Benjamin Lincoln to George Washington 4 March 1787

The parties I mentioned to your Excellency which were lurking on the borders of this State; remained inactive for some time with a hope and expectation as their leaders taught them to believe, that they should be reinforced from different quarters, and they were credulous enough to expect aid from Canada. Thus matters remained untill the Morning of the 27th Ulto when there appeared about 120 of them in Stockbridge who were in a very defenseless state, besides they were compleatly surprized. The Insurgents took a number of the leading Characters, in that Town, plundered many of the Inhabitants, & stole a number of Horses; They then, flushed with success proceeded on to Barrington; on their approach the well affected Militia retired before them towards Sheffield, and were met by the Militia of that Town commanded by Colo. Ashley. The halt the Insurgents made in Barrington gave time for the Lenox & Stockbridge Militia to collect and follow them. Colo. Ashley having collected about Eighty Men, came to a resolution to march in pursuit of the rebels, & to attack them where he should find them; he very soon fell in with them. They were marching in files, had their prisoners in the centre. Their front division formed a line on one side of the road, that left our prisoners in the front of the rear. It is said they did not form; that the whole were routed before they had time to do it; two or three Men on a side were killed & a number wounded; among them one Hamlen, Commander of the party; his wounds are dangerous; as they retreated they fell into the hands of the Militia from Stockbridge & Lenox which were pursuing. About seventy of them have been taken: some are coming in and surrendering themselves.

This Action has had very happy Effects upon the people of this County; it has given them great spirits, and they begin to discover that state of mind which they enjoyed before the Rebellion existed, by which the Friends of government in this part of the County have been exceedingly born down.

The parties, which a few days since, were lurking on the borders of this State, in Connecticut & New York, are very much dispersed, from causes not certainly known by us here. It is said they have been dispersed by the Authority of those governments. The Rebels are retiring to Vermont, & are making their way Northerly, Shays and Wiley were by the last accounts at Otter Creek, and Parsons on his rout to that place. The leaders having left those deluded people, many of them will, I think, return, while others will endeavour to gain settlements in Vermont.

The State has much yet to do. The Supreme Judicial Court will meet in this County on the third Tuesday of this Month for the trial of these offenders. To preserve a line, which shall give security to the Citizens & dignity to the State, without incurring the censure of the World for

being too cruel, may be difficult to draw. Where they hold out terms of pardon it should be done with a good grace, they should at the same time manifest a disposition, to embrace cordially all who are truely penitent & give unequivocal proofs of reformation.

A proper address and attention will soon restore these Counties not only to Government and Order, but to that love and friendship, without which none can be long happy in civil Society.

The regiments I mentioned before, are nearly full, one of them will be here in a few days; as soon as they are compleated and the necessary arrangements are made, I shall return home to the prosecution of the subject which engaged my attention the last year, that in the Eastern Country; my Friends tell me that I have just enthusiasm enough for such a project; what they call the Effects of enthusiasm to me appears the result of my best judgment.

I know this long letter may trespass upon your Excellency's time, did I not feel a responsibility to your Excellency when ever I enter on a military enterprize, and an Obligation to report as a duty I owe to your Excellency & to myself, I should have been silent, as I know your Excellencys time is constantly engrossed in pursuits which have for their object, the best interest & happiness of Mankind. I have the honor of being My dear general with perfect esteem your Excellencys most obedient & most humble servant—

B. Lincoln

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