

Basic Detail Report

Sept. 1
Dear Ed — (ps. Am completely, or nearly, dead - etc.)
Believe it or not, this is all the paper I have. I'm
in the Kingsbridge VA Hospital recovering from
my fifth attack of thrombophlebitis since 1945 — the
worst; so I have to stop smoking altogether take blood-
thinning pills & penicillin & take care of myself the
rest of my life, or, if the condition spreads from legs
upwards, I get brain, heart or lung thromboses that
give fatal aneurysms. I just received an marvelous
letter yesterday via John Holmes, who visited me here
last week (been here 3 weeks, previous to that laid up
a month in Pro. Carolina.) Yes, my ^{young} wife has health
and good violence, I've work to do and fun to
concentrate on. You coming to New York is going to
ouch my life. Bravo for fate in this case! — she
finally got us in the same town. Will be demurring at my
medical advice at 74-21 134th St. Richmond Hill as
soon as I get out of the hospital next Friday. Oh
well, a born celebration is in order for us battered
knights of the cross. Really, Ed, I'm exhilarated you've
come; thank of the sun; I have had new places to go
to (tell you later); and women galore all over. Yes,
I think you made the right choice in architecture — arch-
itecture is better than talking and all that sissy shit —
architecture is a noble thing — it was Faust's last dream —
and you are a born architect, sir! — Think of the honor,
sir, in this age of boys the exact opposite of a philologist!
I look forward to meeting you at the train — shoot me
the coming-time. All's well. Sir, to be your
admirer is not to be weak. Sam Kerouac 1951
Sir, I'm not about to die.

Jack Kerouac letter, regarding the rewriting of "On the Road"

Date

1951

Primary Maker

Jack Kerouac

Medium

Paper

Description

A handwritten letter from Jack Kerouac, signed ("Sam. Kerouac Esq."), to Ed White, September 1, 1951. Together with manuscript fragment from <i>On the Road</i> on verso. Quarto, single leaf with writing on both sides. The verso is filled entirely with Kerouac's handwritten text, in

French and English, blocked off and crossed out in pencil. Together with a handwritten envelope, containing handwritten postscript to verso, postmarked New York, New York. A legendary letter, announcing Kerouac's plans to revise *On the Road*, written from Jack in his sick-bed while he underwent treatment for phlebitis in the Kingsbridge VA Hospital. Instead of revising the novel, however, Kerouac had gone to work on rough "inserts" intended to flesh out the manuscript. The sketches were alternately referred to as *On the Road* and "the book about Cassady" and they ultimately became an entirely different work - the new novel was *Visions of Cody* and wouldn't be published until 1959. Kerouac was told to stop smoking and adhere to a program of medication for life, and never forgot that if the clots reached his brain or his heart, it would kill him. He used his time in the hospital to re-read Proust and start a hospital diary in which he attempted a Proustian recollection of his own past. In the diary he also outlined a series of books that would comprise the legend of Jack Kerouac. He was convinced that remembering his personal odyssey through life would lead to a new burst of creativity. He closes the letter with an assurance to White: "Sir, I'm not about to die."