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### **Richard Butler**

Benjamin Rush to John Montgomery, Philadelphia, 5 November 1782

## Benjamin Franklin Bache

### George Washington to Jeremiah Wadsworth, Philadelphia, 6 March 1797

This man has celebrity in a certain way—for His calumnies are to be exceeded only by his Impudence, and both stand unrivalled.

### John Quincy Adams to Charles Adams, London, 1 August 1797

My old Schoolfellow Bache has become too thorough-bred a democrat to suffer any regard for antient friendship, or any sense of generosity for an absent enemy to suspend his patriotic scurrility.

### John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, London, 7 October 1797

My old school mate Bache has indeed been so industrious in making his praise slander and his slander praise, that abuse from his press, is at least what as a lawyer I should call *prima facie* evidence of merit. I feel therefore some satisfaction in being the object of it.

### Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Philadelphia, 23 November 1797

Your old school mate Bache goes on in his old way loosing altogether the Character of Gentleman, by a low malicious kind of abuse and scurrility. If he ever had any of the milk of Humane kindness, it is all turnd to vinigar, and I believe he is a very miserable Being, for he cannot but feel, that all good Men despise him, and who is hardy enough to brave contempt?

## John Bacon

### William Plumer: Memorandum, 5 June 1806

In the choice of a President of the [Massachusetts] Senate John Bacon had after several trials a majority of one. He was formerly a representative in Congress. He is a man of talents but too metaphysical for a useful legislator. He was once an ordained Clergyman.

## Francis Bailey

### David Rittenhouse to James Madison, Philadelphia, 19 January 1790

I beg leave to recommend to your favorable notice Mr. Francis Bailey, printer, of this City, as a Gentleman of abilities in his profession and an amiable Character. I understand he intends to apply for something in the way of his business, either to the Treasury or elsewhere. His mechanical Genius must in some respects give him advantages superior to any other printer of my Acquaintance. He some time ago invented a very simple and easy method of making flowers and ornaments for printing work which seem incapable of imitation, and may perhaps be of use.

**Thomas McKean to John Adams, Philadelphia, 20 January 1790**

This will be handed to you by Mr. Francis Bailey, printer of the *Freemans Journal* in this city. I esteem him as an intelligent, ingenious & honest man. He has lately invented a simple method of making ornaments, devices and even types for securities, certificates and other public papers, which cannot possible be counterfeited.

As soon as his invention shall be made known, it can be used by any printer, and no patent could secure him much benefit from it: He therefore hopes for employment from Congress in the line of his business so long as he may deserve it, as the only reward for his discovery. With this view he goes to New-York, and requests me to do him the honor of introducing him to you, and soliciting your patronage. Your countenance and recommendation will oblige an industrious & worthy character.

**George Duffield to John Adams, Philadelphia, 20 January 1790**

[Recommended Bailey as] a man of great integrity; & I think, I may safely say, universally esteemed by his Acquaintance for his honesty & uprightness.

**Philip Freneau to James Madison, Monmouth, N.J., 20 May 1795**

You have taken in favour of Mr. Bailey. He is a good republican and a worthy honest Man, which qualifications, I have thought, entitled him to Some Notice from the Government, in his line of business.\* I was heartily laughed at, however, a few weeks ago in N. York, by some aristocrats, for having in my Letter to You or Mr. Beckly, I forget which, extolled his Military Services in the late war. I am sensible he never cut off the heads of Giants or drove hosts before him, as Some have done; at the Same time it ought to be remembered that he was an officer in the Pennsylvania Militia in the season that tried Men's Souls (as Paine says) and I believe never acted otherwise than became the character in which he acted.

\*Bailey was the printer of the *Freeman's Journal*, a Philadelphia newspaper.

## Theodorus Bailey

**James Kent to Simeon Baldwin, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., 26 March 1789**

Mr. Bailey an amiable man but who in my Opinion has wrong Notions on the Subject of national Policy.

## Abraham Baldwin

**Charles Pettit to Nathanael Greene, New York, 20 January 1786**

He is a Man of Learning and sterling good Sense. If you are not acquainted with him, you have a Pleasure to come on which I congratulate you.

**William Pierce: Sketches of Delegates to the Constitutional Convention, c. September 1787**

Mr. Baldwin is a Gentleman of superior abilities, and joins in a public debate with great art and eloquence. Having laid the foundation of a compleat classical education at Harvard College, he pursues every other study with ease. He is well acquainted with Books and Characters, and has an accommodating turn of mind, which enables him to gain the confidence of Men, and to understand them. He is a practicing Attorney in Georgia, and has been twice a Member of Congress. Mr. Baldwin is about 38 years of age.

**Otto's Biographies, Fall 1788**

Reasonable and well-intentioned, but never has had the occasion to be distinguished. Congress has just given him the means by naming him one of the commissioners to settle its accounts with the states.

**New York Daily Gazette, 21 July 1790**

Being now honored with a seat in the great assembly of the United States, he is revered by men whose interests he protected, and admired by the most zealous advocates of a party whose prejudices were diametrically opposite to the principles of his conduct. His oratory is eloquent, with a precision of arguments peculiar to himself. Possessed of talents which nature had bestowed without reserve, he has improved them by an unvaried application. Cautious in the assertions he maintains, and rapid in the animated progress of his language, he astonishes, while, by the judicious texture of his arguments, he renders the authority of his decision unanswerable even by the giant S\*\*\*\*.

**Theodore Sedgwick to Ephraim Williams, 27 January 1791**

We hear and to be sure with little regrets, that Jackson & Baldwin have both lost their election declaiming . . . May every electioneering demagogue who attempts to lay a foundation for popularity, by inflaming the passions of the people meet their deserved fate.

**James Jackson to John Milledge, 7 November 1792**

Our Friend Baldwin, who is certainly one of the most obliging Men on Earth, & clever at everything will have introduced you to all who may be worthy of your acquaintance.

**Augusta Chronicle, 3 November 1798**

If superior abilities—if long services—if unshaken principles can entitle a man to confidence—Mr. Baldwin is possessed of these.

**Hartford Connecticut Courier, 10 December 1798**

It appears that the malicious and inveterate Baldwin has met the marked indignation of a large majority of his fellow citizens unequivocally expressed by their free and unbiased suffrage. Thus another limb of faction is happily lopped off.

**Gouverneur Morris: Diary, 15 January 1801**

[In U.S. Senate debate] Mr. Baldwin argumentative, subtle, and plausible.

**William Plumer to Sarah Plumer, 2 March 1807**

He was a man of talents & had much of the cunning & shrewdness that is peculiar to his native State. I will, however, give him the justice to say that his views & actions were not so narrow & contracted as the people of Connecticut. He was governed by more liberal motives and views. He has long been the firm friend & defender of Mr. Jefferson & of his administration. . . . He was remarkably cautious & reserved. He listened to the conversation of others—but took great care not to commit himself, and frequently avoided intimating his own opinion. His manners & conversation were those of the gentleman.

**Joel Barlow in the *National Intelligencer*, 7 March 1807**

He may have wanted [i.e., needed] ambition to make himself brilliant, but he never wanted industry to make himself useful. His oratory was simple, forcible, convincing. His maxim of never asserting anything but what he believed to be true, could not fail to be useful in carrying conviction to others. Patient of contradiction and tolerant of the wildest opinion, he could be indulgent to the errors of judgment of other men, as if he had stood the most in need of indulgence for himself . . . moderate, but firm; relaxing nothing in his republican principles, but retaining all possible charity for his former friends who may have abandoned theirs.

## Thomas Barclay

**Richard Bache to Benjamin Franklin, Philadelphia, 4 October 1781**

I have wrote a few Lines to you of this date recommending my good Friend Mr. Barclay to your Friendship & Civilities; the obligations I and my Family are under to him, demand my warmest Friendship;—when we fled from Town in the latter end of the year Seventy seven, he received us under his hospitable Roof, where we stayed upwards of two Months; I have never had it in my power to make him a suitable return;—But abstract from this Obligation he has lain me under, I introduce him to you as a deserving, honest Man, much beloved here, and a Man sure of making Friends where ever he goes—

**John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Grosvenor Square, London, 23 August 1785**

If Mr. Barclay will undertake the Voyage, I am for looking no farther. We cannot find a Steadier, or more prudent Man. He should look out for some Clerk or Companion who can write French and understand Italian.

**John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Grosvenor Square, London, 2 September 1785**

I know not whether Mr. Barclay would wish, or be willing to be translated to London, but a Man of his Prudence and Judgment, Vigilance and Fidelity, would be wanted here.

**Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, Paris, 20 June 1787**

I shall mention in my letter to Mr. Jay a disagreeable affair in which Mr. Barclay has been thrown into at Bordeaux. An honest man cannot be found, nor a slower nor more indecisive one. His affairs too are so embarrassed and desperate that the public reputation is every moment in danger of being compromised with him. He is perfectly amicable & honest with all this.

## Joel Barlow

**David Humphreys to Nathanael Greene, New Haven, Conn., 10 April 1780**

There is a hopeful Genius . . . who is so far gone in Poetry, that there is no hope of reclaiming, and making him attentive to any thing else—to be more serious about the matter. The person intended, is a young Gentleman by the name of Barlow; who I could wish was introduced to your notice. He is certainly a very great Genius, and has undertaken a work which I am persuaded, will do honor to himself, and his Country, if he is enabled to prosecute it, in the manner he has proposed. It is entitled the Vision of Columbus, and in the course of the Poem will bring into view, upon a large scale, all the great events that have, or will take place on the Continent; from a sight of the first Book which he has nearly finished, I have conceived an exceeding high idea of the performance. But the difficulty is, it will be a labour of three years at least; And his patrimony which consisted in Continental Bills, is by no means sufficient to support him. However, a number of Gentlemen have undertaken to patronize him, And I hope will not relinquish the plan on account of the expense. Should they, he proposes to set out for the Southward and see what encouragement he can obtain there.

**Ezra Stiles to Thomas Jefferson, Yale College, New Haven, Conn., 30 April 1788**

Mr. Barlow, Author of the Vision of Columbus, will present you with this. I need say nothing further to commend him to your Civilities and Benevolence, than that he is an American of an ingenious and worthy Character.

**George Washington to Marquis to Lafayette, Mount Vernon, 28 May 1788**

Notwithstanding you are acquainted with Mr. Barlow in person, and with his works by reputation, I thought I would Just write you a line by him, in order to recommend him the more particularly to your civilities. Mr. Barlow is considered by those who are good Judges to be a genius of the first magnitude; and to be one of those Bards who hold the keys of the gate by which Patriots, Sages and Heroes are admitted to immortality. Such are your Ancient Bards who are both the priest and doorkeepers to the temple of fame, and these, my dear Marquis, are no vulgar functions. Men of real talents in arms have commonly approved themselves patriots of the liberal arts and friends to the poets of their own as well as former times. In some instances by acting reciprocally, heroes have made poets, and poets heroes.

**William Playfair to Alexander Hamilton, Paris, 30 March 1791**

Mr. Barlow who was here has Run away in debt without informing me or any other Person.

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**Timothy Pickering to Alexander Hamilton, Philadelphia, 29 April 1797**

If a commission extraordinary [to France] should be appointed, what should you think of Mr. Barlow for a member? He has managed the negotiations with Algiers with great ability, address, and zeal for the interest of his country. Having been formerly elected a member of the French Convention, he may be deemed of sufficient respectability. He is even admitted, I take it, to French citizenship. His talents are unquestionable. *I* should sooner confide in him than in Mr M[adison]. The other person named by you [Jefferson], I consider as out of the question, because of his station. Mr. Barlow has no personal antipathies & resentments to gratify, resentments engendered in the collision of parties at home.

**John Adams to George Washington, Philadelphia, 19 February 1799**

Barlow's Letter [to George Washington urging peace between France and the United States], had I assure you very little Weight in determining me to this measure [i. e., sending a diplomat to France]. I shall make few Observations on it. But in my opinion it is not often that We meet with a Composition which betrays so many and so unequivocal Symptoms of blackness of heart. The Wretch has destroyed his own Character to such a degree, that I think it would be derogatory to yours, to give any answer at all to his Letter. Tom Paine is not a more worthless fellow.

**John Quincy Adams to William Vans Murray, Berlin, 2 April 1799**

And I too felt no small satisfaction to find that Joel Barlow had unfolded himself so fully. One of the Jacobin English reviewers compares Tom Paine to Luther, and if there by any resemblance between them, Joel must be Tom's Melancthon. Joel has nothing of his own, he takes his whole political creed from Tom, but having had a learned education and being a man of rhymes, he has sometimes given a grace of expression to Tom's specious doctrines, with which he was not able to clothe them himself. I remember the time when Joel most humbly supplicated the permission of his Most Christian Majesty Louis 16, King of France and Navarre, to dedicate to him the *Vision of Columbus*. His Majesty not only accepted the dedication, but paid very bounteously for it by subscribing for fifty or one hundred copies of the book. The dedication and the poem itself abundantly show Joel's manner of thinking with regard to kings at the zenith of their power. But Joel has no abstract attachment to monarchy. With him the true Amphitryon is the man that gives the dinner. His maxim is that of Falstaff, "He that rewards me, Heaven reward him"; and he can accommodate himself to become the parasite of a Director, as readily as he was that of a Bourbon in his glory. I have heard from pretty good authority that Joel is a man of weak nerves too, and that during the reign of Robespierre especially he had a most trembling horror of the Guillotine. From the tone of his letter one would imagine he thought all his former countrymen as tremulous as himself, as all his arguments are appeals to cowardice. Analyze the whole letter and you will find it one prescription, "Cringe to these rascals, because they are strong," a system which, however conformable to Joel's temper, principles and practice, most fortunately our countrymen did not think proper to pursue.

## Joshua Barney

### Robert Morris to John Jay, Marine Office, Philadelphia, 7 October 1782

This letter will be delivered to you by Joshua Barney, Esqr. a Lieutenant in the Navy of the United States, and now commanding the Packet Ship *General Washington*. This Young Gentleman is an active, gallant Officer who has already behaved well on many occasions, and I recommend him to your particular Notice and Attention from the Conviction that his Conduct will do honor to those by whom he is patronized and introduced.

### Joshua Barney to John Adams, Baltimore, Md., 23 August 1788

Since I had the honor to Command The packett-ship Genrl. Washington. in 84. I have lived at this place in hopes long before this, to have been call'd into the service of My Country in some manner or other. but this has not been the case; I am now very desirous of Visiting Europe in which I have two Views, first I am in possession of a large tract of Western land. this land I wish to sell, Or settle by Emegrants from Europe. and in which, should I succeed the prospects of a large fortune Is before me, besides a great advantage to those that settle, and rendering a service to my Country by such emegrations, my next View is to engage myself in the service of some power in Europe in the Naval-line. these sir are my motives for leaving home. and my inducement to Solicit your patronage. my Intentions are to Visit London and Holland in the first place. the Russian service seems at present to draw my Attention, perhaps I could meet with Your Assistance with that Minister. at the Court of St James's. or in any other Manner your Excellency may think proper; I hope by entering into Actual service to be still more capable of serving my Country when call'd on, my Intentions is to prepare myself in this line, as I mean to make it the study of my life, our Country is yet young and prospects are now opening for something Great. A Navy we must have, and able Commanders will be much wanted. this Sir is my inducement. and notwithstanding I have a family (which I leave behind) My thirst after Naval knowledge Spurs me on, to engage in something which may be an advantage to my Country. and myself hereafter, your friendship which I have experienced before, and Natural desire which I well know to do every that may tend to Assist this our young Country. and the Citizens of it. Induces me to Solicit your friendship on this Occasion, Assuring you, that I shall ever make it my study to merit your patronage. and to do honor to your recommendations, under these circumstances I wish to inform you that my desire is to leave this as early as possible this fall, and shall Anxiously wait for a line from your Excellency.

### George Lux to George Read, Baltimore, Md., 28 July 1789

Captain Barney's services during the war are acknowledged, & every one wishes him to be provided for in the naval line, by having either a packet or a Cutter, but should he be placed in the customs, it will by no means give *general satisfaction*, on account of the boisterousness of his temper, for this Town was extremely convulsed at our two last elections, & he was every where in the Streets, reviling & cursing those, who were not as violent as himself on his side, which conduct injured his cause by driving many people into a decided opposition, who originally intended to be quiet.



**James McHenry to Alexander Hamilton, Baltimore, Md., 3 January 1791**

You owe this short reassurance of my regards to Captain Barney who has a desire to be personally known to you. I introduce him with pleasure. He is a man of many valuable qualities, and well known for his distinguished services during the war. As yet however he is to receive his reward. I believe he goes up to Congress with the intention to petition for commutation, on the expenses incurred in his captivity.

**Benjamin Henry Latrobe: Journals, 30 June 1797**

While I stayed at Lindsay's Hotel, Norfolk, I had constant opportunities of seeing and conversing with *Commodore Barney*, who is, in the present uncertain state of politics, grown into an object of attention. He is certainly a man not destitute of abilities, and as a seaman, I believe he is equal to the most skillful American Navigators. His personal courage is also not to be doubted. But there are many traits in his character and habits that appear to me to unfit him for the situation in which the French republic have placed him. There are not many men, upon whom *command* fits easy, unless they have been inured to it for a considerable time. There is an ease about an old General, Admiral, or Minister of State, let him be ever so haughty and despotic, that is to be acquired only by habit. Barney has not yet acquired it. He appears to be in a situation to which he may perhaps be equal, but to which he is unused. On that account he is not loved by his Crews. Frenchmen have been particularly accustomed to a polite and easy though rigid discipline in their officers of the old School, and must easily detect the deficiency. There is something diametrically opposite to the condescending haughtiness of a French officer, in the plain roughness of an English or American Sea Captain. Barney has much of the latter left, although having made himself tolerably perfect in the rudiments of french shrugs and gesticulation, he is perhaps on the road to acquire the latter. Another cause of dislike to him, originates perhaps in his scarce ever going on board his Ships. In the System of Liberty and equality, this seems a strange neglect. Besides this he never permits his men to come ashore but on particular occasions, although by the rules of the French navy, one-tenth of the Crew have the right to go ashore *daily* in rotation, when in port.

But the most exceptionable part of the Commodore's conduct, as a *public functionary*, seems to be, the want of reserve with which he expresses himself upon his objects and intentions as Commander of a military force. Should his openness however be supposed to be merely assumed, and intended as a Cloak to his real plans, it has the bad effect, that it lowers the opinion entertained of his prudence. In these free communications however he is not very consistent. Having got the *Medusa* frigate thoroughly repaired, he has dropped below the fort almost as low down as Crany Island. He sometimes pretends that he will leave this station on the first dark night with a fair wind. Then he means to go up the Bay. At other times, he thinks he is of service to the French cause by keeping a Superior British force idle in the Chesapeake. He says that he blockades the English, and that it is of little consequence whether he detains them by lying within, or without them. He gives his opinion upon the probabilities of the War, lays open his ideas of his own situation as it respects his French or his American citizenship, and reasons upon the conduct he may pursue in case of a rupture to anyone who will listen to him. The natural effect of this conduct must be, and indeed is, to produce an idea that no important confidence ought to be entrusted to him, and that the French directory will not long continue to employ him.

He makes no Secret of his being deeply engaged in commercial pursuits at Norfolk; and I heard him say, that if he were kept in port long enough he should make 200,000 dollars. He is indeed a little given to boast of the property he has acquired in the French Service.

At Lindsay's Hotel he constantly meets officers of the British fleet, and they converse together with great ease, and perfect good humor. He is indeed not an unpleasant man, and his conversation, though it betrays no very great depth of understanding, and runs too much upon indelicate subjects, is not wholly unentertaining.

## John Barnwell

### **Nathanael Green to Joseph Vince**

I am a stranger in a great degree to General Barnwell but from what I have seen of him he appears to be a good Officer and much of a Gentleman.

## Robert Barnwell

### **Alexander Hamilton to Edward Carrington, Philadelphia, 26 May 1792**

Mr. Barnwell of South Carolina . . . appears to be a man of nice honor.

## Joseph Barrell

### **Joseph Barrell to the Boston Town Committee, 4 June 1778**

I am much Obliged by the Honor done me by the Town yesterday in Choosing me one of their Representatives; but exceedingly sorry for the Choice, as I find myself utterly averse to the employ. How this matter came about I cannot conceive as I've made it my invaried rule to inform every person who mentioned it, that I could on no consideration think of serving. My only Aim, and highest wish, is to support the Character of an Independent Honest Man, and to enjoy the satisfaction consequent thereon. As to Public life I never desire to be known in it, and am convinced I can be of no service to this town by being in the General Court. Was it not that all Private considerations ought to give way to Public good, I should mention that my business would greatly suffer; but My Aversion & Inability are fully sufficient with me to beg as a favor the Town would excuse me from Accepting this Trust.

## John Barry

### **Henry Laurens to Benjamin Lincoln, Philadelphia, 24 November 1778**

Capt. Barry having made some extraordinary demands on Congress, for allowance of a Table & a Secretary, which the House have not determined upon, is detained here. I believe Capt. Barry

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to be a brave & active Seaman, but I am told by Gentlemen of the Marine Committee that the intended service is not pleasing to him, 'tis possible therefore he may wish to avoid it.

**Benjamin Stoddard to Alexander Hamilton, Navy Department, 3 May 1799**

Barry the brave, seemed to be, and to think himself, too infirm for active service.

## Matthias Bartgis

**Stewart Herbert, York, Pa., 11 July 1788\***

[Accuses Bartgis of being] a muddle-headed, puddle-headed booby.

\*Printed in the *Maryland Journal*, 22 July 1788.

## Josiah Bartlett

**Josiah Bartlett to John Langdon, Philadelphia, 19 May 1776**

If we can stand it out this year (and I have no doubt, we can, by divine assistance) I think there will be a final end of British Tyranny and this country soon enjoy peace, liberty and safety. Use your best endeavors to keep up the spirit of the people; for our all is at stake, life, liberty and fortune. We have nothing to hope for, if conquered; and our misfortunes in the war ought to animate us the more to diligence, firmness and resolution; to conquer is better than life, to be subdued infinitely worse than death.

**Josiah Bartlett to Mary Bartlett, Philadelphia, 9 September 1776**

I am sorry to inform you that I am in a poor State of health, & have been so, for more than a fortnight; I have a bad Cough and a slow fever with a poor appetite for food and something of a purging. I have been vomited & purged & am taking Sundry medicines, which I hope will procure me relief if it is agreeable to the will of God: I have been able to attend the Congress Every Day, tho Sometimes I have been obliged to leave it before it Broke up. When the weather permits, I ride out 3 or 4 & sometimes five or six miles in a Day before or after Congress: I have Confined my self for food to hasty pudding (or as they Call it here mush) & milk for breakfast and Supper, & to Soop or fresh broth for Dinner, and shall omit nothing that I shall think likely to be serviceable to me: I think my asthma or Stufiness for breath is rather abated, and I hope (if it is for the best) I shall be able next post to inform you that I am better on all other accounts.

**Josiah Bartlett to John Langdon, Philadelphia, 16 and 23 September 1776**

I hope I am rather better on most accounts, I have never omitted being at Congress Every Day tho I am often obliged to leave it before it adjourns. My appetite for light food is better & my

Cough & asthma is much better if it Does but hold my fever & Sweats Continue bad tho I sometimes hope not Quite so bad as they have been.

[23 September] As to my self I am Stronger and I think better than I have been tho neither my Cough nor fever has left me. When my fever and Sweating increases my Cough abates and when the fever abates my Cough increases. However on the whole I hope I am getting the better of them both. I Eat no meat but my appetite for light food is much better & it sets better on my Stomach. I ride Every Day w/the weather is fair and find it Dont tyre me So much as it Did ten Days ago. If I think it Consistent with my Safety I shall tarry here till my Colleagues return But hope they will be here So that I may return before the Cold weather Sets in as I fear my health will not be Sufficient for undertaking such a journey in Cold bad weather.

### **Josiah Bartlett to John Langdon, Philadelphia, 30 September 1776**

I have not been able to attend either the Marine or Secret Committee for some time past and Congress but little. It is now five weeks since I have been troubled with a severe cough, slow fever, Profuse Sweats & loss of appetite, Except for light food. By the advice of my friends & Physicians I design to leave this City in a few days & try to move homewards, in hopes a change of air, moderate exercise & a recess from business may assist in restoring my health. Mr. Hancock has offered me a seat in his carriage, which I shall accept, as it is impossible for me to return on horse back in my present state of health.

### **Josiah Bartlett to Mary Bartlett, Philadelphia, 7 October 1776**

I was Disappointed of Seting out last week for New hampshire as I Expected which I hope is all for the best as I now think I am really getting better and hope in a little time I shall have more Strength to undertake Such a Journey. Three or 4 Days last week I thought I was almost well. My fever & Sweats intirely left me & my Cough and soreness in my breast was almost gone and my appetite good Enough; for 2 or 3 nights past I have had some of my Sweats but hope they will leave me again in a little time, my appetite now Craves more than my stomach is able to Digest and am obliged to be very Careful not to eat too much.

### **New Hampshire General Court to Josiah Bartlett, 12 June 1792**

The united voice of your fellow Citizens which has again proclaimed your Excellency the chief Magestrate of this State—while it demonstrates their most implicit confidence in your integrity and abilities, must we conceive afford you all that satisfaction which can result from the combined affection and esteem of an enlightened and virtuous people.

## **William Barton**

### **Nicholas Cooke to George Washington, Providence, R.I., 5 November 1777**

I . . . do recommend to your Excellency that brave Officer, who hath heretofore distinguished himself by his Activity, and enterprising Spirit.

**Nathanael Greene to Robert Morris, Camp Whitemarsh, Pa., 4 December 1777**

This will be handed you by Col. Barton from Rhode Island the Gentleman that took Major General Prescott prisoner. He waits upon you Sir by my advice in a delicate affair. The Congress were pleased to honor him with a Sword. His fortune is not so liberal but that he would wish to feel their bounty in some thing more substantial. Providing you thought there was not an indelicacy in the application or that it would be fruitless, if made. I shall esteem it a favor Sir if you'll give him your opinion upon the subject. He was going on to Congress. I thought it most advisable to consult you on the business. The enterprise was bold and hazardous. The Congress are the best Judge how far Wisdom and prudence dictates a liberal reward to be necessary for encouraging such bold and hardy attempts.

**William Barton to George Washington, Philadelphia, 28 August 1788**

I should not have been so sanguine, perhaps, in my ideas of the usefulness that may be derived from certain regulations, respecting Coat-armour, which might be established in this country, were it not for the flattering circumstances of Mr. Secretary [Charles] Thomson agreeing with me in opinion, on that head—When Congress were about to form an armorial Device for a Great Seal for the United States, that gentleman, with Dr. A: Lee and Mr. Boudinot, then delegates in Congress, did me the honor of consulting me on the occasion: and Mr. Thomson, in a letter to me, dated in June 1782, compliments me on the “skill in Heraldic science,” that he is pleased to say, I displayed in the device for the Great Seal; which (he adds) “meets with general approbation.” [Barton proposed adding the eagle to the Great Seal of the United States.]

**David Rittenhouse to James Madison, Philadelphia, 10 July 1789**

Permit me nevertheless, by this method, to recommend to your notice the bearer, William Barton, with whom I have been intimately acquainted from his infancy. His Education, his abilities, and still more his principles and integrity, render him a worthy member of Society, and promise to make him more conspicuously useful.

## Richard Bassett

**From Francis Asbury, February 1780**

Went Home with Lawyer Bassett, a very conversant and affectionate man, who from his own acknowledgement, appears to be sick of sin.

**From Francis Asbury, 1784**

A sweet singer.

**John Rutledge, Jr., to Alexander Hamilton, Newport, R.I., 17 July 1800**

The Governor [Bassett] is all powerful in Delaware., & he is very much influenced by his Son in Law [James A.] Bayard.

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**From Francis Asbury, 1815**

My long-loved friend, Judge Bassett, some time past a paralytic, is lately stricken on the other side and suffers much in his helpless state.

## James A. Bayard

**Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 15 August 1815**

Mr Bayard Survived only a few days after he landed. I am glad that he Came to lay is Body in his native Land. he was a Man of tallents, a free liver I have heard of late but you knew him later in Life than I have.

## John Bayard

**John Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 2 October 1775**

The Bearer of this is Major Bayard a Gentleman of this City of the Presbyterian Persuasion of the best Character and the clearest affections for his Country. I have received so many Civilities from him, that I could not refuse myself the Pleasure of introducing him to you.

**Pierce Butler to John Lecky, Philadelphia, 11 February 1791**

I am not acquainted with the Col. Bayard that You make mention of, tho' I knew his Father. The Coll is a Native of N.Y. I have understood there that his Character was not free from exception.

## John Beckley

**Benjamin Rush to Aaron Burr, Philadelphia, 24 September 1792**

This letter will be handed to you by Mr. Beckly. He possesses a fund of information about men and things, and what is more in favor of his principles, he possesses the confidence of our two illustrious patriots Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Madison.

## Gunning Bedford

**Lewis Morris to Philip Schuyler, Philadelphia, 23 July 1775**

This will be handed you by Mr. Gunning Bedford, a Gentleman who is appointed Mustermaster in your department, we are to Settle his pay to Morrow or next day, the Yankee part of Congress

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mean to have it Set very Small, we shall endeavour to counter act them, they act from resentment, as they were disappointed in their man, if it should be in your Power to put any thing Else in this Gentleman's way must beg the favor you would, he Supports a good Character from all who have the pleasure of his acquaintance and I well know your disposition to reward those who merrit it.

### **William Pierce: Sketches of Delegates to the Constitutional Convention, c. September 1787**

Mr. Bedford was educated for the Bar, and in his profession I am told, has merit.—He is a bold and nervous\* Speaker, and has a very commanding and striking manner;—but he is warm and impetuous in his temper, and precipitate in his judgment.—Mr. Bedford is about 32 Years old, and very corpulent.—

\*At this time, nervous powerful, strong, or filled with emotion.

### **William Plumer: Memorandum, 18 February 1805**

*Gunning Bedford Esq.* Attorney General of the State of Delaware. He appears to be very fair and candid, but not a man of strong mind.

## **Thomas Bee**

### **Thomas Rodney's Characters of Some Members of Congress, post-8 March 1781**

Governor Bee of South Carolina, is a Man of Some Talents, of a crude restive Temper, not Eloquent but of a harsh & disagreeable delivery; consequential in his deportment and Conceited in his notions—very desirous of Order in the House, but Most apt to transgress it himself.

## **Jeremy Belknap**

### **John Adams to Jeremy Belknap, Philadelphia, 18 February 1793**

There are some Sentiments in your late Discourse, which I cannot approve. Dr. Belknap is so able an Historian that I wish his philosophy to be such as will endure and be no diminution of his Authority when the momentary Fanaticism of the times shall have subsided. The sentiments I mean are those which will be construed to encourage the present Spirit of Crusade against European Kings. The Nations of Europe, if they become Republicks, must have Laws, and those Laws must be executed. Elective Kings will not be obtained without continual Anarchy, nor will they be able to execute the Laws when they are chosen. If upon Reflection you are not convinced of this, I will pledge myself to convince you, in confidence. Dr. Belknap writes not to the popular Pulse of the Moment but for Posterity: and before them the Doctrine he now favours will be demonstrated to be unfounded. But his Reputation will contribute to make the present delusions more general and more lasting. The great Nations of Europe must and will return to hereditary Executives or become barbarous. I had so early and so great a share in advising my fellow Citizens in the Course of their

Revolution that I should think myself, not a Man, if I suffered my Example and opinions to be quoted in favour of systems that I know will be destructive, to millions and productive of no good.

**George Washington to Samuel Chase, Mount Vernon, 17 June 1798**

As Mr. Belknap is a man of character & abilities, writes well, and seems anxious to be correct in what he gives to the World, he merits encouragement, and Aid from those who have it in their power to afford it.

**John Davis to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., Boston, 16 July 1798**

We have sustained a severe loss in the death of the excellent Dr. Belknap. As a scholar, a divine, a friend, and a gentleman, he was most distinguished. . . . A life of literary industry did not produce to him that reward his labors merited. To relieve a deserving family, and to present to the world the valuable professional writings of Dr. Belknap, the enclosed proposals have been issued; and to judge from present appearances, will be handsomely encouraged here.

## Anthony Benezet

**Benjamin Rush to John Adams, Philadelphia, 21 July 1789**

My friend the late Anthony Benezet—One of the greatest and best men that ever lived, used to say that “the height of all Charity was to bear with the Unreasonableness of Mankind.”

## Egbert Benson

**Robert R. Livingston to John Jay, Clermont, N.Y., 21 April 1779**

Never was there a greater compound of folly, avarice, and injustice, than our confiscation bill, to which Benson’s compromising genius not a little contributed.

**John Jay to Margaret Livingston, Paris, 26 August 1782**

It would be paying Benson but a niggardly compliment to say that Edward will learn no ill from him, for I know that virtue and humanity, as well as law, will always be found in his office.

**Pennsylvania Herald, 9 February 1788**

A letter from New York, dated February 7 says, “. . . Mr. Benson as being very intimate with the governor, and, in fact, one of his family during the war, was supposed by well wishers to the Constitution, to be against it—But this gentleman, with all the powers of eloquence, assisted by good sense and virtue, boldly came forward and declared himself in its favor; and run Mr. [Samuel] Jones so hard, that he called on the house (it is said) to protect him from personality—By this



gentleman's declaring himself in favor of the proposed system, the federal party up the country gain ground every day; he is a man of great influence in the upper part of this state."

### **Otto's Biographies, Fall 1788**

Enlightened man of the law, but whose sentiments toward France are a little equivocal. He is a member of the Gentlemen's party and is a great zealot of the new Constitution. Eloquent, resolute, influential.

### **Robert Troup to Rufus King, New York, 4 February 1794**

The last post from Albany brought us the very agreeable intelligence that Benson is appointed our fifth Judge. Magna est probitas et prevalebit [honesty is great and will prevail].

### **Timothy Pickering to Alexander Hamilton, Department of State, Philadelphia, 22 March 1796**

The President . . . has concluded to appoint Egbert Benson Esqr. one of the Commissioners for executing the 6th article, relative to the debts owing to British subjects—if he will accept of the employment. He is held in such high estimation for his abilities & integrity, as to render it extremely desirable that the appointment might meet his acceptance.

## **Charles Biddle**

### **Alexander Hamilton to George Washington, Philadelphia, 14 June 1794**

Mr. Biddle has many things in his favor. Perhaps he has more ability than any of the persons named [as candidates for Supervisor of Pennsylvania], and no doubts are entertained of his firmness, activity or attention. His connections and influence are principally among the malcontents. But most persons who have been consulted entertain an unfavorable impression of his political principles, & think there is not full assurance that he would not sacrifice the duties of his station & the interests of the Government to party considerations. He was named by the *Democratic Society* vice President, which he has it seems neither accepted nor publicly disavowed. Several attach an idea of cunning & duplicity to the character. *One* good judge of characters thinks favorably of his principles & that reliance may be placed. But the result of a comprehensive enquiry is that there would be hazard in the appointment and the case is believed to be one in which nothing ought to be hazarded.

# Anne Bingham

## **Abigail Adams (Nabby): Journal in France, 25 September 1784**

This day we have had a company of twenty persons to dine with us, all Americans but four; those were Mr. Grand's family, Mr. and Mrs. B. were among the Americans; they are from P[ennsylvania] and are travelling for pleasure. Mr. B. is possessed of a large fortune—both very young. Mrs. B. is only 20; she was married at 16; she is pretty, a good figure, but rather still. She has not been long enough in this country to have gained that ease of air and manner which is peculiar to the women here; and when it does not exceed the bounds of delicacy, is very pleasing. Mrs. B. has been in Europe two years. I admire her that she is not in the smallest degree tinctured by indelicacy. She has, from the little acquaintance I have had with her, genuine principles; she is very sprightly and very pleasing.

## **Abigail Adams (Nabby): Journal in France, 30 September 1784**

Mrs. B. has a most pleasing address, and a very happy turn of expression, with a good deal of politeness—she will not fail to please.

## **Abigail Adams (Nabby): Journal in France, 26 October 1784**

Mrs. B. gains my love and admiration, more and more every time I see her; she is possessed of more ease and politeness in her behaviour, than any person I have seen. She joins in every conversation in company; and when engaged herself in conversing with you, she will, by joining directly in another chit chat with another party, convince you, that she was all attention to every one. She has a taste for show, but not above her circumstance.

## **Abigail Adams (Nabby): Journal in France, 2 December 1784**

I sat next to Mr. Jackson at table, and next to him was seated Madame B. who by an exuberance of sprightliness and will, slips from the path of being perfectly agreeable; a little judgment would amend whatever defects may appear.

## **Abigail Adams to Elizabeth Cranch, Auteuil near Paris, 3 December 1784**

Mrs. Bingham is a fine figure and a Beautiful person, her manners are easy and affable but she was too young to come abroad without a pilot, gives too much into the follies of this Country, has money enough and knows how to lavish it with an unspiring hand. Less money and more Years may make her wiser, but She is so handsome she must be pardoned.

## **Abigail Adams (Nabby): Journal in France, 20 January 1785**

Mamma and myself went to Paris, and paid a visit to Mrs. B. in the Palais Royal; we have not seen her before since she moved. I was quite as much pleased with her as ever, and must confess that she has excellencies that overbalance every want of judgment, or that love for gay life, which is very conspicuous in her, but which I do not wonder at, at all. It is united with so many agreeable and amiable qualities, that it is impossible not to admire her. They are really domestic, and the

principles of affection and domestic happiness are so very apparent, that I never see them that I do not gain a higher opinion of that state, in which I believe one may most enjoy it.

**Abigail Adams (Nabby): Journal in France, 21 February 1785**

Mrs. B. was as ever, engaging. The elegance of her dress demands a description; a black velvet dress with pink satin sleeves and stomacher, a pink satin petticoat, and over it a skirt of white crape, spotted all over with gray fur; the sides of the gown open in front, and bottom of the coat trimmed with paste; it was superb, and the gracefulness of the person made it appear to peculiar advantage. To avoid singularity, and the observation of the company she goes into, she wears more rouge than is advantageous to her; I was pleased with a little upon her, but she has become quite a French woman in this respect.

**Abigail Adams (Nabby): Journal in France, 3 March 1785**

Mrs. B. came out to make us a visit and drank tea—the bloom of the rose is fading—dissipation will blast the fairest flower that ever bloomed; in her it is verified; 'tis a pity so much delicacy and beauty should be sacrificed to a few weeks of pleasure. They leave Paris in two months, to resume their travels, first to Switzerland, then to Italy, in the course of the present year.

**Abigail Adams (Nabby): Journal in France, 14 March 1785**

Mrs. B. . . . has a great share of grace, united with a vivacity that is enchanting, but without much dignity; grace depends upon the person, actions, and manners; dignity is placed in the mind; the latter she has not; she is nevertheless a charming woman.

**John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 20 December 1796**

I Yesterday dined at Mr. Bingham's and Sitting next to Madam at Table, had Something like a political Conversation with her. She has more ideas of the Subject than I Suspected: and a correcter Judgment. She gave me the Characters of Several of the notable Foreigners [i.e., Frenchmen living in America], and I find has the Same Jealousies of them, which I have entertained. . . . She considers them all as Spies upon Us, and wishes them all away. This is confidential, and I would not be the Occasion of any Misunderstanding between her and these Gentlemen but I was highly pleased with her Attachment to her Country.

**John Marshall to Mary W. Marshall, Philadelphia, 14 July 1797**

Mrs. Bingham is a very elegant woman who dresses at the height of the fashion. I do not however like that fashion. The sleeve does not reach the elbow or the glove come quite to it. There is a vacancy of three or four inches & just above the naked elbow is a gold clasp.

**Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz: *Travels through America*, January 1798**

The mistress of the house is tall, beautiful, perfectly dressed and has copied, one could not want for better, the tone and carriage of a European lady. She has traveled in France and Italy. The daughters are brought up more to be ladies than American citizens.

**Thomas Boylston Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 31 May 1801**

I may associate with the preceding, the information of another loss, which our City has sustained by the death of Mrs: Bingham; of whose illness and long confinement you may have heard. After all hope of her recovery was given over by her Physicians, the last prescription they could give with a prospect of benefit or relief, was a voyage to some Southern climate. She was accordingly embarked on board a ship, accompanied by her husband daughter & Sister and a young Physician. The first effects of a change of air were very favorable & flattered her friends, that her case was less desperate than they had imagined; she sustained the voyage, however, very poorly, and survived her arrival at Bermudas, but three days. Mr: Bingham returned with the rest, a day or two ago & was the first to announce the fatal tidings to the family of his deceased lady, who, as you will readily suppose, are plunged, by this stroke of the fell destroyer, into the abyss of woe & grief. Mrs: Bingham is said to have borne her tedious illness with uncommon fortitude, & when hope had utterly forsaken her own bosom, she displayed a perfect example of resignation. You will feel for the distress of her family, on this mournful occasion; for whether he visit the palace or the Cottage, death is alike afflictive, and his dispensations must excite our regret & command our sympathy, whether they be shared by the opulent or by the indigent.

**Abigail Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 12 June 1801**

William Shaw brought me Your Letter the day before yesterday. I had learnt before, by the public papers, the death of Mrs Bingham and many have been my reflection[s] upon it. Health presuming, Beauty Blooming, ah how dreadfull tis to dye," Says fair Rossomond; that Mrs Bingham was one of the most Elegant, and highly accomplishd women, our Country has furnished, no one who knew her, will deny. to a fine form, was added an affability of address, and an ease of manners, which prepossesst and captivated all who approachd her. She had travelled, and obtained the high polish of the Beau Mond; but her conduct in many respects did not accord with my Ideas of female worth, delicacy and purity. She did not Sufficiently respect herself, nor the opinion of the world; particularly those of her own Country.

She was culpable in a latitude of Manners, and in introducing a mode of dress which as a Mother, she ought not to have permitted in her daughters—If I have any knowledge of human nature, the Stile of dress introduced by her, and copied by her daughters, has a direct tendency to seduce the unwary; to Create inflammatory passions, and call forth lose affections by unfolding to every Eye, what the veil of Modesty ought to Shield; and the mantle of fashion ought to cover; it originated with Harlots, and should not have betrayed a modest woman into the Snare; the consequences have been Seen in her own Family, and are of too recent a date, to need relating—

Mrs Bingham's Family, Fortune, Beauty and accomplishments gave her a lead in Society, and her influence extended far beyond the bounds of Your City: Was that influence employd in the various Services of virtue, was it exercis'd in confirming and prolonging the duration of virtuous affections, in a simplicity of Manners, or in a latitude which gave occasion for censure, and which approached so near the verge of crimminality, as to be evil spoken of. Chastity when founded on the firm basis of pure virtue, holds forth to the Eye of the most artfull the repulsive evidence of impregnable Security, which can awe the most dissolute into respect and admiration—and as the poet expressess it, She that hath that, is clad in compleat Steel"

That Mrs Bingham Had many amiable qualities I well know. her Friends, Relatives and domesticks can bear witness to them. With them I sympathize; by them her loss must be keenly felt—

# William Bingham

## **John Jay to the President of Congress, St. Pierre's, Martinique, 26 December 1779**

Our agent here is in high estimation. I really believe, from everything I hear, that he has done his duty faithfully, and that he well deserves the notice and approbation of Congress.

## **Arthur Lee to James Warren, In Congress, 12 December 1782**

Mr. Morris, Mr. Bingham, Mr. Ross, and others, who have made large fortunes during this war, employ their wealth in a manner not very consistent with that unostentatious virtue which ought to animate our Infant republic. Extravagance, ostentation and dissipation distinguish what are called the Ladies of the first rank. There are however exceptions, there being prudent, amiable and worthy persons of both Sexes. But the generality seem to be intoxicated with a sudden change of manners and unexpected elevation.

## **Abigail Adams (Nabby): Journal in France, 30 September 1784**

Mr. B. is an agreeable man—he is delicately attentive, and his behaviour to Madame is very pleasing.

## **Abigail Adams (Nabby): Journal in France, 26 October 1784**

Mr. B. is an agreeable man, but seems to feel the superiority of fortune more than Mrs. B.

## **Abigail Adams to Elizabeth Cranch, Auteuil near Paris, 3 December 1784**

Mr. and Mrs. Bingham bring up the rear, both of whom are native of America. He is about 25 and she 20. He is said to be rich and to have an income of four thousand a year. He married this Lady at Sixteen. She is a daughter of Mr. Willing of Philadelphia. They have two little Girls now with them, and have been travelling into England Holland and France. Here they mean to pass the winter in the gaiety and amusements of Paris. Tis Said he wishes for an appointment here as foreign Minister, he lives at a much greater expence than any American minister can afford to.

## **Abigail Adams (Nabby): Journal in France, 21 February 1785**

Dined at the Marquis de la Fayette's with a circle of Americans. . . . I was seated at table, between Mr. B. and the Irish gentleman whose name I have forgotten; he was very civil, but nothing very remarkable in him; Mr. B. was insupportably disagreeable. I cannot but dislike his manners in general; to his wife they are better than any man I have known.

## **John Quincy Adams: Diary, 18 April 1785**

He [Benjamin West] spoke of Mr. Bingham, who with his Lady left Paris, Sunday the 10th instant. Mr. W. seems to have of Mr. B. very nearly the same opinion I have, that he is very ignorant, very vain, and very empty. He is very rich; but if he acquired his riches in the manner Mr. W. tells me he did; he is hardly authorized to plume himself upon them as much as he does. . . . Should

anyone see this he might say what has Mr. B. done to you to make you treat him so? I answer, nothing but what he does to every body else. He is as vain and self sufficient as he is ignorant; and assumes airs of superiority, not only over me (which would not perhaps be improper) but over persons of much more real merit than he is, or than he ever will be, if I am not much mistaken. He has never done me any harm; nor has he ever had it (thank god) in his power to hurt me, but I have no obligations to him, nor ever will, if I can help it. The only knowledge he appears to possess well, is Commercial: of that he has had sufficient to make a very considerable fortune, which has turned the little brains he had.

**Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, Paris, 30 January 1787**

Bingham is not in diplomatic office yet as he wishes to be so I will mention such circumstances of him as you might otherwise be deceived in. He will make you believe he was on the most intimate footing with the first characters in Europe & versed in the secrets of every cabinet. Not a word of this is true. He had a rage for being presented to great men & had no modesty in the methods by which he could effect it. If he obtained access afterwards, it was with such as who were susceptible of impression from the beauty of his wife.

**John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 22 April 1794**

Mr. Bingham lives in great Splendor and his Lady shines among the Senators as with all the rest of the World.

**John Marshall to Mary W. Marshall, Philadelphia, 14 July 1797**

I dined yesterday with Mr. Bingham at his celebrated country seat on the Schuylkill. The entertainment was elegant but not by any means so expensive as I had been led to expect. It is the practice here to place in the center of the table a large oval vase almost like the waiter of a tea table but of silver or gold & ornamented with Cupids on which are glasses with flowers. The table is then covered all round with small dishes, none being placed in the center. In consequence of this large dinners here are not so expensive as with us.

**Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz: *Travels through America*, January 1798**

The most opulent and the most ostentatious of the inhabitants of Philadelphia is Mr. Bingham. He enjoys, so it is believed, some 80,000 piasters a year coming from rents from immense lands and from interest on capital invested in various public funds. He owes his fortune to speculations during the last war as well as to his office of Commissioner and Director of privateers in the Indies. His house and garden, situated in the middle of the town, occupy a large area of ground. Their pompous appearance wounds a little the spirit of equality and excites envy. He is the Pisistratus of these parts with the difference that he has neither his talent nor his finesse, keeping his gardens closed while the Athenian had them opened, entertaining at table persons of quality instead of treating the people; he could never become the Tyrant of this city. I was invited one time to his house. One mounts a staircase of white native marble. One enters an immense room with a sculptured fireplace, painted ceiling, magnificent rug, armchairs, sofas in Gobelins of France. The dinner is brought on by a French cook; the servants are in livery, the food served in silver dishes, the dessert on Sevres porcelain. The mistress of the house is tall, beautiful, perfectly dressed and has copied, one could not want for better, the tone and carriage of a European lady. She has

traveled in France and Italy. The daughters are brought up more to be ladies than American citizens. In a word, I thought myself in Europe. This house, as opulent as it is, would never be pointed out in the big cities in Europe, but here it attracts attention, criticism and envy; and woe for the country if it ceases to astonish, if it ceases to be pointed out.

**Benjamin Rush: Commonplace Book, 7 February 1804**

Died at Bath, Wm. Bingham of this city. He left an estate valued at three million of Dollars, half a million of which was in stock of different kinds. He was pleasant in his manners, amiable in his temper, liberal, but said not to be charitable. He died in his 53rd year. He acquired his immense estate by his own ingenuity. Mr. Adams informed me that Mr. B. had borrowed £60,000 Sterling in Holland, all of which he laid out in certificates when they were at 2/6 and 3/ in the pound. In all his money speculations he was fortunate.

## John Blair

**William Pierce: Sketches of Delegates to the Constitutional Convention, c. September 1787**

Mr. Blair is one of the most respectable Men in Virginia, both on account of his Family as well as fortune. He is one of the Judges of the Supreme Court in Virginia, and acknowledged to have a very extensive knowledge of the Laws. Mr. Blair is however, no Orator, but his good sense, and most excellent principles, compensate for other deficiencies. He is about 50 years of age.

**James Sullivan to William Bingham, Boston, 20 October 1793**

I think the President has been very fortunate in the appointment of Judges. We are much pleased with Judge Blair who has been with us. His candor, ease, politeness and learning are acknowledged and I am no less pleased with his independence. We had a cause in which there was a question which had in another cause been decided by the Judges of our supreme Court: He decided it the other way. There is no propriety in my saying who were right but when Judge Blair gave his opinion he observed, that he had the highest respect for the Judges of our State and gave an opinion with diffidence against theirs but that he could give no opinion but his own in that place.

**John Blair to William Cushing, Williamsburg, Va., 12 June 1795**

I think, however, I ought to inform you, that a malady which I have had for some years, in a smaller degree, has since I had the pleasure of seeing you increased so greatly as to disqualify me totally for business—It is a rattling, distracting noise in my head—I had much of it at Savannah; besides also continual choleric.

**Jeremiah Smith to William Plumer, Philadelphia, 5 March 1796**

Judge Blair resigned from old age & indisposition—He was a good man & universally beloved.

**John Blair to Mary Braxton, 5 July 1799**

I was on the 5th Novr 1797, struck with a strange disorder to which I know not how to give a name, since the Doctor does not allow it to be paralytic, the effects of which are to me most melancholy depriving me of nearly all the powers of mind. The effect was very sudden and instantaneous. I happened to be employed in some algebraic exercises (of which kind of amusement I was very fond) when all at once a torpid numbness seized my whole face and I found my intellectual powers much weakened and all was confusion. My tongue took of the distress and some words I was not able to articulate distinctly and a general difficulty of remembering words at all. . . . A dutiful submission to His will who often tries in the School of affliction we shall derive consolations which will greatly alleviate our present sufferings and open to us the fair prospect of an infinitely greater in a better world.

**John Adams to John Marshall, Quincy, Mass., 5 September 1800**

The recommendation of Judge Blair has great weight with your servant.

**Thomas Jefferson to William Wirt, Monticello, 4 September 1816**

John Blair . . . one of the purest men then living, a well read lawyer, logical reasoned, & only kept down by his insuperable diffidence.

**Edmund Randolph: History of Virginia**

John Blair was born of Scotch parents, educated in Great Britain, connected in Scotland by marriage, and chief adviser of his father, who as president of the royal Council had been thrice temporary governor. He was himself the clerk of that Council, under the gift of the governor during pleasure. If the habits of monarchy could have disqualified him for the part of a republican, he must have been alienated from the cause of democracy. But without parade he was steadfast and alert in it. He lived without suspicion, in those precarious days, of having betrayed a syllable of what passed at the Council board. On the other hand he vindicated the rights of man, not with declamation or in a visionary sense, but in one coinciding with practical happiness. His suavity of manners, which is often a veil of hypocrisy, was with him an effusion of nature. He was adept in classical learning, mathematics, divinity, various branches of natural philosophy, belles lettres, and the law. A discerning foreigner once observed of him that his only fault was that he was such pure gold that a little alloy was necessary to the finishing of him as a perfect practical man.

**A Memoir of a Portion of the Bolling Family in England and Virginia, 1868**

Mr. John Blair . . . was about five feet ten inches in height, of an erect and imposing stature, with a noble forehead, blue eyes, a well-formed nose, not deficient in size, hair inclining to red, and an expression of sweetness and gravity which adhered to him through life . . . His manners, formed in the school of Fauquier and Betetourt and in the refined society of the ancient metropolis, were marked by high-bred courtesy and gentleness; and he preserved to the last that strict attention to his dress which was characteristic of the colonial regime. The hair has not yet lost entirely the reddish tinge of his earlier years, though a more ample forehead attracts attention, and the placid gentleness of youth still adorns his venerable features. Like all the patriots of the field and the



forum of the Revolution, he has no hair upon his face; he is attired in a blue coat, with a high collar, a white vest buttoning to the throat, and a white cravat without a collar.

## Jonathan Blanchard

### **Jacob Read to Charles Thomson, Annapolis, Md., 13 August 1784**

*Jonathan* is tall & Straight made, much marked with the Small pox—Wears his own ragged head of hair, has a thin Sharp Visage, is remarkable for Repeating his Words or Sentences. This he is supposed to have acquired from Constantly receiving and following the orders of his Leaders. Never having thought for himself, or uttered an Opinion of his Own. He from habit repeats What he has received from others as a Parrot would and on some occasions is obliged to do so several times before he is quite sure he is right. The place of his birth is not known but supposed to have been in Farm No. 1 [i.e., New Hampshire].

## Richard Bland

### **John Adams: Diary, 2 September 1774**

Bland is a learned, bookish Man.

### **Silas Deane to Elizabeth Deane, Philadelphia, 10 September 1774**

Col. Bland is a plain sensible Man, deeply studied into, & acquainted with the Antiquities of Virginia, & of this Continent in General, has wrote several very sensible pieces on the Subject, & is a tolerable Speaker in public.

### **James Madison to William Bradford, 19 June 1775**

We have a report here that Bland one of our delegates has turned traitor & fled from Philadelphia. I hope it is not true though some unfavorable Hints have been thrown out of late to his prejudice. Virgil certainly gave a great proof of his knowledge of human nature when he exclaimed “*Quid non mortalia pectora cogis auri sacra fames?*”<sup>\*</sup> Though appointed a member of Congress Bland is in needy circumstances & we all know age is no stranger to avarice.

<sup>\*</sup>Cursed greed for gold, to what crimes dost thou not impel the human breast?

### **Thomas Jefferson to William Wirt, Monticello, 5 August 1815**

He was the most learned and logical man of those who took prominent lead in public affairs, profound in constitutional lore, a most ungraceful speaker (as were Peyton Randolph and Robinson, in a remarkable degree). He wrote the first pamphlet on the nature of the connection with Great Britain which had any pretension to accuracy of view on that subject, but it was a singular one. He would set out on sound principles, pursue them logically till he found them leading to the

precipice which he had to leap, start back alarmed, then resume his ground, go over it in another direction, he led again by the correctness of his reasoning to the same place, and again back about, and try other processes to reconcile right and wrong, but finally left his reader and himself bewildered between the steady index of the compass in their head, and the phantasm to which it seemed to point. Still there was more sound matter in his pamphlet than in the celebrated Farmer's letters, which were really but "an *ignis fatuus*, misleading us from true principles."

### **Edmund Randolph: History of Virginia**

Richard Bland, who was a general scholar, was noted as an antiquary in colonial learning. He had enlightened the people by a pamphlet overflowing with historical facts, which reinforced the opposition to the ministry. He attacked with boldness every assumption of power and had combated every ancient usage of the secretary of Virginia to appoint the clerks of the county courts. This was an earnest of his sincerity in his present career.

### **William Wirt: Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry, 1817**

Richard Bland was one of the most enlightened men in the colony. He was a man of finished education, and of the most unbending habits of application. His perfect mastery of every fact connected with the settlement and progress of the colony, had given him the name of the Virginian Antiquary. He was a politician of the first class; a profound logician, and was also considered as the first writer in the colony.

## **Theodorick Bland**

### **Alexander Hamilton to Robert Hanson Harrison, Philadelphia, 27 October 1780**

Bland is very clever & without question wishes to push on in the true & right road [supporting Washington and the army].

### **Thomas Rodney's Characters of Some Members of Congress, post-8 March 1781**

Col. Bland of Virginia is a Man of Moderate Talents, of firmness & Candor and Much Attached to the Constitution of the States—Tho not very Systematical nor always of the best Judgment and is rather rustic in debate.

### **James Madison to Edmund Randolph, Philadelphia, 20 August 1782**

. . . Bland a snake in the grass. . . .

### **James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, Fredericksburg, Va., 15 February 1789**

The draft was revised and corrected by Bland and partakes of his usual fire and elegance.

**James Madison to Eliza House Trist, New York, 21 May 1789**

Our friend Col: Bland received the day before yesterday a melancholy memento of mortality. After experiencing for several weeks occasional sensations very disagreeable, he was suddenly attacked with either an apoplectic epileptic or paralytic stroke under which he would have expired if the Lancet had not been instantly applied. He remained senseless for some time. After a few hours however his mind became right, and he is at present in a manner well; but not without the disquietude incident to the nature of such attacks & the bare possibility of relapses.

**Theodorick Bland to Patrick Henry, New York, 9 March 1790**

The friendly wish with which your obliging favor of the 8th. ultimo was concluded for my health was but just realized after a severe fit of the gout, when your friendly and agreeable letter reached me. Scarce had I began my career of Politics in the great Sanhedrin\* [i.e., Congress] when that fell Monster seized my hands and feet, knees and elbows where he wreaked his vengeance for near a fortnight—but, I thank God, has spared my head, and left it in a better state than it has been for ten months past, being now free of vertigo—and I once more enjoy the pleasing hope of a good state of health with only semi annual returns of that painful crisis of other disorders.

\*The ancient Hebrew supreme council and high court of justice.

**William L. Smith to Edward Rutledge, New York, 4 July 1790**

We have lost a very worthy Member Col. Bland. I had a great esteem for him & regret his loss exceedingly; he was a truly honest good man—candid, open & fair—quite the gentleman & man of education & by far the best man in the whole Delegation—tho not the ablest.

## William Blount

**William Pierce: Sketches of Delegates to the Constitutional Convention, c. September 1787**

Mr. Blount is a character strongly marked for integrity and honor. He has been twice a Member of Congress, and in that office discharged his duty with ability and faithfulness.—He is no Speaker, nor does he possess any of those talents that make Men shine;—he is plain, honest and sincere.—Mr. Blount is about 36 years of age.—

**Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Philadelphia, 6 July 1797**

You will see an intimation in his paper [John Fenno] of some Mal practices by a senator. I inclose to you the Letter this day made publikck. When shall we cease to have Judas's. Here is a diabolical plot disclosed. When the Message was sent to the senate with the original Letter Mr. Malcomb the President's Secretary met Mr. Blount coming out, who stopd and askd him what message he had got, upon which Mr. Malcomb replied it was a secret and confidential one. Mr. Blount did not return until after the Letter was read which threw the whole senate into a consternation. Upon his coming in, the Letter was again read. He turnd very pale, said he did write a Letter at that time to a Mr. Cary, but desired a copy of it, and until the next day to make his

defence. It was granted, but Mr. Blount has not since been seen. Search was made after him yesterday and a vessel found which he had Chartered to go off in. Poor Pensilvanna keeps no Gallows, as Porcupine says. The senate will expell him, & it belongs to the House of Reps—to impeach, but they have not yet reported—It does not appear that his offerd Service was accepted by the British, tho it is a glorious kettle for the Jacobines to Swim in. How they rejoice, corruption, is corruption from what ever source it originates. This same Tenesse Senator was arrested for debt four different times on his return home last fall, and but for his Privilege as senator which Screens him 20 days, he would have been lodged in Jail, which he no doubt richly deserves.

**George Washington to James McHenry, Mount Vernon, 7 July 1797**

I hope the author\* will receive all the punishment which the Constitution and the Laws of this country can inflict and, thereafter, be held in detestation by all good men. To seek private emolument at the expense of public peace—perhaps at the expense of many innocent lives is a crime of so deep a dye as no epithet can convey an adequate idea to my mind.

\*Blount was allegedly involved in a plan to invade Spanish territories in the West using Cherokee and Creek Indians.

**Arthur Campbell to Timothy Pickering, 7 October 1797**

He possesses considerable abilities, a restless ambition, griping avarice, much vanity and pride; and as he seemed to have a prospect to gratify his favorite pursuits he was a republican or an admirer of royalty.

**Moses Fisk to John Wheelock, 17 April 1800**

He had a winning address and had been very humane to many of the first settlers in this country, and seemed to take peculiar pleasure in bringing forth to business and consequence young men of narrow circumstance and good genius.

## Board of Treasury

**Joseph Jones to James Monroe, Richmond, Va., 5 March 1785**

The Gentlemen appointed to conduct the Treasury department are I believe very good Characters but none of them I am told possess any talents beyond those that are common to almost all trading men, that is, they are conversant in accounts and book-keeping, qualifications that may perhaps be adequate to the business of the Treasury.

**John Quincy Adams to John Adams, New York, 3 August 1785**

Mr. Osgood, Mr. Walter Livingston, and Mr. Arthur Lee, are the Commissioners of the Treasury. Mr. Lee was chosen a few days since and has accepted. The board could not be composed of persons more universally respected.

# Elias Boudinot

## Eliphalet Dyer to Jonathan Trumbull, Sr., Philadelphia, 25 September 1782

There is a Mr. Beaudinot of the Jerseys, now, and for sometime a member of Congress from that state is well known to the Gentlemen who have attended Congress from Connecticut. I entertain a Very good opinion of him and Esteem him an Able Lawyer & Councillor a Gentleman of good reputation. I should think it not Amisss but of real policy to employ him in our Cause. He is of an Established reputation in the Jerseys.

## Eliphalet Dyer to Jonathan Trumbull, Sr., Philadelphia, 8 November 1782

Mr. Boudinot of the State of New Jersey, a Gentleman of good Character, virtuous, & decent behavior, was elected President of Congress on Monday last for the Year ensuing; the choice was clear, no strift, as it is the prevailing Inclination of Congress, to proceed in course through the States when it can be done with propriety, Jersey having none before.

## Charles Thomson to Hannah Thomson, Princeton, N.J., 24 October 1783

At dinner the president who loves to talk and is not very curious in his choice of subjects. . . .

## Elias Boudinot to Hannah Boudinot, New York, 14 April 1789

I have my Hands so full, here, that I have but little Time to think about even the gloomy side of the question. I am up at 7 oClock or a little after; spend an half hour in my Room; dress & breakfast by half past 8'; in Committee at 9; from thence immediately to the House; adjourn at 3 oClock. In Committee again at 6; return at 8, and write till 12 at Night. This has been my Course for some time, except when I dine out, which to me is harder service.

## Samuel A. Otis to Jonathan Dayton, New York, 27 April 1789

I never saw Neighbour B——t until this session. His manners are pleasing & his abilities far from contemptible—But the Sailors say “many a fine ship has ‘a *lee lurch*.’”\*

\*A susceptibility to swaying in the wind.

## Nathaniel Barrell to George Thatcher, York, Maine, 11 May 1789

I think Mr. Boudinot, the Gentleman who replied to you, a man of sense and candor.

## James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 26 January 1795

Boudinot the ready agent for all sycophantic jobs. . . .

## Benjamin Rush to John Adams, 5 April 1808

I have sometimes classed lies in the following manner. They are *ironical, hyperbolic, exculpative, malicious, and fraudulent*. Men who exercise themselves much in the first and second often

Founders on the Founders

fall into the subsequent classes. Mr. B. has verified this remark. From a young man he was noted for his jocular and hyperbolic conversation. In Congress at New York, an improbable story (Mr. Clymer informs me) was called a “Boudinot.” The transition from telling improbable stories to the remaining grades of a departure from truth has been easy and natural in this fallen man.

## Benjamin Bourn

### **William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington, Newport, R.I., 15 June 1789**

I am informed that the Gentlemen of this State who belong to the Ohio Company intend to recommend Benjamin Bourn Esq. of Providence in this State to the President, as a suitable person to succeed Genl. Varnum as a Judge of the Western territory.—I am acquainted with him.—He has had a liberal education,—is a man of sense,—a lawyer of distinction,—is a representative for the town of Providence—a staunch federalist, eloquent, and a man of decent manners.

### **William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington, New York, 29 August 1789**

He is I think a sensible man, and worthy of your notice.

### **Jabez Bowen to George Washington, Providence, R.I., 19 June 1790**

It is wished by our Friends that Benjamin Bourne Esqr. May be appointed District Attorney. He is a Gentleman of the very first abilities and would be the person that we shall Vote for as a Representative but at present he can have no chance of succeeding.

### **Nicholas Brown to Mr. Timmin, Providence, R.I., 17 December 1790**

Our Representative Bourn with a little Polish will cut a good figure for poor Rhode Island.

### **Theodore Foster et al. to John Adams, Washington, 13 February 1801**

The Act to provide for the more convenient organization of the Courts of the United States, contemplating the appointment of judges of the Courts in the several circuits, we take the liberty of recommending to you Benjamin Bourn Esqr: the present district judge of Rhode Island as a proper character to fill the office of a judge of the circuit Court in the circuit with which that State is connected—In addition to the circumstance that there are three States which compose it, and the natural pretensions of each to a share in the appointments upon the idea of public utility and general satisfaction, the talents, integrity and professional acquirements of judge Bourn, connected with his extensive information, strong attachment to the Government and amiable manners afford to us the assurance that such is his merit, should the appointment be conferred upon him, he would discharge the duties of it in a manner honorable and satisfactory to our Country, and we beg leave to assure you that such appointment would be highly grateful to the People of that state generally.

# Sylvanus Bourne

## Shearjashub Bourne to George Washington, Philadelphia, 20 January 1792

As the Bill for the Establishment of a *Mint*, will render necessary some Appointments; I beg leave to present to your Notice Mr. Sylvanus Bourne late Consul for St. Domingo as a Candidate for the place of Treasurer in that Department, whose peculiar situation hath impressed me with a Desire of rendering him my friendship as far as Comports with my public duty: In my acquaintance with Mr. Bourne for many years, I have found him to be a Gentleman of Strict integrity & prudence, and by the exercise of those Virtues to have conciliated the Esteem & confidence of his Fellow Citizens, his Abilities ass to the conclusion, that he has not misimproved the Advantages of a liberal Education: He was drawn from his pursuit of the Study of the Laws (for which he was designed) by the Decease of his Father, in Order (if possible) to Save his Estate from the Ruin in which the late War had involved it, but this was not retrievable by his Utmost prudence & assiduity from a loss of £10,000 arising from those incidence which a Civil War ever produces.

In regard to his Specific Abilities for Exercising the Duties of the Office above-mentioned, I would Observe, that he was for some time after he Graduated at Cambridge, in the Compting House of a Respectable Merchant, and has in conducting his own Mercantile affairs been found attentive, methodical & correct, & his knowledge of Accounts has been approved of by frequent Calls to Arbitrate & decide important Cases in that line.

Mr. Bourne's connections by his Father's marriage are among the most respectable in the State of Massachusetts, and his Patrimonial expectations (though once very flattering) were destroyed by the Causes before alluded to, an Event Also enhancing his relative Obligations his regard to which, are among the favorable traits of his Character.

# James Bowdoin

## John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 27 May 1776

I hope Mr. Bowdoin will be Governor, if his Health will permit, and Dr. [John] Winthrop Lt. Governor. These are wise, learned, and prudent Men. The first has a great Fortune, and wealthy Connections.

## Samuel Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 20 July 1778

I am in Pain about the Ship in your Harbour. Her Owners neglect to put her into Repair, and I fear, some of her officers for Want of Skill and Experience will be at a Loss what to do with her if she should meet with a Storm. What a Pity it is that an honest old Pilot [i.e., Bowdoin] who used to steer successfully through Rock and Quicksands has lately been discharged from Service! And that he should suffer this hard Usage, only because unknown to him, One [i.e., John Hancock] who was a hearty well wisher to the Voyage, and was anxious that Capacity and Merit should always govern Promotions, had ventured to declare him the fittest Man to take the Command, when it was thought a Commander would be wanted. Vanity and Avarice, which create an insatiable Desire of Places and Preferment, without Ability or Intention to fulfill the Duties of them, if gratified, would

effect the Ruin of a Country. It would be the Glory of the American Republick, to find Men having no ruling passion but the Love of our Country, and ready to render her the most arduous Services, with the Hope of no other Reward in this Life, but the Esteem of their Virtuous Fellow Citizens. But this, some tell us, is to wish for more than it is in the Power of human Nature to give.

**Abigail Adams to John Adams, 5 July 1780**

The Man who from Merit, fortune and abilities ought to be our *Chief* is not *popular*, and tho he will have the votes of the sensible judicious part of the State, he will be more than out Numbered by the Lovers of the tinkleing cymball [John Hancock].

**James Warren to John Adams, Boston, 11 July 1780**

The Election of Governor, Lt. Governor and Senate to be made on the beginning of September. Mr. B. has again come into public Life that he may with greater Advantage stand as a candidate, in competition with H. for the highest honor and rank in this State. Who will carry the Election is very uncertain. I don't envy either of them their feelings. The Vanity of one of them will Sting like an Adder if it is disappointed, and the Advancements made by the other if they don't succeed will hurt his *Modest* pride. the upper counties will be for H., the Interest of the other will lay in the lower ones.

**Abigail Adams to John Adams, Braintree, Mass., 3 September 1780**

This is a Great and important day in the political System of this State. Mr. B——n has merit and integrity, all the judicious people will vote for him, but popular Clamour will elect another [John Hancock], who ought to forfeit every vote, by the low mean Arts he has taken to procure them. I could tell you many, if prudence did not restrain me, yet nothing that would surprise you, for you know every Avenue of his vain Heart. Give an extension cord, and you know the adage.

**Francisco de Miranda: *Travels in the United States*, 1783–1784**

James Bowdoin, Esq., president of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and former president of the convention when the constitution of the state was drawn up. He is a person of profound accomplishments in experimental physics and has judgment, some erudition, and a quiet manner. I am indebted to him for particular friendship and esteem and, likewise, very interesting information regarding the true origin and events of the past turbulences.

**Richard Cranch to John Adams, Boston, 3 June 1785**

I have enclosed the Speech of our new Governour &c. He is a Man of System and Application, and I hope our publick matters will take a better Turn by his Assistance.

**Samuel Adams to John Adams, Boston, July 1785**

Before this reaches you, you will have heard of the change in our chief magistrate. I confess it is what I have earnestly wished for. Our new governor has issued a proclamation for the promoting of piety, virtue, education, and manners, and suppressing of vice, which, with the good example of a first magistrate and others, may, perhaps, restore our virtue.



**John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams (Nabby), New York, 17 July 1785**

Mr. Bowdoin is present governor of Massachusetts and increases, in popularity every day.

**William Gordon to John Adams, Jamaica Plain, Mass., 4 October 1785**

Mr. Bowdoin is very popular; for he has convinced all, that he is not afraid of spending his money, & *he* has abilities.

**Benjamin Hichborn to John Adams, Boston, 16 January 1787**

The Country in general are much disgusted with Bowdoin they say he is a Frenchman in —— with the British unfriendly to their peace & happiness & not worthy of their Confidence Step[hen] Higginson Jno Lowell Thop[hilus] Parsons & that Set adore him & get most of the Men of property in maritime Towns to joine them in sentiment but I believe notwithstanding their joint efforts this will prove the last year of his Reign under the present Constitution—

**James Warren to John Adams, Milton, Mass., 18 May 1787**

Mr. H[ancock] is undoubtedly chose the first Magistrate. I do not regret the change so much as I once should, though I am sorry for it. If I used to despise the Administration of H., I am disappointed in that of B. Every Philosopher is not a Politician.

**Nicolas Pike to George Washington, Newburyport, Mass., 1 January 1788**

Although Mr. Bowdoin is undoubtedly the first, and one of the best Characters in this State, yet, so unreasonable, cruel & unjust are the popular prejudices, that had I not fixed the date to a time antecedent to the existence of those Prejudices [i.e., before Shays's Rebellion], which are the Offspring of Falsehood & Ignorance, I have great reason to believe it would have ruined the sale of my Book, so far as respects the common People.

**James Cogswell: Diary, 1 March 1788**

Read the New London paper. An Excellent Speech in the Massachusetts Convention by Govr. Bowdoin.—He is really a great Man.

**Brissot de Warville: New Travels in the United States of America, 30 July 1788**

The president of this academy in Cambridge is Mr. Bowdoin, a man of universal knowledge, who combines profound erudition with administrative talents and with the soundest political principles. This respected man is the descendant of one of those Frenchmen who were forced by religious persecution to emigrate during the last century. Mr. Bowdoin's actions both before and during the war and his views on liberty have gained him so much respect from his fellow citizens that they have elected him to a number of honorable offices, including those of Governor of the State of Massachusetts and delegate to Congress. Never has he betrayed the trust of the people, and he has always remained above suspicion even though a general outcry arose against his son-in-law, Mr. Temple, both during and after the war.

**Jonathan Trumbull, Jr., to George Washington, Lebanon, Conn., 28 October 1788**

I could wish to hear the Name of Mr. Bowdoin more generally mentioned than it is for the Vice Presidency.—from a knowledge of this Gentleman, in private as well as public life, I am led to entertain a high veneration for his character.—I view him as a Gentleman of liberal Sentiments, extensive knowledge & enlarged Mind—a Gentleman to whose wise, firm & determined exertions, during the late troubles in Massachusetts [i.e., Shays’s Rebellion];—much more than to the studied popularity of their present Governor [John Hancock];—is owing the happy tranquility which that State enjoys.—It would afford me much satisfaction to reflect on the Aid & support which you my Dear Sir, would receive from the Wisdom, Prudence & Discretion of such a Character, in the arduous situation to which you will—you *must be*, advanced.—

**John Jay to Sarah Jay, Boston, 10 November 1790**

Governor Bowdoin is to be interred this afternoon. His funeral will strongly mark the estimation in which he was held. Various societies will attend it, etc. To him these attentions will be vain, but to his family pleasing. Posthumous fame is in no other respect valuable than as it may be instrumental to the good of survivors.

**John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 16 January 1795**

Mr. Bowdoin’s Morality is the same with that of the Livingston Family at New York, and of all other Men who have more Ambition than principle. I have gone through a Life of almost three Score Years, and how few have I found whose Principles could hold against their Passions, whose honor could contend with their Interests, or even whose Pride could struggle with their Vanity.

## James Bowdoin, Jr.

**Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 4 January 1795**

Judge [John] Lowel asked Mr. Bowdoin, how in his conscience he could vote for [Charles] Jarvis? Why he replied I do not like his politicks, and I despise the Man, but I have been neglected and slighted by the other Party!—Such is the Patriotism of the World. How little Sterling integrity! How hard the lesson to divest one of self interest. The world however see through the veil, and it is oweing to this same Self Love, that the Man has been neglected. Neither his Father’s Patronage, nor his own ample fortune have been able to raise him higher than state Senator—and there with such principals may he remain—

**John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 16 January 1795**

Mr. Bowdoin’s Morality is the same with that of the Livingston Family at New York, and of all other Men who have more Ambition than Principle.

**John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 22 December 1804**

Mr Bowdoin's appointment is the best, the President has made in this State, and the best he could have Selected from his Party: His Descent, his Connections his Education, and his ample fortune, make him more respectable, than any and all of his Rivals: and his moral Character as far as I know it, is as Superior as his Property, to any who could be considered as Candidates by Mr Jefferson. His Talents, for any thing I know, are equal to any that Mr Jefferson has employed abroad. His Secretary of Legation Stands on different ground. The Change of his Bowdoin's Party and Abandonment of his Friends, ten years ago could be no objection with his present Patrons.

**William Plumer Memorandum, 17 March 1806**

To the appointment of Bowdoin [as a commissioner to deal with Spain] there was no objection—He is not a great man—but I believe a practical man—whose integrity is not questioned.

## Hugh Henry Brackenridge

**James Madison to William Bradford, Orange County, Va., 1 April 1774**

Mr. Brackenridge's illness gives me great uneasiness: I think he would be a loss to America: His merit is rated so high by me that I confess if he were gone, I could almost say with the Poet That His Country could furnish such a Pomp for Death no more.

## William Bradford

**Jabez Bowen to George Washington, Providence, R.I., post-14 June 1790**

William Bradford Esqr.—Has been Lieut. Govr. of the State before the paper money system obtained—since the Revolution he has been one of the Judges of the Court—is a man of talents & integrity—much esteemed—and a warm friend to the Genl. Government. . . .

The Federalists of this State wish that Govr. Bradford or Mr. Merchant should be appointed District Judge. They are both Gentlemen of the Law, and fully equall to the Office, they have been equally good Wiggs and Firm for the Establishment the Federal Government.

**Jeremiah Olney: Memo on Persons to Fill Federal Offices in Rhode Island, 19 June 1790**

Bristol—William Bradford—District Judge

Newport—Henry Marchant District judge

As to the abilities of these gentlemen there is but little difference perhaps the Preference if any may be in favour of Mr. Marchant but Mr. Bradford is the Firmest man of the Two—& has met with great losses of Property during the Revolution.

## David Brearley

**William Pierce: Sketches of Delegates to the Constitutional Convention, c. September 1787**

Mr Brearly is a Man of good, rather than of brilliant parts.—He is Judge of the supreme Court of New Jersey, and is very much in the esteem of the People.—As an Orator he has little to boast of, but as a Man he has every virtue to recommend him.—Mr. Brearly is about 40 years of age.

## Isaac Briggs

**James Madison to James Pleasants, Jr., Montpelier, Va., 18 March 1823**

I find that in consequence of the failure of the Board of Public Works to obtain the services of Col. McCree as its principal Engineer, the vacancy in the office remains to be filled. Not knowing whether Isaac Briggs may have yet received the consideration of the Board, I am led by my acquaintance with him to express the belief that he possesses a full measure of the Science, with a considerable fund of the experience applicable to the Trust; and that he might be relied on for integrity in discharging it. With this view of his qualifications I have felt an obligation to suggest his name for the list, from which a choice is to be made.

## Jacob Broom

**William Pierce: Sketches of Delegates to the Constitutional Convention, c. September 1787**

Mr. Broom is a plain good Man, with some abilities, but nothing to render him conspicuous.—He is silent in public, but chearful and conversable in private.—He is about 35 Years old.

## Samuel Broom

**John Adams to Eliphalet Brush, Paris, 26 November 1783**

Mr. Broom I know very well & have a great Esteem for him.

## Andrew Brown

### Tench Coxe to Alexander Hamilton, Philadelphia, 5 March 1790

Mr. Brown, who takes this, has requested me to mention him to you. I believe I may venture to say no man has shown more spirit in support of the Constitution, or suffered more in its cause. He is certainly capable in his branch, and his paper is resorted to by several of our first literary & political Characters. With a little aid it might be rendered subservient to every honest purpose public or private, and I cannot say I think either of our other *daily* papers devoted either to the cause of good government or of good men. You must make great Allowances however, Sir, for what I might say in favor of Mr. Brown for I feel gratitude towards a man that voluntarily exerted himself to stem that torrent of abuse which my activity to carry the adoption of the f. Constitution & the reform of our state constitution occasioned to be poured upon me from one of our presses.

## John Brown

### James Wilkinson to Governor Estaban Miro, 14 February 1789

Brown is one of our deputies or agents; he is a young man of respectable talents, but timid, without political experience, and with very little knowledge of the world. Nevertheless, as he firmly perseveres in his adherence to our interests (in making Kentucky Spanish territory), we have sent him to the new Congress, apparently as our representative, but in reality as a spy on the actions of that body.

### Barthélemi Tardiveau to St. John de Crèvecoeur, Danville, Ky., 25 May 1789

Competent people tell me that in Virginia he is inferior only to Mr. Madison.

## George Bryan

### Benjamin Rush to Jeremy Belknap, Philadelphia, 6 May 1788

The minority of Pennsylvania have nearly exhausted their malice. There will be no opposition by arms in any county in this state to the government when it is set in motion. Mr. Bryan like his brother Shays will now be left a solitary example of political insanity and wickedness. All will end well.

## Archibald Bulloch

### John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 17 September 1773

Mr. Bullock is another of the Georgian delegates, a sensible Man, a Planter I suppose. Mr. Houstoun is the third, a young Lawyer of Modesty as well as sense and Spirit which you will say is uncommon Modesty as well as sense and Spirit which you will say is uncommon.

### John Adams: Diary, 15 September 1775

Archibald Bullock . . . appears as Delegates from Georgia. . . . Bullock is clothed in American Manufacture. . . .

### John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 17 September 1775

Mr. Bullock is another of the Georgian delegates, a sensible Man, a Planter I suppose. Mr. Houstoun is the third, a young Lawyer of Modesty as well as sense and Spirit which you will say is uncommon Modesty as well as sense and Spirit which you will say is uncommon.

### John Adams: Diary, 27 September 1775

Mr. Bullock and Mr. Houstoun, the Gentlemen from Georgia, invited S.A. and me to spend the Evening with them in their Chamber, which We did very agreeably and socially. Mr. Langdon of N. Hampshire was with us.

Mr. Bullock after Dinner invited me to take a ride with him in his Phaeton which I did. He is a solid, clever Man. He was President of their Convention.

### John Adams to Archibald Bulloch, Philadelphia, 1 July 1776

Two Days ago I received your Favor of May 1st. I was greatly disappointed, Sir, in the Information you gave me, that you should be prevented from revisiting Philadelphia. I had flattered myself with Hopes of your joining us soon, and not only affording us the additional Strength of your Abilities and Fortitude, but enjoying the Satisfaction of Seeing a Temper and Conduct here, somewhat more agreeable to your Wishes, than those which prevailed when you was here before. But I have since been informed, that your Countrymen have done themselves the Justice to place you at the Head of their Affairs, a Station in which you may perhaps render more essential service, to them and to America, than you could here.

## Aedanus Burke

### Francisco de Miranda: *Travels in the United States, 1783–1784*

Mr. Chief Justice Burke, author of the pamphlet entitled *Considerations on the Society or Order of Cincinnati*, which, under the name of Cassius, was published in Charleston on the tenth of October, is a man of intellect, ability, and good judgment. It cannot be denied that in the inclinations

of individuals is discovered the analogy of genius, talent, etc., because never before have I found a person so passionate an admirer of the excellence and good taste of our inimitable Miguel de Cervantes. I owe him particular friendship and esteem, having profited immensely from his conversation and knowledge during my entire residence in this city.

**William L. Smith to Judge Grimke, New York, 3 March 1790**

Your Brother Burke is become very pleasant—a great speaker, & often entertains us with humorous strokes of fancy.

**William Smith of South Carolina to Edward Rutledge, New York, 2 April 1790**

Burke has been warmly with us but his mode of speaking & his roughness only excite Laughter.

**William Smith of Maryland to Otho Holland Williams, New York, 4 April 1790**

In the debates two or three days ago, on the Assumption of the State debts, a Mr. Burke from So. Carolina, took occasion to Shew the great Services rendered by the Militia of that State, in fighting the battles of the United States, as an argument Why their debts ought to be paid out of the genl. Funds, iHe of his argument he took an oppertunity to resent, what had long rankled in his mind, some expressions made use of by Colo. Hamilton, in his Eulogium of Genl. Greene, the last summer, by which it was thought he spoke disrespectfully of the Militia. Burke after recapitulating those Services, & remarking on the expressI gave offense, Said he gladly took that oppertunity of giving that gentleman the lie, & doing Justice to the Merits of the So. Carolinians. Here, he was called to order, Stop'd & Set down. After sometime he again rose, & told the Speaker, he was perfectly cool, never more so in his life, but Supposing Colo. Hamilton in the Gallery (which was filled with ladies) he faced round to that quarter, & called out aloud, that he threw the lie in Colo. Hamilton's face. Here he was again Stopped & was not permitted to proceed. The friends of Hamilton, are very Uneasy about this business, some apprehend Serious consequences must ensue [i.e., a duel]. It is Said Mr. Hamilton has wrote him a letter on the Subject, the contents not known, but Supposed making Such demands, as Burke will not comply with. I have been told by some of Burke's intimate friends, that he is obstinate, & will not consent to make any concessions. He ought most certainly to make an appology to the house, perhaps that would Satisfy all parties. I apprehend if no apology is made there will be a fight on the occasion.

**William Maclay: Journal, 26 December 1790**

We had been but a little while with him [Dr. George Logan] when we were joined by Judge Burke of South Carolina. This is the very Man Who, while in New York, railed so tremendously against the Quakers, and against Philadelphia and indeed all Pennsylvania for having Quakers. But behold a wonder. Now he rails against Slavery, extols Quakers and blazes against the Attentions showed to General Washington, which he calls Idolatry; and That a Party wish as much to make him a King as ever the Flatterers of Cromwell wished to raise him to that dignity. . . . Burke said Many just things but he is too new a convert to merit confidence. I find however on Examination, That this is the same Man Who wrote against the Cincinnati.

**Pierce Butler to Alexander Guillon, 12 Miles from Philadelphia, 26 September 1793**

I observe what You say respecting the conversation You had with A.B. You must have observed my unwillingness to have any difference with him. His deportment at Your house was uncouth and unexpected. I believe I should not have been so calm if I had not heard from more quarters than one that he on all occasions in company spoke of me in the handsomest manner; hearing this I was prepared to bear more from him than I would from most men. He is a well meaning Man with striking particularities—

**Mathew Carey: Memoir, 1829**

Adamus Burke—a judge of South Carolina was a most remarkable instance of a confused intellect. He was so very unfortunate in his advocacy of measured in the legislatures of which he was at one time a member, that it is reported that persons who had applications pending before that body requested him not to say anything in their favour. How true this may be, I know not—but it was a current report which I never heard controverted. He sat on the Bench on the trial of a professed duelist, who had been in the habit of insulting people to provoke them to challenge him. This he put into practice with a high spirited young man very little versed in the Science of fashionable murder. A challenge took place. The duelist, whose name I forgot, by way of bravado asked his antagonist where he would choose to be shot. The other replied in a sharp irritated tone “where you please.” “Then here’s at your heart.” The words were scarcely out of his mouth when his antagonist fell dropped down dead, the ball having perforated his-heart—The judge in his charge to the jury, after expatriating a longtime on the horrors of dueling—and that it was neither more or less than ~~duelling~~ murder, wound up by telling the jury that legislators might enact laws—preachers might exhaust the thunders of the pulpit—& judges might pronounce sentence against it—it wd in spite of all, be the law of the land in most countries. It is not wonderful that after such a luminous peroration so wonderfully adapted to sub serve the cause of justice, the villainous culprit was acquitted.

## Thomas Burke

**William Whipple to Josiah Bartlett, Baltimore, Md., 7 February 1777**

. . . a new member from N. Carolina (one Mr. Burke) who I think is the Best man I have seen from that Country.

**Eliphalet Dyer to William Williams, York, Pa., 10 March 1778**

The Disturber, I mean B——ke has just come after Inducing North C——na to dissent from Confederation or a great part of it, is now in Congress to the Universal sorrow of every member.

**Chevalier de la Luzerne to Comte de Vergennes, Philadelphia, 11 June 1780**

Mr. Burke, an ardent and obstinate man, although also a good Citizen. . . . I quite fear the vehemence of this Delegate.



**Thomas Rodney's Characters of Some Members of Congress, post-8 March 1781**

Doctr. Burk, of N. Carolina, tho not equal to Many Who have been in Congress, May Justly be Stiled the ablest and Most useful Member there at present. He has been in Congress five Years, is very Attentive and well Acquainted with business—is Nervous [i.e., Strong] tho Not Eloquent in his language, he is Correct and pointed in his debates, possesses the Honest integrity of a republican and is for preserving inviolable the rights of the people Without being lured away by power— Yet he is Some times not fully guarded from Dictatorial language and does not Attend Sufficiently to System, order and Arrangement, in a general view but Confines himself Too Much to particular Objects.

**Allen Jones to Nathanael Greene, Wheelers, N.C., 28 December 1781**

[Attempting to get Burke's parole from the British lifted] I know no one who can so well draw out the resources of this state or who has more Activity & Zeal. This State at present requires an active Person at the head of Affairs, and as I am sensible you are sufficiently acquainted with Dr. Burke to know what great Advantages might be derived from his presence, shall make no Apology for my intrusion.

**Pierce Butler to Alexander Gillon, New York, 31 March 1790**

[Called Alexander Hamilton a liar when Hamilton denegated the militia during the Revolution.] I was surprised & hurt. How must it end? they are both men of spirit. I wish that neither of them had expressed themselves as they did.

# Aaron Burr

**Eliphalet Dyer to Joseph Trumbull, Philadelphia, 18 July 1775**

This Letter is by Mr. Burr only son of the late President Burr, his Sister Married Mr. Reeves of Litchfield. He is Accompanied by one Mr. [Matthias] Ogden of the Jerseys. They are both young Gentlemen of fortune & regulation. They have so great ardor for Military that they are determined to join our Army as Volunteers and go into the Ranks if they can get Nothing better.

**Oliver Wolcott to Samuel Lyman, Philadelphia, 3 February 1776**

Young Mr. Burr is amongst the News Paper Heroes. He behaved Very bravely and I hope will not get killed—he has an Appointment in the Army.

**Alexander Hamilton to Hugh Seton, New York, 1 January 1785**

Mr. Burr who is a member of the Assembly, of influence and abilities. . . .

**James Kent: Memoirs**

Colonel Burr was acute, quick, terse, polished, sententious, and sometimes sarcastic in his forensic discussions. He seemed to disdain illustration and expansion, and confined himself with stringency to the point in debate.

**James Kent to Theodorus Bailey, 16 January 1791**

The insinuation of his manners is equal to the refinement of his taste and the activity of his mind.

**Morgan Lewis to Robert R. Livingston, Philadelphia, 24 January 1791**

If you have the same Opinion of Mr. Burr that many have, you will not rely much on his friendship. . . . 'tis pretty prevalent, that he is a Man who makes every Thing subservient to his private Views.

**James Watson to Alexander Hamilton, New York, 2 February 1792**

The cautious distance observed by this gentleman towards all parties, however exceptionable in a politician may be a real merit in a Governor.

**Robert Troup to John Jay, 10 June 1792**

[On Burr's legal opinion concerning the disputed gubernatorial election of 1792 between George Clinton and John Jay.] The quibbles of chicanery he [Burr] made use of are characteristic of the man. . . . Burr's [opinion] is a most pitiful one, and will damn his reputation as a lawyer. . . . We all consider Burr's opinion as such a shameful prostitution of his talents, and as so decisive a proof of the real infamy of his character, that we are determined to rip him up. We have long been wishing to see him upon paper, and we are now gratified with the most favorable showing he could have made.

**Aaron Burr to Jacob Delamater, New York, 15 June 1792**

It would, indeed, be the extreme of weakness in me to expect friendship from Mr. [George] Clinton. I have too many reasons to believe that he regards me with jealousy and malevolence.

**James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, Williamsburg, Va., 17 July 1792**

To some few, there are as little doubts of the political principles of the other gentleman [Burr] as of this [George Clinton], but they are not generally known, and therefore his advancement the more objectionable.

**From Alexander Hamilton, Philadelphia, 21 September 1792**

Mr. Clinton's success [in winning the vice presidency] I should think very unfortunate. I am not for trusting the Government too much in the hands of its enemies. But still Mr. C—— is a man of property, and, in private life, as far as I know of probity. I fear the other Gentleman is unprincipled both as a public and private man. When the constitution was in deliberation, his conduct was

equivocal; but its enemies, who I believe best understood him considered him as with them. In fact, I take it, he is for or against nothing, but as it suits his interest or ambition. He is determined, as I conceive, to make his way to be the head of the popular party and to climb *per fas et nefas* [i.e., legally or illegally] to the highest honors of the state; and as much higher as circumstances may permit. Embarrassed, as I understand, in his circumstances, with an extravagant family—bold enterprising and intriguing, I am mistaken, if it be not his object to play the game of confusion, and I feel it a religious duty to oppose his career.

**From Alexander Hamilton, Philadelphia, 26 September 1792**

Mr. Burr's integrity as an Individual is not unimpeached. As a public man he is one of the worst sort—a friend to nothing but as it suits his interest and ambition. Determined to climb to the highest honours of State, and as much higher as circumstances may permit—he cares nothing about the means of effecting his purpose. 'Tis evident that he aims at putting himself at the head of what he calls the “popular party” as affording the best tools for an ambitious man to work with. Secretly turning Liberty into ridicule he, knows as well as most men how to make use of the name. In a word, if we have an embryo-Caesar in the United States 'tis Burr.

**John Nicholson to James Madison, Philadelphia, 3 October 1792**

I take the liberty of addressing you by the Bearer on a subject which concerns the republican interests of the United States. Those in that interest I believe pretty generally desire a change in the vice presidency of the United States at [the] ensuing election, and at the first Governor Clinton was thought of to succeed him; however the circumstances of the State in which he presides combined with his own wishes induced us here to agree to the Honorable Mr. Burr whose talents, abilities and firmness of character are I believe fully equal, with a prospect of some accessional Strength from Middle and Eastern States which would not be given to Clinton. The people here however only desire a communication with their southern brethren on the subject and although they would I believe generally prefer *Burr* to *Clinton* will unite in either that will be thought most likely to succeed, for although Clinton wishes to decline in favor of Burr he does not absolutely refuse to serve if elected.

**James Monroe to James Madison, 9 October 1792**

[In response to a letter from Melancton Smith and Marinus Willett of New York recommending the substitution of Aaron Burr for Governor George Clinton as the Republican candidate to oppose the reelection of Vice President John Adams.] My opinion is briefly this: that if Mr. Burr was in every respect inexceptionable it would be impossible to have him elected [Vice President]. He is too young, if not in point of age, yet upon the public theatre, to admit the possibility of an union in his favor. If formed at all, it must be upon the recommendation & responsibility of particular characters in the several States; & if this could succeed it would be an unpleasant thing to those who would stand as sponsors. But for an office of this kind it could not, nor should it succeed. Some person of more advanced life and longer standing in publick trust should be selected for it, and particularly one who in consequence of such service had given unequivocal proofs of what his principles really were. A person who had marked a line of conduct so decisively that you might tell what he would be hereafter by what he had been heretofore. To place this gentleman, or any

other of his standing in the chair of the present incumbent, would not be well thought of in America; nor would it produce the desired effect; for some compunction always attends the rejection of an old servant, especially when accompanied with any kind of reproach. To lessen this if the ground of exception is well founded, the person preferred should in that respect, at least, be universally known to be sound, and to balance in other respects against him as nearly as possible an equal weight of character. Having this impression I consider the effort in New York in his favor as highly injurious & improper, & which if persisted in will certainly defeat the object. The particular arrangement of things there it might perhaps suit well enough; but they should not endeavor to make the more important interests of the union subservient to their accommodation—The path, however, to be pursued is difficult to be marked. 'Tis manifest that no steps have been taken by them to forward the object to the Eastward, or even perhaps in New York, and whether the step now taken, if attainable before, has not embarrassed it so as to render it impracticable, is doubtful. An answer, however, to their letter will be expected & this must either be given by this messenger, or a message sent by him, perhaps a written one to the gentlemen, signed by both, that as soon as we meet, which will be soon, we will answer it fully. I think the sooner they are apprised of our opinion the better it will be, for if evaded the effort will be continued as at present; and unless we join in, it should be discountenanced. If such should be the result it will place us in a disagreeable dilemma with Mr. Burr, but this must be removed by the most soothing assurances of esteem & confidence on our parts, resting it altogether on his youth &c. I am, however, disposed to concur with you in whatever you think best, & will subscribe any letter you may write, for I am persuaded from past conversations we shall not disagree.

**Alexander Hamilton to Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, Philadelphia, 10 October 1792**

[Burr] has no other principle than to *mount at all events* to the first honors of the State & to as much more as circumstances will permit—a man in private life not unblemished.

**Alexander Hamilton to John Steele, Philadelphia, 15 October 1792**

My opinion of Mr. Burr is yet to form—but according to the present state of it, he is a man whose only political principle is, to *mount at all events* to the highest legal honors of the Nation and as much further as circumstances will carry him. Imputations not favorable to his integrity as a man rest upon him; but I do not vouch for their authenticity.

**Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 10 May 1794**

The North and South appear to be arranged very formidable against each other in politicks and one judas appears from this quarter too conspicuous for his honour, or reputation. tis said here that the Southern Members have promised him the vice Presidency the next Elections if the southern States force us into a war—

**John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 18 November 1794**

A Senate was made to Day, by the Arrival of Col. Burr, as fat as a Duck and as ruddy as a roost Cock. An hundred Thousand Pounds is a very wholesome Thing I believe, and I suppose my manifold Infirmities are owing to my Poverty. I know not whether fame lies, on this occasion, but she begins to whisper that Burr has been very fortunate and successful as well as several others of Govr. Clinton's friends, by means that I will not explain till fame explains them more in detail.

**Charles Adams to John Adams, New York, 30 December 1794**

Mr. Burr preys like a vulture upon the pockets of his Clients; in his family he knows no bounds to profusion. Mr. Burr has lately made a large purchase of lands.

**Peter Van Gaasbeek to Stephen Van Rensselaer, 30 December 1794**

Mr. [Egbert] Benson cannot be carried & I am told, but from no authority, that he would not serve—Mr. Hamilton has in the most unequivocal manner declined in my presence—Thus circumstanced I have cast about for a suitable Candidate, and do not find any Man who can be taken up with so much probability of Success as —— I am sure no man will go so far in our County, and I think that no Man will be so likely to destroy that party spirit which seems to threaten ruin to the state—As to his politicks, he and I often differ in our Votes on particular Measures, but I consider him to be an upright Man and as good a friend to the Constitution & to good Government as you or I—and I know that *the same opinion is entertained of him by many those of the most influential & warmest federalists among the eastern Gentlemen, to whom he is best known.*

**Charles Adams to John Adams, New York, 13 February 1795**

[In the election of the governor of New York between Robert Yates and John Jay.] But where is Mr. Burr? I am inclined to believe he has some deep [——] scheme to outwit them all or that he does not intend to stand his election. The Livingstons hate Burr and he hates them so that there will be no cordiality between those Champions.

**Charles Adams to John Adams, New York, 4 October 1795**

It is rumoured that Mr. Burr has not been idle since the adjournment of the Senate. Where the inordinate ambition of this man will stop is not to be foretold.

**Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 29 November 1795**

It is very certain that all the Eloquence [in the U.S. Senate], and most of the abilities, are monopolized by the majority. Burr, excepted, they are all, Medicer, save in Bacon's left handed Wisdom.\* Burr, has address, insinuation and intrigue, sufficient for a pupil of Machiavelli.

\*This is, "cunning." (Sir Francis Bacon, *The Essays; or, Counsels Civil and Moral*, Essay XXII, "Of Cunning").

**John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 12 March 1796**

I dined Yesterday with Mr. Burr, who lives here in Style.

**John Beckley to James Madison, Philadelphia, 15 October 1796**

Burr has been out electioneering these six weeks in Connecticut, Vermont, R: Island & Massachusetts, but I doubt his efforts are more directed to himself than any body else. You well know him.

### **Theodore Sedgwick to Jonathan Dayton, Stockbridge, Mass., 19 November 1796**

Respecting Mr. Burr, no man better than yourself knows the estimation in which I hold him. But in my conscience I do not believe that every vote in Massachusetts would give him the least chance of an election to either of the offices [President or Vice President]; and the reason of my opinion I will detail to you. The party with which he has generally acted, although they covet the aid of his character & talents, have not the smallest confidence in his hearty union to their cause. Indeed it is my firm belief that their views and his are not only distinct but opposite. Their want of confidence in him was incontrovertibly demonstrated in the support which the party gave to the appointment of Monroe.\*

You remember how anxious you was that Burr should be gratified by that office, and how complete the evidence was to both our minds, that he was defeated by the insidious machinations of that party. And wherefore was it that they preferred Monroe to him? Had they more confidence in Monroe's talents? They are not so stupid. In his integrity? No. But they knew the one would & the other would not condescend to Act as their tool. They doubtless respect Burr's talents, but they dread his independence of *them*. They know, in short, he is not one of them, and of course they will never support but always effect to support him.

I sorry I cannot dwell longer on this subject. If it be agreeable to you, you will please to deliver the enclosed. I feel extremely anxious that we should not appear to play false with our [friends?].

\*In May 1794, Burr and Monroe were candidates to replace Gouverneur Morris as U.S. Minister to France.

### **Philip Schuyler to Alexander Hamilton, Albany, N.Y., 19 March 1797**

If Gentlemen of consideration in the public mind continue to refuse seats in either branch of the Legislature, it is certain that a variety of evils will result to the community, and the metropolis will be most deeply Affected. I wish therefore, that the necessity in Gentlemen to step forward and offer a consent to be candidates at the ensuing election may be strongly urged. Mr. Burr, we are informed, will be a candidate for a seat in the assembly; his views it is not difficult to appreciate. They alarm me, and if he prevails I apprehend a total change of politics in the next assembly—attended with other disagreeable consequences.

### **Alexander Hamilton to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., New York, 28 June 1798**

Col. Burr sets out today for Philadelphia. I have some reasons for wishing that the administration may manifest a cordiality to him. It is not impossible he will be found a useful cooperator. I am aware there are different sides but the case is worth the experiment. He will call on McHenry upon going to the City.

### **Robert Troup to Rufus King, New York, 24 June 1800**

It is impossible to say who will be the man set up as Governor by the Democrats, Burr has undoubtedly a view to the office, if he should fail in being President or Vice-President. He certainly means to avail himself of all chances to become a great man; and if he should be finally disappointed, it will not be owing to his want of industry—or to his modesty or virtue.

### **Fisher Ames to Rufus King, Boston, 15 July 1800**

Col. B. of New York . . . may give his influence to the highest bidder.

Founders on the Founders

**Alexander Hamilton to James A. Bayard, New York, 6 August 1800**

. . . There seems to be too much probability that Jefferson or Burr will be President. The latter is intriguing with all his might in New Jersey, Rhode-Island & Vermont. And there is a possibility of some success to his intrigues. He counts positively on the universal support of the Antis: & that by some adventitious aid from other quarters, he will overtop his friend Jefferson. Admitting the first point the conclusion may be realized. And if it is Burr will certainly attempt to reform the Government *a la Buonaparte*. He is as unprincipled & dangerous a man as any country can boast; as true a *Cataline* as ever met in midnight conclave.

**George Cabot to Alexander Hamilton, Brookline, Mass., 10 August 1800**

The question has been asked, whether, if the Federalists cannot carry their first points, they would not do well to turn the election from Jefferson to Burr. They conceive Burr to be less likely to look to France for support than Jefferson, provided he could be supported at home. They consider Burr as actuated by ordinary ambition, Jefferson by that and the pride of the Jacobinic philosophy. The former may be satisfied by power and property, the latter must see the roots of our society pulled up and a new course of cultivation substituted.

**Aaron Burr to Samuel Smith, New York, 16 December 1800**

It is highly improbable that I shall have an equal number of Votes with Mr. Jefferson; but if such should be the result every Man who knows me ought to know that I should utterly disclaim all competition—Be assured that the federal party can entertain no wish for such an exchange. As to my friends—they would dishonor my Views and insult my feelings by harbouring a suspicion that I could submit to be instrumental in Counteracting the Wishes & expectations of the U.S.

**Alexander Hamilton to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., New York, 16 December 1800**

It is now, my Dear Sir, ascertained that Jefferson or Burr will be President and it seems probable that they will come with equal votes to the House of Representatives. It is also circulated here that in this event the Federalists in Congress or some of them talk of preferring Burr. I trust New England at least will not so far lose its head as to fall into this snare. There is no doubt but that upon every virtuous and prudent calculation Jefferson is to be preferred. He is by far not so dangerous a man and he has pretensions to character.

As to *Burr* there is nothing in his favour. His private character is not defended by his most partial friends. He is bankrupt beyond redemption except by the plunder of his country. His public principles have no other spring or aim than his own aggrandizement *per fas et nefas*. If he can, he will certainly disturb our institutions to secure to himself *permanent power* and with it *wealth*. He is truly the *Cataline* of America—& if I may credit Major Wilcocks, he has held very vindictive language respecting his opponents.

But early measures must be taken to fix on this point the opinions of the Federalists. Among them, from different motives—Burr will find partisans. If the thing be neglected he may possibly go far.

Yet it may be well enough to throw out a lure for him, in order to tempt him to start for the plate & thus lay the foundation of dissention between the two chiefs.

**Alexander Hamilton to Theodore Sedgwick, New York, 22 December 1800**

The appointment of Burr, as President would disgrace our Country abroad. No agreement with him could be relied upon. His private circumstances render disorder a necessary resource. His public principles offer no obstacle. His ambition aims at nothing short of permanent power and wealth in his own person. For heaven's sake let not the Federal party be responsible for the elevation of this Man.

**Alexander Hamilton to Harrison Gray Otis, New York, 23 December 1800**

Burr loves nothing but himself; thinks of nothing but his own aggrandizement, and will be content with nothing, short of permanent power in his own hands. No compact that he should make with any passion in his breast, except ambition, could be relied upon by himself. How then should we be able to rely upon any agreement with him. Jefferson, I suspect, will not dare much. Burr will dare every thing, in the sanguine hope of effecting every thing.

**Alexander Hamilton to Gouverneur Morris, New York, 24 December 1800**

Another subject—*Jefferson or Burr?*—the former without all doubt. The latter in my judgment has no principle public or private—could be bound by no agreement—will listen to no monitor but his ambition; & for this purpose will use the *worst* part of the community as a ladder to climb to permanent power & an instrument to crush the better part. He is bankrupt beyond redemption except by the resources that grow out of war and disorder or by a sale to a foreign power or by great peculation. War with Great Britain would be the immediate instrument. He is sanguine enough to hope every thing—daring enough to attempt every thing—wicked enough to scruple nothing. From the elevation of such a man heaven preserve the Country!

**John Adams to William Tudor, Sr., Washington, 25 December 1800**

The Plan of bringing in Mr Pinckney by tacking him to my shoulder as a Rider, has not only been defeated but two opposite Characters have been brought in, with Splendid Tryumph. If 99 in 100 would have wonderd at the premature Advancement of Mr P. as you Suppose, will they wonder less at the rapid Advancement of Mr B.—I account for this Event in my own Way.—Burr is one of my well born. His Birth has buoyed him up as inflamable Air forces up a Balloon.—He is a Son of Mr Burr a President of Princeton Colledge and a grandson of Dr Edwards of North Hampton who was afterwards President of the Same Colledge: both of them very able and popular Champions of Calvinism, who lived and died in the highest Esteem Admiration, Love and Veneration of all the orthodox religious sects through the Continent, especially the Presbyterians of New England N. York N. Jersey Pennsylvania and Maryland. This immense number of Tongues has been constantly employed in Sounding the Praise of the Reasoning Powers, the Talents and the Eloquence of Col. Burr. Mr Thatcher a few days ago reminded me of a Conversation between him and me, about Eight years ago in a Stage Coach. Speaking of Coll Burr, I gave him the above Account of his origin and his fame and Said that I Should not be Surprized, if these Causes should make him President of the United States in ten years time.

Although I Said I Should not be Surprized, I was mistaken, I am Surprized.



**Alexander Hamilton to Gouverneur Morris, New York, 26 December 1800**

That the Convention with France ought to be ratified as the least of two evils. That on the same ground Jefferson ought to be preferred to Burr.

I trust the Federalists will not finally be so mad as to vote for the latter. I speak with an intimate & accurate knowledge of character. His elevation can only promote the purposes of the desperate and profligate. If there be a man in the world I ought to hate it is Jefferson. With Burr I have always been personally well. But the public good must be paramount to every private consideration. My opinion may be freely used with such reserves as you shall think discreet.

**Alexander Hamilton to James A. Bayard, New York, 27 December 1800**

Several letters to myself & others from the City of Washington, excite in my mind extreme alarm on the subject of the future President. It seems nearly ascertained that *Jefferson & Burr* will come into the House of Representatives with equal votes, and those letters express the probability that the Federal Party may prefer the latter. In my opinion a circumstance more ruinous to them, or more disastrous to the Country could not happen. This opinion is dictated by a long & close attention to the character, with the best opportunities of knowing it; an advantage for judging which few of our friends possess, & which ought to give some weight to my opinion. Be assured my dear Sir, that this man has no principle public or private. As a politician his sole spring of action is an inordinate ambition; as an individual he is believed by friends as well as foes to be without *probity*, and a voluptuary by system, with habits of expense that can be satisfied by no fair expedients. As to his talents, great management & cunning are the predominant features—he is yet to give proofs of those solid abilities which characterize the statesman. Daring & energy must be allowed him but these qualities under the direction of the worst passions, are certainly strong objections not recommendations. He is of a temper to undertake the most hazardous enterprises because he is sanguine enough to think nothing impracticable, and of an ambition which will be content with nothing less than *permanent* power in his own hands. The maintenance of the existing institutions will not suit him, because under them his power will be too narrow & too precarious; yet the innovations he may attempt will not offer the substitute of a system *durable & safe*, calculated to give lasting prosperity, & to unite liberty with strength. It will be the system of the day, sufficient to serve his own turn, & not looking beyond himself. To execute this plan as the good men of the country cannot be relied upon, the worst will be used. Let it not be imagined that the difficulties of execution will deter, or a calculation of interest restrain. The truth is that under forms of Government like ours, too much is practicable to men who will without scruple avail themselves of the bad passions of human nature. To a man of this description possessing the requisite talents, the acquisition of permanent power is not a Chimera. I *know* that Mr. Burr does not view it as such, & I am sure there are no means too atrocious to be employed by him. In debt vastly beyond his means of payment, with all the habits of excessive expense, he cannot be satisfied with the regular emoluments of any office of our Government. Corrupt expedients will be to him a *necessary* resource. Will any prudent man offer such a president to the temptations of foreign gold? No engagement that can be made with him can be depended upon. While making it he will laugh in his sleeve at the credulity of those with whom he makes it—and the first moment it suits his views to break it he will do so. Let me add that I could scarcely name a discreet man of either party in our State, who does not think Mr. Burr the most unfit man in the U.S. for the office of President. Disgrace abroad [&] ruin at home are the probable fruits of his elevation. To contribute to the disappointment and mortification of Mr. J. would be on my part, only to retaliate for unequivocal proofs of

enmity; but in a case like this it would be base to listen to personal considerations. In alluding to the situation I mean only to illustrate how strong must be the motives which induce me to promote *his* elevation in exclusion of another. For Heaven's sake my dear Sir, exert yourself to the utmost to save our country from so great a calamity. Let us not be responsible for the evils which in all probability will follow the preference. All calculations that may lead to it must prove fallacious.

### **Gouverneur Morris: Diary, 27 December 1800**

Today Mr. Harper calls, and Mr. Latimer. The former is, he says, an intimate friend of Burr, and thinks it advisable for the House of Representatives to give him their voice, without asking or expecting any assurances or explanation respecting his future administration. He thinks Burr's temper and disposition give an ample security for a conduct hostile to the democratic spirit which Mr. Harper considers as dangerous to our country, while Mr. Jefferson, he thinks, is so deeply imbued with false principles of government, and has so far committed himself in support of them, that nothing good can be expected from him. I give him some reasons why it would be better for gentlemen in his House to suspend their determinations until they can have more light as to the merit and probable conduct of the candidates.

### **Alexander Hamilton to James Ross, New York, 29 December 1800**

Letters which myself and others have received from Washington give me much alarm at the prospect that Mr. Burr may be supported by the Federalists in preference to Mr. Jefferson. Be assured, my Dear Sir, that this would be a fatal mistake. From a thorough knowledge of the character I can pronounce with confidence that Mr. Burr is the last man in the United States to be supported by the Federalists.

1. It is an opinion firmly entertained by his enemies and not disputed by his friends that as a man he is deficient in *honesty*. Some very sad stories are related of him. That he is bankrupt for a large *deficit* is certain.

2. As a politician discerning men of both parties admit that he has but one principle—to *get power* by *any* means and to *keep* it by *all* means.

3. Of an ambition too irregular and inordinate to be content with institutions that leave his power precarious, he is of too bold and sanguine a temper to think anything too hazardous to be attempted or too difficult to be accomplished.

4. As to talents they are great for management and intrigue—but he is yet to give the first proofs that they are equal to the art of governing well.

5. As to his theory, no mortal can tell what it is. Institutions that would serve his own purpose (such as the Government of France of the present day) not such as would promote lasting prosperity and glory to the Country would be his preference because he cares only for himself and nothing for his Country or glory.

6. Certain that his irregular ambition cannot be supported by *good* men, he will *court* and *employ* the worst men of all parties as the most eligible instruments. Jacobinism in its most pernicious form will scourge the country.

7. As to foreign policies, War will be a necessary mean of power and wealth. The animosity to the British will be the handle by which he will attempt to wield the nation to that point: Within a fortnight he has advocated positions which if acted upon would in six months place us in a state of War with that power.

From the Elevation of such a man may heaven preserve the Country. Should it be by the means of the Federalists I should at once despair. I should see no longer anything upon which to rest the hope of public or private prosperity.

### **John Adams to Elbridge Gerry, Washington, 30 December 1800**

Your anxiety for the issue of the election is, by this time, allayed. How mighty a power is the spirit of party! How decisive and unanimous it is! Seventy-three for Mr. Jefferson and seventy-three for Mr. Burr. May the peace and welfare of the country be promoted by this result! But I see not the way as yet. In the case of Mr. Jefferson, there is nothing wonderful; but Mr. Burr's good fortune surpasses all ordinary rules, and exceeds that of Bonaparte. All the old patriots, all the splendid talents, the long experience, both of Federalists and Antifederalists, must be subjected to the humiliation of seeing this dexterous gentleman rise, like a balloon, filled with inflammable air, over their heads. And this is not the worst. What a discouragement to all virtuous exertion, and what an encouragement to party intrigue, and corruption! What course is it we steer, and to what harbor are we bound? Say, man of wisdom and experience, for I am wholly at a loss.

### **Alexander Hamilton to James McHenry, New York, 4 January 1801**

Nothing has given me so much chagrin as the Intelligence that the Federal Party were thinking seriously of supporting Mr. Burr for President. I should consider the execution of the plan as devoting the country and signing their own death warrant. Mr. Burr will probably make stipulations, but he will laugh in his sleeve while he makes them and he will break them the first moment it may serve his purpose. But will not his interest govern him? It doubtless will, as he understands it. But *stable* power and great *wealth* being his objects, and these being unattainable by means that the sober part of the Federalists will countenance, he will certainly deceive and disappoint them. A *H*—*Lee* &c. &c. may find their account in it but good men in the Country never will. At least such ought to be the calculation; from a profligate, a bankrupt, a man who laughing at democracy has played the whole game of Jacobinism nothing better ought to be expected. Nor should a mere chapter of accidents be hazarded; it ought to be enough for us to know that he is certainly one of the most unprincipled men in the United States.

### **Theodore Sedgwick to Alexander Hamilton, Washington, 10 January 1801**

As to the other candidate there is no disagreement as to his character. He is ambitious—selfish—profligate. His ambition is of the worst kind—it is a mere love of power, regardless of fame but as its instrument—his selfishness excludes all social affections & his profligacy unrestrained by any moral sentiment, and defying all decency. This is agreed, but then it is known that his manners are plausible, that he is dexterous in the acquisition & use of the means necessary to effect his wishes. Nothing can be a stronger evidence of this than the situation in which he stands at this moment—without any pretension from connections, fame or services, elevated, by his own independent means, to the highest point to which all those can carry the most meritorious man in the nation. He holds to no pernicious theories, but is a mere matter-of-fact man. His very selfishness prevents his entertaining any mischievous predilections for foreign nations. The situation in which he lives has enabled him to discern and justly appreciate the benefits resulting from our commercial & other national systems; and this same selfishness will afford some security that he will not only patronize their support but their invigoration. . . .

It must be confessed that there is a part of the character of Burr more dangerous than that of Jefferson. Give to the former a probable chance & he would become an usurper; the latter might not incline, he certainly would not dare, to make the attempt. I do not believe that either would succeed, & I am even confident that such a project would be rejected by Burr as visionary.

### Alexander Hamilton to James A. Bayard, New York, 16 January 1801

As to Burr these things are admitted and indeed cannot be denied, that he is a man of *extreme & irregular* ambition—that he is *selfish* to a degree which excludes all social affections & that he is decidedly *profligate*. But it is said, 1st. that he is *artful & dexterous* to accomplish his ends—2nd. that he holds no pernicious theories, but is a mere *matter of fact* man—3rd. that his very selfishness is a guard against mischievous foreign predilections. 4th That his *local situation* has enabled him to appreciate the utility of our Commercial & fiscal systems, and the same quality of selfishness will lead him to support & invigorate them. 5th. that he is now disliked by the Jacobins, that his elevation will be a mortal stab to them, breed an invincible hatred to him, & compel him to lean on the Federalists. 6th. That Burr's ambition will be checked by his good sense, by the manifest impossibility of succeeding in any scheme of usurpation, & that if attempted, there is nothing to fear from the attempt. These topics are in my judgment more plausible than solid. As to the 1st point the fact must be admitted, but those qualities are objections rather than recommendations when they are under the direction of bad principles. As to the 2nd point too much is taken for granted. If Burr's conversation is to be credited he is not very far from being a visionary. It is ascertained in some instances that he has talked perfect *Godwinism*. I have myself heard him speak with applause of the French system as unshackling the mind & leaving it to its natural energies, and I have been present when he has contended against Banking Systems with earnestness & with the same arguments that Jefferson would use. The truth is that *Burr* is a man of a very subtle imagination, and a mind of this make is rarely free from ingenious whimsies. Yet I admit that he has no fixed theory & that his peculiar notions will easily give way to his interest. But is it a recommendation to have *no theory*? Can that man be a systematic or able statesman who has none? I believe not. *No general principles* will hardly work much better than erroneous ones. As to the 3rd. point—it is certain that Burr generally speaking has been as warm a partisan of France as Jefferson—that he has in some instances shown himself to be so with passion. But if it was from calculation who will say that his calculations will not continue him so? His selfishness so far from being an obstacle may be a prompter. If corrupt as well as selfish he may be a partisan for gain—if ambitious as well as selfish, he may be a partisan for the sake of aid to his views. No man has trafficked more than he in the floating passions of the multitude. Hatred to G. Britain & attachment to France in the public mind will naturally lead a man of his selfishness, attached to place and power, to favor France & oppose G. Britain. The Gallicism of many of our patriots is to be thus resolved, & in my opinion it is morally certain that Burr will continue to be influenced by this calculation. As to the 4th point the instance I have cited with respect to Banks proves that the argument is not to be relied on. If there was much in it, why does Chancellor Livingston maintain that we ought not to cultivate navigation but ought to let foreigners be our carriers? France is of this opinion too & Burr for some reason or other, will be very apt to be of the opinion of *France*. As to the 5th point—nothing can be more fallacious. It is demonstrated by recent facts that Burr is *solicitous* to *keep upon Antifederal ground*, to avoid compromising himself by any engagements with the Federalists. With or without such engagements he will easily persuade his former friends that he does stand on that ground, & after their first resentment they will be glad to rally under him. In the mean time he will take care not to disoblige them & he will always court those among

them who are best fitted for tools. He will never choose to lean on good men because he knows that they will never support his bad projects; but instead of this he will endeavor to disorganize both parties & to form out of them a third composed of men fitted by their characters to be conspirators, & instruments of such projects. That this will be his future conduct may be inferred from his past plan, & from the admitted quality of irregular ambition. Let it be remembered that Mr. Burr has never appeared solicitous for fame, & that great Ambition unchecked by principle, or the love of Glory, is an unruly Tyrant which never can keep long in a course which good men will approve. As to the last point—The proposition is against the experience of all times. Ambition without principle never was long under the guidance of good sense. Besides that, really the force of Mr. Burr's understanding is much overrated. He is far more *cunning* than *wise*, far more *dexterous* than *able*. In my opinion he is inferior in real ability to Jefferson. There are also facts against the supposition. It is past all doubt that he has blamed me for not having improved the situation I once was in to change the Government. That when answered that this could not have been done without guilt—he replied—“Les grands ames se soucient peu des petits morceaux”—that when told the thing was never practicable from the genius and situation of the country, he answered, “that depends on the estimate we form of the human passions and of the means of influencing them.” Does this prove that Mr. Burr would consider a scheme of usurpation as visionary. The truth is with great apparent coldness he is the most sanguine man in the world. He thinks every thing possible to adventure and perseverance. And though I believe he will fail, I think it almost certain he will attempt usurpation. And the attempt will involve great mischief.

#### **Gouverneur Morris to Alexander Hamilton, Washington, 26 January 1801**

[The members of the House of Representatives] consider the Candidates as equal in Worth or (if you like the other Mode of Expression best) as equally void of it with this Difference that Mr. Burr's Defects do not arise from Want of Energy and Vigor. They believe that to Courage he joins Generosity and cannot be branded with the Charge of Ingratitude.

#### **Gouverneur Morris to Robert R. Livingston, 18 March 1802**

Burr is trying to place himself well with us, and his measures are not without some success. His friends the democrats fear and hate him, and he knows it.

#### **William Dickson to Andrew Jackson, Washington, 10 December 1802**

The popularity of the President [Jefferson] continues to increase. But the Vice President has lost irretrievably the confidence of the American People.

#### **Thomas Jefferson: The Anas, 1804**

I had never seen Colo. Burr till he came as a member of the Senate. His conduct very soon inspired me with distrust. I habitually cautioned Mr. Madison against trusting him too much. I saw afterwards that under Genl. W's and Mr. A's administrations, whenever a great military appointment or a diplomatic one was to be made, he came post to Philadelphia to show himself & in fact that he was always at market, if they had wanted him. He was indeed told by Dayton in 1800 he might be Secretary at War; but this bid was too late. His election as V.P. was then foreseen. With these impressions of Colo. Burr there never had been any intimacy between us, and but little association. When I destined him for a high appointment, it was out of respect for the favor he had

obtained with the republican party by his extraordinary exertions and successes in the N.Y. election in 1800.

**Manasseh Cutler to Joseph Torrey, Washington, 13 March 1804**

The [impeachment] trial of Judge Pickering was closed yesterday, and sentence of condemnation passed—ayes, 20, nays, 10. This trial, so far as respects mere forms, has been conducted with much dignity and solemnity. This is wholly owing to Mr. Burr. He presides in the Senate in a manner which reflects much honor and respectability upon him as a man of taste and judgment.

**John Quincy Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, Quincy, Mass., 9 May 1804**

Mr. Burr has lost his election as Governor—It seems the federalists and his partizans could not cordially coalesce, and failed in giving each other the mutual assistance upon which they depended.

**John Quincy Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, Quincy, Mass., 19 July 1804**

The conduct of Mr. Burr through the whole affair [i.e., the challenge and duel with Alexander Hamilton] appears to me strongly to corroborate that opinion of his character which his enemies have long ascribed to him.

**William Plumer: Memorandum, 7 November 1804**

This day the Senate made a quorum for the first time this session. Mr. Burr, the Vice President, appeared and took his seat in the Senate the very first day of the session. It has been unusual for the Vice President to take his seat the first day of the session. But this man, though indicted in New York & New Jersey for the murder of the illustrious Hamilton, is determined to brave public opinion. What a humiliating circumstance that a man Who for months has fled from justice—& who by the legal authorities is now accused of murder, should preside over the first branch of the National Legislature!

I have avoided him—his presence to me is odious—I have merely bowed & spoken to him—Federalists appear to despise, neglect & abhor him. The democrats, at least many of them, appear attentive to him—& he is very familiar with them—What line of conduct they will generally observe to him is yet uncertain.

**Thomas C. Cushing to Manasseh Cutler, Salem, Mass., 15 November 1804**

It is a matter of curiosity and inquiry, whether that — Burr will have the audacity to take his seat in the Senate, and, if he does, how will he be received and treated by that body. Can they submit to the degradation of the presidency of a man lying under the legal imputation of murder? Will not N. jersey claim him as a fugitive from justice? Will not an impeachment be moved against him in your House? But, doubtless, impeachment against ten judges would be voted, before one would be against a murderer.

**William Plumer: Memorandum, 5 December 1804**

'Tis now more than a month since we have been in session, & day by day, when in the Senate Chamber, have I attentively watched the conduct of Aaron Burr. After the minutes of the preceding

day have been read—the little business before us dispatched—he would leave the chair—come to one Senator, & intimate in strong terms that it was best to adjourn—& sometimes request a senator to move an adjournment—& in a few moments he was gone—He appears to have lost those easy graceful manners that beguiled the hours away the last session—He is now uneasy, discontented, & hurried.—So true it is, “Great guilt never knew great joy at heart.” What course he will take after the 3d of March is very uncertain—He can never I think rise again. But surely he is a very extraordinary man, & is an exception to all rules.—No man is better fitted to brow beat or cajole public opinion. And considering of what material the mass of men are formed—how easily they are gulled—& considering how little restraint laws human or divine have on his mind is impossible to say what he will attempt—or what he may obtain.

### **William Plumer: Memorandum, 28 February 1805**

The Vice President is an ambitious man—he aspired to the Presidency—disappointed ambition will be restless. You put arms into his hands to attack your government—He may disseminate seditious pamphlets, newspapers & letters at the expense of the very government he is destroying.

### **William Plumer: Memorandum, 2 March 1805**

At two O’clock Mr. Burr informed the Senate that he should now take leave of the Senate. His address was very correct & elegant & the sentiments very just.

He said he hoped that the Constitution of the U.S. would never be destroyed but he would venture to predict that if such an unfortunate event should ever take place, on this floor it would meet with its last & most noble defense—Here it would draw its last gasp.—This house is the last portion of the people, the last branch in the government that will abandon it.

As to his conduct in office—he said he had with great care endeavored to know no party—no friend or political enemy—He had acted with promptitude & decision—that he thought this more correct although he might thereby sometimes err—than a wavering undecisive conduct—which would stamp ignorance on him & produce confusion & insubordination in the Senate. He had in that promptitude no doubt sometimes wounded the feelings of an individual senator—on these occasions, which he trusted were few, he never had suffered any explanation at the time because the animation of the moment always rendered it improper. He was proud to say that during the four years he had presided he had never seen a single senator but what appeared anxious to support the authority of the Chair. That it was with great consolation he could review his official conduct & with conscious pride could say he had not degraded the dignity of that Chair which he now resigned to his successor. For each individual senator he entertained & felt a spirit of friendship, & he trusted that the regret on parting was mutual.

He bowed & retired—several shed tears very plentifully.

### **William Plumer: Memorandum, 2 March 1806**

For a long time it has been bandied about from New Hampshire to Georgia in the newspapers &c that *Aaron Burr* was to be appointed Envoy Extraordinary & Minister plenipotentiary to Great Britain. I have Myself given no credit to the relation. Mr. Jefferson has no confidence in him. He knows him to be capable of the darkest measures—a designing dangerous man.

**William Plumer: Memorandum, 15 March 1806**

He informed me that he had not seen Aaron Burr for this four years. That he considered him as having great talents—but as a designing, intriguing, dangerous man. That his party in New York are composed of but few & those not influential.

**William Plumer: Memorandum, 4 April 1806**

Stephen Roe Bradley said] That Mr. Jefferson was a visionary man—never qualified for the presidency—That we must now turn our attention to an eastern man—That Rufus King would make a good president—that Burr a better. That Mr. Jefferson had explicitly told him he would not be a candidate at the next election.

**William Plumer: Memorandum, 30 November 1806**

In after visits I became more particularly attentive to the language of Mr. Burr—& I found he possessed the talent of making an impression of an opinion upon the subject, on the person with whom he conversed, without explicitly stating or necessarily giving his sentiments thereon. In every thing he said or did, he had a design—& perhaps no man's language was ever so apparently explicit, & at the same time so covert & indefinite.

**William Plumer: Memorandum, 24 December 1806**

I am still at a loss to know what Burr is doing—& to what object he is driving.

As a conspirator—or as a politician—he has a fault—he is too cunning—too secret—even in business where frankness & openness would not injure him. The reputation of being a *cunning* man, is enough to blast any man's popularity—It at once renders him an object of suspicion. Burr's lawful business always appears enveloped in mystery. This trait in his character is strong, & marks all his conduct.

**Thomas Jefferson to Charles Clay, Washington, 11 January 1807**

Burr's enterprise is the most extraordinary since the days of Don Quixote. It is so extravagant that those who know his understanding, would not believe it if the proofs admitted doubt. He has meant to place himself on the throne of Montezuma, and extend his empire to the Allegheny, seizing on New Orleans as the instrument of compulsion for our western States.

**William Plumer: Memorandum, 15 January 1807**

This evening my colleague, Nicholas Gilman, told me, That Mr. Jefferson a few days since informed him, That the last winter Aaron Burr made several visits to him—& requested that as he was out of employ that the President would give him an appointment as minister to some foreign court. That at the last visit, Mr. Burr pressed the subject—The President then replied to him—You once had my confidence—the people & myself have now lost that confidence they had in you—I cannot therefore gratify you with an appointment. Burr then intimated to the President, that he would find he had it in his power to do Mr. Jefferson much injury.



**John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 2 February 1807**

What shall I say of the Democratical Vice-President and the Federal would-be President, Burr? Although I never thought so highly of his natural talents or his acquired attainments as many of both parties have represented them, I never believed him to be a fool. But he must be an idiot or a lunatic if he has really planned and attempted to execute such a project as is imputed to him.

Lying Spirit has been at Work concerning Burr and that Mr Jefferson has been too hasty in his Message in which he has denounced him by Name and pronounced him guilty. But if his guilt is as clear as the Noon day Sun, the first Male ought not to have pronounced it so before a Jury had tried him.

**Thomas Jefferson to Robert R. Livingston, Washington, 24 March 1807**

Burr has indeed made a most inglorious exhibition of his much over-rated talents. He is now on his way to Richmond for trial.

**Thomas Jefferson to Unknown, Washington, 25 March 1807**

Burr is on his way to Richmond for trial. No man's history proves better the value of honesty.

**Benjamin Rush to John Adams, Philadelphia, 3 April 1807**

I concur with you in your reflections upon the western insurrection, but not altogether in your opinion of Colonel Burr's objects. "Prudence in enterprises and even common business and a guilty conscience," Sully long ago remarked in his character of Count Byron, "are generally incompatible." Burr's plans have been directed like doctors' prescriptions by *pro re nata* circumstances.\* I will give you a specimen of them. He applied indirectly to Governor McKean for the chief-justiceship of Pennsylvania just before he set off for Kentucky last year. Success here was as improbable as revolutionizing the western states. "To be unfortunate," says Richlieu, "is to be imprudent." The history of Colonel Burr's pursuits verifies this remark. He failed 1st. in obtaining a foreign embassy the first year he took his seat in the Senate; 2. in supplanting Mr. Jefferson; 3. in obtaining the government of New York [as governor]; 4. in his western enterprises, and 5. in being chief justice of Pennsylvania. There is often something said or done by men in their youth that marks their destiny in life. I attended the commencement at Princeton at which Mr. Burr took his degree. He was then between 16 and 17 years of age. He spoke an elegant oration and with great spirit upon "Building Castles in the Air," in which he exposed its folly in literary, political, and military pursuits.

\*According to the present appearances.

**Thomas Jefferson to William Branch Giles, Monticello, 20 April 1807**

Against Burr, personally, I never had one hostile sentiment. I never indeed thought him an honest, frank-dealing man, but considered him as a crooked gun, or other perverted machine, whose aim or stroke you could never be sure of. Still while he possessed the confidence of the nation, I thought it my duty to respect in him their confidence, & to treat him as if he deserved it.

**William Plumer: Memorandum, 22 June 1807**

Alexander Hamilton, who fell by his shot, once said to an acquaintance of mine (*Jona. Mason, Esq.*) “The talents of Mr. Burr are over-rated—the world will ere long know it—His arguments at the bar were concise—his address was pleasing, his manners were more, they were fascinating. When I analyzed his arguments I could not discover in what his greatness consisted. But his ambition is unlimited.” Mr. Mason stated these observations of Hamilton to me this day.

**John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 23 June 1807**

Burr, I never considered as my personal Enemy. He would not have been my political Enemy, if Hamilton would have permitted Washington to allow me to nominate him to the Senate as a Brigadier in the Army. But Burr must and would be Something, and *flectere Sine quo Superos Accharonta movebo*,\* was as excusable a Maxim in him, as it was in Hamilton, McKean, Fred. Muhlenbourg, Tenche Coxe, and fifty more that I could name in one breath. Burr became my political Enemy and Jefferson’s political Friend, not from any affection to him or disaffection to me, but merely to make Way for himself to mount the Ladder of Ambition. The most efficacious Enemy and Friend to be Sure he was. By intriguing with Clintons and Livingstons agalilton he turned the State of New York and consequently the Ballance of the Continent. But what has been Burrs reward? It is doubtful whether Hamilton Andrew Brown, or Alexander Callender, are So Signal Monuments of divine Vengeance and whether their destiny is not to be preferred to his. At the same time that I Say this, I am not insensible of the Possibility that he may yet be President of the United States.

\*If I cannot move heaven, I will raise hell (Virgil).

**Benjamin Rush to John Adams, Philadelphia, 9 July 1807**

Colonel Burr retains in his confinement his usual good spirits. He is nondescript in the history of human nature. Should he be acquitted [of treason], you say he may yet be President of the United States. It is possible. Some worse men hold high appointments in every part of our country.

**Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, Plymouth, Mass., 11 July 1807**

Mr Adams asks me what I think of Colo. Burr?—a full reply to this question might lead to a longer page than he has leisure to read;—yet I will observe that I think him *permitted by his Maker* to exhibit to the world another instance of the abuse of superior talents.—But I will not attempt to draw his character—the fibres and cords of the heterogeneous materials which compose it are so entangled, and the tints which are discovered on the surface require a finer pencil and a more dexterous adept in the researches of human intellect, human depravity, and the capacity for virtuous improvement in the human soul, to delineate with just precision.—He is now arraigned at the bar of justice and Ie the intricacies of his intrigues will doubtless have a clear developement;—then some *faithful historic page* may record his rise and his fall, and give a just portrait of his character, and an ample detail of his abilities and his crimes, of his perfidy and his fate.—

**John Adams to Benjamin Waterhouse, Quincy, Mass., 12 July 1811**

H. and Burr, in point of Ambition were equal. In Principle equal. In Talents different: H. superior in Litterary Talents: B. in military. H. a Nevis Adventurer. B. descended from the earliest,

Founders on the Founders

most learned Pious and virtuous of our American Nation, and buoyed up by the Prejudices of half the Nation. He found himself thwarted, persecuted, calumniated by a wandering Stranger. The deep Malice of H. against Bur, and his indefatigable Exertions to defame him are little known. I know so much of it for a Course of Years, that I wondered a Duel had not taken Place Seven Years before it did. I could have produced such a Duel at any Moment for Seven Years. I kept the Secrets Sacred and inviolable: and have kept them to this day.

**John Adams to Samuel B. Malcolm, Quincy, Mass., 6 August 1812**

Colonel Burr, Attorney-General Burr, Senator Burr, Vice-President Burr, almost President Burr, has returned to New York. What is to be his destiny?

**James Wilkinson: *Memoirs of My Own Times*, 1816**

. . . at taking leave, I observed to him [i.e., Alexander Hamilton], “well, Sir, having fatigued you with my prattle, I now propose to visit an old friend whom I have not seen for several years. I know you are twain in politics, but I hope there is no disagreement between you, which might render the renewal of my acquaintance with him indecorous to my superior officer”; he asked me if it was “Lamb,” meaning Colonel [John] Lamb, I replied in the negative, and named Colonel Burr. “Little Burr,” said he, “Oh no, we have always been opposed in politics but always on good terms, we sat out in the practice of the law at the same time, and took opposite political directions. Burr beckoned me to follow him, and I advised him to come with me; we could not agree, but I fancy he now begins to think he was wrong and I was right.”

**Mathew Carey: *Memoirs*, June 1829**

P S Duponceau—I have known fewer instances of keener penetration and foresight, than was displayed on a particular occasion by Mr Duponceau. We were sitting together about the time when A Burr shot A Hamilton in a duel—and I observed that Mr Burr was now put down forever, beyond the power of redemption: for what both parties invited in reprobating him who never united in any thing else. He replied that he would not be surprised, if he were to convulse the Country (or to attempt to convulse it) I do not recollect which form of expression he used, in a year or two. He said that he was as cunning & destitute of principle as ~~h~~Hamilton—but entirely different from Hamilton—That if it had a point to carry, he always took the straight road to accomplish it—Whereas. Burr would always prefer if he had a choice, a tortuous or sinister course.

## Pierce Butler

**William Pierce: *Sketches of Delegates to the Constitutional Convention*, c. September 1787**

Mr. Butler is a character much respected for the many excellent virtues which he possesses.—But as a politician or an Orator he has no pretensions to either.—He is a Gentleman of fortune, and takes rank among the first in South Carolina.—He has been appointed to Congress, and is now a Member of the Legislature of South Carolina.—Mr. Butler is about 40 years of age; an Irishman by birth.

**Pierce Butler to Weeden Butler, Maryvilla, S.C., 2 March 1788**

A tranquil domestic scene suits me much better than the bustle of politicks.

**Pierce Butler to Weeden Butler, 18 July 1788**

You may naturally ask me why, with these sentiments, do you hold so many in Bondage. I answer You, that I would free every one of them tomorrow if I could do it, that is if the Legislature would permit it. I ardently wish I never had anything to do with such property. I daily beg of them to seek some Master that they think they would be happy with, that I may get done with them; but tho it is an Indulgence not unusual here they will not try for One. Nothing prevents my parting with them but the fear of their not bettering by the Change.

**William Maclay: Journal, 9 June 1789**

. . . a new Phenomenon had made its appearance in the House [i.e., the U.S. Senate] since Friday. A Pierce Butler from Carolina had taken his Seat and flamed like a Meteor. He arraigned the Whole impost law, and then Charged (indirectly) the Whole Congress with a design of oppressing South Carolina.

**William Maclay: Journal, 10 June 1789**

We once believed that [Richard Henry] Lee was the Worst of Men, But I think we have a much worse than he, in our lately arrived Mr. Butler. This is the most excentric of Creatures. He moved to strike out the Article of Indigo. Carolina was not obliged to Us for taking Notice of her affairs. Ever and anon crying out against local Views and partial proceedings, and the most local and partial Creature I ever heard open a mouth. All the impost Bill was calculated to ruin South Carolina. He has Words at Will, but scatters them the most random of any Man I ever heard pretend to speak. He seems to have a particular antipathy to Mr. [Robert] Morris.

**William Maclay: Journal, 12 June 1789**

Mr. Butler made a most flaming Speech against the Judicial bill. He was called to Order from the Chair and was not a little angry about it.

**William Maclay: Journal, 24 March 1790**

[Ralph] Izard & Butler both Manifested a most insulting Spirit this day. When there was not the least Occasion for it, nor the smallest affront offered. These Men have a most settled Antipathy to Pennsylvania, owing to the Doctrines patronized in that State, on the Subject of Slavery. Pride makes Fools of them, or rather compleats What nature began.

**William Maclay: Journal, 27 May 1790**

Butler by One of those excentric Motions Which he is remarkable for, flew his party & vote lide.

**William Maclay: Journal, 4 June 1790**

I left the Senate Chamber this day compleatly sickened at the uncandid and ungentlemanly Conduct of the South Carolina Men.

**William Maclay: Journal, 18 June 1790**

Up now came the funding Bill. Butler railed at Elsworth. Elsworth railed back. There really was no entertainment. No Man ever rambled or talked more at random than Butler. He is ever quoting Authors on Trade, finance &ca. ever repeating What he has seen in Europe.

**Pierce Butler to Dr. Peter Spence, New York, 27 June 1790**

Lord how have I posted through the prime of life? I have got to the top of the hill without once looking about me or having had time or rather leisure to breathe! Now that I Begin to descend I open my Eyes, look about me and ask myself questions. Why do so! and why not! why so thoughtless at a time when much thought was required! Why place so much confidence in Man knowing of him so little. In short here I am arrived this Month to the age of forty five without a knowledge of how I got here. I blame myself for a thousand inattentions and unguardednesses, if you will allow me the word; yet I thank the great Ruler of the Universe who has kept my hands clean from blood or fraud. If every Man who has passed thro' a long civil war will say as much, he may find some comfort in reflecting on the past. I feel I am growing serious. I will quit it, tho' this is a day, Sunday, which I generally give to thought and serious reflection.

**Pierce Butler to Edward Van Hartals, New York, 3 November 1790**

My Mind is at present greatly clouded, and has been so for six Months past by the indisposition of Mrs. Butler, who has been confined to her bed for more than six months in excruciating pain. Her sufferings are so great that, tenderly as I love her, and intimately as my peace is connected with her living, yet I [am] almost desirous of seeing her released even by an Eternal Separation. What an Alternative! You who have never been in the Matrimonial line, tho nice and just Your feelings, can scarcely judge of the severity of the trial.

**Pierce Butler to Weeden Butler, New York, 16 November 1790**

The decree is sealed. Her eyes are closed never to open more in this world! Her spirit I trust has fled to receive the reward of her many virtues. Panegerick is too often bestowed on the unworthy after death, but here truth would not be offended. She had qualities that endeared her to me and her Children not only, but to all who knew her. I had been for some months trying to prepare myself to meet the stroke, but when it came I found I had not judged of the severity of the trial. It has materially wounded my peace. She, poor Woman, suffered much, but She has left behind her those who will suffer longer. I will not disturb your friendly benevolent feelings with a picture of the scene of my four dear Children clinging to me and weeping incessantly day and night. The trial is too severe; their loss is irreparable. My poor Boy has his share, tho' not so great as his Sisters. I pray You to write me exactly how he receives the information. I feel like a person who had had a paralectick stroke. I miss my best half. I am hurrying from here to change the scene where every thing that presents itself only brings to my mind the loss I have suffered. I shall depart in a few days for Philadelphia, where You will in future please to direct to me.

**Pierce Butler to His Mother, Lady Henrietta Butler, New York, 28 November 1790**

It is not in any words I am Master of to convey to You a just idea of my distress & the affliction of my dear Children. It has pleased God to take from us the friend of my bosom, their most excellent Mother. A better Woman did not exist in any Country! Great as my loss is, my Daughters' is, if possible, greater, who is to usher them into the World! I know not. I am bewildered—without a plan—totally at a loss what to do—wherever I turn, whichever way I look, I feel my wretchedness. I can only look for light & support to the Father of light, and the certain support of all who call on him in faith—the broken & contrite spirit He will not reject—He, I trust will be the guide & guardian of my innocent Children.

**Pierce Butler to Louis Hovy & Son, Philadelphia, 22 January 1791**

I did flatter myself with the hope of receiving some of the debts owing to me in Carolina so as to have made You a large remittance, but I am materially disappointed. Money transactions in that Country, instead of mending, grow worse. There are failures that I never shou'd have suspected. Since I left Carolina last, to attend Congress, I have lost £9,000 Sterling by Bankruptcies. It is a severe stroke on the back of other losses. As soon as Congress adjourns I propose going to Carolina to try what I can do with those that owe me Money. If I get any from them You shall have it. If I do not collect any thing I fear it will not be in my power this Year to remit You much more than the Interest of my debt; yet I will do all I can. My expences this Year have been considerably encreased by the long sickness in my family. And also by removing to this City. I had taken a lease of a house in N. York for 3 Yrs which I was obliged to pay for. So that altogether my expences have been considerably augmented this year. Be assured Gentlemen that I shall do every thing in my power to remit You. I need no stimulous to do it, but if those who owe me will neither pay principal nor Interest it is impossible for me to do what I wish by those that I am indebted to. I have the most ardent desire to discharge my debt to You, but at present I can not gratify my desire for the reason I have mentioned to You.

**Pierce Butler to John Lecky, Philadelphia, 11 February 1791**

I thank You my kind friend for Your generous opinion of me respecting the treatment of the wretched Affricans. Had it pleased God to allow the benign beam of Civilization to reach their Country, it would not be in the power of Europe to enslave them. I am not a friend to the trafick in Human kind. Yet upon strict enquiry I much doubt if their situation in their own Country is freer or better. However this does not perhaps justify the trade. We should leave them to Their own fare. Indeed I wish I had never owned one of them.

**Pierce Butler to Mrs. Hoffman, Philadelphia, 21 February 1791**

Need I tell You my good Madam, who possess such nice feelings, what I have suffer'd and do suffer. I assure You that the few Months that have pass'd, instead of reconciling me to my loss, make me more sensible of it. A Stupor, an insensibility that I am totally at a loss to account for, took possession of me at first. I am fully awak'd from it. I daily, hourly see & feel the loss of as good a Woman, as good a Wife as ever Man was bless'd with—through what a different medium does every thing on Earth present itself to my View! the very objects and scenes that I formerly took pleasure in are tasteless and not Coveted. My dear Children study to let me feel my loss as little as possible—they are unexceptionably good and dutiful; and are a great comfort to me.

**Pierce Butler to John Hunter, Philadelphia, 6 February 1793**

I thank You my friend, for Your congratulations on my re-election—as it is the strongest mark I cou'd receive of the country's approbation of my publick conduct it must be very satisfactory to me. I feel it a full compensation for the time I have given to the Publick. It is doubly satisfactory to me from information I lately received of an intended attempt to oppose the re-election, and for that purpose the most infamous falsehoods have been propagated with a view of shaking the confidence my fellow citizens placed in me—among other falsehoods I understand it has been propagated that I asked for a ministerial appointment in Europe. You know my sentiments pretty fully on the subject of asking for places or appointments. You have often heard them. I declare to You in the most solemn manner that I never did nor ever will ask, solicit, or seek for any place or appointment whatever. I wou'd put my hand in the fire sooner than I wou'd degrade my personal character by such a meanness. I therefore request if ever You hear this falsehood mentioned that You will say You have full authority from me to declare it is false.

**Pierce Butler to James Gunn, Philadelphia, 17 August 1793**

The Season for calm observance, for great circumspection is arrived; hurried on sooner than it otherwise wou'd have arrived, by excessive imprudence. I am determined for the present to be a looker on only, without saying a word—but when things get to the point they are rapidly inclining to, *I am determined* to do more than look on. You must also take Your station; and we must try to pull at one rope. Our political principles are the same. I have often laughed in Senate at seeing some Men make a serious matter of trifles; but a serious thing cannot be made a trifle. When the object is really important I think I am as cool as any man can be—my sincere opinion is, that a Crisis in our Government cannot be very distant; this, as I have said from the first, I lay to Mr. Hamilton.

**Pierce Butler to Governor Henry Lee, Philadelphia, 20 November 1793**

Mr. [Robert] Morris mentioned to me yesterday that a Gentleman had lately asserted at Your table, that Mr. Butler was concerned in a Land Speculation with a Doctor Hall. You will much oblige me by communicating to me the name of the Gentleman; and I will thank You when You next see him to tell him, that Mr. Butler is no Speculator. If I had inclined to be concern'd in a Purchase of Lands I wou'd choose my associates—Doctor Hall is a stranger to me.

**Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 19 November 1794**

Butlers conduct is much like the Man, unsteady and wavering.

**Pierce Butler to Weeden Butler, Philadelphia, 19 August 1796**

I have at length determined on returning to private life. I wait only for the meeting of the Legislature of South Carolina to resign [from the U.S. Senate]; there are about or near four years of the time I was elected for to run, but I never shall enter the doors of Senate again as a Senator. I cannot say that I regret having given so much time to public life; but I should feel reluctant at giving more. I think by being in public life I have acquired a more intimate knowledge of man than I should otherwise have had. I wish I could say that my respect had increased with my knowledge of him.

# Richard Butler

## **Benjamin Rush to John Montgomery, Philadelphia, 5 November 1782**

What do you think of Colonel Richard Butler? He has both knowledge and a penetrating judgment, and as he is a gentleman in the full import of that word, I am sure he must think with us. I have just heard of his marriage. This will make him more anxious for posterity than ever.