

Fort Simcoe, W.T.

1st Feb. 1859

My dear mother:

Mary's letter of Dec. 16th was duly received and warmly read--a snow so deep had fallen a day or two before it arrived that we all gave up the idea of another mail before spring and then it had commenced snowing again when our expressman came in, about 8 O⁸c p.m. Mary asks particularly how are my eyes. I have forgotten that I have any, they became entirely well a few days after my arrival here from home. They were aggravated by a cold that had hung about me very obstinately during my sojourn in San Francisco.

No news--it is thought some companies of our rgt. will be sent to establish posts at Ft. Boise and Ft. Colville. I hope it will not be mine. I would not at all object on my own account object to go anywhere I had never been before but I think my company has had its share of hewing wood and smoking brick and living out doors through the winter while the houses are building.

With love to all

affectionately yours, J.G. Archer.

P.S. Mary asks me to write my troubles as well as my pleasures. Tell her I am very sorry on her account, and do not have any of the former and few of the later. Everything goes on her just as agreeable as we would possibly hope for in a place where nothing ever happens and which is so far away from all I love.

Fort Simcoe, W.T.

15th Feb 1859

My dear mother:

I have ~~also~~ received Nannie's letter of 2nd Jan. You who are at home can only guess at the eagerness with which I look for the coming of every mail--thanks to Mary and Nannie I have never yet been disappointed.

I have also received a long and interesting letter from William M Williams, formerly of Navre de Grove (???)whom I had not seen or heard of for a long time. He has ~~been~~ been in living in Pen.a and chancing to meet Rankin last spring learned from him of my wheareabouts.

Rankin has left the quartermaster dept. and gone to Olympia having been appointed to some lucrative office there.

Tell Nannie to give my love to little Kate Dubal whom she mentioned in he last letter. I should have asked her I know if she is like the ~~Lands~~ Landdales, all of whom I like and esteem so much.

We have nothing new here to interest us or that would be interesting to ye@O you to hear--an occasional rumor ~~reaches~~ reaches us that Ft. Simcoe is to broken up in the spring and that the companies of its garrison are to be sent to establish new posts at Colville on the Okinakane and at Ft. Boise on an old Indian trading post on Lewis Fork of the Columbia about 200 miles (200) south of Walla Walla. ~~Whatever~~ ^{Whatever} ~~done~~ ^{done} may be ~~done~~ with reg rd to the two latter places, I do not think Ft.

Simcoe can be abandoned for some years to come. It is also rumored that Col. Wright will be made a Brigadier General and assigned to the command of this department--these things however are not as interesting to yeu@O you as us.

I received a long letter from Carr. He had been on recruiting service at St. Louis with which he was much plea ed but at the time of writing was stationed at Newport barracks in Kentucky

We are all i good health, with love to you all, yours truly and

Fort Simcoe, W.T.

15th March, 1859

My dear mother:

Nannie's letter of 2nd Feb received 12th inst and welcomed as her letters always are. I am glad you all seem to be having a "good time."

We had ~~whme~~ little excitement here by the last mail--Capt. Ingalls, QM at Fort Vancouver, the ?? of Gen. Harney, wrote to Capt. Black that it is supposed to be Harney's intention to ha~~00~~ break up this post in the spring and to send two of the companies to Colville and one to some other place he didn't know where. The married officers who have made themselves very comfortable here have nice quarters and ~~006y~~ everything they want and in great trouble but they will have to go to Colville where we would be a year without houses to live in and two or three years before they could expect to have any comforts around them. They would be obliged to send their wives home--I thank the Lord on such occasions that I am not married.

Still stranger to say I have scarcely ever seen an army lady who did not seem to prefer the army to any thing else.

With regard to the probability of the break up here I enclose you a letter from Capt. Jordan who will give a better idea of how probability there is in it and will show you at least that ~~thabe~~ is much idle rumor in the talk.

As for myself I can ~~every~~ little about it except that I want to have a company of soldiers and not of men, hewers of wood and drawers of water burners of brick as they will continue to be if we are sent away to establish another post.

Who is this Dr. Cummings about whom and his wife Nannie writes much? Is he not a Catholic bishop and if so, how happens he to have a wife? Nannie says a great deal in praise of "My Novel." She is behind

the age. "What will he do with it" is the book she ought to have said. I have just secured it b mail together with Carlisle's "Frederick the Great" Prescott's third vol. of Philip 2nd; Holmes "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table" and Sydney Smith's "Wisdom" I wrote to Carr to send me some books and think he has sent them through his cousin, Mary from New York but have no letter to tell where they came from.

Nannie speaks of a most pleasant visit you had from cousin Alice Stump. I should have liked much to have been with you.

I congratulate you on your mild winter. Our winter here has been comparatively mild but then at the head of the valley the snow has lain on the ground from the last of November until yrs (sic) day- while a few miles lower down the valley the snow melted off a month ago.

We will have much marching to do in a few days, however uncertain it may be that we will enjoy the points.

With love to all

Affectionately yours

J.G. Archer.

Marched today four miles along the Columbia, crossed over the mountains to the foot of Lake Chelan, 11 miles now and ferried and swam the Chelan river and encamped before night.

Camp on Methow river

12th June, 1859

Yesterday marched 20 miles and camped on the right bank of the Methow river. Found it booming, having risen rapidly for the last few days. A great deal of drift wood was coming down. This morning it had slightly fallen and there was but little driftwood. Ferried and swam across with but little difficulty on boat made by lashing together two canoes. Was swamped with six men aboard--they were saved by clinging to the boat but their rifles went down in a rapid current 15 feet deep and were lost. I remain here today.

Rode some distance up the river shore this afternoon with the expressman and interpreter who are old California miners and prospecting for gold. Every panful of earth they washed contained from two to 13 scales of gold which considering that the river is now 20 feet higher than low water mark and that the rich washings are always in the bed of the stream, and that their panfuls were taken out 60 at random from the surface indicates rich deposits elsewhere.

Rich deposits have been found in small quantities at two other points along our route

Camp on the Okinakane

Near the mouth of the Similkameen

16th June, 1859

Left the Methow at 4 a.m. on the 13th, Marched 20 miles and encamped on the Okinakane, was not quite but very nearly eaten up by mosquitoes. Next day marched 18 miles and that part of us that was left was taken by the same saty bits of animated nature which in their zeal see to sing over and prey upon the miserable cases of humankind which

fall under their notice yesterday and marched about 18 miles and are camped in the place where I suspect mosquitoes first came from.

I never saw or heard of or imagined anything like ~~00~~ the numbers and veracity of the mosquitoes and I hasten to write before my body shall have been entirely consumed by them. We will have to remain here ten days or two weeks while I send all my pack mules to Colville for provisions and establish a depot about the mouth of the Similkameen for my supply while ascending that river.

Lake Osoyos

19th June, 1859

Found the Similkameen very high and rapid and as the Indians had no canoes and our only means of crossing was a float boat made of
(sic)
canvass stretched over an oaken frame--very good in still water on a gentle current but perfectly unmanageable in the flooded Similkameen--I crossed over the Skinakane and came up by the east bank, coming up on this side of the river we had some difficulty on account of the muddy condition of the river bank for the first mile after that the trail passed between a high steep bank and the wooded shore through swarms of mosquitoes so bad that the soldiers could not stop to scratch. I marched on, not ~~00~~ daring to halt and at last came to open country and felt the cool breeze tenfold the more welcome that it carried off the mosquitoes. Night had closed and I had to go I did not know how much further before I could get wood enough for cooking the dinners but about 10 o'clock I arrived here where we have plenty of fire wood within a short distance--scarcely any mosquitoes and good water for bathing. Now I will remain until Lt. Harker goes to Colville and returns with my supply train. I have sent express out to bring me information as to the whereabouts of the parties of the boundary commission--I do not think they will get near this point

I found near here, day before yesterday, a party of five miners returning from the Frazer river gold mines--they were entirely destitute of provisions and almost starved. They will go into C^olville with Lt. Harker. They could not make a living in the mines.

Today another party, well mounted and provisioned came down who told me the same story.

With love

Yours affectionately

J.G. Archer.

9th and 22 of each month so that I think we will continue to hear regularly from each other. Capt. Black who was with us so long at Ft. Simcoe and who went with his company to Ft. Dalles where he had excellent quarters for his family and wife is in most respects an agreeable post, has been ordered to a miserable place to establish a temporary one company post or rather a camp on Snake river, at least such is the rumor. His family in that event, I think, go east for I have often heard him say he would not take them to any such place. Mrs. B. would prefer going with him.

Mrs. Lugenbeil with her three children has accompanied her husband to Colville and as Lt. Harker reports, is having a good time, comfortable in every respect but the want of servants. She has two or three large tents adjoining which serve as a suite of separate rooms.

Camp Osoyoos, W.T.

21st July, 1859

My dear Mary:

Yours of May 17th was duly received. When my expressman returned from Major Lugenbeil's camp in Colville valley I was much vexed by learning that after Lugenbeil writing me that his mail would close 11th and 24th of each month he sent it off on the 7th two days before mine arrived there. My letters therefore written for that mail will have to lay over at Colville until 24th inst and you will not receive them at home until the same time as you receive this.

I have been here in the same place ever since my last letter and had hoped to remain sometime longer but the beautiful little stream of cool water which I praised so much in my last letter has gone dry so I am obliged to move.

Having sent off my pack train for another supply of provisions I have not enough animals left to move the whole camp so I have sent

Camp Osoyoos, W.T.

6th July, 1859

My dear mother:

I received Mary's letter about a week ago. When I wrote to Nannie I was much pleased with my camp on the bank of the lake but since then the mosquitoes drove us away up here in the mountains I am still in full view of the lake which is only 12 1-2 miles distance and about 300 feet below us.

We have fine provision for the animals, a small stream of excellent water running through the camp ground, a fresh ^{breeze} ~~spring~~ that never fails and rather a fine view bounded by a snow capped ridge about 15 miles beyond the lake

The Indians supply us with plenty of salmon and with ice from a natural ice house at the foot of a mountain three miles off on the opposite side of the lake. I ride down to the lake every day and sometimes twice, usually before breakfast for a bath. The Indian expressman whom I sent out two weeks ago to communicate with the boundary commission, even was not able to cross the snows of the Cascade range and returned to me again. I sent off another expressman today who I hope will be more successful.

Lt. Harker returned 2nd inst with the supply train from Colville bringing 50 days provisions. I think it probable that I will make this a permanent depot of supplies for the operations of the season. The last mail brought a letter from Lt. Carr..he is going to Europe on a Year's leave of absence and tells me to address my letters to him care the American minister at Paris. Garnett also was going to Europe about the same time. Major Lugenbeil's command arrived at Colville valley about the same time I got here and he has established an express to Walla Walla which leaves Colville 11th and 24th of each month and connects with the Walla Walla express to Dalles. I will send an express to Colville

Capt. Frazer's company today to cross the Okinakane and encamp on the north bank of the Similkameen. I will follow tomorrow. The whole distance is only five miles. The Similkameen ^{has fallen}, six or seven feet and is now perfectly clear. Its waters are cool much more so than the Okinakane which flowing for about 120 miles of its course through a chain of lakes becomes warm and disagreeable before it reaches the Osoyoos lake.

The expressman whom I dispatched two weeks ago to find the advanced party of the boundary commission has not yet returned to me. I have heard nothing from the commission since I left Simcoe. I knew it would be so before I started and immediately after receiving my orders to arrive here by the 1st June I applied for permission to go to Colville with my command and wait there through the middle of this month as I know the snows on the Cascades would keep back the surveying party and I wanted the company to have a month at Colville where it is contemplated we are to winter in order to make some rough gardens and raise a few vegetables to keep off the survey from the troop.

I could not obtain the permission as the commissioner thought he would be here by the 1st June. I do not think they will get further than Ft. Okinakane all summer.

The time ~~hangs~~ would hang heavy on my hands where it not for two or three books I brought along with me, amongst them Allisons Miscellanies; and the long rides I take nearly every day. Day before yesterday I rode out with Lt. Karker. We started at 4 a.m. and did not return until 3 p.m. We rode back into the mountains and discovered three small lakes more than a thousand feet above the level of the Osoyoos--one of them is a red? sulphur lake...we killed seven ducks and five grouse which when game is so scarce is considered very well. Yesterday I went out alone to select an encampment on the Similkameen--had a magnificent bath in its cool waters,

then rode up the river about eight miles crossed over the dividing ridge between it and the lake Osoyoos and returned to camp having ridden a distance of from 25 to 30 miles and without seeing any living thing except one single solitary dove which I shot; and a few gnatts and mosquitoes. The weather is excessively hot today. There is a strong breeze blowing out almost as dry and hot as a Simoom??

Camp on Similkameen

22 July, 1859

All well, but the mosquitoes so bad that I cannot write any more

Camp Osoyoos W.T. 7th Aug

My dear mother:

My expressman came in last evening but brought me no letter from the east. It is the first time that my home correspondents have disappointed me, but I am all the more disappointed for that reason and am inclined to believe that the fault is not at home but somewhere between this and San Francisco. Always ^{address} ~~direct~~ ^{send} your letters via Ft. Dalles otherwise as some of the NWB commission are on Puget Sound my letters may go there. When I last wrote I moved my camp to the Similkameen but was soon driven to the hills again by the mosquitoes. I am encamped about one mile from the lake on a piece of ground about 250 feet high close by four cool springs, even then the mosquitoes are very troublesome for about an hour after sunset when the wind invariably rises and then dies off--The surveying parties of the commission have not yet crossed the Cascades range. They will not get further than the Similkameen this year. Last week we had a visit of a few days from Dr. Hammond of Ft. Colville but our doctor returned with him on a visit for a few days. All well

Yours affectionately

Lt J.G. Archer

I received a letter from Winder and the box of apples and carrots which are appreciated. I was glad to get them. Tell Belle I am very much pleased with the likeness she sent me and that I set great stock by it. I think it is excellent.

Camp Osoyoos, W.T.

22 August, 1859

My dear mother:-

Although the two last mail have brought me nothing from home I do not feel at all uneasy or neglected. I know that Nannie and Mary never fail me and that my letters are somewhere on their winding way. Capt. Frazer's letters from the east are also missing, so that I feel pretty soon our letters will come here, having gone to Puget Sound. In the future please direct Via Ft. Dalles, Oregon.

On the 11th Inst. Lt. Parke of the Top-Eng in charge of the advanced party of the boundary commission came into camp 66 and staid two days. They had come on in advance of their work to reconnoiter and went back to examine it. They will be here again about the last of the month..The commission expects to get to Colville this fall and to finish up the work to the summit of the Rock Mountains in 1860. Mr. Campbell is hurrying along, hoping to get his commission extended to the Lake of the Woods and finding that if he is slow another commissioner will be given to run the line from the lake of the Woods West, simultaneously with the survey from the Pacific to the Rocky mts. Should Campbell's comm. be extended my command will probably continue as its escort in that event I shall be somewhere in the neighborhood of the confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers in the autumn of 1861 when it will be an easy and pleasant journey and I will assuredly

avail myself of it.

I think I have also said that escort duty was very little to my liking but as we are to go through the whole of this miserable country to the R Mts. I should rather than turn back for the ground is fertile and abounds in deer, elk, buffalo and small game and not least is within reach of home.

I would not be very much surprised if Maj. Garnett who after all did not go to Europe but returns here to the command of Ft. Dalles (now a one company post* should apply for the com and of the Escort when it begins to descend the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains.

Received a note from Wickliffe, saying that he is going home by next steamer and offering his services to execute commissions. Capt. Fletcher has come back. I manage to get through with all the days pretty well by riding and hunting every day. I accompanied Parke on his return 20 miles up the Similkameen and returned to camp by moonlight. Yesterday I went out hunting with Capt. Frazer, found plenty of grouse a chain of five small mountain lakes. There are lakes in every direction high among the mountains.

The report that Capt. Black had gone to Camp Taylor on Snake river was not true, I have just received a letter from him. He is at Ft. Dalles and expects to remain there. With love to all.

Yours affectionately

J.G. Archer

Camp Osoyoos W T

29th Aug, 1859

My dear mother:

There has been so much useless delay on the express route between C^lville and Dalles that I have determined to send off an express of my own to the latter place by which arrangement you

receive this as early as the letter of 25th inst via Colville and I will secure my eastern mail from ten to 12 days sooner.

Although I retain the same name, Osoyoos for my camp I am not in exactly the same place finding that the Herd, 208 public and 25 private animals were not thriving well on the alkaline water of the lake and the dry grass pasture near my old camp.

I moved up here in the mountains on the 24th, six miles from the lake and about 1,000 feet above it where the pasture is fresh and the water cold and pure as the springs higher up on the bank run all in the same stream on which I had my second encampment near the lake Osoyoos and which dried up so that I was obliged to leave it. I could not previously come here on account of the swarms of gnats which infested the high lands as the mosquitoes infested the low and was obliged to keep the middle ground. I would however have moved my camps as often as I have had not both these plagues existed as in the course of two weeks the camp grounds become very dusty and disagreeable for ~~as did~~ us as for the animals. This is a very beautiful and delightful place, far enough up the mountain to be ~~di~~ ?? with open pasture and forests of larch, pine and fir--during the day it is not too warm and at night only a
end

Camp Osoyoos

10th October

My dear mother

When I wrote it was the day I was just starting on a ride to Camp Similkameen where Lt. Camp and one of the parties of the boundary commission are stationed. On my way I passed by the gold bar of which I wrote you. The men were getting out from ten to thirty dollars a man per day. The gold is however confined to a small locality.

The expressman and miners with me say that a dozen men will work it out in a week.

I have had the m^y properties for several miles above and below but without finding gold in ~~greater~~ quantities that will pay anyone.

Yesterday Mr. Campbell the commissioner and several of his assistants ^N~~W~~ied with me. They left this morning on their way to Colville.

I do not expect to leave Osoyoos before 23rd.

Capt. Frazer went to Portland 1st inst to and will not be back before the 20th so that I have no ~~surplus~~ surplus of officers-- otherwise I would have gone to Colville with the commissioner where I have business connected with the escort. I hope you saw Wickliffe on his way home but it is most likely he took the ? and New Orleans route south.

Love to all

J.G. Archer

Camp Osoyoos, W.T.

21st Oct, 1859

My dear Mary:

After sending my letter to Nannie I thought of some communications I have the moment before forgotten. I will thank you to go to Flint's ? and Taylor or some other establishment of that kind and subscribe for the Edinburgh Quarterly, London, North British Westminster Reviews and two copies of Blackwood's magazine, Harper's Monthly, Harper's Weekly, 2 London Illustrated News, (N.Y. Herald, New Orleans Picayune, Baltimore Exchange, National Intelligencer --Calif. editions) to be directed as follows, viz:

One copy of Blackwood to Nannie.

One copy of London Illustrated News to Willis Smitton?

One copy of Blackwood, the Baltimore Exchange and the National Intelligencer to me . All the other reviews and newspapers to the commanding officer 1 company 9th Infantry.

In getting so many papers I suppose you will be entitled to a reduction

in price on all similar to that advertised on Blackwood and the reviews--
the subscription for a year commencing with 1st Jan.

I enclose Major A.B. Ragan's drafts Nos 35,36 and 37 dated August 24
for \$50, \$100.00 and \$55.00 and Archibald Campbell's draft No.
226 Sept. 30 for \$40 which after paying for the magazines apply to
payment of my note to Henry on leaving Balt. last spring a year---
when I get within reach of a paymaster I will send the balance.

Camp Osoyoos, W.T.

21st October, 1859

My dear Nannie:

Your letter of the middle of August has not yet come
but yesterday I received Mary's of 1st Sept giving a pretty good
account of you all at home. I can sympathize with you and Mary in the loss
of your winter clothing. The same mail brought me a letter from
Priest's Rapids with the interesting information that my trunks which
together with our company property had been left at Fort Simcoe
to be forwarded via Dalles and Walla Walla to Ft. Colville had been
stolen in transit and when found were found broken open and rifled of their
contents. I will make rather a distinguished figure on parade
at Colville next winter with my hiking shirts, buckskin trousers and
cowhide boots. Some of the stolen articles, I have been told have
been recovered--in what condition I don't know, although nothing was
specified but a uniform overcoat and a merschaum pipe.

The transportation of the baggage and the supplies for Colville
instead of coming down by the quartermaster trains was let out by
contract to a transportation company at Dalles and from what I have
learned of the manner in which it has suffered, by the QM deptl,
I expect to hear of great losses of our company property.

having two companies of his regulars garrison here, will be able to furnish all the necessary escort and mine and Frazer's company's can be spared to go with the expected summer campaign amongst the Snake Indians south of Walla Walla--possibly one of our companies will be ordered to re-occupy Ft. Simcoe.

The gold mines discovered on the Similkameen have turned out to be much more extensive than was at first supposed--next spring there will be a great rush of miners to that country.

I have no doubt but that rich diggings will be found at various points all along ~~the~~ from the Wenache to the 49th parallel--miners also on the Pend O'Reille where it empties into the Columbia (near 49thN*) and above are getting from three to 12 dollars a day. Provisions however are so high owing to the great cost of their transportation that they do not realize much more than ordinary wages and rich mines of cinnabar (quicksilver) has been found not far from the mouth of the Yakima; so that this country which appeared to be God forsaken promises to be compensated for its sterility by great mineral wealth.

*From Colville
Depart
Dec. 7, 1859
to Mother*

With love to all

Affectionately yours

J.G. Archer