

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 08c 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 ~~received~~ 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 (273) whom I had not seen or heard of for a long time. He has ~~not~~ been in living in Pen. and chancing to meet Rankin last spring learned from him of my whereabouts.

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 her last letter. I should have asked her I know if she is like the ~~Landdales~~ Landdales, all of whom I like and esteem so much.

We have nothing new here to interest us or that would be interesting to ~~you~~ you to hear--an occasional rumor ~~reaches~~ reaches us that Ft. Simcoe is to be 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} ~~done~~ ~~done~~ may be ~~done~~ with regard 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 ~~you~~ you as us.

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

We are all in good health, with love to you all, yours truly and affectionately. J. A. Archer

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 ^{some} ~~some~~ 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 ~~make~~ 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 ~~have~~ 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 there is much idle rumor in the talk.

As for myself I ^{care} ~~care~~ very 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 by 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.

Quarters,
Fort Simcoe, W.T.
1st April, 1859

My dear mother:

I received Mary's letter of 17th Feb. a few days since.

Spring has at last, after much coquetting, consented to remain with us--the snow still rests on the side of the hills and winter can be plainly seen in the distance but I have no fear of its coming back again. We are getting along fine with our company gardens which we persist in making in spite of all worryings to the contrary.

Captain Ingalls wrote us from Vancouver that the (?) of Gen. Harney --the other day, advising us not to go to any great trouble or expense about anything for possibility that within three months the post would be turned over to the Indian department and the troops would go, nobody knows where. I have no doubt however that at least one company will remain here for a year longer, if no more, although as the inspection General Mansfield did say in his report that "it" (Simcoe) is on no route to any particular place and the travel oasis when the ~~Camp~~post is reached."

I send you a drawing of the fort made for me by the soldiers of my company.

For the last four days I have been on a general court martial, a very tedious ...and it adjourned this morning.

Yours affectionately
J.G. Archer

Fort Simcoe, W.T.

15th April, 1859

My dear mother:

A few days since I received a letter from Nannie telling me that you are all well. Mr. Carr also writes ~~me~~ that he had been to see you but that you were not well enough to come down while he was there. We have had fine weather for a week past and I have been riding out a great deal.

Hill and prairie are at this season covered with flowers--hills that a month hence will be parched and brown are covered for many acres with sweet scented violets and heliotrope.

We are in profound ignorance of our destination. It is not thought now that any of the posts will be broken up-- an order was received last mail at department quarters forbidding the building of any new posts-- so that it seems necessary that all the old ones should be retained for winter quarters.

I am sorry now that I did not wait until next fall to go home. I hope however that the day is not far distant when I will be able to see you again--certainly I will never let pass an opportunity to be with you.

With love, to all,

I remain as ever

Affectionately yours

J. G. Archer

Fort Vancouver, W.T.

24th April, 1859

My dear mother:

Contrary to the opinion of Col. Wright and all other officers acquainted with the country Gen. Harney has determined to abandon Ft. Simcoe---On 17th inst. I received orders to proceed in command of a battalion of two companies "C" (Capt. Frazer) and "I", my own company to the 49th parallel in the Okinakane valley to relieve Capt. Woodruff's company and form the escort to the N.W. Boundary commission--Capt. Black's co (G) goes to Ft. Dalles to relieve Cos A and K which companies under Major [Pinkney] Lugene~~ll~~ will proceed to Colville ~~the~~ and there establish a temporary post to protect the supplies destined for the boundary commission. I am here now to make preparations for my departure from Fort Simcoe by 15th May--you may know I am in good health when I tell you I rode last Wednesday between daybreak and sunset 80 miles and felt perfectly fresh the next day.

I find it quite gay here as besides the general and his staff there are five Ast. Gt. and one Inf. company at the post.

Gov. Stevens, the delegate from Washington territory and Senator Smith ~~and~~ of Oregon are also here having arrived last night on the mail steamer from the east. I dined yesterday with a number of the officers at the general's and after my simple way of living at Simcoe found it quite hard to get through a formal dinner of innumerable courses.

25th April--I have ~~not~~ been able to get my letters out of the mail--the post master having been censured for opening the mail to accommodate individuals here so that I will not know anything from home until I go to Ft. ^{Dalles} ~~Dalles~~ day after tomorrow.

I am at Capt. Ingalls--yesterday I dined at the bachelor officers' mess --this afternoon I go to Portland to make a few purchases-- then I will meet Capt. Frazer who has gone to Salem and we will go back to Salem together.

As I think the boundary commission will not be able to reach the Okinakane for at least a month after the appropriate time I expect to depart from my route so far as to go about to Colville, at point where my command will winter, then spend the intervening time in planting some turnips and potatoes to make sure against scurvy amongst the troops and making some preparations for hutting my post --there will be but little time, there will be little time for anything of the kind when we knock off work in the fall.

With Love to all ,
affectionately
J. G. Archer.

Camp of North West Boundary Escort

Atanum creek, 29 May , 1859

My dear Nannie:

I think I mentioned that Fort Simcoe has been turned over to the Indian Department. Yesterday I sent off the troops, Cos. C and I in advance while I remained to close up the affairs of the post. I have just come up with the battalion. We are very pleasantly encamped or rather bivouacked--my officers are Capt. Frazer, Lt. Camp, Lt. Herker and Dr. Bernies ^(?) Everyone seems disposed to be agreeable to everyone else and to make the duty we are engaged in as pleasant as possible.

I am fortunate enough to secure letters from you and ^{be} sister Hannah just before leaving Simcoe. I expect my march to ^{be} slow and tedious on account of the pack train ^{furnished} me for transportation and by the high water in the numerous rivers across our path, this being a season of floods in the Columbia and its northern tributaries.

^{D.V.C.]}
Camp Sela on the Yakima,

31st May, 59 (on same letter)

Yesterday arrived at the Yakima just below the mouth of the Naches about 10 o'clock a.m.. Found it very high and swift and managed by 8 the next morning to ^{Swim} ~~spring~~ over the mules and horses and ferry over the men and baggage and provisions and by 10 o'clock reached this camp opposite the mouth of ~~the~~ the Wenass

write me North West Boundary
commission, via Ft. Colville, W.T.

Wenachi River

June 5, 1859

(no salutation, apparently continuation of same letter --previously)
Last September returning from our expedition we crossed the mountains from the Yakima to the Wenache (sic) valley by a gradual and smooth ascent that route is now rendered impassable by snows so that we have been obliged to take a much longer and a rocky and broken trail--arrived here about 1 a.m. and had everything across the river by 8 p.m,

Camp on Columbia river

7th June, 1859

Marched only six miles yesterday--a very rough rocky trail--the pack mules, one of mine and two of the other train missed their footing and tumbled from the path down a ~~precipice~~ precipice, 150 feet high into the Columbia. I remain here today to rest the pack animals and mend the trail around a rocky place and to build a wharf around a rocky point this side where the Columbia river has covered the trail deep enough to swim a mule.

Camp on the Columbia

4 miles from Enhatqua

9th June 1859

Yesterday marched six miles, ferried the baggage and swam the animals across the ~~river~~ Enhatqua, repacked and arrived here early this afternoon--lost two miles--one broke his ? and the other his skull by falls from precipices. Will camp here today to make a path along the rocky

face of the mountain. The trail has been overflowed for a considerable distance by the Columbia which is higher than for many years

Camp on Lake Chelan

10th June, 1857

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~~ ^{boats} 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 ~~at~~ 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 saintly bits of animated nature which in their zeal ~~sing~~ 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 ~~the~~ 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~~ ^{and} establish a depot about the mouth of the Similkameen for my supply while ascending that river.

Lake Osoyoos

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 Okinakane 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~~ ^{swarms} of mosquitoes so bad that the soldiers could not stop to scratch. I marched on, not ~~and~~ 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 Colville 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.

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 ~~2~~ 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 ~~spring~~ ^{breeze} 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

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, ^{will} go east for ~~1~~ have often heard him say he would not take them to any such place. Mrs. B. would prefer going with him.

Mrs. Lugenebel 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 Lugenebel's camp in Colville valley I was much vexed by learning that after Lugenebel 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 ~~was~~ had hoped to remain sometime longer but the beautiful little stream of cool water which I ^{Praised} ~~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

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 ~~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. Barker. 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 ~~Similkameen~~ *Similkameen*

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 ^{address} somewhere between this and San Francisco. Always ~~send me~~ ^{address} 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 ~~and~~ our doctor returned with him on a visit for a few days. All well