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# Marquis de Lafayette

## John Adams: Autobiography

When I began to attempt a little conversation in French I was very inquisitive concerning this great Family of Noailles and I was told by some of the most intelligent Men in France, ecclesiastics as well as others, that there were no less than six Marshalls of France of this Family, that they held so many Offices under the King that they received Eighteen millions of Livres annually from the Crown. That the Family had been remarkable for Ages, for their harmony with one another and for doing nothing of any consequence without a previous Council and concert. That, when the American Revolution commenced, a family Council had been called to deliberate upon that great Event and determine what part they should take in it, or what Conduct they should hold towards it. After they had sufficiently considered, they all agreed in Opinion that it was a Crisis of the highest importance, in the Affairs of Europe and the World. That it must affect France in so essential a manner, that the King could not and ought not to avoid taking a capital Interest and part of it. That it would therefore be the best policy of the Family, to give their Countenance to it as early as possible. And that it was expedient to send one of their Sons over to America to serve in her Army under General Washington. The Prince de Poix as the Heir apparent, of the Duke of Mouchy, they thought of too much importance to their Views and expectations to be risked in so hazardous a Voyage and so extraordinary a Service, and therefore it was concluded, to offer the Enterprise to the Viscount de Noailles, and if he should decline it, to the Marquis de la Fayette. The Viscount after due consideration, thought it most prudent to remain at home for the present. The Marquis, who was represented as a youth of the finest Accomplishments and most amiable disposition, panting for Glory, ardent to distinguish himself in military Service, and impatient to wipe out a slight imputation which had been thrown, whether by Truth or Calumny upon the Memory of his father who though he had been slain in Battle was suspected to have lost his Life by too much caution to preserve it, most joyfully consented to embark in the Enterprise. All France pronounced it to be the first page in the History of a great Man.

## Silas Deane: Agreement with the Marquis de Lafayette, Paris, 7 December 1776

The desire which Mr. the Marquis de la Fayette shows of serving among the Troops of the United States of North America, and the Interest which he takes in the Justice of their Cause making him wish to distinguish himself in this war and to render himself as useful as he possibly can; but not thinking that he can obtain leave of his Family to pass the seas and serve in a foreign Country till he can go as a General Officer; I have thought I could not better serve my Country and those who have entrusted me than by granting to him in the name of the very honorable Congress the Rank of Major General which I beg the States to confirm to him, to ratify and deliver to him the Commission to hold and take Rank, to count from this Day, with the General Officers of the same degree. His high Birth, his Alliances, the great Dignities which his Family holds at this Court, his considerable Estates in this Realm, his personal merit, his Reputation, his Disinterestedness, and above all his Zeal for the Liberty of our Provinces, have only been able to engage me to promise him the Rank of Major General in the name of the United States.

**Silas Deane to President of Congress John Hancock, Paris, c. 16 March 1777**

At length, the Marquis de la Fayette, a young Nobleman of the first family and connections at Court, viz. that of Noailles, has equipped a vessel, at his own expense, to transport him and the Baron [de Kalb], with other Officers, to America. As my letters were very particular at the time, and as we shall write express by Capt. Hammond in a few days, will not detain you more than to recommend this young Nobleman to your particular notice and attention. His family are of the first influence here, and have, for ages, been celebrated in the affairs of this Country, as well in peace as war. His fortune puts him above all pecuniary considerations, and he desires none, but wishes to rank with Gentlemen of the first character in the Army.

**Marquis de Lafayette to William Carmichael, On board *La Victorie*, 19 April 1777**

The only favor that I ask is that they give me every possible opportunity to make use of my fortune, my labors, and all the resources of my imagination, and to shed my blood for my brothers and my friends. The only recompense that I shall request, after success, is to obtain new means of being useful to them.

**Henry Laurens to John Lewis Gervais, Philadelphia, 5 August 1777**

A Commission of Major General is granted to the Marquis de la Fayette the young nobleman who lately came from Charles Town. He required no pension, no Special Command; the honor of fighting near General Washington & having rank in the Army was all he coveted except opportunities to show his Zeal for the glorious cause of American Freedom either in the Field, or at Court when it shall be judged he can be more Serviceable at Versailles. This illustrious Stranger whose address & manner bespeak his birth will Serve a short Campaign & then probably return to France & Secure to us the powerful Interest of his high & extensive connections.

**Richard Henry Lee to Landon Carter, Philadelphia, 19 August 1777**

Among other curiosities there, I saw the young Marquis de la Fayette, a Nobleman of the first fortune and family in France, the favorite of Court and Country. He left behind him a most beautiful young wife, and all the soft enjoyments that such a situation, with an immense fortune in a polished Country can furnish to fight in American wilderness for American Liberty! After this can there be a Tory in the World? He has rank of Major General in the Continental Army & fights without pay. He is thirsty for glory but the Commissioners at Paris wish the General may restrain the ardor of youth and not suffer his exposure but on some signal occasion. He is sensible, polite, and good natured. How this example ought to gall the worthless Nobility & Gentry of England, who meanly creep into the Tyrant's service to destroy that liberty which a generous Frenchman quits every delight to defend through every difficulty!

**Marquis de Lafayette to Adrienne de Noailles de Lafayette, Bethlehem, Pa., 1 October 1777**

Do not be concerned, sweetheart, about the care of my wound. All the physicians in America are paying close attention to me. I have a friend who has spoken to them in such a way that I can be assured of the best care. That friend is General Washington. This estimable man, whom I at first admired for his talents and qualities and whom I have come to venerate as I know him better, has become my intimate friend. His affectionate interest in me soon won my heart. I am a member

of his household and we live together like two brothers in mutual intimacy and confidence. This close friendship makes me as happy as I could possibly be in this country. When he sent his chief surgeon to care for me, he told him to care for me as though I were his son, for he loved me in the same way.

**Henry Laurens to John Lewis Gervais, York, Pa., 8 October 1777**

[Laurens came to assist a wounded Lafayette.] I . . . returned once more into the City [Philadelphia] . . . to take charge of the Marquis delafayette who lay wounded by a ball through his Leg. . . . I had the honor of conducting the Marquis who is possessed of the most excellent funds of good sense & inexhaustible patience to Bethlehem where the Second day after our arrival I left him in Bed anxious for nothing but to be again in our Army as he always calls it.

**George Washington to the President of Congress Henry Laurens, White Marsh, Pa., 1 November 1777\***

I would take the liberty to mention, that I feel myself in a delicate situation with respect to the Marquis La Fayette. He is extremely solicitous of having a Command equal to his rank, & professes very different Ideas as to the purposes of his appointment from those Congress have mentioned to me. He certainly did not understand them. I do not know in what light they will view the matter, but it appears to me, from a consideration of his illustrious and important connections—the attachment which he has manifested to our cause, and the consequences, which his return in disgust might produce, that it will be advisable to gratify him in his wishes—and the more so, as several Gentlemen from France, who came over under some assurances, have gone back disappointed in their expectations. His conduct with respect to them stands in a favorable point of view, having interested himself to remove their uneasiness and urged the impropriety of their making any unfavorable representations upon their arrival at home, and in all his letters has placed our affairs in the best situation he could. Besides, he is sensible—discreet in his manners—has made great proficiency in our Language, and from the disposition he discovered at the Battle of Brandy Wine, possesses a large share of bravery and Military ardor.

\*Same idea repeated in Washington's letter to Laurens on 26 November 1777.

**George Washington to the President of Congress, White Marsh, Pa., 1 November 1777**

He is sensible—discreet in his manners—has made great proficiency in our Language, and from the disposition he discovered at the Battle of Brandy Wine, possesses a large share of bravery and Military ardor.

**Baron de Kalb to Pierre de Saint-Paul, With the American Army, 7 November 1777**

The friendship with which he has honored me since I made his acquaintance, and that which I have vowed to him because of his personal qualities, oblige me to have that deference for him. No one is more deserving than he of the consideration he enjoys here. He is a prodigy for his age; he is the model of valor, intelligence, judgment, good conduct, generosity, and zeal for the cause of liberty for this continent. His wound is healing very well. He has just rejoined the army, so as not to miss any chances for glory and danger.

**William Duer to James Wilson, York, Pa., 30 November 1777**

On Monday the Marquis de la Fayette with about four or five Hundred Men attacked a Picket of the Enemy in Jersey of about 300, drove them, killed Several, and took twenty or thirty Prisoners. It is said he behaved with great Intrepidity; and I believe with some Experience will make a good officer.

**James Lovell to John Adams, York, Pa., 1 December 1777**

We have nothing of much Importance this morning. Fayette being with Genl. Greene in the Jerseys fell upon a Picket of the Enemy, killed 20, took 20 & wounded many without loss. He is delighted with the Militia; and Genl. Greene says the Marquis seems determined to court Danger. I wish more were so determined.

**Marquis de Lafayette to Adrienne de Noailles de Lafayette, Camp near Valley Forge, Pa., 6 January 1778**

If I depart, many Frenchmen who are useful here will follow my example. General Washington will be truly unhappy if I speak to him of leaving. His confidence in me is greater than my age allows me to admit. In his position, he is surrounded by flatterers and secret enemies. He finds in me a trustworthy friend to whom he can open his heart, and who always tells him the truth. Not a day passes that he does not have long conversations with me or write me long letters, and he likes to consult me about the most important matters. At this very moment there is a particular matter in which my presence is of some use to him; this is not the moment to speak of leaving.

**Henry Laurens to Matthew Locke, York, Pa., 25 January 1778**

The Marquis is a most excellent worthy young Noble Man, fighting in our Cause, & using his utmost endeavors to promote our Interest at the Court of France & all without pay or gratuity. He deserves to be considered & respected by every friend to these States.

**Gouverneur Morris to Henry Laurens, Camp, 26 January 1778**

I have taken Occasion to speak to the Marquis de la Fayette upon the Appointment you know of. The Sentiments of his Heart which are fully expressed in a Letter to you do him so much Honor that any Expressions of mine would be impertinent. I am deeply surprized at the mature Judgment & solid Understanding of this Young Man for such he certainly is.

**Marquis de Lafayette to Henry Laurens, Valley Forge, Pa., 27 January 1778**

If I had that gentleman [Louis Duportail] and the most respectable [Alexander] McDougall, I should be very happy. I want, my dear Sir, to have men whom I can extract from, as much prudence and as many years (without any sensible injury to their persons) as I believe there is necessary to fill up in my age, which years I think must have a general to be in his point of perfection—and it is my opinion that even when a man is born with those so superior and uncommon talents for the great art of war, the best age for his generalship, after a continued study and experience is between forty and fifty.

**Nathanael Greene to President Henry Laurens, Valley Forge, Pa., 28 January 1778**

That the Congress should have the power to reward is acknowledged by all, and that great political reasons will justify the introducing Officers in some instances and promoting them in others out of the common line, none can deny. However, Merit and the reasons of State in such cases should be obvious; If they are not, the promotions will be viewed with disgust. Under the above distinction, I am happy to mention the Marquis de la Fayette. This Nobleman's generous disinterested conduct, his sacrifices to our course and his great merit, give him a just claim to an honorable Notice.

**Nathanael Greene to General Alexander McDougall, Valley Forge, Pa., 5 February 1778**

He is a very clever honest fellow.

**Robert Troup to Horatio Gates, Bethlehem, Pa., 6 February 1778**

I left the Marquis at Lancaster. He seems to be strongly tinctured with the Fabian Principles of Head-Quarters.

**Henry Laurens to the Marquis de Lafayette, York, Pa., 4 March 1778**

If ever Man stood on a firm Base, you do My Dear General, you are possessed of what Bacon calls the "vantage ground of Truth"—from whence you may look down upon the Crooked vales & paths below. My hopes are sanguine that from the American patriotism of Marquis delafayette & from his native virtue a power will be raised which will effectually repress the Monster, party, now ravaging the fairest Characters in this Country. God forbid Sir, you should entertain a thought of leaving our United States at this juncture.

"My opinion Dear General of your situation," is, that you are at Albany & often in very good Company, & very far from the inglorious precipice which you seem to suggest. The notoriety of your whole conduct & the Resolves of Congress shield you against every possible unfavorable insinuation. Your Excellency will find that Body, Congress, however it may, by artful Men, be sometimes a little Bamboozled, to consist of honest well disposed minds and if "Wisdom is justified of her Children" I appeal to their Acts in general. Fall the blame of the late abortion where it ought, or where it may, or by good manœuvring on one side & tameness & acquiescence on the other, let a thick veil be drawn over it, not the smallest spark or speck of Censure can possibly light on Marquis delafayette; that General has performed every thing which had been prescribed to him. He has overshot the expectation of some who presumed to believe & assert that he would be deficient in "activity," & the intended expedition "some days advanced before his appearance at Albany"—in a word 'tis but just that I should repeat, your Excellency is spoken of by Members in Congress with Respect & Admiration. The Air around the Marquis is serene & his own Breast tranquil; a Blunder, not his own, has afforded an opportunity for a display of Wisdom which has gained him the confidence of the people, hence my Dear Sir, you will perceive that you may with very great propriety & decency, return to your late Military Post.

**Henry Laurens to the Marquis de Lafayette, York, Pa., 6 March 1778**

Were I to attempt an intimation of the public opinion of Your Excellency, the whole would end in repetition of what is contained in my last. I may nevertheless add by way of anecdote the remark

Founders on the Founders



of a Sensible candid Man, when he had heard your Letter of the 20th Febry read. “I,” said he, “was averse to this Irruption into Canada not because I thought badly of the scheme but because I feared the Marquis being a Young Man full of Fire would have impetuously rushed our Soldiers into too much danger—but his present conduct convinces me he is wise & discreet as well as brave, I now esteem him a worthy valuable Officer.” Once more, be assured you have gained great reputation in this Country & that there is not the Smallest ground for your apprehensions of the contrary.

**Henry Laurens to Marquis de Lafayette, 24 March 1778**

I trust your Excellency will do Congress the Justice to beleive they had never entertained the most remote intention to give you offence. I add & repeat with great pleasure that Your Excellency is held by each Individual in the highest Esteem & the House very much relies upon the greatness of your Mind for security against groundless exceptions to any part of their conduct respecting yourself. These indeed are Sentiments not dictated by Congress, but I know they are warranted.

**Francis Lewis to the New York Convention, York, Pa., 30 March 1778**

The Marquis de la Fayette is in high esteem with the Congress. He appears to be a nobleman, with a high sense of honor, & I hope nothing will be done to give him the least disgust.

**Marquis de Lafayette to L’Abbé Fayon, Valley Forge, Pa., 13 April 1778**

Once I set foot in the American camp, I gave up bookish studies. Forgetting belles-lettres, I attempted to educate myself in a cruel and barbarous art. I am so possessed by the demon of war that I have totally abandoned myself to military occupations. Finally, having renounced the gentle company of women, verse, and the Muses, I now find pleasure in the horrible voluptuousness of Bellona.

**Henry Laurens to the Marquis de Lafayette, York, Pa., 29 May 1778**

I congratulate with your Excellency most heartily on the late honorable Retreat which is spoke of by every body here in the highest terms of applause.

The Marquis delafayette has acquired new Glory by this great Act of Generalship.

**Henry Laurens to Cornelius Harnett, York, Pa., 30 May 1778**

Sir Henry [Clinton] will know every step we take, if he finds we are upon our guard & will not be deceived, he will at least give us Credit for good Generalship, whether he goes or Stays. You have heard, but perhaps crudely, how narrowly Marquis delafayette escaped Burgoyning last Week. the enclosed narrative will inform you circumstantially of almost the whole of his adventure but as it comes from a young man nearly allied to me I request you will not suffer it to be published. The Marquis has gained more applause for his Generalship in the late Retreat than would have been bestowed upon a slight victory.

**Marquis de Lafayette to Adrienne de Noailles de Lafayette, Valley Forge, Pa.,  
16 June 1778**

My heart has always been completely convinced that in serving the cause of humanity and that of America, I was fighting for the interests of France.

**James McHenry: Journal, 25 June 1778**

The Marquis de la Fayette is detached to support Scott with 2000 men—with orders to take command of the whole detached troops.

The young Frenchman in raptures with his command and burning to distinguish himself moves towards the enemy who are in motion.

**Samuel Adams to Samuel P. Savage, Philadelphia, 14 September 1778**

Our Boston Papers never fail to mark all the Movements of Great Men, and to give Honor where Honor is due. The *Spirited Exertions* of our Major Generals to be sure ought to be properly noticed. Some of them have the good Fortune to be never out of the Way of making a Figure, while others are wisely following the unpopular Steps of Fabius or Count Daun. The Marquis, every one acknowledges, made surprising Dispatch in going to Boston and returning to Rhode Island; but he was sadly mortified in not being present in the Action on that Island. He did all that Man could do. Impossibilities are not to be expected. But he arrived in Season to take a distinguished Share in the well timed & well conducted Retreat. In *Him* we indeed see an Instance of a young Nobleman “of Rank & Fortune foregoing the Pleasures and Enjoyment of domestic Life and voluntarily exposing himself to the Hardships & Hazards of a Camp,” not in *his own* but a foreign Country, “in the glorious Cause of Freedom.” His Example must be “animating” to our young American Heroes; and who would not covet to be *coupled* with him? Congress have requested the President to write to him & in their Name acknowledge his Zeal and spirited Services on this Occasion, by which he has given a fresh Proof of his warm Attachment to our Common Cause.

**Marquis de Lafayette to the President of Congress, Camp near Warren, R.I.,  
23 September 1778**

The moment I heard of America, I loved her. The moment I knew she was fighting for freedom, I burnt with the desire of bleeding for her—and the moment I shall be able of serving her in any time or any part of the world, will be among the happiest ones in my life.

**Samuel Adams to Samuel Phillips Savage, Philadelphia, 17 October 1778**

I am sorry that by a Repetition of a theatrical Performance which at least appeared to be done in contempt of the Sense of Congress, another Resolution became necessary. You will see it in the enclosed paper. The young French Marquis has discovered the Dignity of the citizens in the Regard he so readily paid to the Sentiments of those in Civil Authority on this occasion. I hope that other Gentlemen “of the first Rank & Fortune who deny themselves the Pleasures of domestic Life and expose themselves to the Hardships of a Camp in the glorious Cause of Freedom,” show as much good Sense and Attention to the cause of Virtue.

**Richard Henry Lee to Arthur Lee, Philadelphia, 19 October 1778**

Monsieur the Marquis de la Fayette having done me the honor to take a letter for you, I am happy in the opportunity of bringing two men acquainted with each other whom I greatly love. All good men in these United States esteem the Marquis for his brave and generous attachment to the cause of America, and for the services he has here performed as a general in our Army. It is impossible that a person of such worth should not feel the obligation of returning to offer service to his country when engaged in war. Yet the Marquis still continues a Major General in the Army of the United States, and we hope will be permitted by his Sovereign to come back more effectually to our aid, by adopting the plan proposed by Congress, for an account of which I refer you to the Marquis.

**President Henry Laurens to King Louis XVI of France, Philadelphia, 21 October 1778**

The Marquis de la Fayette having obtained our leave to return to his Native Country, we could not suffer him to depart without testifying our deep sense of his Zeal, Courage and attachment.

We have advanced him to the rank of Major General in our Armies, which, as well by his prudent as spirited conduct he hath manifestly merited.

We recommend this young Nobleman to Your Majesty's notice, as one whom we know to be Wise in Council, gallant in the Field and patient under the Hardships of War. His Devotion to his Sovereign hath led him in all things to demean himself as an American, acquiring thereby the confidence of these United States, Your Majesty's good and faithful Friends and Allies, and the Affection of their Citizens.

**Samuel Adams to Samuel Cooper, Philadelphia, 26 October 1778**

The Marquis De la Fayette does me the Honor of taking the Care of this Letter. His disinterested Friendship to Mankind, his particular Attachment to our Country and his Zeal, Activity and Bravery in its Service are so well known to you that I flatter myself I cannot gratify you more than by introducing him to your Acquaintance.

**Richard Henry Lee to Arthur Lee, Philadelphia, 27 October 1778**

The Marquis Fayette left us today for Boston where he is to embark. This letter will follow him with our dispatches. I wish that a true friendship may take place between you and the Marquis, because I discern in this young Nobleman those principles that I think cannot fail to render him a great Man. And his virtue is such as will make him superior to all those mean and selfish considerations which mark too many.

**William Carmichael to Benjamin Franklin, Philadelphia, 30 October 1778**

No one but Himself has known how to reconcile the clashing parties of this Continent to his own views, by this you may judge not only of his amiable character but of his discretion. The resolves of Congress Letters, &c. in his favor will show you their Sense of his merit & I do assure you that the Sentiments of the people at Large & of the army are the Same. These public testimonies being extremely agreeable to him, I hope you will pardon the Liberty I take as his friend, of hinting to you, what a satisfaction it will be to his Noble Family that the Ministry should be acquainted by you rather than any one Else of the opinion entertained of Him here for which reason,

may it not be proper to put the resolves letters &c. &c. into the hands of the ministry instantly on the receipt of them & before the Marquis makes his appearance at Versailles?

I am sure all the consequence he can derive from the influence of his Family or from his own merit will be exerted for our Interests because he thinks them blended with those of his Nation, & I know that Personally he ardently desires to cultivate your friendship & to merit your Esteem.

### **The Comte d'Estaing to Minister of Marine Gabriel de Sartine, At sea, 5 November 1778**

The zeal, valor, wisdom, and very excellent conduct of M. le Marquis de Lafayette have been and will be too useful to the service of the king for me not to have the honor of giving you a particular account of them. I beg you to show it to His Majesty. Upon his arrival, M. de Lafayette joined what is called in America General Washington's "family," that is to say, he was among his close aides-de-camp. He did not leave this excellent American school of moral and military genius until by the blood he shed, the signs of zeal he displayed, the services he rendered, his perfect knowledge of the language, and the gentleness of his character he had won the confidence of the most important members of Congress and the army, as well as the rank of major general, which corresponds to that of *maréchal de camp* in France. Always a steadfast admirer of the American leaders, he proposed his ideas to them only as doubts, insisted only as much as necessary, and sacrificed his views to opinions that are accepted solely on the American continent and that anywhere else would at least be called very false prejudices. Without complaining about it, he saw adopted, under an American's name, something that he is in fact a first principle in the art of war and that had been rejected when he proposed it two months earlier. He was tolerant and overlooked the way he had been ridiculed because of an expedition into Canada. He was concerned only with the general good, with restraining the French, who were almost always all equally discontented, and with creating closer understanding. That is what I have seen and known about him.

It is not, my lord, in the sacrifice of all the pleasures of youth and all his comforts that I find M. le Marquis de Lafayette has acquired the greatest merit. An active life may take the place of balls and spectacles. One becomes accustomed to using a knife and a spoon, doing without napkins, drinking to the health of ten persons with each drop one swallows, quenching one's thirst with grog (a liquor composed of a little bad brandy, water, and sugar), keeping the most somber table in the world, eating nothing more for the next three hours, and drinking from the same enormous goblet from which many have just wet their uninviting lips. But one must also fawn, to the height of insipidity, over every little republican who regards flattery as his sovereign right (this same behavior that our master formerly banished from Versailles), hold command over captains who are not good enough company to be permitted to eat with their general officers (for one must be at least a major to enjoy that prerogative), and have some colonels who are innkeepers at the same time. It is his knowing how to turn all that to advantage, to put it in its place and remain in his own that has most impressed me in the difficulties that M. le Marquis de Lafayette has overcome. As well as he can, he restrains the indiscretions of the Frenchmen in the American army who are not exactly subordinate to him; at the same time he helps them with his credit, his purse, and his table. He adds to all that a national sensibility and a little enthusiasm for the ancient chivalry which seems to me perfectly well suited to the circumstances in which he finds himself.

### **Marquis de LaFayette: Memoirs, 1779**

You ask me when I first longed for glory and liberty; I can recall no time in my life when I did not love stories of glorious deeds, or have dreams of traveling the world in search of fame.

With M. de Lafayette, Mr. Deane sent another detachment, and every day so many foreigners arrived that the Congress no longer listened to any of them. The coldness of the first welcome accorded M. de Lafayette gave it the air of a dismissal. But without being discouraged by the representatives who spoke with him, he entreated them to return to Congress and read aloud the following note: “After the sacrifices I have made, I have the right to exact two favors: one is to serve at my own expense, and the other is to begin to serve as a volunteer.” Such a novel tone caught their attention; they read the dispatches from the envoys, and, in a very flattering resolution, M. de Lafayette was appointed a major general.

**The Marquis de Lafayette to John Jay, St. Jean d’Angely near Rochefort, France,  
13 June 1779**

How happy I shall think Myself whenever a Safe opportunity of writing to Congress will be offered, I Cannot Better any way express But in Reminding them of that unbounded Affection and Gratitude I Shall ever feel for them—So deeply are those sentiments Engrav’d in my heart, that I every day lament upon that distance which Separates me from them, and that never any thing was so warmly and passionately wish’d for, as I desire to Return again to that Country of which I shall ever Consider myself as a Citizen. . . .

The affairs of America I shall ever look upon as My first Business while I am in Europe—any Confidence from the King and ministers any popularity I May have among My Country men, any Mean in My power, shall be to the Best of My skill, and till the end of My life exerted in Behalf of an interest I have so much at heart.

**The Marquis de Lafayette to the Comte de Vergennes, L’Havre, 16 August 1779**

A diplomatic career would please me very much, Monsieur le Comte, if a strong influence, an inexpressible attraction, did not draw me to the military profession. But if by chance I had the means and abilities to serve my country otherwise than with arms in hand, I should believe myself very fortunate in taking advantage of it.

**Benjamin Franklin to the Marquis de Lafayette, Passy, France, 24 August 1779**

The Congress, sensible of your merit towards the United States, but unable adequately to reward it, determined to present you with a sword as a small mark of their grateful acknowledgment. They directed it to be ornamented with suitable devices. Some of the principal actions of the war, in which you distinguished yourself by your bravery and conduct, are therefore represented upon it. These, with a few emblematic figures, all admirably well executed, make its principal value. By the help of the exquisite artists France affords I find it easy to express everything but the sense we have of your worth and our obligations to you; for this, figures and even words, are found insufficient. I therefore only add that, with the most perfect esteem, I have the honor to be, etc.

**John Adams to Elbridge Gerry, Braintree, Mass., 11 September 1779**

On the first Arrival of the Marquis De la Fayette in Paris, I made him a Visit and finding him alone, had two Hours Conversation with him, in which I entered into all these Things, and had the Pleasure to find him well acquainted with our Affairs, and heartily disposed to serve Us. He told me, he would represent every one of my Arguments as from himself to the Ministry, which was

what I desired, because I knew that his Character was so high and he was so beloved at Court, that he would be always there, and constantly in Conversation on our affairs.

### **The Marquis de Lafayette to the President of Congress, L'Havre, 7 October 1779**

As from their Minister in France, any European intelligence will be properly conveyed to Congress, I beg only the leave of paying them a due tribute of my respect and a heartfelt assurance of my unbounded zeal, love, and gratitude. So sensible I am of their goodness towards me, that I flatter myself they will kindly receive this letter from one, who will ever boast in the name of an American soldier, and whose delight has been long ago, in sharing the same fortune as the American people, never to be considered but as a countryman of theirs. . . .

The inestimable sword which Congress have generously added to their so many favors, I have received from their Minister with such honorable devices, as by far exceeds any merit I may ever boast of. This present has been also graced by Mr. Franklin's politeness in offering it, and I could not help repeating again to Congress some assurances of those sentiments which forever will animate my grateful heart.

With the warm feelings of one whose first ambition and delight is to be known in this, and to be called in ages to come A lover of America, who is bound to his Representatives by the most respectful tender attachment and gratitude, and with the highest regard for your Excellency.

### **The Marquis de Lafayette to George Washington, L'Havre, 7 October 1779**

How unhappy I am to find myself so far from you on such an occasion, you will easily conceive. The impression of sorrow such a thought gives me cannot be alleviated but by the sense I have, that the general opinion of the turn warlike operations would take this campaign, the ties of my duty towards my own country where my services had been employed for the expedition against England and the hope I entertained of being here more useful to the United States, had not left me the choice in the part I should take for this campaign. I hope, my dear sir, you will agree in opinion with me. . . . Nothing could make me so delighted as the happiness of finishing the war under your orders. That I think is asked by you will be granted to Congress and Your Excellency. But be certain, my dear general, that in any situation, in any case, let me act as a French or as an American officer, my first wish, my first pleasure will be to serve again with you. However happy I am in France, however well treated by my country and king, I have taken such an habit of being with you, and am tied to you, to America, to my fellow soldiers by such an affection, that the moment where I will sail for your country, shall be one of the most wished for and the happiest in my life.

From an American newspaper I find that a certain English intelligence had been propagated through the United States—that at the head of fifteen hundred officers or non commissioned officers I was going to embark for America, and that with soldiers of your army embodied under them, I wanted to teach military discipline through the *American Army*. However remote I am from thinking of teaching my own masters, and however distant from such views was that command in France whose end you very well know. I could not help taking it as a reflection on *the American Army*. The English troops may remember that on some particular occasions, I have not been to lament the want of discipline and spirit in the troops I had the honor to command. While we have but the same British army to fight with we need not look out for any other improvement, but the same qualities, which have often enabled my fellow American soldier, to give, instead of Receiving, pretty good lessons to an enemy whose justly reputed courage added a new reputation to American bravery and military conduct.

**The Marquis de Lafayette to Benjamin Franklin, L'Havre, 14 October 1779**

I hope that in concert with my heroic friend, he [Admiral d'Estaing] will rather contract the arms of the British tyrant and his faithful incendiary soldiers, so that our people may perhaps be by this time in possession of New York. When I say *ours*, I mean the Americans, and under that same denomination I used in America to mean the French, so that whatever of both countries I am in, I am at once both speaking as a foreigner, and spoken of as a citizen.

**John Adams to Abigail Adams, Paris, 28 February 1780**

If the Marquis should make you a Visit You will treat him with all Distinction that is due to his Merit and Character, as well as his Birth and Rank which are very high.

He has been the invariable and indefatigable Friend of America, in all Times, Places and Occasions, and his Assiduity have done Us much service. He is my particular Friend, and therefore deserves from mine, the greatest Respect, on my private Account as well as on the public.

**John Adams to Henry Knox, Paris, 28 February 1780**

Your Friend the Marquis, with whom I have sometimes had the Honor to drink your Health after that of General Washington, will deliver you this. His Love of Glory is not diminished, nor his affection for America, as you see by his Return. He has been indefatigable in endeavors to promote the Welfare and Comfort of our Army, as well as to support their Honor and Character, and has had success in both.

**John Adams to James Warren, Paris, 28 February 1780**

The Marquis de la Fayette is going to Boston in a Frigate, and surely he wants no Recommendation of mine—his own Merit and his Fame are enough. He has been the same Friend to Us here that he was in America. He has been very assiduous to procure Cloaths and Arms for our Army, and to promote our Interest in every other Way, within his Circle.

**John Adams to James Lovell, Paris, 29 February 1780**

I cannot let the Marquis go off without a Line to you. He took leave of the King a few days ago, in the Uniform of an American Major General, and attracted the Eyes of the whole Court more than ever. He had on no doubt his American Sword\* which is indeed a Beauty, and which he shows with great Pleasure, upon proper Occasions. The workmanship is exquisite, and there are Emblems on it, representing him, in all the most remarkable Situations he has been in America. He goes out in a Frigate of the King the *Hermione* from Rochfort, he carries with him Cloaths enough for the Army to make him welcome to them, if they had not known him before.

\*Congress resolved on October 21, 1778, that Benjamin Franklin should have an elegant sword made and presented to Lafayette. Lafayette received the sword in August 1779.

**Benjamin Franklin to George Washington, Passy, France, 5 March 1780**

I have received but lately the Letter your Excellency did me the honor of writing to me in Recommendation of the Marquis de la Fayette. His modesty detained it long in his own Hands. We became acquainted, however, from the time of his Arrival at Paris; and his Zeal for the Honor

of our Country, his Activity in our Affairs here, and his firm Attachment to our Cause and to you, impressed me with the same Regard and Esteem for him that your Excellency's Letter would have done, had it been immediately delivered to me.

**Samuel A. Otis to Nathanael Greene, Boston, 30 April 1780**

The arrival of the Marquis La Fayette has cheered us in this quarter. If he has any matters particularly in charge, He is as impenetrable as night; at any rate he has no reason to be dissatisfied with his reception here to the Caresses of a grateful people. And I think him deserving the highest marks of respect. He however either has none or will tell no news.

**Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, Boston, 8 May 1780**

But we have yet some virtues among us, and gratitude is none of the least. It was remarkably displayed on the return of the Marquis La Fayette to this place. A general satisfaction was diffused through each countenance, and every expression of respect manifested on his arrival. And while the heroic character of this accomplished young nobleman, engages universal esteem and admiration, his easy manners, his affable demeanor, and his polite address, win him the hearts of all who have the honor of his acquaintance. Yet when I hear him converse, I cannot but waft a sigh across the Atlantic for his most amiable lady, as well as for the many others who by the cruel necessity of the times are obliged to suffer the interruption of domestic felicity.

**Alexander Hamilton to James Duane, Morristown, N.J., 14 May 1780**

The Marquis has a title to all the love of all America; but you know he has a thousand little whims to satisfy—one of these he *will have* me to write to some friend in Congress about. He is desirous of having the Captain of the Frigate in which he came complimented and gives several pretty instances of his punctuality & disinterestedness. He wishes Congress to pass some resolutions of thanks & to recommend him to their Minister in France, to be recommended to the French Court. The first of these is practicable. The last I think might have an officious appearance. The *essential* services the Marquis has rendered America in France give him a claim for all that can be done with propriety; but Congress must not commit themselves.

**Samuel Cooper to John Adams, Boston, 23 May 1780**

The Marquis de la Fayette did me the Honor to deliver me the Letter you kindly wrote by Him. As his arrival diffused a general Joy, every Expression of it was given here that circumstances would allow, and particular Respects were paid by the Government as well as the People at large to this prudent and gallant young Nobleman who keeps the Cause of America so warm at his Heart.

**George Washington to the Comte de Rochambeau, 16 July 1780**

As a General officer I have the greatest confidence in him; as a friend he is perfectly acquainted with my sentiments and opinions; he knows all the circumstances of our army and the country at large; all the information he gives and all the positions he makes, I entreat you will consider as coming from me.



**George Washington to Chevalier de Ternay, 16 July 1780**

The Marquis De la Fayette as a general officer in whom I confide and as a friend from whom I conceal nothing, will be able to give you every information you may wish for the regulation of your conduct and is charged by me to settle with you all arrangements whatsoever relative to the intended cooperation. I entreat you to receive whatever he shall tell you as coming from me.

**Marquis de Lafayette to Alexander Hamilton, Light Camp, N.J., 21 October 1780**

Have you yet any thing new, My dear Sir, any thing that May put me in spirits? You know I am not of a desponding, dark temper.

**Nathanael Greene to Griffin Greene, Camp at Precaness, N.J., 22 October 1780**

All I meant by mentioning the Marquis was, to make use of his interest to obtain goods in France; being persuaded that he would be willing to serve me from motives of friendship; and because I have it in my power to gratify his military pride. He is an exceeding good hearted youth; and highly deserving the love and confidence of America.

**George Washington to Thomas Jefferson, New Windsor, N.Y., 8 December 1780**

I have the honor of introducing to your Excellency the Marquis de la Fayette, Major General in our army and an officer of Rank in those of France. This Gentleman's character, illustrious birth and fortune, cannot be unknown to you, though you may be unacquainted with his person. I should be wanting in that justice which is due his great merit, to his early attachment to the American Cause, and to his powerful support of it here and at the Court of Versailles; was I to permit him to depart for the Southern Army without this testimony of the sense I entertain of his worth, and recommendations of him to your attention.

**Sarah Bache to Benjamin Franklin, Philadelphia, 14 January 1781**

The Marquis de Fayette did us the honor of a Visit when in Town. He is expected here again to stay some time. He is greatly admired and beloved wherever he goes.

**Marquis de Lafayette to the Prince de Poix, New Windsor, N.Y., 30 January 1781**

My situation with the army and the American people is as pleasant as one can possibly imagine. They overwhelm me with kindness here, and the trust and friendship they are so good as to evince for me makes my service here delightful

**John Jay to Benjamin Franklin, Madrid, 21 February 1781**

[In this letter U.S. Minister designate to Spain John Jay describes his relationship with Lafayette in Madrid. Jay's disagreeable situation refers to his desire to have Spain recognize the U.S. and make a loan, but the Spanish court would not even recognize the official existence of Jay himself.]

The marquis repeating his general invitation about this time, I dined with him. He received and entertained me very politely. We parted, to appearances, pleased with each other; but he has not been at my house since, though a great many visits in my debt.

Ever since my arrival, I have been particularly cautious to avoid offending any person of any rank; to endeavor to please all, without becoming the property or sycophant of any. My disagreeable situation was not unknown to him, but the inferences he drew from it proved fallacious. I never find myself less disposed to humility, or improper compliances, than when fortune frowns. I have uniformly been very civil, though not confidential, to the marquis, nor has any thing harsh ever passed between us. He is a man of business, abilities, and observation, and (what is of much importance here) of money. He keeps the most, and indeed only, hospitable house here, and persons of the first rank and fashion are found at his table. His consequence at court is unequal to his desires, and I think to his capacity of being useful. In a word, he has a good share of sagacity, ambition, and pride. I think it probable that we shall yet be on more familiar terms; for though I will never court, I shall with pleasure cultivate, his acquaintance.

**Marquis de Lafayette to Thomas Jefferson, Williamsburg, Va., 16 March 1781**

From an early period, Sir, I had the honor of being admitted into the American Union, when without means, without foreign aid, but with a determination either to conquer or die, our noble contest was carried through to many dangers and difficulties. Long since have I been used to those inconveniences that are so far compensated by the numberless blessings of a popular government. Whenever personal labors, or more difficult ways may conduct to the same purposes of public good, duty as a servant of the public and affection as a lover of America shall ever prompt me to adopt every measure that you may think more suitable to the temper of the people, or the state of our circumstances

**Marquis de Lafayette to Governor Thomas Jefferson, Alexandria, Va., 21 April 1781**

[Lafayette's army needed wagons and horses to fight the British in Virginia. The civilian authorities did not obtain them thus Lafayette would have to use the military to obtain them.] I Request Your Excellency to be convinced that my respect for the rights and conveniences of the citizens cannot be equalled but by my zeal to forward every means of securing their freedom, and that my happiness will be complete if our services may be useful to the State of Virginia.

**Marquis de Lafayette to the President of Congress, Alexandria, Va., 22 April 1781**

Having no hope of relief from any public magazine, and being fully convinced that our absolute want of shoes and linen put it out of our power to proceed, I have borrowed from the merchants at Baltimore a sum that (with the addition of a few shoes purchased here) will amount to about two thousand guineas. For this I became a security and promised it would be returned with the interest in two years time, engaging however to make exertions for an earlier payment.

Should Congress be pleased to leave with me the management of this affair, I will propose that the government of France have this money added to any loan Congress may have procured in that country, and will also endeavor to reduce the debt of Congress to the primitive sum for which these articles have been bought in France.

This measure which want of time obliged me to take upon myself, and which I beg Congress will please to excuse may enable me to furnish every non-commissioned officer and soldier in the detachment with one shirt and one pair of overalls. Some hats and some shoes will also be procured. I am under great obligations to the merchants of Baltimore for their readiness to afford me

their succor, and feel myself particularly indebted to the ladies of that town, who have been pleased to undertake the making up of the shirts for our detachment.

**Nathanael Greene to the Marquis de Lafayette, Camp near Rugeley's Mill, S.C.,  
1 May 1781**

I have only one word of advice to give you (having entire confidence in your ability, zeal and good conduct), that is not to let the love of fame get the better of your prudence and plunge you into a misfortune, in too eager a pursuit after glory. This is the voice of a friend, and not the caution of a General.

**Marquis de Lafayette to Alexander Hamilton, Richmond, Va., 23 May 1781**

I request you will write me if you approve of my conduct. The command of the waters, the superiority in cavalry, and the great disproportion of forces, gave the enemy such advantages that I durst not venture out and listen to my fondness for enterprise. To speak the truth I was afraid of myself as much as of the enemy. Independence\* has rendered me the more cautious, as I know my own warmth; but if the Pennsylvanians come, Lord Cornwallis shall pay some thing for his victory.

\*By "Independence" Lafayette refers to being the commander of all forces in Virginia with no officers above him.

**Marquis de Lafayette to George Washington, 24 May 1781**

Was I to fight a battle I'd be cut to pieces, the militia dispersed, and the arms lost. Was I to decline fighting the country would think herself given up. I am therefore determined to skirmish, but not to engage too far, and particularly to take care against their immense and excellent body of horse whom the militia fears like they would so many wild beasts.

**James McHenry to Nathanael Greene, Head Quarters, 23 miles from Richmond, Va.,  
20 June 1781**

Wayne was impetuous, and the Marquis [de Lafayette] loved glory, but then, he was reasonable, and possessed a prudence which the other thinks he can do without.

**Nathanael Greene to the Marquis de Lafayette, Camp at Bush River in the Neighborhood  
of 96, 23 June 1781**

It was my intention to have come to the Northward with the greater part of our Cavalry if the enemy had not received a reinforcement here which enables them to take the field; and they are increasing their Cavalry by every means in their power and have a greater number than we have, though not of equal goodness. We are trying to increase ours. Enlarge your Cavalry or you are inevitably ruined. Don't pay any regard to the murmurs of the people. They will bless you when they find they derive security from them. Let your Army be as light as possible and have your Stores kept at a great distance that you may not be cramped in your movements. Avoid a general action if possible while the enemy have such a superior Cavalry. A defeat to you in that situation may prove your ruin.

**Marquis de Lafayette to the Vicomte de Noailles, Williamsburg, 9 July 1781**

This devil Cornwallis is much wiser than the other generals with whom I have dealt. He inspires me with a sincere fear, and his name has greatly troubled my sleep. This campaign is a good school for me. God grant that the public does not pay for my lessons.

**William Carmichael to Benjamin Franklin, Madrid, 13 July 1781**

[The Marquis] was well in the middle of May & greatly respected & beloved by his Troops.

**Anthony Wayne to Robert Morris, Williamsburg, 14 September 1781**

The Marquis Lafayette one of the best of Officers and first of men. . . .

**Marquis de Lafayette to Samuel Cooper, Camp near Yorktown, Va., 26 October 1781**

The operations of the siege will be so fully related to you that it is needless for me to enter into details. I shall only observe to my friend that never my feelings have been so delightfully gratified as they were on the 14th in the evening, when the American light infantry in sight of the armies of France, America, and England gallantly stormed a redoubt sword in hand, and proved themselves equal in this business to the grenadiers of the best troops in Europe. I long ago knew what dependence was to be put on them, and was so sure of success, that not a gun had been loaded—but to see this little affair transacted under the eyes of foreign armies, gave me unspeakable satisfaction.

**James Madison to Edmund Pendleton, Philadelphia, 13 November 1781**

Will not the [Virginia] Assembly pay some handsome compliments to the Marquis for his judicious & zealous services whilst the protection of the Country was entrusted to him? His having baffled and finally reduced to the defensive so powerful an army as we now know he had to contend with, and with so disproportionate a force, would have done honor to the most veteran officer and, added to his other merits and services, constitute a claim on their gratitude which I hope will not be unattended to.

**Congress' Report on Lafayette's Return to France, 23 November 1781**

That Major General the Marquis de la Fayette have permission to go to France & that he return at such time as shall be most convenient to him and that he be furnished with the frigate *Alliance* to carry him to France.

That he be informed, that, on a review of his conduct throughout the past campaign, and particularly during the period in which he had the chief command in Virginia, the many new proofs which present themselves of his zealous attachment to the cause he has espoused, & of his judgment, vigilance, gallantry & address in its defense, have greatly added to the high opinion entertained by Congress of his merits & military talents.

That he be requested to make known to the officers & troops whom he commanded during that period, that the brave & enterprising services with which they seconded his zeal and efforts, and which enabled him to defeat the attempts of an enemy far superior in numbers, have been beheld by Congress with particular satisfaction & approbation.

**Richard Bache to Benjamin Franklin, Philadelphia, 27 November 1781**

The Marquis, during his command in Virginia, has shown all the Abilities of a Veteran, he is universally beloved on this side the Atlantic, & we hope to see him again in the Spring, should his Services be wanted in another Campaign—

**Robert Morris to Benjamin Franklin, Office of Finance, 27 November 1781**

The Marquis de la Fayette, who is about to sail for France, will have the Honor to deliver this Letter; and consistently with the Acts of Congress of the twenty third Instant I must request you to communicate it to him, and from Time to Time to take his Aid in the Prosecution of the Business which I must recommend to your particular Attention. The Affairs of my Department are of a Nature not to require Concealment, but even if that were not the Case, I have such perfect Confidence as well in the Prudence of the Marquis as in his Attachment to this Country, that the Acts of Congress out of the question I should feel a pleasure in making him acquainted with my Views and Wishes. Indeed I expect that his Zeal and Activity will go far in smoothing the Way towards the Accomplishment of those Objects which your Excellency will have to solicit.

**Comte de Vergennes to the Marquis de Lafayette, Versailles, 1 December 1781**

It is recognized with pleasure that although you did not have the lead in directing this large operation [the Battle of Yorktown], your prudent conduct and your preliminary maneuvers had prepared the way for its success. I followed you step by step, Monsieur le Marquis, throughout your campaign in Virginia. I would often have trembled for you had I not been reassured by your discretion. It takes great skill to stand up, as you did for such a long time despite the extreme disparity of your forces, to Lord Cornwallis, whose military talents are praised. You are the one who led him to that fatal end at which, instead of allowing him to make you a prisoner of war as he might have planned, you forced him to become a prisoner himself. History offers few examples of such a complete success, but it will be a mistake to believe that this success sets the time for an imminent peace.

**French Minister of War, the Marquis de Ségur to the Marquis de Lafayette, Versailles, c. 5 December 1781**

You have made a most glorious campaign, Monsieur le Marquis. Our old warriors admire you; the young ones want to take you as a model, without, however, your having excited among them the least impulse of jealousy. You add to perfect conduct a modesty that enhances the value of your virtues.

**John Jay to Henry Knox, Madrid, 10 December 1781**

The harmony subsisting between the French troops and ours is an agreeable as well as an important circumstance, and I am glad that the Marquis de Lafayette had an opportunity of cutting some sprigs of laurel on one of the enemy's redoubts [at Yorktown]. He has given strong proofs of attachment to our cause and country, and as military glory seems to be his mistress, he has my best wishes that she may be as constant to him as he has been to us.

**Matthew Ridley: Diary, 1782**

[p. 107] I find the Marquis to be meddling in the Affairs of Peace. He is continually inquisitive as to what is passing wishes to be present at all Mr. Jay's Interviews with those appointed to treat on the part of England wants to know everything passing and as regularly conveys all to Comte de Vergennes and without doubt to the Marquis de Castries as he is his Relation. In short he is a politician who seeks to profit of time and Circumstances in order to advance himself in France. Full of Ambition and not without Intrigue. Feels his consequence and Influence and profits of it to force himself into the knowledge of what relates to us under the character of an American.

**Edmund Randolph to George Washington, Philadelphia, 8 January 1782**

Shall we beg the favor of you to forward the inclosure to the Marquis. Its contents are honorary in a great degree; but I fear, there is something very unusual in presenting a gentleman with a bust of himself.

**William Carmichael to Benjamin Franklin, Madrid, 22 February 1782**

We think differently of French Gallantry in America, I never can think of it without thinking of the Marquis De la Fayette.

**Benjamin Franklin to Robert R. Livingston, Passy, France, 4 March 1782**

The Marquis de la Fayette was at his Return hither received by all Ranks with all possible Distinction. He daily gains in the General Esteem and Affection and promises to be a great Man here. He is warmly attached to our Cause; we are on the most friendly and confidential footing with each other, and he is really very serviceable to me in my Applications for additional Assistance.

**John Jay to Robert R. Livingston, Paris, 28 June 1782**

Agreeably to the desire of Congress, as well as my own wishes, I have had the satisfaction of conferring with the Marquis de Lafayette on several interesting subjects. He is as active in serving us in the cabinet as he has been in the field, and (there being great reason to believe that his talents could be more advantageously employed here than an inactive campaign in America would admit of there) Dr. Franklin and myself think it advisable that he should postpone his return for the present. The Marquis inclines to the same opinion, and, though anxious to join the army, will remain here a little longer.

**Benjamin Franklin to Marquis de Lafayette, Passy, France, 17 September 1782**

In naming your Children I think you do well to begin with the most ancient State.\* And as we cannot have too many of so good a Race I hope you & Madame de la Fayette will go through the Thirteen. . . .

\*Lafayette's second daughter was named "Virginia."

**John Adams: Diary, 23 November 1782**

. . . unlimited ambition will obstruct his rise. He grasps at all civil, political, and military, and would be the *unum necessarium* in every thing. He has had so much real merit, such family supports, and so much favor at court that he need not recur to artifice. . . . He has gained more applause than human nature at 25 can bear. It has enkindled in him an unbridled ambition . . . this mongrel character of French patriot and American patriot cannot exist long.

**John Jay to Marquis de Lafayette, Rouen, 19 January 1783**

Our warmest acknowledgments are due to you for the zeal you manifest to serve America at all times and in all places.

**John Adams to James Warren, Paris, 16 April 1783**

The Marquis de la Fayette is an amiable Nobleman and has great Merit. I enjoy his Friendship and wish a Continuance of it; But I will conceal nothing from you. I see in that Youth the seeds of Mischief to our Country if we do not take Care. He was taken early into our Service and placed in an high Command, in which he has behaved well, but he has gained more applause than human nature at twenty-five can bear. It has enkindled in him an unbounded Ambition which it concerns Us much to watch. . . .

The Marquis may live these fifty years. Ten years may bring him by the order of Succession to the Command of your Army. You have given him a great deal too much of Popularity in our own Country. He is connected with a Family of vast Influence in France. He rises fast in the French Army. He may be soon in the Ministry. This Mongrel Character of French Patriot and American Patriot cannot exist long, and if hereafter it should be seriously the Politicks of the French Court to break our Union, Imagination cannot conceive a more Proper Instrument for the Purpose than the Marquis. He is now very active, everlastingly busy, ardent to distinguish himself every Way, especially to increase his Merit towards America, aiming as I believe at some Employment from Congress. Pains are taken to give him the Credit of every Thing. Believe me it is of infinite Importance that you yourselves and your Servants should have the Reputation of their own Measures and of doing your Service.

**Marquis de Lafayette to George Washington, Nancy, France, 8 September 1783**

As to the American trade, it has been represented that my presence here might serve the United States, and to me, that consideration shall ever be a determining one. I hope My Dear General will approve my conduct, which approbation, I confess, in every instance will ever prove necessary to my happiness and self satisfaction. But I grieve to be so long from you, such a distance, such an interval of time cannot agree with the tender feelings of a heart who had taken the happy habit to live in your family, among my American friends, who, in any part of the world, never felt himself so much at home, as when he was at headquarters. Until I return to America, My dear General, until I see you and our fellow supporters of our noble cause, my mind cannot be properly easy, and every mention, every remembrance of America makes me sigh for the moment when I may enjoy the sight of our free and independent shores.

**Marquis de Lafayette to William Temple Franklin, Paris, 19 November 1783**

The object of my wanting a Declaration of Independence is to have it engraved in golden letters at the most conspicuous part of my cabinet, and when I wish to put myself in spirits, I will look at it, and most voluptuously read it over—So that you will oblige me to procure it for me, printed if you can, in order that a French workman may be less apt to make blunders.\*

\*Lafayette eventually placed his engraved copy of the Declaration of Independence on one side of a double frame, leaving the other side empty. He claimed he was waiting for a parallel declaration of French rights to hand beside it (Lafayette, *Memoires*, 3:197; Gottschalk, *Between*, 53–54.)

**Samuel Osgood to John Adams, Annapolis, Md., 7 December 1783**

The Marquis LaFayette has zealously interested himself in all our important Matters. He assumes the Language of a true born American, & is a very popular Character in the Country. But if I Mistake not he is deeply immersed in European Politicks, which are the worst that can possibly exist for America. When he last left this Country he went with an evident Design to assist our Commissioners in negotiating the Peace. It was pretty plainly intimated that he wish'd to be one of the Number. Had he been added to them, it would not have been more extraordinary, than some other Matters that have taken Place. An Instruction however to you, to consult and advise with him, was carried. I do not apprehend you were much the wiser for the Information you might have obtain'd from that Quarter. Few Americans are worthy to be trusted in some of the most important concerns of the United States—& *not a single Foreigner*.

**Marquis de Lafayette to John Adams, Paris, 8 March 1784**

As to my democratic principles, let it be remembered that at a time when your situation was to the worst and my disobeying this Court might be ruinous, I went over a Volunteer in the cause from which others could not recede unless they were deserters.

**Marquis de Lafayette to George Washington, Paris, 9 March 1784**

You will be my compass, My dear General.

I don't Say that I Have Merit—But I Say I Have Consequences—viz.—Enemies—My Popularity is Great throughout the Kingdom, and in this City—But Amongst the Great folks I Have a large party Against me, Because they are jealous of my Reputation.

**Marquis de Lafayette to John Adams, Paris, 9 April 1784**

As to my going to America, I first went for the Revolution, and not for the war, and warfaring was truly a secondary incident, which in support of the rights of mankind had become necessary. Now I am going for the people, and my motives are, that I love them, and they love me—that my arrival will please them, and that I will be pleased with the sight of those whom I have early joined in our noble and successful cause. I may add, that opinions of honest men, when they have some influence, do more or less prove serviceable—and how could I refrain from visiting a nation whose I am an adoptive son, and where, particularly among your fellow citizens, I have experienced so many marks of affection and confidence.



**Marquis de Lafayette to the Marquise de Lafayette, Mount Vernon, 20 August 1784**

Though I do not know if my letter will reach you, my dear heart, I had to write you that I am at Mount Vernon and that I am reveling in the happiness of finding my dear general again; and you know me too well for me to need to describe to you what I felt. Crossing the countryside very quickly, I arrived here on the seventeenth, and as the general, though he had been anticipating my arrival, did not expect me for several more days, I found him in the routine of his estate, where our meeting was very tender and our satisfaction completely mutual. I am not just turning a phrase when I assure you that in retirement General Washington is even greater than he was during the Revolution. His simplicity is truly sublime, and he is as completely involved with all the details of his lands and house as if he had always lived here. To describe to you the life that we lead here, I shall tell you that after breakfast the general and I chat together for some time. After having thoroughly discussed the past, the present, and the future, he withdraws to take care of his affairs and gives me things to read that have been written during my absence. Then we come down for dinner and find Mrs. Washington with visitors from the neighborhood. The conversation at table turns to the events of the war or to anecdotes that we are fond of recalling. After tea we resume our private conversations and pass the rest of the evening with the family.

**James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 7 September 1784**

At Baltimore I fell in with the Marquis de la Fayette returning from a visit to Mount Vernon. Wherever he passes he receives the most flattering tokens of sincere affection from all ranks.

**Barbé de Marbois: Journal of His Visit to the Territory of the Six Nations, 23 September 1784**

[At the treaty negotiations with the Iroquois.] I except M. le Marquis de Lafayette, however, who seemed to be impervious to heat, cold, drought, humidity, and the inclemency of the seasons. To protect himself against the rain, he had brought along an overcoat of gummed taffeta which had been wrapped in newspapers that had stuck to the gum. There had been no time to pull them off, and the curious could read on his arm or his back the *Courrier de l'Europe* or the news from various places.

**James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 17 October 1784**

The time I have lately passed with the M. has given me a pretty thorough insight into his character. With great natural frankness of temper he unites much address with very considerable talents, a strong thirst of praise and popularity. In his politics he says his three hobby horses are the alliance between France and the United States, the union of the latter and the manumission of the slaves. The two former are the dearer to him as they are connected with his personal glory. The last does him real honor as it is a proof of his humanity. In a word I take him to be as amiable a man as can be imagined and as sincere an American as any Frenchman can be; one whose past services gratitude obliges us to acknowledge, and whose future friendship prudence requires us to cultivate.

**Joseph Barrell to Samuel Blachley Webb, Boston, 21 October 1784**

The Marquis is with us, & has been treated with a friendship *unknown* by the dishonest, & with a Respect that could not be exceeded if he was a Crown'd head, read Adams & Nourse Paper [Boston *Independent Chronicle*] of this day, & depend the description is not in the least exaggerated.

**John Jay to the King of France, Trenton, N.J., 10 December 1784 (draft)**

The Marquis de la Fayette a nobleman, who has ably promoted the Interests of both Countries, and acquired Glory by strenuous & successful Endeavours to advance our mutual Honor, Prosperity, and Confidence.

Permit us to assure your Majesty, that we not only approve, but admire his Conduct—we entertain Esteem & affection for him as a Man, we think highly of his Talents—and are convinced of his Disposition to perpetuate the amity & good understanding which we pray God may ever subsist between France and America—

**Resolution of Congress, Trenton, N.J., 10 December 1784**

Resolved, That the Secretary in the War Office do in the name of the United States in Congress Assembled present to Major General the Marquis de Lafayette a standard of those captured at the surrender of . . . Cornwallis . . . as a testimonial of the high sense Congress entertain of the great bravery and prowess evinced on many occasions by the Marquis and particularly during the siege of Yorktown, by carrying, sword in hand with the American column of troops which he commanded in person [against] one of the enemy's redoubts, completely garrisoned, and in an entire state of Military defense.

**Marquis de Lafayette: Address to Congress, Trenton, N.J., 13 December 1784**

Sir: While it please the United States in Congress so kindly, to receive me, I want words to express the feelings of a heart which delights in their present situation, and the bestowed marks of their esteem.

Since I joined the standard of liberty, to this wished for hour of my personal congratulations, I have seen such glorious deeds performed and virtues displayed by the sons of America, that in the instant of my first concern for them, I had anticipated but a part of the love and regard which devote me to this rising empire.

During our revolution, Sir, I obtained an unlimited indulgent confidence, which I am equally proud and happy to acknowledge; it dates with the time, when, an unexperienced youth, I could only claim my respected friends' paternal adoption. It has been most benevolently continued throughout every circumstance of the cabinet and the field; and in personal friendships, I have often found a support against public difficulties. While on this solemn occasion I mention my obligations to Congress, the states, the people at large, permit me also to remember the dear military companions, to whose services their country is so much indebted.

Having felt both for the timely aid of my country, and for the part she, with a beloved king, acted in the cause of mankind, I enjoy an alliance so well riveted by mutual affection, by interest, and even local situation. Recollection ensures it. Futurity does not but enlarge the prospect; and the private intercourse will every day increase, which independent and advantageous trade cherishes, in proportion as it is well understood.

In unbounded wishes to America, Sir, I am happy to observe the prevailing disposition of the people to strengthen the Confederation, preserve public faith, regulate trade, and in a proper guard over continental magazines and frontier posts, in a general system of militia, in foreseeing attention to the navy, to ensure every kind of safety. May this immense temple of freedom ever stand a lesson to oppressors, an example to the oppressed, a sanctuary for the rights of mankind! and may these happy United States attain that complete splendor and prosperity which will illustrate the blessings of their government, and for ages to come rejoice the departed souls of its founders.

However unwilling to trespass on your time, I must yet present you with grateful thanks for the late favors of Congress, and never can they oblige me so much as when they put it in my power, in every part of the world, to the latest day of my life, to gratify the attachment which will ever rank me among the most zealous and respectful servants of the United States.

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

[On meeting Lafayette at a dinner at Benjamin Franklin's home.] The Marquis de la Fayette I never saw before he appears a little reserved, and very modest.

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

Dined at the Marquis de la Fayette's with a circle of Americans. It was intended as a compliment; but I had rather it had been thought so to introduce us to French company. The fondness that Madame la Marquise discovers for her children in a country where the least trait of such a disposition is scarce known. She seems to adore them, and to live but in them. She has two that were presented to us; they both speak English, and sing it; the Marquis appeared very fond of them likewise. He is apparently a man of great modesty, and delicacy of manners.

**Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, Paris, 18 March 1785**

Your character of the M. Fayette is precisely agreeable to the idea I had formed of him. I take him to be of unmeasured ambition but that the means he uses are virtuous. He is returned [to France from America] fraught with affection to America and disposed to render every possible service.

**John Adams to Elbridge Gerry, Auteuil near Paris, 28 April 1785**

Our Friend the Marquis, whom I love, altho I fear he has, been instrumental of introducing bad Fashions among Us, informs me that Mr. Smith is appointed Secretary of Legation to London.

**Abigail Adams to Mary Smith Cranch, Auteuil near Paris, 8 May 1785**

I shall lose part and the greatest part of American intelligence by quitting France, for no person is so well informed from all the states as the Marquis de la Fayette. He has Established a correspondence in all the states and has the News Papers from every quarter.

**Abigail Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, Auteuil near Paris, 10 May 1785**

The Marquis you know. He is dangerously amiable, sensible, polite, affable insinuating pleasing hospitable indefatigable and ambitious. Let our Country Guard let them watch let them fear his virtues and remember that the summit of perfection is the point of declension.

**John Jay to Marquis de Lafayette, New York, 13 August 1785**

You have my best wishes that the latest historian may say of your descendants that all the men were as valiant and worthy as their ancestor, who will probably be distinguished by the appellation of *Americanus*, and all the women as virtuous and amiable as *his* lady.

**James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Orange, Va., 20 August 1785**

Subsequent to the date of mine in which I gave my idea of Fayette I had further opportunities of penetrating his character. Though his foibles did not disappear all the favorable traits presented themselves in a stronger light. On closer inspection he certainly possesses talents which might figure in any line. If he is ambitious it is rather of the praise which virtue dedicates to merit than of the homage which fears renders to power. His disposition is naturally warm and affectionate and his attachment to the United States unquestionable. Unless I am grossly deceived you will find his zeal sincere & useful whenever it can be employed in behalf of the United States without opposition to the essential interests of France.

**Virginia Act for the Naturalization of the Marquis De La Fayette, October 1785 (passed with opposition)**

Whereas the Marquis De La Fayette is eminently distinguished by early and signal exertions in defense of American liberty: And whereas this illustrious nobleman continues to afford testimonies of increasing affection to this state, and the general assembly being solicitous to bestow the most decisive mark of regard which a republic can give:

Be it enacted, That the Marquis De La Fayette be henceforth deemed and considered a citizen of this state, and that he shall enjoy all the rights, privileges, and immunities, thereunto belonging.

**Marquis de Lafayette to Rabaut de Saint-Etienne, Paris, 20 November 1785**

Although less a soldier, thank God, than a citizen, I have a keen taste for that profession, and for all the means of improving myself in it.

**Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, Paris, 8 February 1786**

I am persuaded that a gift of lands by the state of Virginia to the Marquis de la Fayette would give a good opinion here of our character, and would reflect honor on the Marquis. Nor am I sure that the day will not come when it might be an useful asylum to him. The time of life at which he visited America was too well adapted to receive good & lasting impressions to permit him ever to accommodate himself to the principles of monarchical government; and it will need all his own prudence & that of his friends to make this country a safe residence for him. How glorious, how comfortable in reflection will it be to have prepared a refuge for him in case of a reverse. In the mean time he could settle it with tenants from the freest part of this country, Bretagne. I have never suggested the smallest idea of this kind to him: because the execution of it should convey the first notice. If the state has not a right to give him lands with their own officers, they could buy up at cheap prices the shares of others.

**John Jay to Marquis de Lafayette, New York, 16 June 1786**

I can easily conceive that, at the German courts you visited, you have done us service, because I know how able, as well as how willing, you are to do it. I wish all who speak and write of us were equally well-informed and well-disposed. It is a common remark in this country that wherever you go you do us good. For my part, I give you credit, not merely for doing us good, but also for doing it uniformly, constantly, and upon system.

**Thomas Jefferson to Edward Carrington, Paris, 16 January 1787**

In my letter to Mr. Jay I have mentioned the meeting of the Notables appointed for the 29th inst. It is now put off to the 7th or 8th of next month. This event, which will hardly excite any attention in America, is deemed here the most important one which has taken place in their civil line during the present century. Some promise their country great things from it, some nothing. Our friend de la Fayette was placed on the list originally. Afterwards his name disappeared: but finally was reinstated. This shows that his character here is not considered as an indifferent one; and that it excites agitation. His education in our school has drawn on him a very jealous eye from a court whose principles are the most absolute despotism. But I hope he has nearly passed his crisis. The king, who is a good man, is favorably disposed towards him: and he is supported by powerful family connections, and by the public good will. He is the youngest man of the Notables, except one whose office placed him on the list.

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

The Marquis de Lafayette is a most valuable auxiliary to me. His zeal is unbounded, & his weight with those in power great. His education having been merely military, commerce was an unknown field to him. But his good sense enabling him to comprehend perfectly whatever is explained to him. His agency has been very efficacious. He has a great deal of sounder genius, is well remarked by the king & rising in popularity. He [i.e., the king] has nothing against him but the suspicion [of] republican principles. I think he will one day be of the ministry. His foible is a canine appetite for popularity and fame. But he will get above this.

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

He [George Washington] spoke to me of M. Lafayette with affection. He regards him as his son and foresaw with both joy and anxiety the role he was to play in the forthcoming revolution in France. He could not clearly predict the outcome of this revolution, for on one hand he knew well the ardor of the French and their tendency to resort to extreme measures, but on the other he was also aware of their deep veneration for traditional government and for monarchs, though he regarded the belief in the sacredness of the throne as a bizarre idea.

**Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, Paris, 5 December 1788**

We are greatly indebted to the Marquis de la Fayette for his aid on this as on every occasion. He has paid the closest attention to it and combated for us with the zeal of a native.

**Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*, I, 1791**

M. de la Fayette went to America at an early period of the war, and continued a volunteer in her service to the end. His conduct through the whole of that enterprise is one of the most extraordinary that is to be found in the history of a young man, scarcely then twenty years of age. Situated in a country that was like the lap of sensual pleasure, and with the means of enjoying it, how few there are there to be found who would exchange such a scene for the woods and wilderness of America, and pass the flowery years of youth in unprofitable danger and hardship! But such is the fact. When the war ended, and he was on the point of taking his final departure, he presented himself to Congress, and contemplating, in his affectionate farewell, the revolution he had seen, expressed himself in these words: *“May this great monument, raised to Liberty, serve as a lesson to the oppressor, and an example to the oppressed!”*

The peculiar situation of the then Marquis de la Fayette is another link in the great chain. He served in America as an American officer under a commission of Congress, and by the universality of his acquaintance, was in close friendship with the civil government of America, as well as with the military line. He spoke the language of the country, entered into the discussions on the principles of government, and was always a welcome friend at any election.

**Daniel Carroll to James Madison, 13 January 1793**

In What Situation is the M. La Fayette? I feel strongly for that most worthy & great Man.

**Marquis de Lafayette to Alexander Hamilton, Witmold-Holstein, 12 August 1798**

In the passionate love of liberty which brought me to America there were the proper requisites to espouse her democratic system of republicanism. While I was impressed with the dangers of British royalty and aristocracy, and acknowledged the deficiencies in our first experiments, I lately came to think that the science of social representative organization had not been fairly explored and to wish it might have an universal trial—its first principles, however, were to me indubitable. This fundamental doctrine of the rights of men and citizens, reduced to what I thought necessary and sufficient was proclaimed on the 11th July 1789 in an Assembly surrounded with royal troops, and after the National triumph of the 14th, a civil militia was organized as an over match for the standing armies of Europe. . . .

I most heartily thank you for the warm and affectionate manner in which you express the kind dispositions of America in my behalf and your own feelings on the occasion. I am sensible of my obligations to that Beloved Country the welfare of which I would ever be ready to purchase with the last drop of my blood. I am happy and proud of the sentiments which her virtuous and steady inhabitants have uniformly produced to me—and for my more intimate companions, particularly for you, my dear Hamilton, I hope you know that our former friendship has been in my heart unaltered, and that from the early times which have linked our brotherly union to the last Moment of my life I shall Ever be Your Affectionate Friend.

**Alexander Hamilton to the Marquis de Lafayette, New York, 6 January 1799**

I have been made happy my dear friend by the receipt of your letter of the 12th of August last. No explanation of your political principles was necessary to satisfy me of the perfect consistency and purity of your conduct. The interpretation may always be left to my attachment for you. Whatever difference of opinion may on any occasion exist between us can never lessen my conviction

of the goodness both of your head and heart. . . . Neither I have I abandoned the idea that 'tis most advisable for you to remain in Europe 'till the difference is adjusted [between France and America]. It would be very difficult for you here to steer a course which would not place you in a party and remove you from the broad ground which you now occupy in the hearts of all. It is a favorite point with me that you shall find in the universal regard of this country all the consolations which the loss of your own (for so I consider it) may render requisite.

**John Quincy Adams to William Vans Murray, Berlin, 26 March 1799**

I am glad you have seen La F[ayette], and not surprised that you found him full of the same fanaticism from which he has already suffered so much, a great part of which, however, with him is what it always was, ungovernable ambition in disguise. He is willing to look upon himself as a martyr of liberty, because five years of imprisonment lose almost all their credit and reputation, when they are considered as having been the result of folly or wickedness. There is therefore more address and subtlety in his enthusiasm, than you think. His character, at least as far as judgment combined with honesty is concerned, has long since been irretrievable with thinking men. By recanting he would gain nothing in their opinion, and he would lose most of his personal partisans. I believe he thinks his intentions as good as you allow them to be, but he is a man extremely apt to mistake the operations of his heart as well as those of his head. You will very probably discover before he quits your neighborhood, that he deals largely in a sort of minute intrigue not calculated to inspire confidence.

**Marquis de Lafayette to George Washington, Vianen, The Netherlands, 9 May 1799**

I have from my youth, head, heart, & hand been devoted to American independence and freedom.

**George Washington to Timothy Pickering, Mount Vernon, 3 November 1799**

I have not a doubt of General Lafayette's being *now* on his passage to the United States. I have done every thing in my power to induce him to suspend this determination; by representing the delicate situation in which he would be placed here, and the embarrassment it might occasion. Mr. Murray has enforced my observations with all his might; in vain I believe.

He replies, Poor fellow!—with too much truth I fear!—that there is no asylum for him in Europe. That he is determined (without knowing himself, I conceive) to be perfectly neutral. That his wish is to possess a small farm where he can enjoy ease & quiet. Little believing, although he has been told, that he will be assailed by the opposition party in this Country, and that it is hardly possible for him to avoid taking *a side*, without being suspected by *both sides*. That if he joins the Government party, he must relinquish all hope, & expectation of countenance from his own Country, under its present form; and if he joins the opposition, he will of course be frowned upon by the Government under whose protection he is settling.

**Marquis de Lafayette to Alexander Hamilton, LaGrange, France, 10 February 1801**

I was on the day of my arrival [back into France after his imprisonment in Austria] and am more every day determined for a life of perfect retirement. It has been said I was going to America as an ambassador. My feelings and my habits in the United States I could not well reconcile to the

acting a foreign character, however friendly, nor could I with ease to myself, either within or without put off my American regimentals. I may be a happy visitor, and so I shall one day or another, but am not fit to be an ambassador of one country to the other. I feel it better than it can be expressed.

### **John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 27 March 1806**

When I arrived at Bourdeaux in April 1778 I found an Anecdote in every Man's mouth concerning the Marquis De La Fayette. A Marshall of France had said, when he first heard of the Marquize's Adventure to America "C'est le premier page dans l'histoire, d'un grand-homme." "It is the first page in the history of a great Man."

### **John Adams to Benjamin Rush, September 1807**

Mirabeau said of La Fayette, "Il a affiché désintéressement," and he added, "this never fails." You know the sense of the word "affiché"? It is as much as to say "he advertised" his disinterestedness. that is equivalent to saying that he employed a crier to proclaim through the streets "O Yes! O Yes! O Yes!" All manner of persons may have the benefit of my services, *gratis*, provided always and only that they will yield me their unlimited and unsuspecting confidence and make me commander in chief of five hundred thousand men, and after I shall have gained a few victories, make me a king or an emperor, when I shall take a fancy to be either. This has been the amount and the result of most of the disinterestedness that has been professed in the world. I say most, not all. There are exceptions, and our Washington ought to pass for one. La Fayette imitated his example. So have Jefferson, Hamilton, Governor Strong, Fisher Ames, and many others.

### **John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Quincy, Mass., 13 July 1813**

When LaFayette harangued You and me, and John Quincy Adams, through a whole evening in your Hotel in the Cul de Sac, at Paris; and developed the plans then in Operation to reform France: though I was as silent as you was, I then thought I could say something new to him. In plain Truth I was astonished at the Grossness of his Ignorance of Government and History.

### **John Marshall: Speech Describing Lafayette, Richmond, Va., 27 October 1824**

It is your praise, during this arduous and trying conduct for Virginia, to have so happily tempered the enterprising courage of youth with the caution and prudence which belong to riper years, that you performed every practicable service without sustaining any serious disaster, and preserved your army entire for the great achievement which not only liberated Virginia, but accomplished the independence of the United States.

### **John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Quincy, Mass., 15 November 1824**

You and I have been favored with a visit from our old friend General La Fayette. What a wonderful Man at his Age to undergo the fatigues of such long journeys and constant feasts. I was greatly delighted with the sight of him and the little conversation I had with him.



**President John Quincy Adams: Speech on the Departure of Lafayette, Washington,  
23 February 1825**

We shall look upon you always as belonging to us, during the whole of our life, as belonging to our children after us. You are ours by more than patriotic self-devotion with which you flew to the aid of our fathers at the crisis of our fate; ours by that unshaken gratitude for your services which is a precious portion of our inheritance; ours by that tie of love, stronger than death, which has linked your name for endless ages of time with the name of Washington. . . . Speaking in the name of the whole people of the United States, and at a loss only for language to give utterance to that feeling of attachment with which the heart of the nation beats as the heart of one man, I bid you a reluctant and affectionate farewell.

**Marquis de Lafayette: Response to President Adams's Speech, Washington,  
23 February 1825**

[After a long pause necessary for Lafayette to compose himself, the departing hero responded] God bless you, Sir, and all who surround you. God bless the American people, each of their states and the federal government. Accept this patriotic farewell of a heart that will overflow with gratitude until the moment it ceases to beat.

## Madame Lafayette

**Abigail Adams (Nabby): Journal in France, 28 October 1784**

We came away after dinner and went to pay our respects to madame, the Marquise de la Fayette. We were shown to the ladies in their rooms. Madame, the Marquise, her mother, and youngest sister, were sitting in an unceremonious way with their work, and seemed to be in that social manner that we boast of in America. They seemed to be going out; so we made a short visit. Madame de la Fayette received us very civilly and cordially, with great ease and goodness, and very politely apologized for not waiting upon us first. She speaks English a little. I had always heard she was handsome; I do not think her so; she was not painted, and very little dressed, she is very agreeable and pleasing, as indeed are all the ladies of this country; not equalled by any other I believe.

**Abigail Adams (Nabby): Journal in France, 7 November 1784**

Madame de la Fayette is a fine woman; speaks a little English: perfectly easy in her manners; a little French in some respects; sprightly and very pleasing. As we were sitting round the fire, the door opened, and this lady entered with all the freedom of a familiar friend, how much more agreeable than any other manner possible. The women universally in this country, and the ladies of education in particular, have an ease and softness in their manners, that is not found in any other country perhaps in the world; it is very charming, and were it not for some little exceptions, their manners would I think be perfect. She sat half an hour, and left us much pleased with her.

## John Lamb

### **Richard Montgomery to Philip Schuyler, St. Johns, Canada, 24 November 1775**

[Lamb was] a restless genius [and had] a bad temper. . . . He has been used to haranguing his fellow-citizens in New York, and can not restrain his talent here.

### **Robert R. Livingston to John Jay, Albany, N.Y., 6 December 1775**

Lamb is a good Officer but so extremely turbulent that he excites infinite mischief in the army, a few days ago he promoted a petition & remonstrance upon the subject of some indulgence that was shewn to one or two Officers who had families in Canada & were permitted to visit them on their parole—

### **“New England” to Richard Henry Lee, *Connecticut Courant*, 24 December 1787**

The Collector of Impost for New York, with whom your pamphlets were left to be distributed, acquitted himself of his trust as well as could be expected from a man too violent to be prudent, and too ignorant of the characters he addressed, not to be frequently mistaken.

### **Oliver Wolcott, Jr., to John Adams, Philadelphia, 12 April 1797**

The Secy of the Treasury respectfully reports to the President of the United States. That in the month of September 1796, it was discovered by the Secretary, that important errors existed in the accounts of John Lamb Collector of the Customs for the District of New York, in consequence of which, the Letter dated Sept. 14th. was written from this Department, of which a Copy is herewith transmitted. . . .

The Secty on the ground of facts herein stated, fulfills a painful, but as he conceives an important duty, in reporting, that in his opinion John Lamb Collector for the District of New York, ought to be immediately removed from Office.

### **Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Philadelphia, 1–5 February 1798**

Lamb the Collector [for the Port of New York] was not dismissed from office for his Jacobin sentiments, but for his Peculation, . . . for opposing the Government in its operations.

## John Langdon

### **Marquis de Chastellux: Travels in North-America, in the Years 1780, 1781, and 1782**

After dinner we went to drink tea with Mr. Langdon. He is a handsome man, and of a noble carriage; he has been a member of Congress, and is now one of the first people of the country; his house is elegant and well furnished, and the apartments admirably well wainscoted; he has a good manuscript chart of the harbour of Portsmouth. Mrs. Langdon, his wife, is young, fair, and tolera-

bly handsome; but I conversed less with her than with her husband, in whose favour I was prejudiced, from knowing that he had displayed great courage and patriotism at the time of Burgoyne's expedition. For repairing to the council chamber, of which he was a member, and perceiving that they were about to discuss some affairs of little consequence, he addressed them as follows: "Gentlemen, you may talk as long as you please, but I know that the enemy is on our frontiers, and that I am going to take my pistols, and mount my horse, to combat with my fellow citizens"; the greatest part of the members of the council and assembly followed him, and joined General Gates at Saratoga. As he was marching day and night, reposing himself only in the woods, a negro servant who attended him, says to him, "Master, you are going to fight for Liberty; I should suffer also patiently if I had Liberty to defend." "Don't let that stop you," replied Mr. Langdon, "from this moment you are free." The negro followed him, behaved with courage, and has never quitted him.

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

Mr. Langdon is a Man of considerable fortune, possesses a liberal mind, and a good plain understanding.—about 40 years old.

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

One of the most interesting and most amiable men in the United States; a former governor of New Hampshire and the head of a very powerful party which is opposed to General [John] Sullivan.\* Mr. Langdon made a great fortune in commerce and is the Robert Morris of his state. He likes to spend money and has attached many citizens to him because of his generousities. He was one of the principal members of the Philadelphia Convention but he attended Congress only a few days. Some of his colleagues have offered him the presidency [of Congress]. He didn't want to stay here [in New York City] because he had in mind the governorship of New Hampshire and his commercial affairs don't permit him long absences. He is sincerely attached to France and even predisposed to our customs and manners. To propagate a taste for our furniture, he has imported some very beautiful things from Paris. It is said that he is jealous of his wife, which is rather rare in America. Many French officers have seen to their chagrin that his jealousy was not well-founded.

Mr. Sullivan likes us very much and if he returns to Congress we can be sure to learn all that happens from him. He is only a little indiscreet and he likes to see that men have confidence in him.

\*[Otto's marginal note]: This opposition is only personal and means nothing in political matters. These two antagonists are equally attached to their country, to the Revolution, and to France; but Sullivan is the man of the people and Langdon the protégé of gentlemen. One has the gentlemen of the country for him, the other the merchants. Whatever may be the success of their intrigue, the commonwealth can never destroy it and the principles of government will rest with them. In Society, Mr. Langdon far outweighs his adversary. But it is necessary to see Sullivan as a lawyer and as the head of the militia.

### **Eleazer Russell to John Langdon, 30 March 1789**

I'm happy in thinking your fortitude is great, and your nerves Solid.

**Hopley Yeaton to John Langdon, Portsmouth, N.H., 3 April 1790**

[Saddened that Langdon will retire from Congress because it needs men like Langdon who] Know what is Right or Rong.

**William Plumer to Jeremiah Smith, New York, 10 January 1795**

Woodbury Langdon's\* abilities and integrity are certainly far superior to John's. In point of talents, few men in the state are superior to the former, but many are to the latter.

\*John and Woodbury Langdon were brothers.

**Aaron Burr to Henry Tazwell, New York, 3 September 1795**

I have been eastward as far as Portsmouth, where I saw Langdon. He is the happiest man alive— That state is said to be as unanimous as your's in hostility to the [Jay] Treaty.

**John Adams to William Cranch, Stoneyfield (i.e., Quincy, Mass.), 29 June 1801**

I thank you for your favour of the 13th. If it be true, or has not only whispered but confidently asserted for many years that the Jacobins first perverted Langdon, by holding out to him the temptation of the V. P. The least they could do in honor, after cheating him of that promotion, destroying his character, and passing him through Purgatory for 5 years, was to make him Secy. of Navy. His fitness for that office or any other I leave. His appointment will not diffuse much influence in N England.

**William Plumer: Memoradum, 25 June 1805**

Gov. Langdon's speech to the Legislature is really a very empty vapid thing. In vain you look for sentiment, nervous\* style or well turned periods.—He is really a man of feeble mind—but has long been in the habit of vociferating the *majesty of the people*.

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

**Salma Hale to Arthur Livermore, Richmond, Va., 16 May 1818**

Of Gov. [John] Langdon, he [i.e., Jefferson] spoke with great respect, but regretted that in his old age he had become gloomy and unhappy.

**Mark Langdon Hill to Thomas Jefferson, Washington, 17 April 1820**

There never has been any biographical sketch of Mr Langdon, which has been attributable, in part, to the want of materials, or a particular knowledge of the most important transactions of his congressional life.

Altho it is not to be pretended, that he possessed very great & splendid talents, yet he was a very influential, popular & useful man in that section of the Union where he resided, in maturing and establishing the Independence of the Country & aiding in the subsequent administration of the government. And Dear Sir, as it is in your power, more than any other man living, should it consist with your leisure (I know it will with your inclination) to furnish a few facts, and prepare a short

biographical outline, suitable for the occasion, it would gratify not only his immediate connexions, but also his political friends generally, by whom you know he was highly regarded.

Altho some time has elapsed since the death of Gov. Langdon, yet I recollect your elegant illusion “that all is not lost which is deferred,”\* and am of opinion, that a modest & just tribute to his memory would be laudable & useful.

\*Jefferson had used this French proverb in his 5 April letter to Hill, referring to Hill’s recent inability to visit Monticello.

### **James Madison to Mark Langdon Hill, post-17 April 1820**

I was myself, intimately acquainted with yr. Uncle, and cheerfully concur in all the praise Mr. J[efferson] bestows on him. He was a true patriot, & a good man, with a noble way of thinking and a frankness & warmth of heart, that made his friends love him much as it did me in a high degree, & disarmed his enemies of some of the asperity indulged towards others.

## **Woodbury Langdon**

### **William Plumer to John Hale, Londonderry, N.H., 22 October 1786**

In the commencement of the revolution your friend, Woodbury Langdon, Esq. was a tory. He was one of the five who signed the protest against the war. In 1775 he embarked for England, and was often closeted by the British Minister. On his return to New York he was well accommodated in a British frigate. At New York the British imprisoned him; but it is now understood that it was done to produce an opinion here that he was friendly to our revolution. His principles are formed by his interest, and his conduct has changed with the times. He has been both Whig and tory. When he became a Whig, he inveighed with bitterness against the tories. He is certainly a man of strong mental powers, of a clear discriminating mind. Is naturally arbitrary, and has strong prejudices. His sense of what is right and his pride form a greater security for his good behavior than his love of virtue.

## **John Lansing, Jr.**

### **Alexander Hamilton to Robert Morris, Albany, N.Y., 13 August 1782**

Lansing is a good young fellow and a good practitioner of the law, but his friends mistook his talents when they made him a statesman. He thinks two pence an ounce upon plate a *monstrous tax*. The county of Albany is not of my opinion concerning him.

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

Mr. Lansing is a practising Attorney at Albany, and Mayor of that corporation.—He has a hesitation in his speech, that will prevent his being an Orator of any eminence;—his legal knowledge

I am told is not extensive, nor his education a good one. He is however a Man of good sense, plain in his manners, and sincere in his friendships. He is about 32 Years of age.

**“Extract of a letter from a Gentleman at Poughkeepsie,” *New York Daily Advertiser*, 28 June 1788**

[In the New York ratifying convention, Lansing] . . . was miserable, wretched and deformed in every public feature.

**“A Friend to Candor and Decency,” *New York Daily Advertiser*, 1 July 1788**

It is readily admitted, that Mr. Lansing is not as great a speaker as the Chancellor [Robert R. Livingston]; but, I believe it will be acknowledged by all, or the greater part of the persons then present, that his arguments were not destitute of ingenuity and good sense; and altho’ they might not have met the approbation of *some* of his auditors, yet he by no means deserved the epithets given him, of being “*miserably wretched and deformed in every public feature.*”

**“Extract of a Letter from a Correspondent,” *Maryland Journal*, 12 September 1788**

I have, at last, seen what Mr. Lansing, of New-York government, calls his amendments to the constitution.

A person of slender talents and narrow capacity, is generally full of himself. Mr. Lansing has launched into an ocean, with which he was unacquainted, without quadrant or compass; and has adopted a latitude and variation, so the consequence of which he seems to be an entire stranger. . . .

It appears, upon the whole, that Mr. Lansing might have improved himself by staying a month or six weeks longer in the Federal Convention, which he left so abruptly.

**Robert Troup to Rufus King, New York, 6 June 1802**

Our new Chancellor is attentive and honest, but his mind is narrow and piddling; and he is utterly destitute of those liberal and comprehensive views, which are suited to the Court over which he presides.

**Alexander Hamilton: Speech at a Meeting of Federalists, Albany, N.Y., 10 February 1804**

If Lansing is Governor his personal character affords some security against pernicious extremes, and at the same time renders it morally certain, that the democratic party already much divided and weakened will molder and break asunder more and more. This is certainly a state of things favorable to the future ascendancy of the wise and good.

**Alexander Hamilton to Robert G. Harper, Albany, N.Y., 19 February 1804**

One consequence of the distraction of the party is the declining of Governor Clinton to be candidate [for governor] at the next election. A very respectable man as to private character, Chancellor Lansing, is the substitute. He had secretly many competitors and is far from being a general favorite of the party. From this moment, it is destined to be split into fragments, unless hereafter reunited under the more skillful and able lead of Mr. Burr.

**Robert Troup to Rufus King, Albany, N.Y., 15 April 1807**

The truth is that Clinton originally debauched Lansing, and drew him when he was a warm partisan from the party he was attached to and put him in the opposite ranks. Ever since which Clinton has promised him and given him a currency to office & importance, which his slender abilities never entitled him to.

## John Laurance

**Alexander Hamilton to Robert Morris, Albany, N.Y., 13 August 1782**

Laurance is a man of good sense and good intentions—has just views of public affairs—is active and accurate in business. He is from conviction an advocate for strengthening the Federal government and for reforming the vices of our interior administration.

## Henry Laurens

**William Manning to Henry Laurens, London, 4 October 1775**

I still think if the Gentlemen of the several Congress's were blessed with your moderation, prudence, & real love for your Country, an accommodation might be firmly concluded this winter.

**John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 17 August 1777**

We have many new Members of Congress, among whom are . . . Mr. Lawrence of S. Carolina. This last Gentleman is a great acquisition—of the first Rank in his State, Lt. Governor, of ample Fortune, of great Experience, having been 20 Years in their assembly, of a clear Head and a firm Temper, of extensive Knowledge, and much Travel. He has hitherto appeared as good a Member, as any We ever had in Congress. I wish that all the States would imitate this Example and send their best Men.

**John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 19 August 1777**

I feel a strong Affection for S. Carolina, for several Reasons. 1. I think them as staunch Patriots as any in America. 2. I think them as brave. 3. They are the only People in America, who have maintained a Post and defended a Fort. 4. They have sent Us a new Delegate, whom I greatly admire. Mr. Lawrence, their Lt. Governor, a Gentleman of great Fortune, great Abilities, Modesty and Integrity—and great Experience too. If all the States would send Us such Men, it would be a Pleasure to be here.

**Daniel Roberdeau to Timothy Matlock, York, Pa., 1 November 1777**

Henry Laurens Vice President of So. Carolina a worthy, sensible, indefatigable Gentleman was this day chosen by a unanimous vote, except his own, President of Congress.

**James Lovell to William Whipple, York, Pa., 3 November 1777**

Our late President has left us, and Col. Laurens of South Carolina is chosen to succeed. He is a very good man both for order and dispatch, a gentleman of fortune and known in Europe, having travelled as well as traded largely.

**Henry Laurens to George Washington, York, Pa., 13 November 1777**

I return the most Sincere thanks for your Excellency's polite compliments on my appointment to the Chair in Congress, a determination equally unthought of & undesired by me, former experiments had instructed me to know & to wish to shun the labour & variety of trouble attendant upon a faithful discharge of the Duty of president. While I continue in that Office & enjoy the honour of your Excellency's correspondence & confidence, it will be impossible for me to be wittingly deficient in any mark of Esteem for a Character, which, after holding near twenty Years in a respectable light, I have learnt to revere. Let me also assure your Excellency, there are no incentives which could prevail on me to Spend another day of the fragment of my Life in this or any public station, but the Love of Country.

**Henry Laurens to John Lewis Gervais, York, Pa., 30 December 1777**

I am now sitting both feet & Legs bound up in a Basket in the room where Congress meets—between the adjournment at 1/2 past one o'clock & meeting hour at 3—& where a scrap of somewhat will be sent for my repast to serve till tomorrow's breakfast. Perhaps two, it may be three, hours after dark I may be permitted to hobble on my Crutches over Ice & frozen Snow or to be carried to such a homely home as I have, where I must set in Bed one or two or three hours longer at the writing Table, pass the remainder of a tedious night in pain & some anxiety. I hear you reply—why faith if I was you I would resign the presidentship. Believe me my dear Sir that was my solid determination on the 2d or 3d day after my present troublesome companion had taken possession of me, when by reflective comparison with former attacks & making a proper allowance for the rigor of this Climate I foresaw a continuance of pain & Crippleism for many Weeks. I then dictated a Letter to be written to Congress expressing my apprehensions & earnestly entreating an acceptance of my resignation, an answer was returned by a Member, that Congress were not disposed to grant my request but would in preference to appointing a new President, address the Chair & Secretary during my unavoidable absence, this seemed & indeed was very kind & a little flattering—a Compliment which laid claim to my gratitude. I summoned patience & fortitude to my Aid, I adopted every measure I could think of in order to restore me to strength & abstained from every thing, except hard work, that could have the smallest tendency to impede my recovery—writing in Bed, & especially one particular Night's discipline when I kept the Pen in hand till one in the Morning & resumed it again before five, shook me. However on Christmas day I found myself so far relieved from severe pain as to encourage hopes that three or four days indulgence would produce a little Strength in my Ankles, but late that Evening & again very early next Morning I received visits from a Zealous Member of Congress pressing me if possible by any means to attend the House the 26th adding the request was made by desire of many Members not so immediately to the President as to a Member who solely represented a State, intimating that the business which I had set or encouraged to set in motion of the highest importance was to be agitated that it ought to be treated with the greatest solemnity in a full Representation. This address to a State, made an impression which would not have been felt, if it had been directed to the president. I knew the business, it had been the subject of my meditation & contemplation through Several painful &



sleepless nights & Days. Believe me my dear friend I have been obliged to pause here a minute to wipe away a falling tear which in my present low & weak state of bodily health, rose irresistibly with my reflections upon the great affair which I allude to, & to which my duty has already required me to affix my signature, a signature which will probably be brought before the Tribunal of the whole Civilized World. Possibly I may find my self at liberty to be more explicit to His Excellency the President—but to return—the Summons animated my Soul, which is more vigorous in my present condition, than the Body. “South Carolina shall not be quite unrepresented, I will be carried into Congress.” I was *carried*, two whole days trenching deep upon each Night were passed in a Committee of the whole, late last Saturday Night the business was so far matured as to enable me to dispatch a special Messenger immediately to Major General Heath of Boston. These exertions have thrown me back I cannot tell how far, but I am in a condition which would meet more compassion were you present from you than it seems to do from myself. I attend Congress from the motive promised & while I can bear to be carried & to sit here, my State shall not be totally Absent. The great business is not yet completed on our part, God only knows what will be the final end of it. . . .

There are other matters of very momentous concern on the tapis which duty requires me to attend to, without regarding my own Ease & being here since 'tis the desire of Congress, I may as well sit president as any Character. A good Seat near a warm fire must compensate for additional labour!—But there is my morsel.

#### **Henry Laurens to William Livingston, York, Pa., 27 January 1778**

But alas Sir, what have I, who am neither a Scholar nor a Wit, to return in Exchange for your polite correspondence, call me one Step beyond the composition of a plain Letter of business, & I am gravelled. If after this frank & laconic declaration your Excellency shall be pleased to take me as I am, & to confirm the late proposition, you will find me faithful, ready to embrace occasions for evidencing an Esteem which I had entertained for your Character, long before the adventitious circumstance of Official addresses had drawn me into Your Excellency's view.

#### **Henry Laurens to the Marquis de Lafayette, York, Pa., 28 January 1778**

As I do most sedulously avoid even the appearance of being a party Man, Your Excellency will the more readily excuse me for Speaking only in general terms. I think I can discern on which side Virtue & honour predominate as well as that where Craft & design are lurking under specious guise when perhaps the party themselves are blinded by prejudice & not sensible of their own errors, & as I judge charitably I would endeavour to act circumspectly even with such Characters, who divested of the spirit of party may be valuable Men in community.

#### **Josiah Bartlett to William Whipple, York, Pa., 20 June 1778**

The Congress is at this time pretty full. I know not whether you are acquainted with the President, Mr Laurens; I think him a very sensible, judicious man, acquainted with the world and makes an excellent President.

#### **Henry Laurens to Samuel Huntington, Philadelphia, 11 December 1778**

I am now relieved from all duties of that multiplicity of business to which you allude; I had never any ambition to sit in the Chair of Congress & when I had sat one complete year in it, I urged

Founders on the Founders

the House to make a better choice for filling it. The unanimous voice of the Members then present requesting me to continue, added to another circumstance, overbalanced my determination to retire & rendered it necessary that I should bear a little while longer a painful preeminence; but the conduct of the House under the overbearing influence of a few Members who act in my opinion as excellent part for the benefit of our Enemies, obliged me to resign on the 9th Instant. I must have been void of all feelings for the honor & dignity of the United States of America as well as for my own if I had not shown such resentment for the Insults offered to the former, & there were no other means in my power but resignation. I shall read to Capt. Hubbard the reasons which were assigned by me, previous to the final Act & if after a few days consideration it shall not appear to be improper I will do myself the honor of sending you a Copy.

**William Whipple to Josiah Bartlett, Philadelphia, 14 December 1778**

Since you left Congress Messrs. Jay & Duane have taken their seats. The first mentioned Gentleman was last Thursday put into the Chair on the resignation of that very worthy Gentleman you left in it. I have so high an opinion of Mr. Laurens that I must confess I exceedingly regretted his leaving the Chair. However, I hope it is again well filled.

**Francis Lightfoot Lee to Richard Henry Lee, Philadelphia, 15 December 1778**

The enclosed Letter from Mr. Laurence, will give you an Account of his resignation & his reasons. He is really an honest Man, & I hope will do a great deal of Good. Jay is President.

**William Whipple to Joseph Whipple, Philadelphia, 19 January 1779**

The late President is really as good a man as I ever knew. He Resigned the Chair on Republican Principles having set in it more than a Year. The Chair is now exceedingly well filled.

**Whitmell Hill to Thomas Burke, Philadelphia, c. 7 June 1779**

[In censuring Laurens for having a letter he wrote captured and published by the British in New York City.] Why did not Congress press Lawrence for his Copy of the Letter that he might be a little disgraced; but why do I mention Disgrace? Is he not callous to any sense of Shame? I think his Character much more pitiable than any other in Congress; as for Adams and Lee, they have Designs & great Objects in view, but our Southern Champion is duped by their Flattery, an Artillery which he cannot oppose.

**James Lovell to John Adams, Philadelphia, 13 June 1779**

The eastern States are charged with wanting what they have no right to, and what is of “no interest to the southern States.” Plenty are these local sentiments lately; and R. H. Lee, with H. Laurens, are squinted at as two monsters on the other side of the Susquehanna who pursue points in which the southern States have *no* interest.

**John Adams to Edmund Jennings, Amsterdam, 23 October 1780**

The Treatment of Mr. Laurens will have a deep Effect upon the American Mind. He is very dear to all honest Americans. His ill Treatment will be considered as a studied Insult, to all America: it will be considered as it is intended, as a glaring proof in the Sight of all the World, of their Contempt and Hatred of all America, and of their determination to pursue Hostilities to the Last Extremity.

**Arthur Lee: Speech in Congress, Philadelphia, 19 September 1782**

That it was known Mr Laurens was a man of sense, of firmness & of integrity.

**John Adams: Diary, 23 November 1782**

. . . unlimited ambition will obstruct his rise. He grasps at all civil, political, and military, and would be the *unum necessarium* in every thing. He has had so much real merit, such family supports, and so much favor at court that he need not recur to artifice. . . . He has gained more applause than human nature at 25 can bear. It has enkindled in him an unbridled ambition . . . this mongrel character of French patriot and American patriot cannot exist long.

**John Adams to Martha Laurens, Amsterdam, 1 December 1781**

I had the Honour to serve in Congress, with your Father and for his Abilities, his attachment to his Country, and his inviolable Integrity, and numerous other Virtues I conceived an Esteem for him which will never be obliterated.

**Edmund Jennings to John Adams, Brussels, 24 December 1781**

My Friend has a Communication with our Excellent Countryman, and has imparted to me what He said to the Governor of the Tower, videt.

“When I was in prosperity I thought myself and was generally esteemed an honest Man. Adversity hath discovered to me a Secret. I am very proud. I Hope however my pride is Laudable and becoming. I am too honest to borrow and too proud to beg.”

**John Adams to Edmund Jennings, Amsterdam, 26 December 1781**

Laurens has most certainly an honest soul.

**Edmund Burke to Benjamin Franklin, London, 28 February 1782**

As Mr. Laurens is released from his confinement, and has recovered his health tolerably, he may wait, I hope, without a great deal of inconvenience, for the final adjustment of his troublesome business. He is an exceedingly agreeable and honorable man. I am much obliged to you for the honor of his acquaintance.

**John Adams to Edmund Jennings, 7 June 1782**

From the first day of my acquaintance with Mr. Laurens to this moment, I know not that I ever Said a disrespectful or unkind Word concerning him, or entertained an unkind or disrespectful

Thought. I have ever found him and ever represented him as a Man of Honour, Candour, Integrity and abilities, of great publick and private Merit.

**John Adams to Benjamin Franklin, The Hague, 13 June 1782**

Mr. Laurens, did me the Honour of a very short Visit, in his Way to France, but I was very Sorry to learn from him, that in a Letter to your Excellency he had declined Serving in the Commission for Peace. I had vast Pleasure in his Conversation, for I found him possessed of the most exact Judgment respecting our Ennemies, and of the Same noble Sentiments in all things, which I Saw in him, in Congress.

**John Adams to Henry Laurens, Paris, 6 November 1782**

I know not how to mention, the melancholly Intelligence by this Vessell, which affects you so tenderly.—I feel for you, more than I can or ought to express.—Our Country has lost its most promising Character, in a manner however, that was worthy of her Cause.—I can Say nothing more to you, but that you have much greater Reason to Say in this Case, as a Duke of Ormond said of an Earl of Ossory. “I would not exchange my son for any living Son in the World.”

**John Thaxter to Abigail Adams, Paris, 27 November 1782**

Mr. Laurens was much hurt at the Death of his Son—but bears it heroically. “The Wound is deep, says he, but I thank God I had a Son, who dared to die for his Country.” There is something magnanimous and noble in this Sentiment. He could not have expressed more affection to his Son and more Attachment to his Country more feelingly. God bless the old Hero.

**Henry Laurens to John Lewis Gervais, Paris, 14 December 1782**

I must in that Month or earlier if possible return to Bath and recover in strength what I have lost by coming here in obedience to the injunction of Congress, otherwise I shall soon die or be a poor lame old Man all my few remaining days. The gout has left me except now and then a slight stroke, but it had left me in an exceeding weak state of knees and ancles. Bath waters had brought me up so well, that on a certain day in November I was able without much fatigue or much interval of rest, to walk upwards of five Miles—the disuse of those waters and the Effect of violent Journey day and night to this place have thrown me back, tis with the utmost difficulty I go up and down stairs and get in and out of a Carriage—I wholly refrain from the use of Wine and spiritous Liquors, in my diet am abstentious and go to Bed every night about 9 oClock, but can’t yet leave off the trick of early rising.

**John Adams to Robert R. Livingston, Paris, 23 January 1783**

Mr. Laurens has been here, and has behaved with great Caution, Firmness & Wisdom. He arrived so late, as only to attend the two last days of the Conferences, the 29th & 30: November—But, for the short time he was with us, he was of great service to the Cause—He has done great Service to America, in England where his Conversation has been such, as the purest & firmest American would wish it, and has made many Converts. He has gone again to Bath, and his Journey will do as much good to his Country, as to his health.—He will return to the Signature of the Definitive Treaty.—

**Henry Laurens to Alexander Hamilton, Charleston, S.C., 19 April 1785**

Our dear friend [John Laurens, Henry's son] and his father entertained but one opinion respecting Slavery, excepting that his generous Soul would have precipitated a Work, which to make it glorious his father thought he saw could only be accomplished by gradual Steps. Haste would make havoc. Could I but prevail upon my fellow Citizens to prohibit further importations, I should deem it progress equal to carrying all the outworks; my attempts hitherto have been fruitless, I have some ground for believing offensive; speaking generally a whole Country is opposed to me, pressing the Business which We had in view would not forward it, nor afford happiness even to the Negroes, witness Frederick's Case. I am acting therefore agreeable to the dictates of my Conscience and the best lights of my understanding. Some of my Negroes to whom I have offered freedom have declined the Bounty, they will live with me, to some of them I already allow Wages, to all of them every proper indulgence, I will venture to say the whole are in more comfortable circumstances than any equal number of Peasantry in Europe, there is not a Beggar among them nor one unprovided with food, raiment & good Lodging, they also enjoy property; the Lash is forbidden; they all understand this declaration as a Substitute—"If you deserve whipping I shall conclude you don't love me & will sell you, otherwise I will never sell one of you, nor will I ever buy another Negro, unless it shall be to gratify a good Man who may want a Wife."

You may remember George in Philadelphia, I had given him absolute freedom before I went last to Europe, he embarked with me, but returned long before I came home, is now about my house and says he does not want to be more free than he is. Yet I believe no man gets more work from his Negroes than I do, at the same time they are my Watchmen and my friends; never was an absolute Monarch more happy in his Subjects than at the present time I am, how long this will continue is uncertain, but I will endeavor to do right today.

I think I see the rising gradations to unlimited freedom and view the prospect with pleasure. When We shall be wise enough to stop importation, such happy Families will become more general and time will work manumission or a state equal to it. Policy and Decency will dictate proper reservation; We shall then insure good Servants, good Soldiers, our Strength in time of Need; at present the Number of wretched Slaves, precarious Riches, is our greatest Weakness Massachusetts but alas! these Southern States are not at this moment in a disposition to be persuaded though one should rise from the dead—God forbid our conversion by too long a Delay, shall be the Effect of a direful Struggle. . . .

My heal is somewhat mended since my arrival in Carolina, but a constitution broken down by Long & close confinement of an aged Man, cannot be recovered by increasing Age—for happiness, since receiving the Wound to which We have alluded, ever green, I have learned to be at least half happy by a quiet submission in every Event; comparatively I am very happy, my landed property remain & I am not in debt.

## John Laurens

**Henry Laurens to John Laurens, York, Pa., 8 October 1777**

While I was waiting in humble submission to the Will of the Almighty disposer of all events, having heard of death & Wounds fated to our late freind White & other brave Officers in the battle of German Town, inclined rather to indulge a suspicion that with respect to you an ill judged

tenderness had tongue tied all my freinds, your Letter of the 5th came in. The well known inscription instantly dissipated every gloomy Idea, but a sudden revulsion of joy which as instantly followed cost me a Tear & brought such a fit of trembling upon my whole [— —] probably I should [— —] much worse news. Accept O God my [humble thanks?].

I congratulate with my Country upon the good conduct & safety of another Citizen who has dared to risque his Life in her Cause—I congratulate with you my Dear Son, with my Daughter, with all our freinds upon your happy escape. My own duty commands my presence upon this spot, if I were free, I would at all hazards lame & incapable as I am of alert travelling fly to assist as your Nurse until you should be able to take the field again. At this distance I can only help you with prayers & good wishes & thank you for the honour you have done me

No Man can doubt of your bravery, your own good sense will point out the distinction between Courage & temerity nor need I tell you that it is as much your duty to preserve your own health & strength as it is to destroy an Enemy.

### **William Henry Drayton to John Laurens, Philadelphia, 7 September 1778**

I most affectionately congratulate you upon the glory you have gained in the late action on Rhode Island, & upon your having continued safe in the midst of so many balls & dangers. Your post was in the most important, most honourable & most perilous quarter. We had received a copy of Gen. Sullivan's letter to Gen. Washington. Your Father had received a letter from the Marquis la Fayette. Three days passed & not a word from or of you after the action. A report prevailed that you had fallen. And it had weight from the above circumstances. However, yesterday Major. Morris arrived with the desired account & relieved us from our anxiety: & I felt particularly happy on the occasion, as well upon your Father's as your account.

A Man who is ever vigilant to discharge his duty to his country, is pleased to have objects pointed out. Give me leave to point one. The public is fully convinced that in you they possess a most valuable officer, & upon this point great hopes are established. It is your duty then in action to take some care of such an officer, & not unnecessarily expose those hopes to a blasting shower of balls.

### **Alexander Hamilton to John Jay, Middlebrook, N.J., 14 March 1779**

Mr. Laurens. He has all the zeal, intelligence, enterprise, and every other qualification requisite to succeed in such an undertaking.\*

\*The "undertaking" was Laurens' proposal to arm slaves and form them into a regiment to fight the British.

### **Comte de Vergennes to Chevalier de la Luzerne, Versailles, 11 May 1781**

This officer, little familiar with our usages and with the attentions that are due to the ministers of a great power, has formulated many demands not only with importunate entreaties, but even by employing menace.

### **Arthur Lee to John Adams, Philadelphia, 1 October 1782**

It is with sorrow, I inform you of the death of young Col: Laurens, who was killd lately in a skirmish with the British near Charles-town. He is as much a public as a private loss; and I am

much afraid it will be an accumulation of misfortune on his most worthy Father too great for him to bear.

**Ralph Izard to Alice Izard, Philadelphia, 7 October 1782**

The Enemy made an excursion from Charles Town to collect Rice, & other provisions on the 27th of August. General Greene's Light Infantry attacked them, & unfortunately Lieutt. Colonel Laurens was killed. He certainly was a most excellent Officer, & his loss will be severely felt. I pity his Father exceedingly: he has already had more than a sufficient number of misfortunes to contend with.

## John Lawrence

**New York City Federalists to the Electors of the City and County of New York, New York, 3 March 1789**

[On nominating Lawrence for election to U.S. House of Representatives.] Among the other qualifications which were taken into consideration, that of a talent for public speaking was not unattended to; and though this was not deemed an indispensable one, it was yet regarded as *one* which could not fail to contribute in a material degree to the usefulness of the candidate.

## Nathaniel Lawrence

**Nathaniel Hazard to Alexander Hamilton, New York, 30 September 1791**

Lawrence looks up to Burr with Veneration, has formed a favorable Opinion of you, but is shy. He is honest, but very wary & cold blooded for a young Man.

## Tobias Lear

**Benjamin Lincoln, Jr., to Benjamin Lincoln, Sr., 2 January 1786**

Mr. Lear whose character you wish, I have been some time acquainted with. He is a young man of sobriety, good sense and learning, possesses an honest heart, a generous, elevated spirit and is such a youth as General Washington will esteem and be happy to patronize. He is been unfortunate in the loss of a very handsome patrimony. But his misfortunes while they drained his purse have enriched his understanding and given him a style of thinking which in my opinion at his time of life is preferable to wealth.

**George Washington to Benjamin Lincoln, Mount Vernon, 6 February 1786**

Mr. Lear, or any other who may come into my family in the blended characters of preceptor to the Children, and as a Clerk or private Secretary to me, will sit at my Table—will live as I live—will mix with the Company which resort to the House—and will be treated in every respect with civility, and proper attention. He will have his washing done in the family, and may have his linen & Stockings mended by the Maids of it.

The duties which will be required of him are, generally, such as appertain to the Offices before-mentioned. The first will be very trifling 'till the Children are a little more advanced—and the latter will be equally so as my correspondences decline (which I am endeavoring to effect): and after accounts and other old matters are brought up. To descend more minutely into his avocations I am unable, because occasional matters may require particular Services; nothing however derogatory will be asked, or expected.

**John Adams to Jean Luzac, Quincy, Mass., 2 October 1793**

The Bearer of this letter is Mr Lear the late Secretary to President Washington a gentleman universally esteemed and beloved wherever he is known.

**Martha Washington to Fanny Bassett Washington, Philadelphia, 29 September 1794**

[Offering advice on the proposed marriage of Tobias Lear, Washington's private secretary, to Fanny Bassett Washington, the widow of Washington's nephew George Augustus Washington.] My dear Fanny, I wish I could give you unerring advice in regard to the request contained in your last letter; I really don't know what to say to you on the subject; you must be governed by your own judgment, and I trust providence will direct you for the best; it is a matter more interesting to yourself than any other, The person contemplated is a worthy man, and esteemed by every one that is acquainted with him; he has, it is conceived, fair prospects before him; is, I believe, very industrious and will, I have not a doubt, make something handsome for himself. As to the President, he never has, nor never will, as you have often heard him say, inter meddle in matrimonial concerns. He joins with me however in wishing you every happiness this world can give. You have had a long acquaintance with Mr. Lear, and must know him as well as I do. He always appeared very attentive to his wife and child, as far as ever I have seen; he is I believe a man of strict honor and probity; and one with whom you would have as good a prospect of happiness as with anyone I know; but beg you will not let anything I say influence you either way. The President has a very high opinion of and friendship for Mr. Lear; and has not the least objection to your forming the connection but, no more than myself, would wish to influence your judgment either way. Yours and the children's good being among the first wishes of my heart.

**Tobias Lear to Alexander Hamilton, Mount Vernon, 16 January 1800**

From the time of the General's death, I consider myself as out of the public service; and after I shall have executed the charge committed to me [putting Washington's papers in order] (which I expect to do in a few weeks) I shall apply myself to the settlement of my own affairs, which the total devotion of my time to the duties of my station has hitherto prevented, and which were much disordered and involved, by a variety of untoward circumstances, during four years that I was engaged in commerce. In doing this I shall deprive myself of every species of property and of every pecuniary resource. But Justice demands it: And while I preserve my integrity inviolate I



shall never regret the loss of wealth. For the last sixteen years of my life (excepting the four in which I was engaged in commerce) my time and best services have been devoted to an employment grateful to my heart. And I trust that my future pursuits, whatever they may be, will never be marked by any conduct that will cause those who have *known* me in better days to remember my name with regret.

**William Plumer: Memorandum, 14 December 1805**

[General William Eaton] said he knew Tobias Lear (formerly of Portsmouth, New Hampshire) to be a man of a little mind—jealous—cowardly, & what was worse *false*.

## Hugh Ledlie

**Benjamin Huntington to John Adams, Norwich, Conn., 13 July 1795**

At the Request of Capt Ledlie of Hartford who will Wait on you with this I have preferred to trouble your Excellency with a Line in his Favour as he thinks your Advice in a business he has on hand will be Important.

Capt Hugh Ledlie is a Gentleman who formerly was much Engaged in Mercantile Concerns in this State & by his Industry Economy and Punctuality in Business obtained a large Property and formed good Connections in business and an Intensive Acquaintance with many Gentlemen of Rank and Reputation in this and the Neighbouring States & among other Transactions he unfortunately became Concerned with General Lyman and others in a Grant of Lands on the East Bank of the Mississippi Soon after the Close of the last French War in which he had served some Years with Reputation as a Captain in the Provincial Service. By some means the Grant Obtained by General Lyman never was Settled among the Adventurers before the Death of that Gentleman—Capt Ledlie will lay the Business before you with his Papers and wishes for Advice in his Claim, what steps can be taken to Obtain his Just Right and whether it can Probably be obtained or not—

## Arthur Lee

**Benjamin Franklin to Arthur Lee, Passy, France, 3 April 1778 (never sent)**

It is true I have omitted answering some of your Letters. I do not like to answer angry Letters. I hate Disputes. I am old, cannot have long to live, have much to do and no time for Altercation. If I have often received and borne your Magisterial Snubbings and Rebukes without Reply, ascribe it to the right Causes, my Concern for the Honor & Success of our Mission, which would be hurt by our Quarreling, my Love of Peace, my Respect for your good Qualities, and my Pity of your Sick Mind, which is forever tormenting itself with its Jealousies, Suspicions & Fancies that others mean you ill, wrong you, or fail in Respect for you—If you do not cure yourself of this Temper it will end in Insanity, of which it is the Symptomatic Forerunner, as I have seen in several Instances. God preserve you from so terrible an Evil; and for his sake pray suffer me to live in quiet.

**John Adams: Autobiography, 10 April 1778**

The first moment Dr. Franklin and I happened to be alone, he began to complain to me of the Coolness as he very coolly called it, between the American Ministers. He said there had been disputes between Mr. Deane and Mr. Lee. That Mr. Lee was a Man of an anxious uneasy temper which made it disagreeable to do business with him: that he seemed to be one of those Men of whom he had known many in his day, who went on through Life quarreling with one Person or another till they commonly ended in the loss of their reason.

**John Adams: Autobiography, 21 April 1778**

Mr. Arthur Lee, my other Colleague, was a Native of Virginia. His father had been long a Councillor under the Crown and sometime commander in Chief of the Colony and ancient Dominion of Virginia. He left several Sons, Thomas, Richard Henry, William, Francis Lightfoot, and Arthur, with all of whom except Thomas I have been intimately acquainted. Their father had given them all excellent Classical Educations and they were all virtuous Men. Arthur had studied and practiced Physick but not finding it agreeable to his Genius he took Chambers in the Temple in England, and there was admitted to practice as a Barrister, and being protected by several Gentlemen of Rank among the Opposition was coming fast into importance. Animated with great Zeal in the Cause of his native Country, he took a decided part in her favour and became a Writer of some Celebrity by his Junius Americanus and other publications. Becoming known in America as a zealous Advocate for our Cause, the two Houses of the Legislature of Massachusetts Bay appointed him provisionally their Agent to the Court of Great Britain, in case of the death, Absence or disability of Dr. Franklin, in which capacity he corresponded with some of the Members of that Assembly, particularly with Mr. Samuel Adams, and with the Assembly itself, transmitting from time to time information of Utility and Importance. After a Congress was called in 1774, 5 and 6 He continued to transmit to Us some of the best and most authentic Intelligence, which We received from England. In 1776 when the Election of Ministers to the Court of France was brought forward and after I had declined the nomination, and Mr. Jefferson had refused the Election and Appointment sent him by Congress, Mr. Arthur Lee was elected in his place. He came immediately over to Paris and joined his Colleagues in Commission. His manners were polite, his reading extensive, his Attention to Business was punctual, and his Integrity without reproach.

**Samuel Adams to John Adams, Philadelphia, 21 June 1778**

Mr Carmichael comes strongly recommend[ed] by Dr Franklin & Mr Silas Dean; but Dr Lee in his Letter gives Reasons why he cannot place a Confidence in him. From a long Correspondence with Dr Lee, I conceive so great an Opinion of his Candor as well as inflexible Integrity & Attachment to our Country, that I cannot entertain a Doubt that he would suffer partial Considerations to operate in his Mind to the Prejudice of any Man. Such a Difference of Sentiments concerning a Gentleman who I imagine must be of some Consequence, could not take Place without at least apparently good grounds; and it may produce such Effects on this Side of the Water as may prove uncomfortable to us if not injurious to our Cause. Would it not then be doing some Service, to exercise your Prudence in endeavoring to investigate the real grounds of it, in doing which possibly some things may open to View of Importance and at present not thought of.

Dr Lee is a Gentleman of a fair and generous Mind. I wish therefore that you would freely converse with him upon this Subject if you think you can do it with Propriety; and let him know

that I have lately receivd many Letters from him, which I have duly attended to and would have acknowledgd to him by this Opportunity, if I had Leisure.

**Joseph Reed to Esther Reed, Philadelphia, 16 August 1778**

For my own Part, my Opinion of Dr. Lee is not altered by the Transaction [i.e., Lee's charge that Reed and John Langdon held "treacherous Correspondence with the British Ministry"]. I shall vote just in the same Manner as I should have done if another Person had been the Object of this Charge & am really sorry that the Talent he unquestionably possesses should be useless to himself & dangerous to others for Want of a little Portion of Candour & common ordinary Sense to mingle with them.

**Samuel Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 11 October 1778**

In the enclosed Newspaper you will see certain Queries, calculated to impress on the Minds of the People the Idea of Dr. Lee's having held a criminal Correspondence with a Person known to be at the same Time in the Service and under the Direction of the British Ministry. I hope it will not be in the Power of this Querist to do essential Injury to so eminent a Patriot; who took the earliest and most decisive Part in opposition to the Measures of the British Court, and whose invariable Attachment to the Liberties of our Country, never was, and I think cannot be justly suspected. Yet it may be necessary to guard against it; for I plainly tho silently saw when I was last in Boston a malevolent Disposition towards Dr. Lee, in a certain Gentleman, who, till he is better known, will have a great Influence in the Massachusetts State.

**Samuel Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 23 November 1778**

My Friend A. L. is called by those who dread his Vigilance "a dissatisfied Man." Having received many Letters from him since I last saw you, I know he is dissatisfied. What Man who regards the Publick Interest, or his own Reputation, can be satisfied, when he sees Millions of Livres spent, himself accountable with others for the Expenditure, and the Man through whose hands the greatest Part has passed without consulting him after being repeatedly called upon by him, unready or unwilling to account for them. There are other Things which my Friend complains of, and I think not without Justice.

**John Adams to James Warren, Passy, France, 5 December 1778**

Your old Friend I take to be a Man of Honor and Integrity, yet to be very frank he cannot easily govern his Temper, and he has some Notions of Elegance, Rank and Dignity, that may be carried rather too far. He has been of opinion that the public Money has been too freely issued here.

**John Adams to Samuel Adams, Passy, France, 7 December 1778**

Your old Friend is a Man of Honour and Integrity, altho to be very frank and very impartial, he cannot, easily at all Times any more than your humble servant govern his Temper, and he has some Notions of Elegance, Rank and Dignity that may be carried rather too far.

**Jean Holker to the French Minister of Marine, Paris, 7 December 1778**

Mr. J. Adams the Deputy does not succeed here further than is reasonable: He appears to be entirely devoted to Mr. Lee, who, as you know, is a sort of mad-man.

**Francis Lightfoot Lee to Richard Henry Lee, Philadelphia, 25 December 1778**

The only charges against Doctr. Lee are that he is suspicious, jealous, affrontive to every body he has any business with, & very disgusting to the whole French Nation, by his hatred for them, which he discovers by all his words & actions.

**Samuel Adams to Samuel Cooper, Philadelphia, 3 January 1779**

The other took an early, decided and active Part in Support of our great Cause. In London he had a great Share in the open opposition made to the Tyranny of the British Court & their Measures respecting America. There he turnd his Attention from the Practice of Physick to which he had been regularly educated in Edinburgh, to the Study of the Law. This he did by the Advice of some of the most able Advocates for the Liberties of America, from the opinion they had conceivd of his promising Usefulness to that Cause in that Way. He answered their Prospects. He constantly aided your Agent the late Mr De Berdt\* to whom his Knowledge of Affairs rendered his Services essential. That his Pen was employd for America in General, his Junius Americanus abundantly testifies; and that, and his other Publications witness his Attachments to Massachusetts Bay & South Carolina in particular. His private Letters to his Friends were written with that Freedom as well as Zeal, which would have exposd him to the Risque even of his Life from the Resentment of an unprincipled & nefarious Court, if any of them by Accident or Design had fallen into their Hands. This I know to be true.

\*Dennys DeBerdt (1695–1770), the Massachusetts General Court's agent in London, 1765–1770.

**Samuel Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 6 January 1779**

Mr. A L, you are fully sensible, was most indefatigable in supporting our Cause in England. By penetrating into the Designs of a most unprincipled Court, he was able to give us the most timely and important Intelligence which he did at the Risk of his Life, while Mr. — [Silas Deane] was in the opinion of some of his own Countrymen as well as others of a doubtful political Character. Mr. Lee continued to transmit to our Friends in France as well as to Congress, before he left England, the most accurate State of things there. Such was the Opinion entertained by Congress of his Abilities, his Integrity, and his Zeal and Attachment to his Country, which indeed had been long experienced, that he was employed as a most useful and necessary Man. The vigilant Eye of so consistent a Patriot may be formidable to a Combination of political and Commercial Men, who may be aiming to get the Trade, the Wealth, the Power and the Government of America into their own Hands. He must therefore be hunted down, and the *young* as well as the old Hounds are all ready for the Game.

**John Adams: Diary, 9 February 1779**

Virtue is not always amiable. Integrity is sometimes ruined by Prejudices and by Passions. There are two Men in the World who are Men of Honour and Integrity I believe [Arthur Lee and Ralph Izard], but whose Prejudices and violent Tempers would raise Quarrels in the Elysian Fields

if not in Heaven. . . . [Lee] has such a bitter, such a Sour in him, and so few of the nice feelings, that G[od] knows what will be the Consequence to himself and to others. Besides he has as much Cunning, and as much Secrecy. . . . He has Confidence in no body. He believes all Men selfish—And, no Man honest or sincere. This, I fear, is his Creed, from what I have heard him say. However I never was so nearly in his Situation before.

**John Adams to Samuel Adams, Passy, France, 14 February 1779**

This last implies the removal of Mr. Lee, which would give me much pain on many accounts. I think him a faithful man and able. . . . I am fixed in these two opinions, that leaving the doctor [Benjamin Franklin] here alone is right, and that Mr. Lee is a very honest and faithful man.

**John Adams to James Lovell, Passy, France, 20 February 1779**

Our old incidental Agent, is an honest Man: faithful and zealous in our Cause: but there is an Acrimony in his Temper—There is a Jealousy—there is an Obstinacy, and a Want of Candor at times, and an Affectation of Secrecy the Fruit of Jealousy, which renders him disagreeable often to his Friends, makes him Enemies, and gives them infinite Advantages over him.

That he has had great Provocations here I never doubted, and Since the Appearance of the Address less than ever. . . .

These two Gentlemen [i.e., Lee and Ralph Izard], have been very intimate, and have encouraged no doubt each other and often irritated. Another Thing I think that [Lee] ought not to have been here. He should have been in Italy or in America, or being here, I really think he ought not to have interfered, so much. This is simply my opinion—I may be wrong. That Gentleman thought he was doing his Duty I am clear. But of this I am persuaded that if he had been in Italy Things would never have gone to the Lengths they have.

**John Adams to Thomas Cushing, Passy, France, 24 February 1779**

You will find every Insinuation against the Fidelity of a certain Gentleman here, groundless. It is his Fidelity and Zeal that have made him, some of his Enemies, perhaps the most of them. And his Character must be vindicated from all false Imputations, or no Man will be safe, in the public service.

**Samuel Adams to Benjamin Austin, Philadelphia, 9 March 1779**

Were I connected with Dr Lee as a publick Man, and conscious of my own Tardiness, I should think I had every thing to apprehend, not from a peevish, fretful Temper with which interested Men have attempted to stigmatize him, but from his stern Virtue and Republican Jealousy. I may be partial to Dr Lee. I confess I feel the strongest Obligation to him, for the eminent Services he renderd to America when he was in England, and to the Massachusetts Bay in particular. I hope my Countrymen are not all ungrateful. Some of them, I have been taught to believe are so; otherwise the publick Character of an old Servant would not have been aspersd, nor wd it have been said, as I am informd it has, that he had been bribd to desert his Country. It is his honorable Lot to have Enemies. Honorable, because he flatters himself his Enemies are among the weak & the wicked. I leave my own Character, under God, in the Care of my virtuous fellow Citizens. I will contend for Dr Lees, because I am his Friend; and I am his friend, because I have long had abundant Reason to be convinced that he is a Friend to our Country. I have said I may be thought partial to

him. Be pleasd then to take the Testimony of another, and show it to his Friends and his Enemies. “Your old friend,” says one, “is a Man of Honor and Integrity.” “He has been of opinion that the publick Monies have been too freely issued here, & has often opposd it.” Let me remark here that it is no Wonder he has exposd himself to the Resentment of a Man thro whose hands the Chief to the money passed. “Insinuations, I have been told, have been made at Court against your old friend that he was too friendly to the English, too much attachd to Ld Shelburne & even that he corresponded with his Lordship & communicated Intelligence to him. This, whoever suggested it, I am perfectly confident was a cruel Calumny. You and I have had opportunity to know his invariable Attachment to our Cause long before Hostilities commenced & I have not a Color of Ground for Suspicion that from that time to this he has deviated from the Cause of his Country in Thought Word or Deed.”

You may tell the Friends of Virtue and Liberty, that the Letter from which the foregoing Extracts are taken was written to me by one in whom they have always very justly placed great Confidence.\* I could transcribe more Passages which mention Dr Lee as “a worthy Character,” the unwarrantable Lengths to which the Animosities of interrested Men have been carried against him, & the Inveteracy of many Subaltern and collateral Characters but I think I have given enough to satisfy every reason able Man.

\*John Adams.

#### **John Adams to Arthur Lee, L’Orient, France, 10 June 1779**

At the Same Time that I lament the Necessity of giving my Testimony to a Point that ought to be so well established in every Part of the World, I have great Pleasure in declaring, that from my first Knowledge of your Fame to this Hour, I have never entertained one Moments Suspicion of your Attachment to our Country or her Cause, but on the contrary through the whole Course of that Period, which I think is more than ten Years I have seen frequent Proofs of your Fidelity and Zeal in it often times at a great Expencc of Labour and Care at least, and at great Hazard. And particularly, through the Space of Time I had the Honour to serve with you, in Commission, I never Saw nor heard any Thing which gave me the least suspicion of the sincerity, Fidelity, or Zeal of your Devotion to the sovereignty of the united States, but on the contrary constant Evidence of a warm Affection for their Honour, Dignity and Prosperity.

#### **“A Friend to Truth and fair Play” [Oliver Ellsworth], *Connecticut Courant*, 7 September 1779**

As to Mr. Lee, be his other talents or graces what they may, you know, if you know anything about him, that it is the soul of that man to be forever prying into secrets and communicating them to his employers, and that he has written letters enough himself to Congress, since he has been in France to have made a volume; and among much other interesting intelligence, has not failed to furnish them seasonably and very particularly from time to time with the secrets of the British cabinet. And I will venture to add had he wrote somewhat less than he has he might have been less obnoxious to men both on that side of the water and on this.

#### **John Adams to James Lovell, Braintree, Mass., 21 September 1779**

You hope A. Lee will soon make a Treaty with Spain. Whether he does or not, if he continues in Commission to that Court, pray order him to Spain, positively. He will do no good, at Paris,

believe me. I respect his past services, I know his Attachment to America, and I believe his Integrity. But I know his Prejudices, and his Passions. His Countenance is disgusting, his Air, is not pleasing, his Manners are not engaging, his Temper is harsh sour and fierie, and his Judgment of Men and Things is often wrong. Virtue itself is said to be not always amiable. . . .

I believe such a Group of Characters as Lees,\* Isard and Deane, never were before selected out for Ambassadors. I declare if it was a new Thing, I never could in Conscience give my Vote for either. Three more imprudent Men I don't know. I dread the Consequence of Lee's going to Spain. He will be watched. He will be provoked, and he can not govern himself. Yet the most perfect Reserve, the most perfect Prudence, will be necessary in that Nation, and the most Dissonance, from that Quarter I shall be happily disappointed.

\*William and Arthur Lee.

### **John Fell to Robert Morris, Philadelphia, 5 October 1779**

Now we have chiefly and to my great satisfaction got through Our foreign affairs; and I hope the Name of Lee will be no more mentioned, that we shall do business in a better humour.

### **William Churchill Houston to Caleb Camp, Philadelphia, 5 October 1779**

The principal Intention of this is to point at a Question which from accidental Circumstances has acquired a Magnitude and Importance what, simply considered, it was entitled to. A Question which has excited much Inveteracy and Ill-blood in Congress, and not a few Speculations and Suspicions abroad. I mean the Recall, or rather Supersession, of Mr. Arthur Lee, Commissioner of the United States at the Court of Madrid. I have carefully read over the Papers, and attended to every feasible Means of unbiased Information relative to this Question, and I think have done it with a Temper divested of Prejudice. The Result is this: I take Mr. Arthur Lee to be a man of a jealous, suspecting, difficult Disposition; trusty, capable and industrious. Indefatigable above others in procuring and transmitting Intelligence, accurate and frugal in Expenses and Money-matters, simple, severe, and republican in his manners; so much so as to be thought be many sour and cynical. This I take to be his Character; and in many Essentials I am not afraid to call him equal to any Person Congress ever employed in a similar Capacity in Europe. The Story hawked about, that his Indiscretions prevented the Court of Spain from treating with him, I cannot think believed by those who propagate it, as that Conduct in the Spanish Ministry is ascribable to very different Reasons which must strike every Person at once who has the least Knowledge of the State of matters as they respected that Power. But admitting he were the best-qualified and most meritorious Man on Earth, is it not my Duty to vote for removing him when the Time of Congress is absolutely wasted, and the publick Business not only retarded but stopped by unavailing Altercations concerning an Individual? When a General offers up a *forlorn Hope* to save an *Army*, the Alternative is dreadful; but the Principle is defensible and the Practice of it often necessary. I confess that in a republick, where Approbation, Honour and Praise, more than Money and Emoluments, are the Reward of faithful Services, such Things ought to be admitted with Reluctance and Caution; yet still they may not always be avoidable. But further, should it turn out to be a Fact that France was doubtful of him, and that Spain hesitated, it mattered not how good a Man he was, one every way inferior, if free from such Exception, would have been preferable for the Purpose of treating. The *real* of Delay being now removed, it is to be hoped the gentleman who succeeds Mr. Lee will be successful. As I would ever wish to be simply just, but at the same Time to do what is best, all Things considered, I have no other Request than that this State of Facts may be

remembered another Day, when Time will throw Light upon what is now dark. Prejudice will be extinct and the Course of Conduct, or to what Length of Crimination, Resentment may impel this unfortunate Man, I am excused from surmising. Whether, as many have done, he will adhere to the Part he has taken in Spite of what he may think ill Treatment; or whether, as many have also done, he will transfer himself to a Situation where he will expect more Attention; does not belong immediately to the present Decision; at least. I have taken the Liberty to throw it out of the Balance. At all Events I am happy this troublesome Affair is ended, and I hope it will never rise up to disturb the Counsels of America more.

**James Lovell to William Whipple, Philadelphia, 5 October 1779**

I have not yet seen the *Tall Boy* [Gouverneur Morris]; the *Tall Man* [Roger Sherman] good uncle Roger arrived the day after the *Sacrifice*. He is “shocked at the *Ingratitude* of that proceeding.”

New Hampshire was the only State for A. L., our’s was divided with R.I., Penna. and South Carolina.

**Thomas Burke to the North Carolina Assembly, Philadelphia, 25 October 1779**

Doctor F. & Mr. Dean who principally conducted our affairs at the Court of Versailles Seemed to act in perfect Harmony, and to be fully possessed of the Confidence of the Court. Doctor Lee who was Joint Commissioner with them, accused them both of peculation, and Criminal waste and misapplication of public money. Mr. Dean Accused Doctor Lee of being Froward, proud, Supercilious, Malevolent, Suspicious to So unreasonable a degree as to take unfounded Conjectures for facts, and to draw from them uncandid and disingenuous Conclusions—with all, to be of a temper Sordid and disgusting—and by his Correspondence and Connections with British Subjects and Emissaries to have become Suspected by the French Court of Infidelity—and Doctor Franklin Considered the same Gentleman as laboring under a Disorder of his Understanding. . . . But the Sentiments of your Delegates, and of many others in Congress were very different as to Doctor Lee. From his Letters, and from the concurring Testimony of many who were personally acquainted with him they Conceived him to labor under that Imperfection of Capacity which gives to trifles too much Importance, and to be of a temper So Suspicious and unconciliating as to embarrass all public Business in which he might be engaged. They had also indubitable proof that he was not only denied the Confidence of the Court of Versailles, but deeply suspected by them.

**Thomas McKean to Richard Henry Lee, Philadelphia, 25 March 1780**

When I reflect on the assiduity, the zeal, the fidelity, the abilities and patriotism of Doctor A. Lee, I cannot help deploring his fate, and reprobating the ingratitude of Congress; but, Sir, it is with pleasure I can assure you that he has many unshaken friends still remaining in that Body, who have never seen him, and who esteem him only for his public virtues. I profess myself one of these, and he has at least my warmest thanks for his substantial services rendered to my country.

**Samuel Adams to Elizabeth Adams, Philadelphia, 17 October 1780**

I have ever esteemed Mr. Lee one of the most virtuous, active & able American Patriots. This opinion, you know, I have long entertained of him, and therefore you justly conclude, that he meets with the most cordial Reception from *me*.

Founders on the Founders



**Samuel Adams to Richard Henry Lee, Philadelphia, 31 October 1780**

Upon conversing with your Brother Mr. Arthur Lee, I am confirmed in my own opinion that his Character is very different from that which his Enemies gave him two years ago. You know I have long corresponded with him, and a Man's confidential Letters are so sure a Criterion by which to judge of his real Disposition, that I before thought I could not be mistaken. He has shared the Fate of honest Patriots in all Times of Corruption in being persecuted. But I am satisfied the People in the Eastern States entertain an high opinion of his Integrity & Abilities. I hope he will meet with Justice in Congress—I think he merits Applause.

**Samuel Adams to Samuel Cooper, Philadelphia, 7 November 1780**

Your favor of the 21st of September was delivered to me by my very worthy Friend Arthur Lee who came to this City about a Fortnight ago. The Respect which you say was paid to him by the principal Gentlemen in Boston is exceedingly pleasing to me, because, from an intimate & confidential Correspondence with him for ten years, I am convinced that he was among the most early and consistent American Patriots. His inflexible Virtue in the first Stages of our Contest rendered him obnoxious to the great & powerful in England, and equally of late to interested Persons in France & their Connections in America. My Friendship for him is not private; it is grounded altogether on publick Principles. You tell me, his short Residence in the State of Massachusetts, has been very far from diminishing that Estimation in which the People held him there. I should have been indeed sorry if it had been otherwise; for his great Services to *them* in particular, had justly merited their Esteem. I always rejoice that *my own* Countrymen are not ungrateful. I hope they will always be too knowing and too just, either to pay servile Homage to the weak and wicked, or to withhold the Marks of their Approbation due to the wise and good.

**Benjamin Franklin to Samuel Cooper, Passy, France, 2 December 1780**

Dr. Lee's Accusation of Capt. Landais for Insanity was probably well-founded; as in my Opinion would have been the same Accusation, if it had been brought by Landais against Lee: For though neither of them are permanently mad, they are both so at times; and the Insanity of the latter is of the two the most mischievous.

**Samuel Adams to Richard Henry Lee, Philadelphia, 15 January 1781**

Your second Letter came to hand in due Season. My much esteemed Friend Mr. Arthur Lee will take the Charge of this. I will say to you as I have said to my Boston Friends, who are solicitous to know what Treatment he meets with here. The more I have conversed with him, the more I have been confirmed in a good opinion of him, and lamented the Mistakes and Prejudices of some Men & the Wickedness of others. His Enemies, I think, dare not openly attack his Reputation or Conduct. But the Whispers of envy & Malice, have some times Influence enough to prevent the Justice due to the virtuous Citizen. When this is the Case, it affords a Symptom of the Decay of publick Spirit, more threatening to the Liberties of a Commonwealth than Hosts of foreign Enemies. Monarchs have their Favorites who serve as Pimps on their honest Subjects. But Republicks should examine the Conduct of their Servants with an impartial Eye; and it discovers the Want of publick Virtue, as much, to withhold their Smiles from the wise and good as to bestow them on the wicked & unfaithful. Mr. Lee has as yet had neither Smiles nor Frowns. I am still in hopes he will meet with the Rewards which I am sure he would have received if he had returned a few years ago. He

will have them when the Trustees of the Publick shall have Fortitude enough to be uninfluenced by great Names & Characters given to Men of base & depraved Minds. You will ask, when will that be. Perhaps not in this Age. But the Historian will in some future time draw forth the Proofs of his Patriotism, & unprejudiced Posterity will acknowledge that Arthur Lee has borne a great share in defending & establishing the Liberties of America. I say Posterity; for I believe that a wiser Generation will enjoy the Fruits of the Toil of Patriots & Heroes in the present Day.

**James Madison to Edmund Randolph, Philadelphia, 16 July 1782**

For reasons which will occur to you Doctor Lee was sent into the department of Finance. The Doctor is endeavouring I am told Contrary to the object in view to go into an investigation of the contracts in trade allowed by Congress. All the movements of Doctor are pointed directly or circuitously either to Morris or Franklin.

**Samuel Holten to Samuel Adams, Princeton, N.J., 14 August 1783**

The more I am personally acquainted with Doctr. Lee, the more he rises in my esteem. I was, lately, in hopes to have had his company in the same house with me, which he was desirous of, but we could not bring it about, and he has taken a chamber, on the other side of the street, & I believe we shall be neighbourly.

**Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, Annapolis, Md., 20 February 1784**

Lee finding no faction among the men here, entered into that among the women which rages to a very high degree. A ball being appointed by the one party on a certain night he undertook to give one, and fixed it precisely on the same night. This of course has placed him in the midst of the mud. He is courting Miss Sprig a young girl of seventeen and of thirty thousand pounds expectation. I have no doubt from some conversations with him that there is a design agitating to sever the Northern Neck and add it to this state. He supported in conversation with me the propriety & necessity of such a general measure, to wit of enlarging the small states to interest them in the union. He deserves to be well watched in our state. He is extremely soured with it and is not cautious in betraying his hostility against it.

**John Adams to Arthur Lee, The Hague, 6 April 1784**

I wish a Secretary of foreign Affairs appointed and that you may be the Man. There is no Man in America So well acquainted with our foreign Affairs and Surely they require a Man of Some Experience.

**Marquis de Lafayette to Alexander Hamilton, Albany, N.Y., 8 October 1784**

I am told Mr. Jay is not determined upon accepting [the position of Secretary for Foreign Affairs]. I much wish he may consent to it. The more so as his probable successor A.L. does not hit my fancy. Indeed, I very much wish Mr. Jay may accept the Office.

**James Monroe to James Madison, Trenton, N.J., 18 December 1784**

Virginia votes for Mercer [for the Confederation Board of Trade] & seemed inclined to suffer A. Lee to retire from the public service in the opinion it will be advantageous to the public.

**Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, Paris, 17 June 1785**

I am sorry to see a possibility of A. L.'s being put into the Treasury. He has no talents for the office, and what he has will be employed in rummaging old accounts to involve you in eternal war with R. M. and he will in a short time introduce such dissensions into the Commission as to break it up. If he goes on the other appointment to Kaskaskia he will produce a revolt of that settlement from the United States.

**Otto's Biographies, Fall 1788**

A sensible man, loving pleasures and women; former commissioner who signed the treaty of alliance and commerce [with France]. Too passionate in his affairs, intriguing, formerly very dissatisfied with the French because he was jealous of the influence of Dr. Franklin, but he is beginning to be reconciled with us. As for the rest, he has little influence and draws more from the importance of his family than from his own assets.

**George Washington to James Madison, New York, c. 8 September 1789**

What can I do with A—— L——. He has applied to be nominated one of the Associate Judges—but I cannot bring my mind to adopt the request. The opinion entertained of him by those with whom I am most conversant is unpropitious and yet few men have received more marks of favor & confidence than he has. These contradictions are embarrassing.

**Henry Lee to James Monroe, 22 December 1792**

United to this cause I may add another the death of my inestimable friend Mr. A. Lee.

A violent pleurisy carried him off in ten days.

His loss to the public is not so great as it would have been had the community been in the fashion of availing themselves of his talents. To his private circle is it very great as he was a model of honor & amiability.

**Mercy Otis Warren, History of the American Revolution, 1805**

The character and principles of Mr. Arthur Lee, gave equal reason to expect his most energetic endeavours, to support the interest and weal of America. He has resided in England for several years, as agent for the state of Virginia. Invariably attached to his native country, and indefatigable in his efforts to ward off the impending evils that threatened it, he had communicated much useful intelligence and advantageous advice, to the patriotic leaders in various parts of America; and by his spirited writings and diligent exertions, he procured them many friends in England. He was a man of a clear understanding, great probity, plain manners, and strong passions. Though he loved America sincerely, he had at this period great respect and affection for the parent state; and his predilection in favor of Britain appeared strongly, when balanced with the idea of an American connection with the house of Bourbon.

**Thomas Jefferson to Robert Walsh, Monticello, 4 December 1818**

Dr. Lee was his [Franklin's] principal calumniator, a man of much malignity, who, besides enlisting his whole family in the same hostility, was enabled, as the agent of Massachusetts with the British government, to infuse it into that State with considerable effect.

**John Adams to Richard Henry Lee (grandson of RHL), Quincy, Mass., 11 August 1819**

Arthur Lee, a man of whom I cannot think without emotion; a man too early in the service of his country to avoid making a multiplicity of enemies; too honest, upright, faithful, and intrepid to be popular; too often obliged by his principles and feelings to oppose Machiavellian intrigues, to avoid the destiny he suffered. This man never had justice done him by his country in his lifetime, and I fear he never will have by posterity. His reward cannot be in this world.

## Charles Lee

**James Warren to John Adams, Watertown, Mass., 7 July 1775**

General Lee I have seen but a Minute. He appears to me a Genius in his way. He had the Marks about him of having been in the Trenches.

**John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 18 February 1776**

General Lee is to command in that Country [i.e., Canada], whose Address, Experience, and Abilities added to his Fluency in the French Language, will give him great Advantages.

**John Adams: Speech in Congress, 21 February 1777 (from Benjamin Rush notes)**

I admire Genl Lee for his military talents, but he possesses an unbounded Share of Vanity. This Vanity led him to correspond with Genl Burgoyne—and induced him to propose himself as one of a committee to confer with Lord Howe. His Lordship has no terms to offer us.

## Francis Lightfoot Lee

**John Adams: Diary, 15 September 1775**

Lee is a Brother of Dr. Arthur, the late Sheriff of London, and our old Friend Richard Henry, sensible, and patriotic, as the rest of the Family.

**John Harvie to Thomas Jefferson, York, Pa., 18 October 1777**

Our Worthy president [John Hancock] withdraws from Congress in about 10 days. Will you be Surprised if F. L. Lee Esqr. Succeeds him? That he will is the General Opinion at present.

**Benjamin Rush: Sketches**

He was brother to Richard Henry Lee but possessed, I thought, a more acute and correct mind. He often opposed his brother in a vote, but never spoke in Congress. I never know him wrong eventually upon any question. Mr. Madison informed me that he had observed the same thing in many silent members of public bodies.

**George Washington to James Madison, Mount Vernon, 10 January 1788**

Francis L. Lee on whose judgment the [Lee] family place much reliance, is decidedly in favor of the new form, under a conviction that it is the best that can be obtained, and because it promises energy—stability—and that security which is, or ought to be, the wish of every good Citizen of the Union.

# Henry Lee

**Comte de Moustier to Comte de Montmorin, New York, 30 July 1788**

Mr. Lee has the habit of speaking with frankness.

**John Dawson to James Monroe, Richmond, Va., 29 October 1792**

By the enclosed papers you'll see how our governor is assailed. His interference in the late election & great anxiety in favour of his kinsman [i.e., Arthur Lee for U.S. Senate] have injured him very much. Indeed I never knew so rapid a change in any man's popularity, both in the assembly and among the inhabitants of the city.

**John Adams to William Stephens Smith, Quincy, Mass., 15 October 1812**

What shall I say to you, of Henry Lee. you know him. I know him such a mixture of Sense and Stupidity, of Wisdom and Folly, of Learning and Ignorance, of Generosity and meanness, of Impudence and Modesty, and what is more enigmatical Still of Wealth and Poverty, of Frankness and Hypocrisy, was never before Jumbled together in any human Character. I am well informed that this Man at Washington last Winter was bellowing out for War with Great Britain. But disappointed, in not being employed: to regain his lost Credit with the Federalists he engaged in Defence of Hanson Wagner and their Newspapers first sett on foot by Tem P[——].

**Mathew Carey: Memoirs**

Gen Henry Lee:—Mr Graham a Va gentleman told me this afternoon that Gen Lee was a sharper and was constantly on the watch to take in the unwary. He attempted to swindle Graham out of two hogsheads of tobacco, by offering him a high price and a draft on some person in Gloucester, where no man owed him a dollar. After having a long time eluded the pursuit of the sheriff, he was at length arrested, and lodged in jail where he wrote his celebrated history of the Southern campaigns of which no small part is to a Certain degree fictitious. He like some others

drew on his imagination for his facts. His person was magnificent and his address was truly Chesterfieldian.

## Henry “Lighthouse Harry” Lee

### George Weedon to Nathanael Greene, Fredericksburg, Va., 12 October 1779

I am made very happy at being informed of my much Esteemed friend Major Lee’s Honorable Acquittal of every Charge brought against him for his conduct in the Paulus Hook enterprise. And nothing so much astonishes me as to find Colo. Gist was his persecutor. For the Lord sake what could induce that head of the Wrongheads to Calumniate so Splendid, So Gallant, so brave and Officelike conduct as that little Hero displayed in that affair. For which he Ought to be loved, Honored and adored, instead of being Arraigned and brought to Trial. I am sorry for the Colonel as it must hurt him in the Opinion of all good men.

### Marquis de Lafayette to George Washington, 28 October 1780

The difference made by his presence in my security is equal to the doubling of pickets and patrols.\*

\*A reference to the potential of Lee leaving Lafayette’s command.

### Marquis de Lafayette to the Chevalier de La Luzerne, 28 October 1780

. . . beyond compare the best officer of light infantry in the English, Hessian, or American armies on this continent.

### Marquis de Lafayette to Nathanael Greene, Light Camp, 10 November 1780

Though by my temper and principles I am Bound to accept of anything, and cheerfully to act upon any scale which a superior officer thinks fit for me, I can’t help acknowledging your kindness and frankly tell you that you are not mistaken in believing that the Command of a flying Camp, composed of the horse, and Light infantry of your Army will better please me than the honorable but less active command of a Wing. As I am sure that My friend *Lee* will apply for being attached to me. I beg leave to support the motion of that officer whom I love, and on whom I Greatly confide both for advice and execution.

### Nathanael Greene to Anthony Wayne, Camp near the Cross Roads between Broad River and the Catawba, S.C., 27 June 1781

Lt. Col. Lee has proved himself this campaign what I always knew him to be that is one of the first Officers in the World.

### Henry Lee to Nathanael Greene, 19 February 1782

My ambition might have been very great once, it is not so now, & I rest contented with my crass future.

Founders on the Founders

**Nathanael Greene to Richard Henry Lee, Headquarters near Bacon’s Bridge, S.C.,  
25 April 1782**

Have you seen my friend Lt. Col. Lee? He left the Army some time past to go to the Northward for the recovery of his health. When he left Camp he was a little gloomy from reports propagated to his prejudices. As I know the public can have no foundation for such opinions, I cannot think they have any existence but in the minds of a few snarling varlets whose opinions are formed not from facts but from Malice. There was no officer or Corps ever in service that had an equal number of honorable reports of important services as Col. Lee had last Campaign. And they are the best Panegyric as well as the most lasting record that can be given of an Officer’s merit and services. The Col. thinks the reports not being higher colored gave rise to obloquy; but it is my opinion if any have taken such freedoms after reading my reports, they would censure notwithstanding any thing I might have written. And it is further my opinion that where any thing is labored in commendation of an officer it begets suspicions of a want of real merit instead of establishing it. For if you show more of friendship than candor in a relation, you lessen its operation and injure instead of serving your friend. As I love and esteem him I was unhappy to hear a whisper to his prejudice. But every man has his enemies and there is no service however important or conduct however upright will secure a man universal approbation while mankind are so much under the influence of party rage and private views. And to expect it is a folly, as you know from your own experience.

**Don Diego de Gardoqui to Conde de Floridablanca, New York, 6 December 1787\***

In the general account that I send with this letter packet, Your Excellency will note that I charge an item in my account of 5750 Pesos of which I inform Your Excellency and in justification of which are the following:

5000 Pesos which on two occasions I have ventured in the form of a loan to Mr. Henry Lee as I informed Your Excellency at that time in my letters.

\*Translated from Spanish.

**Henry Lee to Alexander Hamilton, Richmond, Va., 23 June 1792**

I have withdrawn myself from continental politics. My indifference has begot an ignorance & both together have established an uninterrupted calm in my breast. The State business furnishes me with employment and ease & innocence accompany my execution of the duties of my station [as governor of Virginia].

In love with every sweet nymph but not so far gone with any one yet as to think of matrimony.

**Alexander Hamilton to George Washington, New York, 5 November 1795**

Governor Lee has several things for him & several against him—he ought to have a good secretary under him.

**Timothy Pickering to Alexander Hamilton, Philadelphia, 17 November 1795**

With ample military talents, General Lee is conceived to want others, essential to a secretary of war. Embracing some great objects, the department comprehends a multitude of details, and demands economy in its numerous expenditures. This appointment would doubtless be extremely

unpopular; it would be disapproved by the enemies of the government, without acquiring the confidence of its friends.

**Alexander Hamilton to Timothy Pickering, New York, 20 November 1795**

Of those South, notwithstanding there are real and weighty objections, I incline on the whole to LEE.

## Richard Bland Lee

**Robert Carter to Sarah Carter, Nomini Hall, Westmoreland County, Va., 30 January 1789**

His Abilities fall to the Lot of few men.

**James Madison to Thomas Todd, Montpelier, Va., 6 June 1823**

I have recd. A letter from R. B. Lee wishing me to drop a few lines to you & Judge Duvall, bearing my testimony to his capacity and worth, as a candidate for the vacant Clerkship of the Supreme Court of the U.S. Without knowing who may be his competitors, or supposing that I can add to your knowledge of his character & public standing I owe it to a personal friendship contracted in early life, and continued through a long one, to say that I regard him as possessing a sound & well cultivated understanding, with much experience in public business unimpeached integrity, and amiable manners, & that with this view of his estimable qualities it wd.be truly gratifying to me to see him in comfort & at ease as far as so happy a destiny may be permitted by the course of public circumstances. In the early stages of our Constitutional history his public services gained him much credit, and afforded evidence of talents which may be properly appealed to in his favor.

## Richard Henry Lee

**John Adams: Diary, 28 August 1774**

He [Jonathan Dickinson Sergeant] says the Virginians speak in raptures about Richard Henry Lee and Patrick Henry—one the Cicero and the other the Demosthenes of the Age.

**John Adams: Diary, Philadelphia, 1 September 1774**

After Coffee We went to the Tavern, where we were introduced to . . . Richard Henry Lee Esq. . . . Lee is a tall, spare Man.

**John Adams: Diary, Philadelphia, 3 September 1774**

Breakfasted at Dr. Shippen's. Dr. Witherspoon was there. Coll. R. H. Lee lodges there. He is a masterly Man.

Founders on the Founders



This Mr. Lee is a Brother of the Sheriff of London [William Lee], and of Dr. Arthur Lee, and of Mrs. Shippen. They are all sensible, and deep thinkers.

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

Col. Lee, is said to be his [Patrick Henry's] Rival in Eloquence, & in Virginia & to the Southward they are styled the *Demosthenes*, & *Cicero* of America. God Grant they may not, Like them, plead in Vain for the Liberties of their Country. These last Gentlemen are Now in full Life, perhaps near Fifty & have made the Constitution, & history of G. Britain, & America their Capital Study ever since the late Troubles between them have arose.

**John Adams: Diary, Philadelphia, 10 October 1774**

Lee, Henry, and Hooper are the orators [in Congress].

**John Adams: Autobiography, February 1776**

Jealousies and divisions appeared among the Delegates [to Congress] of no State more remarkably, than among those of Virginia. Mr. Wythe told me, that Thomas Lee the elder Brother of Richard Henry was the delight of the Eyes of Virginia and by far the most popular Man they had. But Richard Henry was not. I asked the reason, for Mr. Lee appeared a Scholar, a gentleman, a Man of uncommon Eloquence, and an agreeable Man. Mr. Wythe said this was all true but Mr. Lee had when he was very young and when he first came into the House of Burgesses moved and urged on an Inquiry into the State of the Treasury which was found deficient in a large Sum, which had been lent by the Treasurer to many of the most influential Families of the Country, who found themselves exposed, and had never forgiven Mr. Lee. This he said had made him so many Enemies, that he never had recovered his Reputation, but was still heartily hated by great Numbers. These feelings among the Virginia Delegates, were a great Injury to Us. Mr. Samuel Adams and myself were very intimate with Mr. Lee, and he agreed perfectly with Us in the great System of our Policy, and by his means We kept a Majority of the Delegates of Virginia with Us, but Harrison, Pendleton and some others, showed their Jealousy of this Intimacy plainly enough, at times.

**Richard Henry Lee to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 3 November 1776**

I have been informed that very malignant and very scandalous hints and innuendoes concerning me have been uttered in the house. From the justice of the House I should expect they would not suffer the character of an absent person (and one in their service) to be reviled by any slanderous tongue whatever. When I am present, I shall be perfectly satisfied with the justice I am able to do myself. From your candor Sir, and knowledge of my political movements I hope such misstatings as may happen in your presence will be rectified.

**Richard Henry Lee to John Page, Philadelphia, 25 November 1776**

I wish to be Independent indeed, not of Great Britain only, but of the whole world.

**Richard Henry Lee to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 29 April 1777**

If I were to consider punctilio more than the suggestions of friendship, I should expect an answer to some of the letters I have written you, before I dispatched another. But I ever hated ceremonies, and shall not commence ceremony with you.

**William Duer to John Jay, Philadelphia, 28 May 1777**

The *Chaste* Colonel Lee will I am credibly informed be left out of the new Delegation for Virginia which is now in Agitation. The mere Contemplation of this Event gives me Pleasure. My mind is full, and I wish to unburden it; but Prudence forbids me.

**William Duer to Robert R. Livingston, Philadelphia, 9 July 1777**

I am sorry to inform you that Colonel R. H. Lee is returning to Congress Crowned with Laurels. His Smooth Discourse, and Art of Cabal have blunted the Edge of his Countrymen's Resentment, and they have lauded him Encomiums on his Patriotism and Attention to Business, which he modestly says, he is Anxious of deserving. . . .

At present there are no very great Matters in which our State is particularly interested before Congress; and indeed if they were, Mr. [Gouverneur] Morris can supply my place with great Advantage to the Reputation of the State, as well as his own. His Coolness of Temper, and happy Vein of Irony are Qualifications, which would render him a very powerful Antagonist to Mr. R. H. Lee.

I hope you will give him a Hint not to neglect this great *Orator*. You may depend upon it, he will advance his own Reputation, and be of Advantage to the Public in making the *Person* appear in that Contemptible Point of View which he really deserves.

**Richard Henry Lee to Arthur Lee, York, Pa., 27 May 1778**

My eyes are so extremely injured by their constant application, that without the aid and support of Spectacles I fear I shall soon lose the use of them. I pray you then to procure me a pair of the best Temple Spectacles that can be had. In fitting these perhaps it may be proper to remember that my age is 46, that my eyes are light colored and have been quick & strong but now weakened by constant use—My head thin between the Temples.

**Walter Stewart to Nathanael Greene, Williamsburg, Va., 29 January 1779**

The Affair between Mr. Deane and the Lees have Occasioned much Conversation in this Country? We found the People as low down as Fredericksburgh possessed with very Just Ideas of those men and their Colleagues in Congress, but Richard Henry Lee with a few Adherents have been very busy between that place and Williamsburgh. The People heard but one Story, and were from their old Attachment to the Lee Family willing to believe it. However Col. Ball and myself have been equally Industrious in placing things in a proper light, and I flatter myself the day is not far distant when the Junto will receive a Severe Shock by being deprived of one of the most Artful, designing and Wicked men the Country stands Cursed with; I mean Richard Henry Lee. It is amazing to hear of his Artifice in this state in support of a Popular Character, but the People's eyes are now Opened and I doubt whether his Oratory and Weeping will again bring Tears and Lamentations (as Usual) for his sufferings from the Assembly; they have ever been Infatuated when he held

forth to them, for whatever he said they were sure to believe.

### **James Lovell to John Adams, Philadelphia, 13 June 1779**

The eastern States are charged with wanting what they have no right to, and what is of “no interest to the southern States.” Plenty are these local sentiments lately; and R. H. Lee, with H. Laurens, are squinted at as two monsters on the other side of the Susquehanna who pursue points in which the southern States have *no* interest.

### **Benjamin Rush: Sketches**

A frequent, correct and pleasing speaker. He was very useful upon committees and active in expediting business. He made the motion for the Declaration of Independence and was ever afterwards one of its most zealous supporters.

### **Meriwether Smith to Virginia House of Delegates, Philadelphia, 25 February 1781**

In Obedience to this Order, Sir, I cannot in any other manner, satisfy the House of Delegates so well as by transmitting to them an Exact Account of my Expenditures from Sept. 1778 to Novr. 1780; during all which Time I have been honored with the public Confidence in Office. They will see, at one View, the whole of my Conduct, and may from thence form a Judgment respecting my Motives & the Advantages I have received; and, I trust, that to every unprejudiced Mind, the Rectitude of my Intentions in all things relating to the publick Interest will manifestly appear. At the same Time, I confess that I feel myself but little concerned about the Result of a publick Inquiry into my Conduct, having the fullest Confidence in the Justice & Candor of the House of Delegates; and, whatever may be the Event, I am prepared to meet it with that Fortitude & zealous Perseverance in the Service of the Public which have hitherto distinguish[ed] my Conduct, & supported me amidst every Species of Persecution from a Man [R. H. Lee], who, from the *Duplicity of his Conduct, & thyself-interested Motives by which I discovered him to be actuated*, forfeited the good Opinion I had before entertained of him, and ought to have lost the public Confidence. “It is the portion of Humanity to err.” I may have erred in this Matter; but ——. *nil conscire sibi,\** ——.

\*To be conscious of no wrong-doing.

### **John Quincy Adams: Diary, 30 July 1785**

Dined with a large Company, at the president’s. He entertains three times a week, and has commonly about 25 persons at his table; all men.

### **Robert Hunter, Jr.: Travel Diary, 12 October 1785**

The President [of Congress] was disappointed in fifteen members of Congress. He is a polite, well-bred man, and quite a gentleman in his manners. His conversation is rather reserved, though he seemed to pay us particular attention as strangers. I am told he is the most elegant speaker in Congress and quite a saint in his disposition. He gave me a very polite invitation to pay him a visit

at Alexandria in Virginia. He will be there, he says, about the 15th of November, when His Excellency will be very happy to see me. . . . We came home at seven to drink tea, highly pleased with the President's company. He is one of the richest gentlemen in the state of Virginia.

**Richard Henry Lee to John Adams, Chantilly, Westmoreland County, Va.,  
12 December 1785**

The State of my health is so precarious (being at present prevented by the Gout in my right hand from writing my Self) that it is uncertain when I shall be permitted to return to Congress.

**Edmund Randolph to James Madison, Richmond, Va., 22 March 1787**

Colonel R. H. Lee has been appointed [to the Constitutional Convention]. . . . This seemed proper from the conspicuousness of the Character, and the respect, due to past services. The objection to his unfederal opinions was so urgently pressed, that the council consisting of eight were equally divided. I gave the decision, from a hope that himself and his friends might be attached to the union, on those principles, which can alone support it.

**Nathan Dane to Rufus King, New York, 16 July 1787**

There appears to be a disposition to do business [in Congress], and the arrival of R. H. Lee is of considerable importance. I think his character serves at least in some degree, to check the effects of the feeble habits and lax modes of thinking in some of his Countrymen.

**Louis Guillaume Otto to Comte de Montmorin, New York, 23 October 1787**

Congress itself is not agreed on the great powers that it is a question of giving to it. Mr. Richard Henry Lee, the former President, is at the head of the opposition. . . . This new Gracchus,\* My Lord, has all the talents necessary to make an impression; he has against him men equally distinguished by their merit, their knowledge, their services; but he pleads the cause of the people.

\*Gracchus, Tiberius Sempronius (163–133 BC), and Gaius Sempronius (153–121 BC). Roman political figures. Tiberius, as tribune of the people, in 133 BC, tried to restore the class of small farmers by limiting the amount of public land a citizen might occupy and sponsoring a greater subdivision of lands. Gaius, as tribune of the people, in 123–122 BC, proposed to replace the existing aristocratic government with a democratic one, and advocated the extension of Roman citizenship to the Latins. Both brothers were killed in riots.

**John Armstrong to George Washington, Carlisle, Pa., 20 February 1788**

Mr. R. Lee's letter too, tho' wrote with decency, contains more of the air, than the Substance of the Statesman; and in which he has fallen below himself.

**William Smith of Maryland to Otho H. Williams, New York, 21 June 1789**

Colo. R. H. L. was at the head of this scheme, And from his Assiduity & address, he expects, & I have no doubt he will obtain a considerable influence, you are I believe on Such terms with him as to afford an opportunity of corresponding. He is very open to flattery, as is most men.

**Richard Henry Lee to Patrick Henry, New York, 14 September 1789**

It is now proposed to adjourn [Congress] on the 22d. instant, but I think it will be the last of the month at least before this event takes place—And when it does I shall return to Virga. And lay up for the Winter Season which is pretty uniformly my Gouty Season—

**Thomas Tudor Tucker to St. George Tucker, New York, 15 September 1789**

Mr. L. has been said to be a Man of republican Principles. Whether this be true or not I am intirely ignorant. If it be true in any degree it wou'd be imprudent to drive him over to the aristocratical Party, already too powerful. Were we to make every Man our Enemy who is not *wholly* in Sentiment with us, we shou'd have very little Support left.

**Edmund Randolph: History of Virginia**

In the quarter of Virginia included in the proprietorship of the Northern Neck, Richard Henry Lee had gained the palm of a species of oratory rare among a people backward in refinement. He had attuned his voice with so much care that one unmusical cadence could scarcely be pardoned by his ear. He was reported to have formed before a mirror his gesture, which was not unsuitable even to a court. His speech was diffusive, without the hackneyed formulas, and he charmed wheresoever he opened his lips. In political reading he was conversant, and on the popular topics dispersed through the debates of Parliament, his recollection was rapid and correct. Malice had hastily involved in censure for a supposed inconsistency of conduct upon the Stamp Act; but the vigor and perseverance of his patriotism extorted from his enemies a confession that he deserved the general confidence which was afterwards conceded to him.

**John Adams to John Trumbull, New York, 25 April 1790**

I despair of ever seeing the Ancient Dominion wiser; their stupid and mulish systems have many a time brought America to the brink of ruin. And R. H. Lee as little as you and I think of him as a statesman, is as great as any one I ever knew from that State excepting only Washington yet I am on perfectly good terms with them all.

**William Maclay: Journal, 12 June 1790**

R. H. Lee, the Man Who gave independence (in One Sense) to America, a man of a clear head, and great experience in public business. Certainly ambitious, and Vain glorious but his passions seek gratification, in serving the public.

**John Adams: Autobiography, 1776 (written in 1802)**

Mr. Richard Henry Lee was not beloved by the most of his Colleagues, from Virginia, and Mr. Jefferson was set up to rival and supplant him. This could be done only by the Pen, for Mr. Jefferson could stand no competition [i.e., Jefferson could not effectively compete] with him or any one else in Elocution and public debate.

**Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, Monticello, 22 August 1813**

[On Lee's writing style.] His was loose, vague, frothy, rhetorical. He was a poorer writer than his brother Arthur.

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

Richard Henry Lee was the Cicero of the house. His face was on the Roman model; his nose Cesarean; the port and carriage of his head, leaning persuasively and gracefully forward; and the whole contour noble and fine. Mr. Lee was, by far, the most elegant scholar in the house. He had studied the classics in the true spirit of criticism. His taste had that delicate touch, which seized with intuitive certainty every beauty of an author, and his genius that native affinity which combined them without an effort. Into every walk of literature and science, he had carried this mind of exquisite selection, and brought it back to the business of life, crowned with every light of learning, and decked with every wreath, that all the muses and all the graces could entwine. Nor did those light decorations constitute the whole value of knowledge, with an activity of observation, and a certainty of judgment, that turned that knowledge to the very best account. He was not a lawyer by profession; but he understood thoroughly the constitution both of the mother-country and her colonies; and the elements also of the civil and municipal law. Thus, while his eloquence was free from those stiff and technical restraints which the habits of forensic speaking are so apt to generate, he had all the legal learning which is necessary to a statesman. He reasoned well, and declaimed freely and splendidly. The note of his voice was deeper and more melodious than that of Mr. Pendleton. It was the canorous voice of Cicero. He had lost the use of one of his hands, which he kept constantly covered with a black-silk bandage, neatly fitted to the palm of his hand, but leaving his thumb free; yet, notwithstanding this disadvantage, his gesture was so graceful and so highly finished, that it was said he had acquired it by practicing before a mirror. Such was his promptitude, that he required no preparation for debate. He was ready for any subject, as soon as it was announced; and his speech was so copious, so rich, so mellifluous, set off with such bewitching cadence of voice, and such captivating grace of action, that, while you listened to him, you desired to hear nothing superior, and indeed thought him perfect. He had a quick sensibility and a fervid imagination, which Mr. Pendleton wanted. Hence his orations were warmer and more delightfully interesting, yet still, to him those keys were not consigned which could unlock the sources either of the strong or tender passions. His defect was, that he was too smooth and too sweet. His style bore a striking resemblance to that of Herodotus, as described by the Roman orator: "He flowed on, like a quiet and placid river, without a ripple."\* He flowed, too, through banks covered with all the fresh verdure and variegated bloom of the spring; but his course was too subdued, and too beautifully regular. A cataract, like that of Niagara, crowned with overhanging rocks and mountains, in all the rude and awful grandeur of nature, would have brought him nearer to the standard of Homer and of Henry. . . .

On the opposite side of the house sat the graceful [Edmund] Pendleton, and the harmonious Richard Henry Lee, whose aquiline nose, and Roman profile struck me much more forcibly than that of Mr. Henry, his rival in eloquence. . . . I was then between nineteen and twenty, had never heard a speech in public, except from the pulpit—had attached to the idea I had formed of an orator, all the advantages of person which Mr. Pendleton possessed, and even more the advantages of voice which delighted me so much in the speeches of Mr. Seethe fine polish of language, which that gentleman united with harmonious voice, so as to make me sometimes fancy that I was listening to some being inspired with more than mortal powers of embellishment, and all the advantages

of gesture which the celebrated Demosthenes considered as the first, second, and third qualification of an orator.

\*Orat. XII, 39.

### **John Adams to Richard Henry Lee, Quincy, Mass., 11 August 1819**

With your grandfather, Richard Henry Lee, I served in Congress from 1774 to 1778, and afterwards in the Senate of the United States in 1789. He was a gentleman of fine talents, of amiable manners, and great worth. As a public speaker, he had a fluency as easy and graceful as it was melodious, which his classical education enabled him to decorate with frequent allusion to some of the finest passages of antiquity. With all his brothers he was always devoted to the cause of his country.

### **Thomas Jefferson to George Alexander Otis, Monticello, 25 December 1820**

Mr. Lee was considered as an Orator & eloquent, but not in that style which had much weight in such an assembly of men as that Congress was.\* Frothy, flimsy, verbose, with a musical voice and chaste language, he was a good pioneer but not an efficient reasoner.

\*The Second Continental Congress.

### **James Madison to Richard Henry Lee, Montpelier, Va., 9 February 1824**

Your Grandfather Richard Henry Lee, of whom you are preparing a biographical Memoir, having borne a conspicuous part in our Revolution, I should very cheerfully make any contribution in my power towards the portrait of his character which is destined for posterity. But altho we were always on a footing of mutual cordiality my intercourse with him furnished fewer opportunities of witnessing his private life & his public career, than were enjoyed by others of his friends, and by some of his fellow laborers on the political theatre. The distance of our abode from each other did not admit of social communications: and my first acquaintance with him was subsequent to the close of the revolutionary struggles, the period during which his powers & public virtues were drawn into their greatest display. At later periods we were, in several instances, associated in public life, and I was thence a witness of his patriotic zeal, and of his captivating eloquence. Occasions occurred also on which I shared in the private gratifications afforded by the charms of his colloquial gifts, and polished manners. Beyond these remarks I could speak of him as one of the distinguished worthies of the distinguished times in which his lot was cast, in the general terms only which expressed the rank he held in the estimation of his Country.

### **Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, Monticello, 18 December 1825**

I presume you have received a copy of the life of Richd. H. Lee, from his grandson of the same name, author of the work. You and I know that he merited much during the revolution. Eloquent, bold, and ever watchful at his post, of which his biographer omits no proof. I am not certain whether the friends of George Mason, of Patrick Henry, yourself, and even of Genl. Washington may not reclaim some feathers of the plumage given him, notable as was his proper and original coat.

**James Madison Conversation with Jared Sparks, April 1830**

The talents of R. H. Lee were respectable, but not of the highest order.

## William Lee

**John Adams: Diary, 15 September 1775**

Lee is Brother of Dr. Arthur, the late Sheriff of London, and our old Friend Richard Henry, sensible, and patriotic, as the rest of the Family.

## Pierre Charles L'Enfant

**John Quincy Adams: Diary, 22 July 1785**

Dined with Mr. van Berkel, where I met with Major L'Enfant, who appears to be a sensible man.

**John Quincy Adams: Diary, 27 July 1785**

Perhaps I judge wrong. Major L'Enfant is a true frenchman.

## Francis Lewis

**Benjamin Rush: Sketches**

A moderate Whig, but a very honest man, and very useful in executive business.

## Merewether Lewis

**Thomas Jefferson to Dr. Benjamin Smith Barton, Washington, 27 February 1803**

You know we have been many years wishing to have the Missouri explored, and whatever river, heading with that, runs into the western ocean. Congress, in some secret proceedings, have yielded to a proposition I made them for permitting me to have it done. It is to be undertaken immediately, with a party of about ten, and I have appointed Captain Lewis, my Secretary, to conduct it. It was impossible to find a character who, to a complete science in Botany, Natural History, Mineralogy, and Astronomy, joined the firmness of constitution and character, prudence, habits adapted to the woods, and familiarity with the Indian manners and character, requisite for this undertaking. All



the latter qualifications Captain Lewis has. Although no regular botanist, &c., he possesses a remarkable store of accurate observation on all the subjects of the three kingdoms, and will therefore readily single out whatever presents itself new to him in either; and he has qualified himself for taking the observations of longitude and latitude necessary to fix the geography of the line he passes through.

## Benjamin Lincoln

### **George Washington to John Hancock, Trenton Falls, 20 December 1776**

In speaking of Genl. Lincoln, I should not do him justice, were I not to add, that he is a Gentleman well worthy of notice in the Military line, he commanded the Militia from Massachusetts last Summer or Fall rather, and much to my satisfaction, having proved himself on all occasions, an active, spirited, sensible man.

### **John Adams to William Tudor, Philadelphia, 11 March 1777**

We have made Lincoln a Major General. I wish to know how it is liked and how he behaves. I wish We had better Materials than We have, but We must use the best We can get.

### **George Washington to Philip Schuyler, Head Quarters, Ramapough, N.J., 24 July 1777**

I have directed General Lincoln to repair to you as speedily as the State of his Health, which is not very perfect, will permit him. This Gentleman has always supported the Character of a brave, active, judicious Officer and as he is exceedingly popular and much respected in the State of Massachusetts, to which he belongs, he will have a Degree of Influence over the Militia, which cannot fail being highly advantageous. I intend him more particularly for the Command of the Militia and I promise myself it will have a powerful Tendency to make them turn out with more cheerfulness, and to inspire them with perseverance to remain in the Field, and with Fortitude and Spirit, to do their Duty while in it. The Confidence they have in him will certainly operate forcibly towards producing these desirable Ends. You intimate the propriety of having a Body of Troops stationed somewhere about the Grants [i.e., Vermont], the Expediency of which Measure appears to me evident. It would make General Burgoyne very circumspect in his Advances; keep him in continual Anxiety for his Rear, and believe him to leave the posts behind him much stronger than he would otherwise do, and might answer several other valuable purposes—General Lincoln cannot be more serviceable than in the Command of this Body and no person can be more proper for it than him.

### **De Lisle (William Livingston), *New Jersey Gazette*, 31 December 1777**

Lincoln . . . served with reputation last year at the head of a body of Massachusetts militia: Genius and industry supplied, in some measure, the want of a military education; he was cool, determined, and enterprising.

**James Lovell to Benjamin Lincoln, York, Pa., 2 February 1778**

You may be assured that your Name and Character is as highly esteemed in Congress at both Camps, than which I cannot find a more honorable Comparison.

**John Penn to Richard Caswell, Philadelphia, 18 October 1778**

General Lincoln goes to South Carolina to take command there. The latter is from Massachusetts Bay. He is highly spoken of—both as a Soldier and a Gentleman—by all that know him, especially by the Southern Officers.

**Gouverneur Morris to Nathanael Greene, Philadelphia, 24 December 1781**

Lincoln is our Minister of War and the Election to the Office has been to you [Nathanael Greene] most honorable, for all agreed that you were the proper Person and nothing prevented your unanimous appointment but an Opinion almost as unanimous that if recalled from your Command you could not be replaced. That you was not chosen I do truly lament for I can with great Truth assure you that I know not a Man who is in my Opinion equal to the Office except yourself. It is however much Consolation to me that General Lincoln is an honest and a sensible Man, and what is also of Importance that he is an industrious Man. These are qualities which will make him a good Minister if not a great one, and these qualities will go far in restoring or rather creating that order and Regularity without which a Minister of the most superior Genius and Talents would be only a Lion in the Toils, and be the sooner exhausted in Proportion to his superior Strength and more vigorous Struggles.

**Samuel Osgood to John Lowell, Philadelphia, 19–25 September 1782**

I do not wish to flatter the Abilities of Genl. Lincoln, least he should grow too vain, & think himself really the Man alone of the Und. States. But he has been, & still is, of infinite Service to us, in his Office. He has succeeded in his Office beyond my most sanguine Expectations.

**Samuel Osgood to John Adams, Annapolis, Md., 7 December 1783**

It was fortunate for the United States, that the Secretary at War, was a true Republican, and totally oppos'd to Intrigue & aristocratical Measures—had Genl. Schuyler, who nearly carried the Choice, been plac'd in that Office, It is a great Question in my Mind, whether it would have been practicable for Congress, to have disbanded their Army. The Financier only wanted a person in that Office who would go any Lengths with him: a Number of Officers as well as Citizens were ripe for the Measure. It had undoubtedly been deliberately digested—And the Finance Office was probably the Center of Motion. I am well informed that an Attempt was made to draw in the late Secretary at War—But he checked it with a Firmness, that will always do him Honor. Such a Triumvirate, would have been too powerful for the United States; and Heaven only knows what Kind of a Form our federal Government would have assum'd. The present, by that Party, is held in the utmost Detestation, & they will persevere inflexibly in their Attempts for any Alteration, by Intrigue, & by open Force, when Matters are matured, & promise more Success, than at present.

**Luigi Castiglioni: Sketches of American Soldiers, 1787**

From peaceful country life he was called once more to command the troops gathered in the internal regions of Massachusetts by order of the state to repress the incipient rebellion; and, in fact, his prudence in avoiding bloodshed and his firmness when the means of conciliation proved useless succeeded quickly in putting down the rebellion that had broken out and demonstrated that it would have been difficult to choose a better man for that task.

General Lincoln is already a man of advanced age, but of sturdy physique, simple in his dress, but of a good and cordial character.

**Fisher Ames to Nathaniel Bishop, New York, post-17 May 1789**

I think Gen. Lincoln one of the best and most useful our state ever bred.

**Fisher Ames to John Lowell, New York, 11 July 1789**

I trust that General Lincoln will not be neglected. He possesses qualities which are very valuable in any country. The negligence and corruptibility of public officers produce almost every where great defalcations of revenue. In addition to merit of the purest kind, Genl. Lincoln has the talent of conciliating the affections of people, and of rendering the transaction of a business obnoxious in its nature more palatable than any other person within my knowledge.

**Theodore Sedgwick to Caleb Davis, New York, 9 August 1789**

Most sincerely do I rejoice that the respectable & virtuous Genl. Lincoln has a place worthy his acceptance. It was an object very near my heart.

**Fisher Ames to John Lowell, New York, 3 September 1789**

I saw Gen. Lincoln with the truest satisfaction. he was in fine Spirits, and seemed to manifest the change in his situation & prospects, tho' his firmness in adverse circumstances has been painfully tried.

**Pierce Butler and Ralph Izard to Anthony Wayne, New York, 1 October 1789**

The rank & abilities of the Commissioners [to the Southern Indians] can not fail making a proper impression on the minds of the Indians. The great Warrior at the head of them.

**George Washington: Opinion of General Officers, 9 March 1792**

Sober, honest, brave and sensible, but infirm; past the vigor of life, and reluctantly (if offered to him) would accept the appointment.

**Timothy Pickering to George Washington, Trenton, N.J., 13 September 1798**

[Pickering's response to President Adams's suggestion of Lincoln as second in command to George Washington.] Lincoln is always asleep.

**John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 14 May 1810**

Lincoln's education, his reading, his general knowledge, his talent at composition was superior to Washington's; his services more arduous, dangerous, and difficult than Washington's.

**John Adams to the Printers of the *Boston Patriot*, June 1812**

[Alexander Hamilton allegedly said that] Lincoln was sleepy and lethargick.

## Levi Lincoln

**Theodore Sedgwick to Rufus King, Stockbridge, Mass., 26 September 1800**

For myself I fear that Lincoln will prevail. We could not send from this state a worse man. He is dangerous from his weight of character, and more from his being an enthusiast.

## Samuel Livermore

**New Hampshire Gazette, 28 August 1788**

The station at the head of our Supreme Court, the dignity with which he has presided there, and the many proofs of real learning and abilities, which our worthy citizen, the Hon. Samuel Livermore, Esq., has for many years exhibited, through the late contest with Great Britain, both in the legislature of the state and great Congress of America, presents him to his countrymen as worthy a station in the new government. It will be no disparagement to many valuable characters there, to say that none excelled this deserving man, in the late Convention of this state, in zeal, arguments, and influence, to lead to its adoption, which caused such general joy, through the continent. His line of life has furnished him with every requisite to fit him for the science of legislation, whereby he will afford much benefit to the community and honor to the states, should he be distinguished in the expected election, as one of the Senate of the new government.

**“A Friend to the People,” Exeter, N.H., *Freeman's Oracle*, 1 November 1788**

I took notice, not long since, of a piece in your paper, marking out the abilities of the Honorable Chief Justice Livermore, of this state, and concluded by recommending him as a suitable person for a Senator in Congress under the new government. I agree with him in sentiment, that the abilities of the gentleman are great, and I will venture to say further, that I do not think we have a gentleman in this state that will grace the bench equal to him. The aged and experienced lawyers look to him as their superior in science; the young admire his knowledge and abilities. They consider him as the essence of law—not like the young practitioner who appears with his abridgments, but like an old sage carries the whole code of laws with him. In short, the wisdom of the Council was most excellently marked out in the appointment of the gentlemen, as justices on the superior bench, added to their extraordinary natural abilities and acquirements.

. . . I think those gentlemen who have really considered the matter well would not wish to see the Honorable Chief Justice removed from the seat he is now placed upon; for he presides with great dignity. The innocent courts his smiles, and the guilty fears his frowns.

**“Friend to Amendments,” Exeter, N.H. *Freeman’s Oracle*, 8 November 1788**

I cannot fall in with the notions of the *friend to the people*\* in your last with regard to the unfitness of our worthy President [John Langdon] and Chief Justice [Samuel Livermore] for Senator in the new Congress. As to the latter I know he holds an office of importance and fills it as nicely as a man can do, for I have been on the jury and heard him talk as glibly as ever I heard a minister read a sermon in the pulpit without having a word writ. But if there is another office of greater importance that he is better qualified to fill than any other man, it seems to me good policy would not oppose his being hoisted into it. And such an office is that for which he is a candidate [i.e., U.S. Senator].

\*“A Friend to the People,” *Freeman’s Oracle*, 1 November 1788.

## Brockholst Livingston

**John Jay to Philip Schuyler, Elizabethtown, N.J., 5 May 1776**

This Letter will be delivered to you by Henry Brockholst Livingston, my Brother in Law, whom I take the Liberty of introducing to your Acquaintance. He intends engaging in the Service as a Volunteer, and for that Purpose will embark with Coll. Dayton’s Battalion. I can with great Truth assure You, that this young Gentleman’s Conduct has hitherto been very satisfactory to his Family & Friends, and if he perseveres in it, I flatter myself he will receive from you every Mark of that Attention, which, as a General, you so readily extend to [. . .] and as a Friend, to your most obedt. Servt.

**Robert Troup to Alexander Hamilton, New York, 12 September 1791**

I have received your favor respecting the special authority necessary to be given to those who represent the original holders of Bank Shares in the choice of Directors and have done as you requested. The speculations in those shares have been prodigious & much money has been made & lost by them. The fluctuations in their value have excited alarm in the minds of the well wishers to public credit as tending to exhibit an unsound state of our finances. The truth is that the fluctuations are principally owing to the arts & contrivances of mere jobbers & amongst these our friend Brockholst stands in the foremost ranks. A few days ago a cursed scheme of depression was planned & executed under his immediate patronage as is universally said & believed. It frightened the Directors of our Bank & seriously injured many persons among whom are some of Brockholst’s particular friends. The current has since taken a contrary direction but it is conjectured it will not carry the shares to as high a value as they have generally been at since the bubble first broke. By the by our friend Brockholst some how or other has an unfortunate story eternally pursuing him—And as he rises in fortune he appears to sink in reputation. His last maneuver has occasioned a separation between him & several who were his warmest supporters.

## Edward Livingston

**John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 28 April 1796**

Livingston looks like Horror.

## Gilbert Livingston

**James Kent to Nathaniel Lawrence, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., 21 December 1787**

Gilbert who came up this week with Capt. North says he saw you & that you are so firmly on the side of *his darling* anti-federal cause that I am to expect a long & severe letter from you in support of your Principles & to my own confusion. He thinks it in a way that leads me to suppose you said something expressive of your intention to write to me copiously on the subject. I own I stand in need of hearing some abler advocate than Gilbert for he has so much of the fanatic & so much of the boy about him that he is enough to ruin the best cause even if it is the amiable Religion of our Saviour.

**Robert R. Livingston: Speech in the New York Convention, 24 June 1788**

[In referring to a speech in the New York Convention] Such arguments as these seem rather to be the dreamings of a distempered fancy, than the cool rational deductions of a deliberate mind.

## Philip Livingston

**Gouverneur Morris to John Jay, York, Pa., 23 May 1778**

Because Mr. Livingston is sick. On this last head I have to add that I really am very apprehensive on the old Gentleman's account for truly I beleive he will not escape if he does escape without much Pain, Sickness & other of those Circumstances which render Life no such desirable Boon as those who observe the Tenaciousness of Mankind about it would be led to imagine. What his Disease is no Body pretends to know. I who am no Phisician will however venture to guess that it is an Impostumation in his Stomach or perhaps in some one of the Viscera still more important in a Complaint of that nature. This I gather from a quick Pulse, Languor, continued sickness, some Pain and much Uneasiness about the Part I suppose to be affected, a Decline of strength & Flesh, Hectic appearance. But I will not play the Doctor to you at least who never plays it.

# Robert R. Livingston

## **Robert Morris to John Jay, Philadelphia, 4 February 1777**

I hate to pay Compliments and would avoid the appearance of doing it but I cannot refrain from saying I love Duane, admire Mr. Livingston & have an Epithet for you if I had been writing to another.

## **John Jay to Gouverneur Morris, Fish Kill, N.Y., 3 June 1778**

We may say of our friend Robert as somebody did of Homer “Aliquando nodit” [sometimes he ties himself up].

## **Gouverneur Morris to Robert R. Livingston, Philadelphia, 22 September 1778**

I repose myself entirely with you and Jay. You shall act for me. Let me tell you that your Tempers are so very different that you will make the best Friends in the World. You are too lazy, he is too proud. He is too hasty, you too inattentive to the public Affairs. Shall I go on. No. With all the Faults both of you have I have as many as both of you together. You both pardon me therefore you must pardon each other. And do you hear. None of your Stomaching.

## **John Jay to Gouverneur Morris, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., 21 October 1778**

I confess I was chagrined and plainly blamed our friend. Nor did I pay that respect to his excuses which perhaps prudence directed; to me they appeared very trifling indeed. But from this affair I did not apprehend a breach or coolness between us. Neither his nor my conduct have to my knowledge given any such indications. I certainly disapprove of his inattention, or to speak more plainly, of his laziness, and that lazy he is too many know and all his friends regret. But though this trouble may sometimes ruffle my temper, it will never destroy my friendship for him. Connections of this kind should neither be hastily formed nor dissolved. . . .

I have written to you repeatedly, since I have been here, but not having received an Answer to either of my Letters, I conclude they have not reached you. To the Disgrace of Human Nature, it has become a common Practice to betray the Confidence we repose in each other either by opening Letters, or not sending them to the Persons to whom they are directed. I have seen so many Instances of such Behaviour that I am determined to use more Caution hereafter. This Letter therefore, is directed to the Care of Col. Hamilton, who will send it by the first Express—

## **John Jay to Robert R. Livingston, Philadelphia, 14 March 1779**

That You have deserved well of your Country is agreed, and that you became latterly a little relaxed, is not disputable. You have never been thrown out or distanced in the Pursuit of Virtue, but like some game Horses, you sometimes want a Whip. This is a coarse Simile, Friendship will pardon it.

**John Jay to Robert R. Livingston and Gouverneur Morris, Philadelphia, 29 September 1779**

Your Manners, Abilities & Address will give New York great Advantage in contested Matters [in Congress].

**Chevalier de la Luzerne to Comte de Vergennes, Philadelphia, 11 August 1781**

I am persuaded, My Lord, that this assembly could not have made a better choice. Mr. Livingston has filled with honor the place of Chancellor of the State of New York,\* he is familiar with business, he is perfectly informed about that of the United States, he writes well, he speaks with sufficient eloquence, he has much affability of character, he is sufficiently confident, his conduct has been uniform since this revolution, he makes a profession of attachment to the Alliance; and to these good qualities, as a public man, he adds a reputation of great probity as a private one. He is from one of the oldest families in the State of New York, a near relation of Mr. Jay, and his friend; he enjoys a considerable fortune. The esteem which I have for him does not prevent me from telling you that he is reproached with reason for his considerable indolence and for loving his repose above all.

\*Livingston was elected the Confederation's first secretary for foreign affairs.

**Chevalier de la Luzerne to Comte de Vergennes, Philadelphia, 1 November 1781**

Mr. Livingston enjoys a great reputation; he has experience and knowledge, but he is entirely a stranger to the type of affairs with which he has just been charged.\* His natural talents will perhaps place him on the level of this work; he is not unaware of the part that I have had in his election, but it has taken place only by a majority of Seven States, which was the most appropriate measures, he knows that most of the others were against him, and he seems up to now to hold himself apart from all observations to which personal liaisons with me could give rise.

In addition, he is a man of a uniform character, sure and prudent. We have to fear on his part neither that he may let himself be penetrated by the English nor that they find the means to influence him.

\*Livingston was just named as the Confederation's secretary for foreign affairs.

**Arthur Lee to Francis Dana, Philadelphia, 6 July 1782**

It may be proper to inform you that the present Secretary for Foreign Affairs is a decided partisan of Dr. F. & enemy to Mr. Adams. Like a number of other Parrots here, he praises the former by rote, & undertakes to tutor the other. Whatever you see or receive from him you may consider as dictated by the French Minister. He made him what he is, & policy, or gratitude keeps him from disobeying or renouncing his Maker.

**John Jay to Gouverneur Morris, Paris, 13 October 1782**

I find you are industrious and, of consequence, useful; so much the better for yourself, for the public, and for our friend Morris, whom I consider as the pillar of American credit.



**Chevalier de la Luzerne to Comte de Vergennes, Philadelphia, 2 January 1783**

I had the honor of informing you last summer of Mr. Livingston's disposition to tender his resignation in the course of this winter. The state of his private affairs, the impossibility of meeting the expenses which living in Philadelphia requires with the salary which he receives from Congress, and the necessity of choosing between the post of Secretary of Congress for foreign Affairs and that of Chancellor of the State of New York determined him to renounce the former. . . .

Mr. Livingston, a man estimable for his talents and his character, has had no occasion to display much competency during the term of his Ministry; I have been nothing but pleased with his confidence, and I am vexed that, circumstances having forced him to this course, from which I have in vain attempted to deter him, his vanity did not permit him to live here without fame, and his dependence *on Congress* completed making his functions disagreeable.

**Elias Boudinot to Benjamin Franklin, Philadelphia, 18 June 1783**

He is a very worthy deserving Character, and the United States will suffer greatly by his resignation, tho' I really think him justified in attending to the calls of his private affairs.

**John Adams to Abigail Adams, Paris, 1 September 1783**

Our late Minister of foreign affairs appears to have been a mere Puppet danced upon French Wires electrified from Passy. I hope there will be, an End of this Philosophical and political Conjururation, if not, I am determined to get out of its striking Distance. Hitherto, altho it has tossed and tormented me, and prevented me from doing a great Part of the Good I meditated, and am Sure should have accomplished without it: yet it has not totally defeated me. Yet it has defeated me in so many Things and others in so many more, that it is high time to break it up.

**Samuel Osgood to John Adams, Annapolis, Md., 7 December 1783**

That Mr. L—n was capable of . . . many Specimens of his Disposition to Intrigue. . . .

The Secretary for foreign Affairs was a Man of more acquired knowledge, and less natural Ability [than Superintendent of Finance Robert Morris]. A Person as completely devoted to promote all the Views and Wishes of our good Ally, as his Minister and Secretary could possibly be. His Office was mysterious, & secret to all those, who ought to have a perfect Knowledge of all it contain'd. It was undoubtedly public to all those, to whom it ought to have been a profound Secret. Two foreigners were private Secretaries in that Office; one of which it is probable was educated a Jesuit, the other had been a French Priest. With this Arrangement, it is impossible to suppose that any Thing of Importance, would not be communicated immediately to such as the Interest of the united States required, should not know it. More real Injury resulted from this Arrangement, than could possibly have done, if there had been no Office and no pretended Secrets. It was a Snare to our faithful foreign Ministers, and a secure Asylum, to such as were dispos'd to prostrate the Honor & Dignity of the United States, before the polluted Shrine of Monarchy. In this Situation it was impossible to support an honest Man; All our foreign Ministers, excepting one, have felt very severely the Effects of this unaccountable System. It is strange that so many, who seem to be republicans, were so easily drawn into the Snare, and that they either could not, or would not see, that it was giving up at once, all the Privileges for the Preservation of which we had freely lavish'd our Blood & Treasure.

**Robert Livingston to James Duane, Manor Livingston, N.Y., 13 February 1788**

I wrote Robert fully on the affair of the Chancellor's erecting mills on my waters, he has two [—] Stones on it & will I suppose choose 2 more shortly & so rob me of the greatest part of my Grist, for his Craving disposition has no End, he is what we Call mill mad. I am determined not to be frightened by him tho' he should bring 10 suits against me.

**"A Citizen, and real Friend to Order and good Government," New York *Daily Advertiser*, 21 March 1788**

Mr. Livingston's legal knowledge, integrity and virtue are eminently conspicuous in his decisions in the Court of Chancery of this State; his address is elegant and easy, and his manners fascinating, his speeches are replete with information, and delivered with propriety; his power of reasoning uncommonly great, like the torrent of a mighty river, he bears all before him; and as a statesman and an orator, he is not excelled in the United States.

**Melancton Smith to Nathan Dane, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., 28 June 1788**

The speech published for the Chancellor is the substance of what he delivered—He and I have come in contact several times—but he has ceased hostilities—He is a wretched reasoner, very frequently—

**"Extract of a letter from a Gentleman at Poughkeepsie," New York *Daily Advertiser*, 28 June 1788**

[In the New York ratifying convention] the Chancellor . . . spoke charmingly indeed. He let fancy rove unchecked, and such bold and figurative language I before had never heard. The house was perfect silence—the eyes and mouths of every man were fixed and open—and his eloquence, like a river which had been abridged for a time, burst forth irresistibly. When he first rose his eyes bespoke passion, his countenance indicated an injury received, and it required no great sagacity to pronounce him a speaker in quest of revenge [because of a previous speech by Melancton Smith responding to Livingston's former speech]. . . . In speaking of poverty and riches, the Chancellor was fancifully eloquent, and fellingly descriptive; in remarking on his property, he was delicately pleasing; but in speaking of his ambition, the greatness of his mind and the virtues of his soul shone brilliantly splendid, and even his enemies, who would feign be blind to his talents, could not but view his virtues with envy and admiration.

**DeWitt Clinton to Charles Tillinghast, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., 2 July 1788**

The Chancellor the day before yesterday attempted to ridicule the opposition out of their arguments—but yesterday he was severely attacked by G[ilbert] Livingston, [John] Williams, and M[elancton] Smith—he however answered and acquitted himself with great address. One remark of Judge Smith's was so apropos to the Chancellor's character that I cannot help setting it down. The Chancellor had ridiculed the notion of being afraid to lodge the purse and the sword in Congress in an able manner. Judge Smith in answer observed that he had no objection to giving the Congress the sword, but he was for restricting their power over the purse—because the Honorable Gentleman very well knew that some people who had no great inclination to handle the sword,

were notwithstanding very fond of thrusting their hands into the purse—this observation the Chancellor in reply passed over—Williams indirectly compared him to a Windmill—

**John Brown Cutting: “Extract of a letter from Poughkeepsie,” July 11th 1788**

. . . the Chancellor also spoke with his usual energy and brilliancy.

**Otto’s Biographies, Fall 1788**

Chancellor of the state and Secretary for Foreign Affairs before Mr. Jay. Infinitely more qualified than the latter to fill such a consequential post; of a great personal importance, well-educated and sincerely attached to France. He has, however, a little arrogance in his character. We hope Mr. Livingston would fill an influential place again and especially that of Secretary for Foreign Affairs, if Mr. Jay resigns.

**John Jay to Robert R. Livingston, undated**

When our friendship first commenced, or rather when it was particularly professed to each other (the 29 March 1765) and for sometime after, I took it into my head that our dispositions were in many respects similar. Afterwards I conceived a different opinion. It appeared to me that you had more vivacity. Bashfulness and pride rendered me more staid. Both equally ambitious but pursuing it in different roads. You flexible, I pertinacious. Both equally sensible of indignities, you less prone to sudden resentments. Both possessed of warm passions, but you of more self-possession. You formed for a citizen of the world, I for a College or a Village. You fond of large acquaintance, I careless of all but a few. You could forbid your countenance to tell tales, mine was a babler. You understood men and *women* early, I knew them not. You had talents and inclination for intrigue, I had neither. Your mind (and body) received pleasure from a variety of objects, mine from few. You was naturally easy of access, and in advances, I in neither. Unbounded confidence kept us together—may it ever exist!

**James Kent: Memoirs**

The tall and graceful person of Chancellor Livingston, and his polished wit and classical taste, contributed not a little to deepen the impression resulting from the ingenuity of his argument, the vivacity of his imagination, and the dignity of his station.

**Philip Schuyler to Alexander Hamilton, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., 5 January 1795**

I am this moment informed that Chancellor Livingston has proposed to our friends at New York to form a Coalition, I do not know on what principles. I hope he has not met with encouragement for I am persuaded any kind of Coalition with him would be Injurious to us.

**Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz: *Travels through America*, 14 August 1798**

In his youth Chancellor Livingston was one of the best and most eloquent lawyers; later because of severe sickness he lost his hearing and today occupies the position of Chancellor. This office, which is very important, is found in only a few states. He himself comprises, what is called here, a *Court of Equity*, and on moot points, where the law is contrary to equity, he is appealed to. He

himself decides not according to the law, but rather according to what is fair and right. From his judgment one can appeal to the Senate, which is the highest tribunal.

The Chancellor has an income of no more than 4 or 5 thousand piasters per year, that is about 45 thousand Polish slotys, mostly from leases. He does no farming apart from haying and fruit-growing. For servants he has 4 negroes and 4 negresses. The table is excellent, the family well dressed, the library large and well chosen. He has none of the cares and troubles of farming. A well-kept and comfortable house placed in the most beautiful situation in the world, a wife, one would not wish for better, two daughters of whom one, by inclination of heart and the wishes of the family, married a Livingston, the other will do so soon. In a word—an estate, honor, reputation, everything which a man could want, fate has showered down on him. Is he happy? It seems to me he is happy, although not completely so. the passion which torments a man when all others are sated, that passion, I say, Ambition, disturbs his peace, that is the wish for a higher position than he possesses, to be governor of the state; for this he has tried twice, but because he was in the opposition, John Jay, a man of lesser reputation, prevailed.

Though this large and wealthy family are, for so they identify themselves, members of the Republican party, in truth they are simply dissatisfied with the government. The public blames the Chancellor for haughtiness and ambition.

### **James Kent: Journal, 1833**

[Egbert Benson] said that Robert R. Livingston was never a sound man, & that he went over to democracy because John Jay & not he was appointed Ch. Justice.

## **William Livingston**

### **John Adams: Diary, 1 September 1774**

Mr. William Livingston from the Jerseys, lately of New York, was there [at the First Continental Congress]. He is a plain Man, tall, black, wears his Hair—nothing elegant or genteel about him. They say he is no public Speaker, but very sensible, and learned, and a ready Writer.

### **John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 22 September 1776**

I shall enclose to you, Governor Livingston's Speech, the most elegant and masterly, ever made in America.

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

Governor Livingston is confessedly a Man of the first talents, but he appears to me rather to indulge a sportiveness of wit, than a strength of thinking. He is however equal to anything, from the extensiveness of his education and genius. His writings teem with satire and a neatness of style. But he is no Orator, and seems little acquainted with the guiles of policy. He is about 60 years old, and remarkably healthy.

**Otto's Biographies, Fall 1788**

Governor since the beginning of the Revolution, well-educated, steady, patriotic, preferring the public good to his own popularity and often endangering his position by stopping the legislature from passing bad laws. Although he doesn't cease to censure the people, he is always re-elected, since even his enemies acknowledge that he is one of the most capable and most virtuous men on the continent. He is the father of Mrs. Jay and Mr. Broc. Livingston.

**Obituary, *New Jersey Journal*, 28 July 1790**

On Sunday, about eleven o'clock at night, the 25th instant, departed this life, at his seat near this town, and was interred yesterday afternoon in the Presbyterian church-yard of this place, with singular honors, his Excellency WILLIAM LIVINGSTON, Esquire, Governor of this State.

He was descended from an ancient and respectable family in the State of New-York. His genius far superior to the common level—his mind was great and comprehensive—his imagination brilliant, refined and elegant—and his memory strong and retentive. His literary accomplishments were various, distinguished, and shining—his religion was without superstition and bigotry—his morals of the strictest kind—and his political principles altogether republican. He carried a beautiful and excellent pen. His writings both in prose and poetry are fraught with the evidences of a strong mind, an accurate judgment, an elegant taste, and extensive knowledge—In satire, few were his equals, and none his superiors. He at all times distinguished himself as the firm friend to the liberties of America induced the Legislature of this State, early in the revolution, to elect him to the first seat of honor in their government, which they have annually conferred upon him ever since. He lived an active, useful, and important life, and died much and universally lamented, in the 67th year of his age. He always made religion the basis of his other virtues,—had a well ground confidence in the Supreme Being upon principle of Christianity, and died with the most exemplary devotion.

Inn a word, his Excellency was an able civilian, a chaste writer, who united an excellent genius with the qualities of the heart—a steady and uniform patriot, and a fosterer of the sciences.

By this dispensation of Providence, the State has sustained an heavy loss—his children are deprived of an affectionate parent, who ever consoled them in their afflictions, and solaced their wants—and the republic of letters one of its brightest ornaments.

**John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Quincy, Mass., 12 November 1813**

There was [in the First Continental Congress] a little aristocracy among us, of talents and letters. . . . Billy, *alias* Governor Livingston, and his son-in-law, Mr. Jay, were of this privileged order.

## William Smith Livingston

**George Clinton to George Washington, New Windsor, N.Y., 9 October 1777**

[On the British attack on Forts Montgomery and Clinton—5,000 British, Hessians and Loyalists attacking 600 Americans.] This was about two o'clock in the afternoon; and the enemy approached the works and began the attack, which continued with few intervals till about five o'clock, when

an officer appeared with a flag. I ordered Lieutenant-Colonel Livingston to meet him without the works and know his business. Colonel Livingston having demanded his rank and business, he was told by the bearer of the flag, that he was Lieutenant-Colonel [Mungo] Campbell, and that he came to demand the surrender of the fort to prevent the effusion of blood. Colonel Livingston replied that he had no authority to treat with him, but, if they would surrender themselves prisoners of war, they might depend upon being well treated; and if they did not choose to accept of those terms they might renew the attack as soon as he should return within the fort, he being determined to defend it to the last extremity. As soon as Lieutenant-Colonel Livingston returned, the attack was renewed with great violence.

**Benjamin Tallmadge to Samuel Blachley Webb, Upper Dublin near Germantown, Pa.,  
13 November 1777**

Colo. Livingston I am told is a Prisoner—Unfortunate Man, I pity him much, but his amiable Lady more, because I really believe She will be more concerned for him, than he for himself. His Zeal for our Cause, & determination not to hear it ridiculed may perhaps bring him into trouble, but his Connections in N. York & the British Army will be of great service to him.

**Nathanael Greene to Catherine Greene, West Point, N.Y., 4 September 1779**

I am told Col. Livingston has made a great deal of money, in driving a trade not altogether allowable. He has boasted of his good fortune himself, and set some envious tongues in motion. I wish he was a little more prudent in his matters; as it must pain the family to find his vanity frustrating their prospects, as well as injuring their reputations. It is an old observation: what is bred in the bone, can never be got out through the Skin. Strong habits, and a natural propensity, to the marvelous, overcome every prudential consideration. That is the Col.'s misfortune, as his friends says. However it is said he has certainly made upwards of £20,000 this Summer. This is a pretty affair for a young family.

**James Tillary to Alexander Hamilton, New York, 14 January 1793**

I might give you a dish of Local Politics, but your supplies on that score issue from many sources of more competent information. I flatter myself that I have been, & shall be, in some measure, useful in keeping from Congress that Whore in Politics William S. Livingston.

## Livingston Family

**James Tillary to Alexander Hamilton, New York, 14 January 1793**

I might give you a dish of Local Politics, but your supplies on that score issue from many sources of more competent information. I flatter myself that I have been, & shall be, in some measure, useful in keeping from Congress that Whore in Politics William S. Livingston. The Chancellor [Robert R. Livingston] is removed from the Presidency of the Scotch Society [i.e., the St. Andrew's Society of New York City], & that has been ascribed to my interference.

The truth is I wished to make the whole family unpopular, because in my Judgment, by their apostasy they had rendered themselves quite odious.

## Abraham Lott

**Nathanael Greene to Jeremiah Wadsworth, Morristown, N.J., 19 May 1778**

Mr. Lott a Gentleman of this place purchased a small quantity of Rum and Salt at Boston, which he cannot get on, owing to the State Laws. I shall be much oblige to you to give him such a pass, that his property may come forward. He wants the Salt for his family's use. Part of the spirits he proposes for Sale.

Mr. Lott's character for generosity and hospitality is too well known to say any thing upon the subject. I am under particular obligations to him; and shall esteem myself so to you, if you'll be kind enough to enable him to get forward his property.

## James Lovell

**Abigail Adams to James Lovell, Braintree, Mass., 8 January 1782**

You Query why Portia [Abigail Adams] has not written to you as usual. The real reason was that she was perplexed. The character which she supposed she had in former times corresponded with, was that of a Man of Honour in publick and in private Life, sincere in his professions a Strict observer of his *vows*, faithful to his promises—in one word a Moral and a Religious Man. Shall the cruel tongue of Slander impeach and abuse this character by reporting that the most sacred of vows is violated, that a House of bad fame is the residence, and a Mistress the *Bosom associate*. *Truth* is the one thing wanting to forever without a pen.

## John Lowell

**John Adams: Diary, 20 January 1766**

[Daniel] Leonard says that Lowell is a Courtier, that he rips about all who stand foremost in their opposition to the Stamp Act, at your, Otis's and Adams's &c. and says that no Man can scribble about Politicks without bedaubing his fingers, and every one who does is a dirty fellow. . . . Lowell is however very warm, sudden, quick, and impetuous and all such People are unsteady. Too much Fire. *Experientia docet*.

**Christopher Gore to Rufus King, Boston, 6 August 1789**

The appointments to the Judicial seats will soon be made—We flatter ourselves in Massachusetts that one of the Supreme court will betaken from this state—the general expectation is, that

our friend Lowell, will be appointed, an associate judge—and no doubt was ever entertained of this event—till we heard that our Chief Justice [William Cushing] was in nomination—Should the Chief Justice be appointed, we shall lose an excellent man; whose talents are peculiarly fitted for the place he fills, without tendering any great service to the United States; and a very good man will be extremely mortified—The Chief Justice, now 56 years of age, cannot long be an active member of the court, and he has new habits, and new modes of legal decision to acquire—on these grounds, I much doubt if he would be an acquisition to the Union, or at least an acquisition to the Govt. as Lowell—but in addition to all the consequences, which will be apparent, in your mind, to taking him from our state bench—Lowell's situation, from such neglect of him, will be intolerable—Having held a similar rank, under the old confederation, which commission is superseded only by the adoption of the new government; the neglect to appoint him to the Supreme court, will imply a conviction, in the mind of him, who appoints, that he had been tried & found wanting—this certainly will be disgraceful to a very good and able man—from a regard to the happiness & welfare of this state, and a wish that the just expectations of a valuable part of the Community should not be disappointed—and that an honorable & good man should not be extremely mortified I request your attention & influence in this appointment—and I am sure if you see no just reason, on national grounds, for preferring Cushing to Lowell, you will endeavor that the latter shall not be disgraced.

## Rawlins Lowndes

### Christopher Gadsden to William Samuel Johnson, Charleston, S.C., 16 April 1766

. . . my friend Mr. Lowndes, a gentleman who though without the happiness of hardly a common education, yet by his own application and close attention to public business has made himself deservedly conspicuous and respected.

### Rawlins Lowndes: Speech in the South Carolina House of Representatives, 18 January 1788

Mr. Lowndes concluded his speech . . . Popularity was what he never courted but on this point he spoke merely to point out those dangers to which his fellow citizens were exposed [from the Constitution]; dangers that were so evident, that when he ceased to exist, he wished for no other epitaph than to have inscribed on his tomb, Here lies the man that opposed the constitution, because it was ruinous to the liberty of America.

### James Lincoln: Speech in the South Carolina House of Representatives, 18 January 1788

[Lincoln] concluded, by returning his hearty thanks to the gentleman [Lowndes] who had so ably deserved the title of Man of the People, he on this occasion most certainly did.

### David Ramsay to Benjamin Rush, Charleston, S.C., 17 February 1788

. . . Mr. Lownds made many objections against it [i.e., the Constitution]; but they may be referred to a narrow illiberal jealousy of New: England & the contracted notions of a planter who



would sacrifice the future naval importance of America to a penny extraordinary in the freight of rice mistakenly supposed to be less in British than American bottoms. He was an enemy to independence & though President of the State in 1778 he voluntarily resumed the character of a British subject during their usurpation. He has not one continental or federal idea in his head nor one of larger extent than that of a rice barrel.

## George Lux

### Samuel Chase to John Adams, Harford Town, Md., 24 July 1775

Give Me Leave to introduce to your Notice Mr. George Lux a Son of a Gentleman who is my particular Friend, a Man of the most worthy and amiable Character.

## Chevalier Luzerne

### Samuel Holten to Benjamin Lincoln, Philadelphia, 18 December 1779

The Chevalier de la Luzerne the new Minister, & Mr. Marbois his secy., are very agreeable Gentlemen, and appear desirous of strengthening the alliance between the two Countries, and assisting us against the common enemy.

## Samuel Lyman

### “Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman in Berkshire,” Northampton, Mass., *Hampshire Gazette*, 29 April 1789

I . . . support the election of Samuel Lyman, Esq. [as U.S. Representative], whom I think a man of a fair, candid, unbiased mind, accompanied with good sense and information; and I think from the violent abuse attempted against him, the conclusion is natural that he is a man of integrity and a true friend to liberty.

### John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 15 March 1794

. . . Mr. Lyman from Northampton discovers a Disposition to go wrong. . . . [He] is a Pupil and Correspondent of Sullivan, certainly; probably of Jarvis and Austin. He has a false a Subtle and a malicious Countenance: This I know, from my Sight. That he is so in reality I have heard. But a Pettifogger a Tool to Sullivan is enough to decide a Character, and by Such Character is this Country to be cursed with War, and an Additional Debt of hundreds of Millions, while they are every hour declaiming against

**Mathew Carey: Memoirs**

Lyman . . . Mr Lyman and Mr Page, two members of Congress, the former from Massachusetts the latter from Va when Congress sat in Philada used frequently to spend evenings at my House, take tea of Coffee and drink wine. They both smoked segars, and used to discharge the saliva copiously on the open stove which Mrs C. took great pains to keep bright—and every morning after they had been with us the servant had extra trouble in scouring—I considered myself amply indemnified for my tea and Coffee and wine & for the disfiguration of the Stove by their conversation which was delectable.

## William Lyman

**John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 15 March 1794**

A General Dearbourne from the Eastward and a Mr. Lyman from North hampton discover a Disposition to go wrong. Whether the first wants Employment in an Army I know not. The last is a Pupil and Correspondent of Sullivan, certainly: probably of [Charles] Jarvis and [Benjamin] Austin. He has a false, a Subtle and a malicious Countenance: This I know, from my Sight. That he is so in realty I have heard. But a Pettifogger, a Tool to Sullivan is enough to decide a Character: and by Such Characters is this Country to be cursed with War, and an Additional Debt of hundreds of Millions, while they are every hour declaiming aginst Debts and Taxes.

**John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 30 April 1796**

Mass. Has 3 of the worst [U.S. Representatives]—two of whom are moral Characters, of a Levity altogether inconsistent with the Principles Practices Habits and Wishes of their Constituents. I mean Lyman & Dearborne. Dissipation is their prevailing Virtue and all they have to boast. I wish their Constituents would institute an Inquiry into their Conduct. Varnum is an Obstinate fool.

## Thomas Lynch

**John Adams: Diary, Philadelphia, 31 August 1774**

We dined with Mr. Lynch, his Lady and Daughter at their Lodgings, Mrs. McKenzies. And a very agreeable Dinner and Afternoon we had notwithstanding the violent Heat. We were all vastly pleased with Mr. Lynch. He is a solid, firm, judicious Man.

**Silas Deane to Elizabeth Deane, Philadelphia, 7 September 1774**

Mr. Lynch is a Gentleman about Sixty, and could You see him, I need say nothing more. He has much the appearance of Mr. Jas. Mumford deceased, dresses as plain, or plainer, is of immense fortune & has his Family with him. He wears the Manufacture of this Country, is plain, Sensible, above Ceremony, and carries with him more Force in his very appearance, than most powdered

Folks, in their Conversation. He wears his hair straight, his Clothes in the plainest order, and is highly esteemed.

**John Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 30 September 1775**

Mr. Lynch, you have seen before. He is an opulent Planter of great Understanding and Integrity and the best affections to our Country and Cause.

**Samuel Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 3 October 1775**

Mr. Lynch is a Man of Sense and Virtue.

**John Adams to William Heath, Philadelphia, 5 October 1775**

Mr. Lynch is from S. Carolina, Coll. Harrison from Virginia, both Gentlemen of great Fortune, and respectable Characters, Men of Abilities and very staunch Americans.

**James Warren to John Adams, Watertown, Mass., 20 October 1775**

I think Mr. Lynch very Sensible, and Judicious.

**Samuel Huntington to Joseph Trumbull, Philadelphia, 20 February 1776**

This morning at About Eight o'Clock the Worthy Mr Lynch of South Carolina was taken with an Appoplectic fit; remains very Ill tho' his reason is restored & Speech So as to answer questions. May God restore his health & usefullness.

**Josiah Bartlett to John Langdon, Philadelphia, 21 February 1776**

Yesterday Mr Lynch was taken with an apoplectick fit and was thought to be near his end, but is something better to Day.

**Joseph Hewes to Samuel Johnston, Philadelphia, 1 March 1776**

An express is now waiting, he is sent to So. Carolina by the delegates of that Province to inform them of this days appointments and of the Critical state of Mr. Lynch's health who a few days ago had an appoplectic stroke and is now in great danger.

**Joseph Hewes to Samuel Johnston, Philadelphia, 4 March 1776**

Mr. Lynch continues very ill, tho better than he has been.