

Introductory notes:

Fort Monroe U.S. Mail steamer, St Louis, Dec. 23, 1855

To Panama, steamship, Oregon in Panama Bay Christmas morning...
mongrel population.

Railroad cars transported across the isthmus in four hours. Boarded the Oregon in Panama bay, taken out by barges. Steamboat three miles from town near a clump of islands.

The next troops are coming on the Golden Age.

In Panama bay Christmas day, 1855

Steamship Oregon.

Dear Brother Bob

The news received from the Indian country sounds quite warlike. Companies C, D and H are coming on the Golden Age, a ship with greater speed and will probably reach San Francisco shortly after we do.

"I begin to like Maj. Luganbeel.

Twelve days are allowed for the trip to San Francisco. We departed from Old Point, Company K ~~seemingly~~ on the Oregon, has had no dinner yet aboard ship tonight and it is nearly 8.

San Francisco, Jan. 16, 1856

Arrived at San Francisco on the 12th. Dined with friends.

Still aboard the Oregon.

Fort Vancouver, W.T., Jan. 25, 1856

Dear Mother:

This is the first chance to write. We arrived on the 20th. Just before arriving we danced on deck by the light of the moon and the ladies seemed to enjoy it as much as at the fort.

Mount Hood is the highest peak in the U.S.

Fort Vancouver is no post after all. It is only a military station, constructed of log houses for officers quarters at the head of a slope

U.S. Mail Steamer

23d December 1896 185

My dear mother:

Bob who was with me when we embarked at Fort Monroe has no doubt informed you of everything pertaining to our departure.

I felt exceedingly anxious for you to come down although I would not say I wanted you to come--I was satisfied however that it was better you did not come. it was hard enough to part with Bob. I could not have borne to have said good bye to all I love.

After Bob left me I walked on down to the bridge where Nannie once accompanied me and when I returned to the hotel found all the gentlemen and ladies whom we used to have at Old Point assembled with the artillery band to go aboard the steamer and take ^{leave} ~~care~~ of the regiment.

We got underway about 6 o'clock in the afternoon and with the exception of the first three days, during which time the sea was very rough and we were all sea sick, have had a pleasurable voyage. The sea for the last five days has been almost as smooth as the Chesapeake the night Nannie went to the Point with me--moonlight nights and mild weather as each day we approached nearer the region of eternal summer, an excellent band of music assembled, all in perfect harmony, have contributed to cheer and sooth the saddened hearts of the outward bound. Many have brought with them and seem to care for, but some of us have left everything behind and will always look forward back, whatever may be before them. No one has left more to love than I have and I fear that ~~nothing~~ ^{all} ~~useless~~ as I have been to you ~~all~~ now will be more sadly missed--Nannie and Bob will miss me most although the mother rest love me just as much. But I must stop acting in this childish way. I believe I am more of a baby about leaving home now than when really young in years. Do not think that I am unhappy or dissatisfied--except the fact of leaving home, everything in my present life is agreeable. I no doubt induced you to think that Col. Wright would prove an objectionable commander. He did commit a great error in the beginning but I think it was only an error in judgment of which he is sorry and ashamed.

and desirous of atoning for.

The examination of the officers to which all without any distraction were subjected has been made, I do not exactly know with what ? but I was able to answer correctly all the questions propounded to me.

Major Lugenbeel has just asked me in passing who I was writing to and requests to be remembered to you. I am beginning to like him.

We arrived at Aspinwall this afternoon and the ship is lying off about four miles from shore. We land tomorrow morning at 8 o'clock and proceed at once by railroad 47 miles to Panama on the Pacific where we immediately ~~embark~~ ~~embark~~ on the steamer Oregon, leaving behind at Panama to follow after by regular mail steamer three companies, C D and H. I have seen few scenes more beautiful than that presented in the approach to Aspinwall. The country may possibly not bear a close inspection but seen from the sea with its green mountain ranges rising as it seems from the water's edge it is very beautiful. The sun was just setting as we came up within a quarter of a mile of the town and immediately after the full moon rose. I need not tell you that we are in the midst of summer.

When I arrive at San Francisco which will be I hope on the ~~8th or 9th or 10th~~ ~~8th or 9th or 10th~~ 8th or 9th or 10th of the next month, I will write again and to Henry, Bob and Kate as well as to the two houses in Mullock??

Steamship Oregon

My dear mother:

After lying out at sea the night of 23rd to avoid the malaria which I believe infects the isthmus at all seasons we landed at 9 o'clock yesterday morning and took the cars for Panama.

Aspinwall as I supposed, derives all its beauty from the enchantment of distance. The houses are of all new, rough and slightly build of wood and inhabited by a mongrel population of Americans, Negroes, Indians and Spaniards.

I was agreeably surprised at the fine condition of the rail road and cars. We made the trip across the Isthmus in four hours It was altogether a pleasant little journey, a cooling breeze blowing all the time

without a speck of dust)The great destroyer of comfort in our own railway travelling.) We embarked immediately from the cars , on arriving at Panama by means of barges and a small steamboat--our ship lying about three miles from the town near a clump of little islands. Panama unlike Aspinwall is an ancient world city with an old history rich with stirring events of the times of the buccaneers. It has been a place of great wealth and commercial importance. The harbor is formed by a group of islands varying in size from one to 15 ot 220 acres rising steep from the water like the port of Watson's island to the height of our hills. The mainland, crescent shaped at the beach, consists as far as it can be seen in every direction of irregular mountain chains and knobs ,ever spot of earth green with richest foilage.

The three companies which we are to leave behind until the arrival of the next steamer from New York, about four days, are already embarked on the Golden Age and will , I suppose, arrive at San Francisco two days behind us.

You should have no uneasiness for our safety on the voyage. This ocean is Pacific as it 's name imparts and our ship tight and strong.

Ever affectionately

J.G. Archer.

Steamship Oregon, Panama Bay
Christmas Day, 1855

My dear brother:

The news received fr00 here from the Indian country sounds quite warlike. If in consequence of such news more regiments should be added permanently to the army and you should be able to obtain a commission as captain I think you would like the life with all its drawbacks better than any other. Should you enter the army as a captain you will of course be anxious to recruit your company as rapidly as possible. Let me advise you to take a lesson from what you know of my experience and while you are faithful to your duty as a recruiting officer, not to sacrifice anything important through an over zealous devotion to that thankless duty. Avail yourself of every opportunity to learn the tactics and as it can only be

completely learned bby practice combined with the study of the text book embrace the first occasion to leave your rendezvous for the depot where the recruits were sent to be drilled--commence drilling a squad yourself . In t is way you will be able always to keep ahead of your company and it is the only way to acquire familiarity with the exact words of commands and the proper tone of voice and manners. I disliked extremely the order requiring me to go so soon to Old Point when my company was first organized and nearly as much did I dislike the oreer issued about two weeks after requiri g company officers to drill a swuad but I soon saw the advantage. Study geography, something about our form of government, for questions required in exam ations. Hardie's rifle tactics is a good manual. Read Davis's or Pike. I have a copy of Pike among my books at Nune's office opposite my old office at the Marshall building. I never felt a hotter July or August day at home than this is. It seems perfectly ridiculous to call it Christmas--that season in Maryland of sleighs and skates and big fires.

I begin to like Major Lugenbeel and to think my first opinion did him injustice. Your affectionate brother, J.J. Archer.

Christmas night

9 Our company baggage for which we have been waiting came across the isthmus today and has just come alongside in the small steamboat by means of which we embarked. We will not take it aboard until tomorrow morning andwill not I suppose get under weigh until tomorrow afternoon--17 days are allowed for the trip to San Francisco where we hope to arrive by the 11th.

We were all invited to dinner today on board the Golden Age. As officer of the day I could not go ~~000~~ and consoled myself with the recollection of having been entertained at a 7 o'clock dinner there last ~~n0000~~ evening and with some of Mumm's best champagne which Col. Smith presented to the regiment on its departure from Old Point to keep Christmas with. Our accommodations are much inferior to what they

were on the St. Louis. I have no place to write a letter(for instance) my portfolio resting on my lap--a good excuse for any want of neatness in my letter. The arrangements for the comfort of the soldiers are much worse, not only as regards their sleeping , it being understood that one half will always sleep on deck but the ship company does not supply the provisions properly although it is now eight o'clock at night one of the companies (Co. K) has not yet had its dinner and all of them have been on scant allowance.

I suppose however that we will be able to get everything to rights for tomorrow. Col. Wright ought to, and I suppose will , refuse to go to sea until proper arrangements are made.

Yours affectionately J.J. Archer

Steamship Oregon at sea

Lat. 26 46 N Longitude 114 14 W

8th Jan, 1856

My dear mother:

I have ~~availled~~ availed myself of every possible means of sending a letter, to write home since I left Old Point but very much doubt whether you will receive them all. I wrote to you from Aspinwall to you and Bob from Panama and to you again from Acapulco when we touched for coal and water. The company's agent at Panama undertook to mail my letters posting them with the proper postage and at Acapulco I had to entrust my letter to the care of a gentleman whom I knew nothing about and who most likely neglected it. I am writing now in expectation of meeting the Golden Gate today on her way down and depend on the chances of our passing near enough to each other to throw my letter aboard. The captain says he expects to exchange newspapers with the Gate. We have had a smooth water since leaving Acapulco except for about 250 miles crossing the entrance to the gulf of California at the season there is always a strong current of wind blowing down the gulf which makes that part of the voyage rough and disagreeable to those whose health at sea depends upon smooth water.

We have scarcely been out of sight of land for the last seven days--keeping most of the time near enough to distinguish the character of the vegetation. Our voyage thus far has been a much more pleasant one than I had expected. Our sitting room or rather the substitute for it is the upper deck under an awning. The weather continues warm enough to wear ~~sounding~~ summer clothing during the day although for the last two days a cloak has been found very comfortable at night. The band is with us and plays every evening.

We are running at an average rate of 200 miles a day (during the past 24 hours we made 225 miles* and expect to reach San Francisco Saturday (12 Jan.) I believe I misdated my letter from Acapulco Dec 2nd 55 instead of 2nd January 1856. I do not think you will receive it now

ever as the postage stamp was only 3 cts whereas a 10 cent stamp is required and the consul to whom it was sent to be mailed, is as I happen to know one of the meanest of the mean and not ~~likely~~ likely to incur the great expense of making up the difference. With love to all

J.J. Archer

Steamship Oregon at Sea

Lat 35 17 N Long. 121 45 W

12 O'clock A.M. 11 Jan 1856

My dear mother:

We expect to reach San Francisco about 10 o'clock tomorrow morning but as it is not certain whether we will remain in California all winter or only a few days or only a few hours, just long enough to take on coal and water to continue the voyage to the Columbia river and as in the latter event I should possibly have no time to write I am writing my letter now. The Golden Gate by which I hoped to send the enclosed letter dated Jan 8 met us at night and not nearer than six miles. ~~The~~ change of temperature as we enter the higher latitudes is felt each day since leaving the tropics and before we reach the Columbia will be felt severely, the more especially as the Oregon has no fires except for her galleys (cooking house) and boilers. There are no means of warming the cabins so that we must depend entirely on keeping well wrapped up--I understand that it is the same on all the steamers between San Francisco and Panama and it does not seem ...to have fires although at this season they would make things a little more comfortable.

I anticipate some pleasure on meeting Oliver Thomas in San Francisco and Tilton in Washington territory. I received a letter of congratulations from Tilton when I was first appointed in which he expressed the hope that I would be stationed near him. I little expected then how soon we were likely to meet. When we expected to march out on the plains by the way of St. Louis and the Yellow-Stone Rivers and that possibly we would find ourselves on the Pacific coast in two or three years.

9 o'clock PM ..I had scarcely begun to write before I was interrupted by having to leave the table on account of preparations for dinner and now when I attempt to resume my letter the ship is rolling so much that I can hardly write. There has been a cold, drizzling rain all day until about two hours ago and since the clouds have cleared away we have had a stiff breeze from the south with a heavy sea. It is the first time that a rough sea has not made me sick and I begin to hope that I have at last got seasoned to it.

Mrs. Winder has suffered very much from sea sickness; nothing but to go back to the eastern shore of Maryland, she says, can ever induce her to go to sea again. The soldiers are made much more comfortable than I had supposed they could be. The bunks prepared for them at Panama were sufficient for only one third of the men, the rest were expected to and they did sleep on deck as long as we were in the tropics but since we have entered a colder climate, standees as they are called, a kind of ; ...for their tiers of mattresses, have been put every night between decks sufficient to accommodate all who are not on guard.

San Francisco

16 Jan 1856

We arrived at San Francisco on the 12th. I went ashore immediately to find Oliver who I found at his office. He seemed perfectly delighted to see me and we have been together all the time that I have been able to spend on shore.

I hoped to have written you a long letter from this place but had to leave for Ft. Vancouver within three hours and only knew we were going a half hour ago. . We had counted on at least a day's notice. The Golden Age arrived last evening and I have received Nannie's and Mary's letters-- never let a mail pass without sending me a word from home. I will always write by every opportunity but that will not be every California mail that goes east.

Lt. Wickliffe, Dr. Randolph and I dined yesterday at Van Ness', Mrs. Van Ness sent a carriage for us, to take us out. They live about three miles from the city. Mrs. Van Ness reminded me a good deal of Johnie Constable.

With love to all.

We are still aboard the Oregon which carries us up to the Columbia River. Write to me at San Francisco. Oliver will forward my letters.

Fort Vancouver
25th January, 1856

My dear mother:

This is the first opportunity of sending a letter since I wrote you from San Francisco. We left there on the 16th inst. by the Oregon, the same ship that brought us from Panama. Arrived safe at Ft. Vancouver on the evening of the 20th; our passage was generally rough but without storm and I had become sufficiently a sailor not to be sea-sick.

The only night when the sea was smooth enough for the purpose we had the band up on the hurricane deck and danced by the light of the moon--an agreeable substitute for fires to keep us warm. The ladies seemed to enjoy it quite as much as they did the ball at Ft. Monroe. We entered the Columbia river at 10 o'clock the morning of the 20th--a clear, mild day, warm enough to make it comfortable sitting on deck with overcoats--the scenery is very beautiful all the way up the river- it is studded with islands which are mostly covered with trees which I took for water birches and the shores of the river are high and steep and covered with fir trees. Mount Hood, the highest peak in the United States (????) covered with eternal snow became visible the day before we reached the mouth of the river and has been in full view ever since--it forms the principal place feature on our landscape now and is I think higher and more beautiful than the Orizaba or Popocatepetl of Mexico.

Fort Vancouver is no fort at all, it is only a military station

consisting of a long row of log houses for officers quarters at the head of a slope about 150 feet above the river a quarter of a mile distant from it and quarters for three or four hundred men.

An officer from each company landed with a small working party on the next day after our arrival to attend to the landing of baggage and its safe transportation to the fort and to pitch tents--we had only time however to pitch just enough to stow away the rest of the property for the night. The next day the troops landed and encamped on the parade ground then covered with about two inches of snow which had fallen during the preceding night. The next night there was another fall of snow and although the first two nights at Vancouver were rather uncomfortable I could not get at my bedding except a woolen blanket and the India rubber blanket you sent me but which enabled me to get through the night very well. We have not got flooring for the tents and the weather has grown milder so that we are beginning to have a pretty good time in camp and tomorrow or next day I will be in nearly as good quarters as I had at Fort Monroe for these log houses rough as they seem on the outside are well wainscotted within and painted. They have high ceilings and big fire-places, half of one of these houses (two rooms) has been allotted to me but I expect to take a lieutenant or two in with me. Three weeks ago the ice on the river was eight inches thick but the cold weather is now thought to be over. We were very hospitably received by the officers of the post on our arrival and have since become permanent members of their mess, at least as permanent as our stop here. Two of the companies, H (Guthrie's) and D, under Lt. Col. Casey, go to Fort Steilacoom on Puget Sound. I do not know whether we will remain here during the winter or not. Faxton, the architect, formerly a partner of Nelson is here on a short visit from San Francisco. With all my love for you and all of yours

Yours affectionately

J.J. Archer

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 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 that 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 and thoughtfulness 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

since we receive the mail once in two weeks and have the Hudson Bay Company's depot here ~~where~~ 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 amongst the memories of the past.

Nannie, my dear sister, my constant companion while at home, my usual companion when aboard, much less 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 niht 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.

Fort Vancouver, Wash Ter.

28th January, 1856

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 T omas. 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 too 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

ghe depot for the stores of the company--the place where they ship their
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
their ball--the examination is as I believe a matter of form almost
intended to give a chance to reject officers who are ~~no~~ really unfit for the
appointment.

Yours affectionately

J.J. Archer

(To Robert H. Archer)

Fort Vancouver, Was ington 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 boqrds, slightly ~~one~~ raised on ~~one or two~~
?? above the ground--the weather has become m ld 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 ~~Edwards~~ 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 Stillacoom 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

steamer from San Francisco with its 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 in 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

J.J. Archer.

Fort Vancouver, W.T. March 7 1856

My dear mother:

I was delighted to receive letters from Nannie, Mary, ^{and} Kate ~~and ?~~ 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 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 ~~be~~ 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

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 Infty. 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 ~~have~~ 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 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 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 ~~came~~ 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

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

[1856]

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 who owner who wanted to wait for better weather in order that he might ~~two~~ ^{tow} 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 at 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 Columbia.

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.

The valley here opens to the width of from four to five miles between the

bases of the mountains on each side of the river. The mountains are smooth and sloping goth hill and vale destitute of trees and scantily supplied with gaass. Mount Adams and Mount Hood, snow mountains, are in sight

Gen. Wool visited Vancouver since we left and made a change in Col. Wright's arrangements. He has sent ^Dent's and Fletcher's companies to Steilacoom on Puget Sound. We would now be en rou e for Walla Walla But for the want of wagons which can only reach us in pieces by the little steamboat. We expect to start on Saturday.

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 halfan 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 with out inte mission from this time until the rainy season commences in the autum.

Major Lugenbeel desires to be particularly mentioned to you.

Capt. Woodruff and Lt. Carr send their greetings to Nannie--Carr desires e to say to her that he much regrets his inability to stop even for an our in Baltimore and especially to say to her that he will take e~~o~~c~~a~~d~~a~~d~~a~~d~~a~~o excellent care of ~~me~~. He has, on his application, been permanently ransferred 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 een the conve ted Indians at their devotions--their sermon and hymns were elivered in Chinook language. I am to acquire some knowledge of it as it s to I dians west of the Rocky Mountains what the French is to England though there are many distinct languages amongst the various tribes the Chinook s spoken by all.

(have not yet had occasion to use my mess ch st--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, Cpl. Steptoe, Dr. Randolph and I, found @@@ 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 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 aake 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 r gret that I did not see before I left.