe thieving exploit like that I have just related and the report made to us by Pandosi was communicated to him that he might tell us for the purpose of preventing our sending for the cattle.

The snow does not keep me indoors, there has been kept open a beaten

sled track three miles up to the pine timber where I walk out every day with either Myers or Carr. The view is very beautiful, especially about sundown. The sun in the northern latitude lingers longer on the horizon than he does on Cecil Hills and the vast expanse of snow is grander than anything we have at home. But still the sunset winter scenery is beautiful to me, chiefly because it reminds me of our winter evening walk at Rock Run. I never see it without thinking of those lines we thought satire to our own home: "I love to mark the---go from Denmark both to go and having on billows to cheer --(undecipherable)"

Fort Simcoe, W.T.

Mon 26 Jan '57

My dear mother:

I have just come in from a long ramble amongst the mountains and find that two of the carpenters who have been in the employe of the ~~WM~~ are going to start tomorrow morning for the Dalles. Woodruff is going to send in an expressman the first of next month. But as the weather and ground are favorable for travel now and as there is no knowing what kind of weather we may have then I send off by the private source, consequently these few lines.

The Indians whom we went in to the Dalles on snow shoes with our mail returned on the 20th inst. bringing letters. Another mail from the east was due and doubtless at Fort Vancouver but the heavy snows with which we have been visited seemed to have prevailed over all the country between the Dalles and Fort Vancouver and travel is necessary by snow shoes.

Wickcliffe writes me from Fort Dalles that he arrived there on the 16 Dec escorting a train from Walla Walla near 200 miles through snow 1 to 4 feet deep, 100 miles of the way being entirely destitute of wood. He is waiting at the Dalles for the weather to break and surmises that in the meantime his Walla Walla friends are getting hungry.

He mentions with much feeling although very briefly of the intelligence of the death of his father.

The severity of the winter we hope, is past. A week ago it became suddenly warm and has continued mild ever since. The snow has entirely disappeared from the valley and mountain gorges and pouring out rivers of water.

Fort Simcoe, Feb 1, '57

My dear mother:

I have been dipossessed of the pleasure of writing to you at my leisure by the arrival this morning of Owhi and several other Indian chiefs who came to have a talk and by whom I have been bothered out of all my little spare time I should have today. This is one of my busy days when I have my returns to mail out and official letters to write. I did not get through with it until 1 o'clock at night.

Nannie asks me who is my other sweetheart besides Carr--tell her Lt. Myers and a very nice fellow he is, too. He arrived Dec. 1 from a leave of absence. Lt. Sergeant whom I left on recruiting service has resigned. He was not in my company at the time of his resignation. Carr, when he arrived at Vancouver being anxious to be in my company mess applied to Colonel Wright and obtained an exchange.

We hope shortly to have some ladies at the post. Capt. Black recently promoted to (late) Bowman's company, Major Garnett, who went home to get married and perhaps Lt. Reynolds, who Nannie writes me was married the other day was soon to and will bring their wives with them. My Lt. Myers has a wife when he is at home in Cincinnati but she was here or at least at the Dalles in other days and I believe "lives so sweet shell" ask for no more."

We have managed to get through the winter here thus far very well. Besides the few books belonging to officers the company quarters, yet in their infancy contain about 150 well selected books. Carr's room is on one side and Meyers on the other of my sitting (or parlor) so I

can talk to them through the cracks when I am reading.

(end..no signature..evidently some missing)

Fort Simcoe, w.t.

3rd Feb 1857

My Dear Nannie:

When I was out yesterday I was astonished to find the ground covered with little wild flowers--you are indebted to them for this letter which I only send as a messenger to carry one to you.

I write my letter so far in advance of the mail because I am going to start tomorrow to march with my company to a point on the West bank of the North fork of Columbia river distant about 75 miles from this point and about 20 miles from the mouth of the Yakima and will not probably be back before the departure of the next ~~express~~ departure of the next mail.

While I write Myers is very kindly engaged in making various little arrangements for my personal comfort on the trip--he is anxious to go along but is acting quartermaster at the post and the commanding officer will not relieve him --Carr accompanies me of course and Lt. Allen goes with me as quartermaster for my little train.

Myers whom you do not know sends his regards to you and Carr would as always, do the same, only I have him busy and he does not know I am writing.

I don't know whether I told you I received a letter from Oliver Thomas by the last mail. I have asked him and Carr joins in my invitation to him, to come up and ? with us next spring or summer. I am not without hope that he will come.

You will have all summer and much pleasure at Rock Run.

I think I understand perfectly all the feelings you express then, although they could more in any event be //much more so than while I am here in another world. I have no doubt but that these very letters which she considers most worthless to me are the very ones that give me most pleasure and that they are the ones that tell the little things about it.

Thank Billy and Ben for remembering me and tell Ben
not to grow too tall to get in the house before I come back. Carr
sends his remembrance. I have not had occasion to renew my vorrespondence
with his cousti since.

Affectionately

J.G. Archer.

Fort Simcoe

3rd March 57

My Dear Mother:

I have had to make out a great many papers to send off by the mail and did not get through so as to have any time to write to you.

It is after 1 o'clock now and the quartermaster is ~~xxxx~~hurryying me to stop writing so that he can put up the mail and go to bed. I have then only time to bid good night , say I am well, affectionately,

J.G. Archer.

18th March, 1857

I was greatly disappointed when the mail before the last failed to bring me letters from home, but the New York Herald informed me of the snow storm and consequently I ~~be~~^{learned} of the failure of the mail, so that I was satisfied ~~be~~^{that} you had written. The last mail was ~~of~~^{of} wealth to me, bringing your letter of 17th Jan. 1st Feb with sisters and Henry's. You were mistaken any ? dates were due from me between the 18th Nov and 4 December. The steamer carrying that of 4 Dec from Vancouver to San Francisco

beginning of next line and page)

I am about starting a garden for the company. It is almost necessary to have one and ~~second~~ yet I begrudge every hour of work they bestow upon it, for I have no doubt we will spend this summer as we did last summer moving about over the face of the earth while the garden will be left to dry up--you asked me whb Woodruff's lieutenant-- his 1st Lt. was Black now Capt of Late Capt. Bowman's co. Douglass is promoted to Black's place and the 2nd Lt is the sme as before. Reynolds who went home to Baltimore and married Miss Butler--we expect him out with his wife shortly. You don't seem to ~~be~~ recollect my end Lt Myers. He as well as Carr has been with me all winter. Yes, I did know ^(sic) what Garnett was going home for but I did not think you would be much interested in his marriage and therefore confined my observations to a person I take much more interest in but of whom I will not say much now that you should accuse me of egotism. We expect to have a grand time when Black, Reynolds

and Garnett bring their wives to S. mcoe.

Why don't you send mother's daguerreotype...pack it up at once and send it by mail that is the cheapest and much the safest way of sending it. It was promised a long time ago and lately you say nothing at all about it.

good night

affectionately, J.G. Archer

Since ~~vi~~⁶⁰⁰⁰ writing the above I have written to Lt. Reynolds to send you his address if he will be kind enough to carry the likeness out here ~~from~~^{from} for me . But Reynolds must probably will already have left Baltimore before my letter gets there. I will write you again when I have time to write more at leisure , as usual I have put off writing until I am hurried.

Ene

(no signature)

Fort Simcoe W.T.

2nd April, 1857

My Dear Mother:

I have just received Mary's and Kate's letters dated 15th, 16th February.

I congratulate you upon all being well. Mary says it is the first time for a short ~~while~~ great while that she could say so, some one or other be having been more or less indisposed.

A year ~~ago~~ so auspiciously commenced will I hope bring you nothing but happiness throughout--your visit to Rock Run, soon now to be made, will bring with it I trust, more than the pleasure of last summer, for you will be then in time for all those little out door occupations that belong to spring--planting the trees, moving the rose bushes and what not.

I have commenced a garden here for the company but with nothin like certainty of being here if it succeeds, to enjoy its points. I am afraid too that mice will eat up everything for the stockyard now abounds with mice than this whole garden does--you know by the recollection of a great scarcity of vegetables at home while I was gardener that I am not a very good one but I now have the advantage of being a man who has been a gardener all his life--but I am waiting here concerning this spring and its pleasures and you do not ? until the summer is with you; Why did not Nannie write. I am not used to a disappointment from her and won't stand it. She must keep her pen in action if I allow her to miss one mail she will after a while let two pass and so on by degrees until at last she may say "Ok," I thought someboey else was writing this time and thus slide gracefully into becoming only an occasional correspondent. Tell her I depend on her and will not hear of her

ever omitting a single mail--no matter who else is writing--for it will not hurt me the least to be told the same thing twice. I expect in a few days--as soon as I find my "quarterly returns" at which I am now engaged, to go to the Dalles on a visit of five or six days

end

Fort Simcoe W.T.

17th April, 1857

My Dear Mother

I received by last mail Nannie's and Sister's letters dated 1st and 2nd and third and am exceedingly sorry that in answer to so much kind and grateful attention in letters from home I should so often have to return these hurried scrawls. This time this is by no means my fault. The commanding officer having neglected to inform us the day before the departure of the expressman and I had only five minutes notice and the expressman is to leave immediately.

We are just now having a pleasant time. The weather for weeks past has been mild, clear and calm)continually) like our May weather. Our oak grove is almost in full leaf and the whole face of the country is covered hill and valley, with flowers of every imaginable hue and shade--I have lately resumed my daily rides on horseback and enjoy it very much. It is like riding through an immense flower garden.

Carr and I have postponed our trip to the Dalles, Vancouver and Portland to the 1st of next month.

The 4th infantry has been ordered overland to the east and will be succeeded by the 6th.

As the fourth now occupies many posts in Oregon and Washington its withdrawal will involve many changes in the dispositions of the companies of our own regiment. The next mail may possibly bring me orders to

proceed to Dalles\Vancover, Walla Walla Steilacoom, Bellingham Bay or any where else within the two territories.

Skloom recently paid us a visit and has returned the cattle and horsehe took the trouble to steal last winter--A letter from Capt. Fletcher at Walla walla informs me that Kamaiakin is expected to come in to that post with offers of surrender----The signs of the times are now warlike.

ever most affectionately

J. F. Archer

(To Mrs. A. Archer, Rock Run, ~~Rock~~ Hartford Co., Maryland.

A niece of Mrs. Chiffelle was married a few weeks since to Lt. McFeely of fourth inftry. Chippell has failed to ~~obtain~~ ~~obtain~~ ~~obtain~~ ~~obtain~~ ~~obtain~~ and returned to Maryland.

Portland, O.T. 11th May, 1857

My dear Nannie

I have no time to do more than apologize for not writing ..this time Carr, Douglass and I have just come from Ft. Simcoe and the mail steamer is just leaving so that I can only say I am well and God bless you. We come to see the dentist, but he has gone to Puget Sound. We are talking of a trip up the Willamette a out two days journey ~~where~~ ~~where~~ where the best dentist o the Pacific coast is said to reside but have not yet commenced upon it.

Major Garnett and Capt Black have arrived, bringing their wives with them

affct. J.G. Archer.

Portland O.T.

11th May, 1857

My dear Bob

I have just arrived from Ft. Simcoe on a visit--my leave of absence is only for seven days all of which have already expired but as usual with us here, when there is no authorized competent ? to give a longer leave I shall remain absent at least double the time. The principal object in coming here was to see the densist but I have been disappointed --the densist having left for Puget Sound the very morning of the day I arrived. Carr, who came with me and I are contemplating a trip up the Willamette but have not yet commenced upon it. The mail steamer is just leaving so I have no time for a loving letter. Enclosed you will find a issuing draft for two hundred dollars I have ~~at~~ ~~00000~~ never kept any account with you but know that you have at various times advanced to me at least that much. And whether you recollect it or think so or not it makes no difference as I have it to spare. With much ^{little} love to ~~all~~, Henry and all at home

yours affectionate brother, J.G. Archer.

Fort Dalles, W.T.

16th May, 1857

My dear mother:

I leave tomorrow morning at day break for Simcoe after a very pleasant visit to Vancouver and Portland.

I go up with only two men of my company who came down with me on a furlough which has expired. Douglas remaining below for a day or two longer and Carr having, after accompanying me back from Portland to Vancouver, resolved to follow the dentist to somewhere on the headwaters of the Willamette where he is by no means certain to find him. I was strongly tempted to go with Carr as the trip would have enabled me to see the whole of the Willamette valley which is the garden of this? and too my teeth are in want of the dentist. I know I can wait for him however to visit the Dalles and have no doubt but that he will come as there are many officers here and at Simcoe and Walla Walla who will come in to see him..

Woodruff's company has been detailed as an escort to the commissioners appointed to survey the northern boundary. I had some little hope that mine would have been taken for that duty and was disappointed when the orders first came out. I hope however to be on duty now to my taste than escorting the boundary commission.

Salt Lake is not very far distant and I may yet have an opportunity of paying my respects in person to Brigham Young.

When I get back to Simcoe I will ~~write~~ write to you more at length. Now I am in a ~~huselodion~~ hotel with a half dozen officers talking around me and telling me to hurry through my letter and join in their talk. I would not write to you at all under such circumstances, but that the mail will ~~leave~~ leave here in a day or two and before another // down from Simcoe, you would therefore miss ~~hearing~~ hearing from me for a whole month and I would rat

ther send this scrawl than break the regular chain of ommunication I
have endeavored to keep up. I arrived ~~00000~~ ? my trip to Portland in order
that I might dress suitably to have my likeness taken for you
but the daguer eetypist had just left as well as the densist--

better luck pe haps next time/ I will have to postpone my letter to
Nannie for this time. ever affectionately J. G. Archer.