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Samuel Adams to Elizabeth Adams, Baltimore, Md., 26 December 1776

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 George Lux to Nathanael Greene, Baltimore, Md., 26 May 1778
 Samuel Holden Parsons to Nathanael Greene, Redding, Conn., 11 April 1779
 Peter Oliver: Origin & Progress of the American Rebellion, 1782

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Samuel H. Parsons to John Adams, c. May–August 1789
 George Washington: Opinion of General Officers, 9 March 1792

William Paca

John Adams: Diary, Philadelphia, 10 October 1774

Galloway, Duane, and Johnson, are sensible and learned but cold Speakers. Paca is a deliberator too.

Benjamin Rush: Sketches

A good tempered worthy man, with a sound understanding which he was too indolent to exercise, and hence his reputation in public life was less than his talents. He was beloved and respected by all who knew him and considered at all times as a sincere patriot and honest man.

William Tilghman to Tench Coxe, Chestertown, Md., 20 April 1788

. . . he is a good tempered man.

Otto's Biographies, Fall 1788

Former governor of Maryland. Equally good orator and lawyer and to whom a justifiably respected reputation gives a great preponderance. He is against the new Constitution.

Nathaniel Ramsay to George Washington, Charles-Town, Md., 12 November 1789

I cannot help expressing my fears that the extent of the duties required of the District Judge, increased by the number of places at which he must attend to hold his Courts, when com[—?]ary will be an effectual [—?]ing accepted by any lawyer of abilities and reputation.

I must crave your Excellencies forgiveness for presuming to hint that perhaps Mr. Paca might be an exception to the forgoing supposition. He is a man of an un[—?] fortune, and at present engaged in no business either public or private, he has ever shown a disposition to be amused and pleased with Judicial proceedings, and his Integrity and abilities as a Judge is in high estimation.

He has in an eminent degree possessed the confidence of this State, and whatever he may have lately lost of it by his opposition to the present government, he is now fast regaining by his heart [—?] cheerful acquiescence under it.

Ephraim Paine

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

[Paine] is a man of strong natural parts and as strong prejudices; his zeal is fiery, his obstinacy unconquerable. He is as primitive in his notions, as in his appearance. Without education, he wants more knowledge, or more tractableness.

Robert Treat Paine

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 18 November 1775

The late Appointment* you mention gives me many very serious Thoughts. It is an Office of high Trust, and of vast Importance at any Time: But of greater at this, than any other. The Confusions and Distractions of the Times, will encumber that Office with embarrassments, expose it to dangers and Slanders, which it never knew before. Besides I am apprehensive of other Difficulties. Mr. [William] Cushing has been on that Bench, and was my senior at the Bar. Will he accept under another? Mr. Paine too has taken an odd Turn in his Head of late, and is so peevish, passionate and violent that he will make the Place disagreeable, if he does not think better of it. Mr. Cushing, Mr. Serjeant [Sargeant] and Mr. Read are very able Men, and Mr. Paine might be so if he was undisturbed in his Mind. But the Unhappy Affair in his Family, his Church and Town, appears to me to have affected his Mind too much. It is a melancholly Thought to me, because I have ever had a Friendship for him. I am really sorry that he has exposed his Character and Reputation so much of late as he has done, by certain Airs he has given himself, and it has many Times, in the beginning of the summer, when I was in an ill state of Health made me unhappy. But since the Adjournment, I have avoided Altercation with him, and this I shall continue to do.

*John Adams was frecently appointed chief justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court.

John Adams to William Cushing, Philadelphia, 9 June 1776

I am not a little chagrined that Sargeant has declined, having entertained great Hopes, from his Solid Judgment and extensive knowledge. Paine has acted in his own Character, though scarcely consistent with public Character, which he has been made to wear. At this, however, I am not much mortified, for the Bench will not be the less respectable, for having a little less Wit, Humor, Drollery, or Fun upon it—very different Qualities being requisite in that Department.

John Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 27 July 1776

I assure you the Necessity of your sending along fresh delegates here, is not chimerical. Paine has been very ill for this whole Week and remains in a bad way. He has not been able to attend Congress, for several days, and if I was to judge by his Eye, his Skin, and his Cough, I should conclude he never would be fit to do duty there again, without a long Intermission, and a Course of Air, Exercise, Diet, and Medicine.

Benjamin Rush to John Adams, Philadelphia, 13 April 1790*

Robert Treat Paine. He was educated a clergyman and afterwards became a lawyer. He was facetious in his manner both in public and in private. He had a certain obliquity of understanding which prevented his seeing things in the same light that they struck other people. He opposed everything, and hence he got the name of the *Objection-maker* in Congress. He was thought by his colleagues to be cool to independence. He was a useful member of Congress, especially upon committees, where he was punctual and faithful.

*Rush quotes from his biographical sketches of 1775 and 1776.

Benjamin Rush: Sketches

He was educated a clergyman, and afterwards became a lawyer. He had a certain obliquity of understanding which prevented his seeing public objects in the same light in which they were seen by other people. He seldom proposed anything, but opposed nearly every measure that was proposed by other people, and hence he got the name of “The Objection Maker” in Congress. His temper was amiable, and his speeches and conversation often facetious. He was moderate in his feelings for his country. This was so much the case, that he told me the first time I saw him in 1774 that his constituents considered him as one of their “cool devils.” He was notwithstanding a firm, decided, and persevering patriot, and eminently useful in Congress, particularly upon committees, in which he was remarkable for his regular and punctual attendance.

Thomas Paine

Thomas Paine and the *Pennsylvania Magazine*, 1775

[Robert] Aitken contracted with Paine to furnish, monthly, for this work [i.e., the *Pennsylvania Magazine*] a certain quantity of original matter; but he often found it difficult to prevail on Paine to comply with his engagement. On one of the occasions, when Paine had neglected to supply the materials for the Magazine, within a short time of the day of publication, Aitken went to his lodgings, and complained of his neglecting to fulfill his contract. Paine heard him patiently, and coolly answered, “You shall have them in time.” Aitken expressed some doubts on the subject, and insisted on Paine’s accompanying him and proceeding immediately to business, as the workmen were waiting for copy. He accordingly went home with Aitken, and was soon seated at the table with the necessary apparatus, which always included a glass, and a decanter of brandy. Aitken remarked, “he would never write without *that*.” The first glass put him in a train of thinking; Aitken feared the second would disqualify him, or render him untractable; but it only illuminated his intellectual system; and when he had swallowed the third glass, he wrote with great rapidity, intelligence, and precision; and his ideas appeared to flow faster than he could commit them to paper. What he penned from the inspiration of the brandy, was perfectly fit for the press without any alteration, or correction.*

*“Aitken was a man of truth, and of an irreproachable character. This anecdote came from him some years before his death.” Isaiah Thomas: *The History of Printing in America*, 1810.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 28 April 1776

The Writer of Common Sense, and the Forrester, is the same Person. His Name is Payne, a Gentleman, about two Years ago from England, a Man who General Lee says has Genius in his Eyes.

Thomas Paine to Henry Laurens, 1778

I am neither farmer, manufacturer, mechanic, merchant nor shopkeeper. I believe, however, I am of the first class. I am a *Farmer of thoughts*.

Gouverneur Morris: Speech in Congress, 7 January 1779

What then do we ask? To turn a Man out of Office who ought never to have been in it. Let us examine the Circumstances. Mr. Payne Secretary to the Committee of foreign affairs stiling himself Secretary of foreign Affairs acknowledges himself to be the Author of a Publication highly dishonorable to his most Christian Majesty and very injurious to him and us. Dishonorable to the King of France because it is in direct Contradiction to repeated Assurances given to the British Court. Injurious to our mutual Interests because it enables the Ministers of Great Britain to charge France with a Breach of the Treaties and call upon other Courts for the Performance of Engagements entered into upon a View to that Contingency. Gentlemen who know Mr Payne may be unwilling to believe this. It deserves Consideration. The Secretary of foreign Affairs is the Person who of all others must from the Nature of his Office be best acquainted with such Transactions. His Assertions therefore contain the fullest Weight which Knowledge can give. And not only so but from the Importance of that Office none but the most approved and exalted Character could be by a wise People intrusted to fill it. And therefore The Ideas annexed to such a Character will serve to authenticate his Assertions. Foreigners Sir have not an adequate Idea of the Manner in which Business is conducted in this House nor the Difficulties we have labored under. They are led therefore to compare every Thing on the Scale of their own Experience—And what would be the Idea of a Gentleman in Europe of this Mr. Payne. Would he not suppose him to be a Man of the most affluent Fortune born in this Country of a respectable Family with wide and great Connections and endued with the nicest Sense of Honor? Certainly he would suppose that all these Pledges of Fidelity were necessary to a People in our critical Circumstances. But alas, what would he think Should he accidentally be informed that this our Secretary of foreign Affairs was a meer Adventurer from England without Fortune, without Family or Connections ignorant even of Grammar? and one who had tamely submitted to be kicked and cuffed from one End of America to the other. Could he believe this? And if assured of the Fact, And if possessed only of common Sense, would he not think that we were devoid of it? And yet, Sir, this is the Man whom we would remove from Office And this is the Man who hath been just now puffed as of great Importance.

Gouverneur Morris: Speech in Congress, 9 January 1779

[Paine was] a mere Adventurer from England, without Fortune, without Family or Connections, ignorant even of Grammar.

Thomas Paine to Henry Laurens, Philadelphia, 14 September 1779

I find myself so curiously Circumstanced that I have both too many friends and too few. . . . I know but one kind of life I am fit for, and that is a thinking one, and, of course, a writing one. But I have confined myself so much of late, taken so little exercise, and lived so very sparingly, that unless I alter my way of life, it will alter me. I think I have a right to ride a horse of my own but I cannot now even afford to hire one, which is a situation I never was in before, and I begin to know that a sedentary life cannot be supported without Jolting exercise.

Elkanah Watson: Memoirs, 1781

About this period, the notorious Tom Paine arrived at Nantes, in the *Alliance* frigate, as Secretary of Colonel [John] Laurens, Minister Extraordinary from Congress, and took up his quarters at my boarding-place. He was coarse and uncouth in his manners, loathsome in his appearance, and

a disgusting egotist; rejoicing most in talking of himself, and reading the effusions of his own mind. Yet I could not repress the deepest emotions of gratitude towards him, as the instrument of Providence in accelerating the declaration of our Independence. He certainly was a prominent agent, in preparing the public sentiment of America for that glorious event. The idea of Independence had not occupied the popular mind, and when guardedly approached on the topic, it shrunk from the conception, as fraught with doubt, with peril, and with suffering.

In 1776 I was present, at Providence, Rhode Island, in a social assembly of most of the prominent leaders of the State. I recollect that the subject of independence was cautiously introduced by an ardent Whig, and the thought seemed to excite the abhorrence of the whole circle.

A few weeks after, Paine's *Common Sense* appeared, and passed through the continent like an electric spark. It everywhere flashed conviction, and aroused a determined spirit, which resulted in the Declaration of Independence, upon the 4th of July ensuing. The name of Paine was precious to every Whig heart, and had resounded throughout Europe.

On his arrival being announced, the Mayor, and some of the most distinguished citizens of Nantes, called upon him to render their homage of respect. I often officiated as interpreter, although humbled and mortified at his filthy appearance, and awkward and unseemly address. Besides, as he had been roasted alive on his arrival at L'Orient, for the * * * * and well basted with brimstone, he was absolutely offensive, and perfumed the whole apartment. He was soon rid of his respectable visitors, who left the room with marks of astonishment and disgust. I took the liberty, on his asking for the loan of a clean shirt, of speaking to him frankly of his dirty appearance and brimstone odor, and prevailed upon him to stew for an hour, in a hot bath. This, however, was not done without much entreaty, and I did not succeed, until receiving a file of English newspapers, I promised, after he was in the bath, he should have the reading of them, and not before. He at once consented, and accompanied me to the bath, where I instructed the keeper in French (which Paine did not understand) to gradually increase the heat of the water, until "le Monsieur etait bien bouilli."* He became so much absorbed in his reading that he was nearly par-boiled before leaving the bath, much to his improvement and my satisfaction.

*Boiled through and through.

Sarah Bache to Benjamin Franklin, Philadelphia, 14 January 1781

I hear Mr. Payne is gone to France with Mr. Lawrence [John Laurens]. He did not call on us. I had a little dispute with him more than a year ago about Mr. Deane, since which time he has never even moved his hat to me. He has lately wrote a Pamphlet called Public Good, which you will receive. Tis called sensible, but he appears throughout to be much afraid of his old employers the Lees, who are interested Virginians. There never was a man less beloved in a place than Payne is in this, having at different times disputed with everybody. The most rational thing he could have done would have been to have died the instant he had finished his *Common Sense*, for he never again will have it in his power to leave the World with so much credit.

Joseph Reed to Nathanael Greene, Philadelphia, c. December 1781

Your old Friend Mr. Paine has proved himself the Mercenary his Enemies formerly called him having deserted his old Friends & Connections. He is now in the actual Pay of the Men & a supporter of the measures a few Years ago he labored so much to demolish. I am told he pleads Necessity. Many a poor Dog has gone to the Gallows with the same Plea.

Thomas Paine, *Philadelphia Freeman's Journal*, 1 May 1782

I have ever kept a clear head and an upright heart, and am not afraid of being replied to. I never took up a matter without fully believing it to be right, and never yet failed in proving it so.

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

I know not how it happened, that since my arrival in Philadelphia, I had not seen Mr. Payne, that author so celebrated in America, and throughout Europe, by his excellent work, entitled, *Common Sense*, and several other political pamphlets. M. de la Fayette and I had asked the permission of an interview for the 14th in the morning, and we waited on him accordingly with Colonel [John] Laurens. I discovered, at his apartments, all the attributes of a man of letters; a room pretty much in disorder, dusty furniture, and a large table covered with books lying open, and manuscripts begun. His person was in a correspondent dress, nor did his physiognomy belie the spirit that reigns throughout his works. Our conversation was agreeable and animated, and such as to form a connection between us, for he has written to me since my departure, and seems desirous of maintaining a constant correspondence. His existence at Philadelphia is similar to that of those political writers in England, who have obtained nothing, and have neither credit enough in the state, nor sufficient political weight to obtain a part in the affairs of government. Their works are read with more curiosity than confidence, their projects being regarded rather as the play of imagination, than as well concerted plans, and sufficient in credit ever to produce any real effect: theirs is always considered as the work of an individual, and not that of a party; information may be drawn from them, but not consequences; accordingly we observe, that the influence of these authors is more felt in the satirical, than in the dogmatical style, as it is easier for them to decry other men's opinions than to establish their own. This is more the case with Mr. Payne than any body; for having formerly held a post in government, he has now no connection with it; and as his patriotism and his talents are unquestionable, it is natural to conclude that the vivacity of his imagination, and the independence of his character, render him more calculated for reasoning on affairs, than for conducting them.

Thomas Paine, *The Crisis*, 1783

It was the cause of America that made me an author.

"An Observer," *Boston Independent Chronicle*, 22 January 1789

The Hon. Timothy Paine, Esq., is respectable for his abilities, his integrity, and moderation.

"Lancaster," *Massachusetts Spy*, 19 February 1789

Mr. Paine . . . is a friend to the substantial yeomanry of the district, is equally true. The integrity of his heart, and the great purity of his morals, have never been questioned. He early received a liberal education, and has always been esteemed a man of real substantial abilities, though not of the most splendid kind. Yet he is possessed of that kind of knowledge, which really will always render him extremely useful in public assemblies. No man distinguishes the right from the wrong readier than he. The great use that has been made of him, as a referee and an arbitrator, in this as well as in other counties, demonstrates that he is esteemed for his abilities and impartiality. He is

a man of large landed property, and which lands are in the commonwealth of Massachusetts, and mostly in your district.

Gouverneur Morris: Diary, 26 January 1790

Although he has an excellent Pen to write he has but an indifferent Head to think.

John Trumbull to John Adams, Hartford, Conn., 17 April 1790

Such a writer as Payne, scribbling to the passions & feelings of the moment, will for that moment be much more applauded, but must content himself with a temporary & decaying reputation—His *Common Sense* cannot now be read without contempt & disgust.

Etienne Dumont: Recollections of Mirabeau and of the First Two Legislative Assemblies of France, 1791

I could easily excuse, in an American, his prejudice against England but his egregious conceit and presumptuous self-sufficiency quite disgusted me. He was drunk with vanity. If you believed him, it was he who had done everything in America. He was an absolute caricature of the vainest of Frenchmen. He fancied that his book upon the Rights of Man ought to be substituted for every other book in the world; and he told us roundly that, if it were in his power to annihilate every library in existence, he would do so without hesitation in order to eradicate the errors they contained and commence with the Rights of Man, a new era of ideas and principles. He knew all his own writings by heart, but he knew nothing else. . . . Yet Paine was a man of talent, full of imagination, gifted with popular eloquence, and wielded, not without skill, the weapon of irony.

Benjamin Rush to Jeremy Belknap, Philadelphia, 6 June 1791

Have you read Paine's and Priestley's answers to Burke's pamphlet? They are both masterly performances, although they possess different species of merit. Paine destroys error by successive flashes of lightning. Priestley wears it away by successive strokes of electricity.

Pierce Butler to John Rea, Philadelphia, 18 November 1791

In Paynes book ther is much good sense, tho' nothing new, express'd in vulgar language, yet he reasons close & forcibly.

Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*, II, 1792

Independence is my happiness, and I view things as they are, without regard to place or person; my country is the world, and my religion is to do good.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 14 January 1793

I expect e'er long to hear that Pain is Split and pliced for an Aristocrat: perhaps roasted or broiled or fried. He is too lean to make a good Pye, but he is now in company with a Number, who are admirably qualified and disposed to feed upon each other.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 2 March 1793

[William Stephens] Smith says that my Books are upon the Table of every Member of the Committee for framing a Constitution of Government for France except Tom Paine, and he is so conceited as to distain to have any Thing to do with Books.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 22 December 1793

It is reported this Luminary is coming to America. I had rather two more Genets should arrive.

Thomas Paine, *Age of Reason*, I, 1794

I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life.

John Adams to Charles Adams, Quincy, Mass., 11 September 1794

As it is many Years Since I have lost all my former esteem for Mr. Paine's Character both as a Man and a Politician, his last Publication and the consequent Declension of his Character among virtuous Men, has been no Surprize to me. It is a Pity that his ridiculous "Age of Reason": had not appeared before his ranting "Rights of Man." That the poison concealed in it, might have been Suspected from the hateful Character of the Physician who prescribed it.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 28 December 1794

The Clergy of New England have trumpeted Paine and Robespierre till they begin to tremble for the Consequences of their own Imprudence.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 2 January 1796

This sounds like the Bombast of Mad Tom.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 15 January 1796

So poor Tom Paine is gone to see whether there is any State besides the present. Heaven be praised that he is gone there, instead of coming to America. "If plagues and Earthquakes break not heaven's design Why then a Paine or Jacobine?" He was an instrument of much mischief.

John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, London, 5 May 1796

Mr. Paine has written another pamphlet to which he has as usual given an eccentric title. It is "the decline and fall of the English system of finance."* Like all the former writings of that political Harlequin, it contains some coarse wit, some shrewd remarks, some whimsical combinations, with a vanity still inflating, and which has already swolen him to such a size, that we are tempted to believe the experiment of the frog in the fable, may be sometimes successful.—I send one of this pamphlet by the present opportunity, and if you think it worth reading, it will amuse you.

*Thomas Paine, *The Decline and Fall of the English System of Finance* (Paris and London, 1796).

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 8 December 1796

They kept back Paine's Letter Several Weeks, presuming no doubt that it would not promote their Election. It appeared for the first, this morning. I think, of all Paine's Productions it is the weakest and at the same time the most malicious. The Man appears to me to be mad—not drunk. He has the Vanity of the Lunatick who believed himself to be Jupiter the Father of Gods and Men.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 22 January 1797

I have read Peters censor.* He is a full Blooded English Man. I want to see him craking Pain's Bones. That Wretch has however written a Book which even the Jacobins will blush to advocate. I think he has Done his business in this Country. There are More Persons who will detest him for his abuse of Washington than for his infidelity.

*William Cobbett, writing as "Peter Porcupine," had censored Paine's criticism of President Washington for failing to obtain Paine's release from a French prison. In *Procupine's Political Censor, for December, 1796* (Philadelphia, 1796).

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 3 March 1797

Tom Paine's Letter to the President has greatly Served the cause of Liberty and Religion. Even the Jacobins are ashamed of him. He is considered as an apostate an outcast. Like Cain there is a Mark sit upon him. He is accursed on the Earth,

"And his Name shall like his carcass Rot
Alive abhord, and Dead forgot"*

*"Thy name shall like thy carcass rot,/In sickness spurn'd, in death forgot" (Edward Moore, Fable XIV, "The Sparrow, and the Dove," *Fables for the Female Sex* (London, 1744), lines 303–4.

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Philadelphia, 17 March 1798

Tom Paine is again using his weapons, but they have lost their Poison very much in this Country. He is perfectly well known and detested very generally.

***The Port Folio* (Philadelphia), 18 July 1801**

. . . that the loathsome Thomas Paine, a drunken atheist, and the scavenger of faction, is invited to return in a national ship, to America, by the *first magistrate of a free people* . . . by Mr. Jefferson, to hazard such an insult to the moral sense of the nation.

Gazette of the United States (New York), 21 July 1801

. . . that living opprobrium of humanity, TOM PAINE, the infamous scavenger of all the filth which could be raked from the dirty paths which have been hitherto trodden by all the revelers of Christianity. . . .

. . . and when that infamous letter* of Tom Paine arrived in this country, a letter which must stamp upon the author perpetual abhorrence, in the estimation of every American. . . .

*Paine's letter that attacked President George Washington for not doing more to obtain Paine's release from a French prison during the Reign of Terror.

John Adams: Autobiography, 1776 (written in 1802)

Paine soon after the Appearance of my Pamphlet [*Thoughts on Government*] hurried away to my Lodgings and spent an Evening with me. His Business was to reprehend me for publishing my Pamphlet. Said he was afraid it would do hurt, and that it was repugnant to the plan he had proposed in his Common Sense. I told him it was true it was repugnant and for that reason, I had written it and consented to the publication of it: for I was as much afraid of his Work as he was of mine. His plan was so democratical, without any restraint or even an Attempt at any Equilibrium or Counterpoise, that it must produce confusion and every Evil Work. I told him further, that his Reasoning from the Old Testament was ridiculous, and I could hardly think him sincere. At this he laughed, and said he had taken his Ideas in that part from Milton; and then expressed a Contempt of the Old Testament and indeed of the Bible at large, which surprised me. He saw that I did not relish this, and soon checked himself, with these Words “However I have some thoughts of publishing my Thoughts on Religion, but I believe it will be best to postpone it, to the latter part of Life.” This Conversation passed in good humor, without any harshness on either Side: but I perceived in him a conceit of himself, and a daring Impudence, which have been developed more and more to this day.

The third part of Common Sense which relates wholly to the Question of Independence, was clearly written and contained a tolerable Summary of the Arguments which I had been repeating again and again in Congress for nine months. But I am bold to say there is not a Fact nor a Reason stated in it, which had not been frequently urged in Congress. The Temper and Wishes of the People, supplied every thing at that time: and the Phrases, suitable for an Emigrant from New Gate, or one who had chiefly associated with such Company, such as “The Royal Brute of England,” “The Blood upon his Soul,” and a few others of equal delicacy, had as much Weight with the People as his Arguments. It has been a general Opinion, that this Pamphlet was of great Importance in the Revolution. I doubted it at the time and have doubted it to this day. It probably converted some to the Doctrine of Independence, and gave others an Excuse for declaring in favour of it. But these would all have followed Congress, with Zeal: and on the other hand it excited many writers against it, particularly plain Truth, who contributed very largely to fortify and inflame the Party against Independence, and finally lost us the Allens, Penns, and many other Persons of Weight in the Community.

Notwithstanding these doubts I felt myself obliged to Paine for the Pains he had taken and for his good Intentions to serve Us which I then had no doubt of. I saw he had a capacity and a ready Pen, and understanding he was poor and destitute, I thought We might put him into some Employment, where he might be useful and earn a Living. Congress appointed a Committee of foreign affairs not long after and they wanted a Clerk. I nominated Thomas Paine, supposing him a ready Writer and an industrious Man. Dr. Witherspoon the President of New Jersey College and then a Delegate from that State rose and objected to it, with an Earnestness that surprised me. The Dr. said he would give his reasons; he knew the Man and his Communications: When he first came over, he was on the other Side and had written pieces against the American Cause: that he had afterwards been employed by his Friend Robert Aitken, and finding the Tide of Popularity run rapidly, he had turned about: that he was very intemperate and could not write until he had quickened his Thoughts with large drafts of Rum and Water: that he was in short a bad Character and not fit to be placed in such a Situation.—General Roberdeau spoke in his favour: no one confirmed Witherspoon’s Account, though the truth of it has since been sufficiently established. Congress appointed him: but he was soon obnoxious by his Manners, and dismissed. . . .

At this day it would be ridiculous to ask any questions about Tom Paine's Veracity, Integrity or any other Virtue.

Eli Whitney to Mr. Stebbins, Washington, November 1802

You have doubtless heard of the arrival of the notorious Tom Paine in this country—Being informed, previous to my arrival here, that he was in this neighborhood I had some curiosity to see him—I stopped at the public house where I am now writing to spend one day (it being in a central situation & convenient to the Public Offices where I do business)—I walked out for an hour & returned to dinner—on entering the room—to my great surprise I found that T. Paine was there & a lodger in the house & in less than five minutes we were seated opposite each other at the table—

I was not disappointed in my expectation of his appearance—I found him the same filthy old sot that he has ever been represented. . . . I should judge from his appearance that he is nearly 70 years of age. . . . He is about five feet 10 inches high—his hair three-fourth white—black eyes—a large bulbous nose—a large mouth drawn down at the corners with flabby lips—with more than half decayed, horrid looking teeth—his complexion of a brick color—his face & nose covered with carbuncles & spots of a darker hue than the general color of his skin—his dress rather mean & his whole appearance very slovenly—his hands so convulsed that while his expansive lips almost encompassed a wine glass, he could hardly get the contents of it into his head without spilling it. . . . In short he is a mere loathsome carcass, which has withstood the ravages & rackings of brutal intemperance for an uncommon length of time & from which (were it exposed on the barren heath of Africa) the Hyena & Jackals would turn away with disgust.

He observed that he had dined with Mr. Jefferson yesterday & the Day before—& I make no doubt he is a “bosom friend” of the President. . . . Though some of the democrats will swallow common carrion with a good relish, I think most of them will loath the putrid rattle snake which has died from the venom of his own bite.

William Dickson to Andrew Jackson, Washington, 10 December 1802

The Author of Rights of Man—Common Sense &c is here. But that energy of mind and forcible language of which he was formerly possessed is gone. He is now in the sixty-sixth year of his age, but the hardships sustained in the French Prisons have made him much older—he receives due attention from the Republicans.

Manasseh Cutler to Joseph Torrey, Washington, 3 January 1803

In answer to your inquiries respecting Paine, I hear very little said about him here. You see by his fourth letter that his “useful labors” are to be suspended during the session. I have not heard of his being at the President's since the commencement of the session, and it is believed that Mr. Jefferson sensibly feels the severe, though just, remarks which have been made on his inviting him to this country. You see by the Message, that courting popularity is his darling object, but we have convincing proof that his caressing of Paine has excited his fears. . . . Paine's venom against the character of the great Washington was occasioned by his not interfering on his behalf when he was confined in France, and any affront from Mr. Jefferson would induce the same kind of treatment. I cannot believe it will be in the power of this degraded wretch to do much mischief. It is certain the more sensible Democrats here view him with contempt, and there are very few so abandoned as openly to associate with him. He lives at Lovell's hotel, who has many lodgers. The members

who are there are not willing to acknowledge they have any society with him. He dines at the public table, and, as a show, is as profitable to Lovell as an *Ourang Outang*, for many strangers who come to the city feel a curiosity to see the creature. They go to Lovell's and call for the show—even some members of Congress have done it. I have not yet seen him, nor shall I go out of my way for the sight. He has not, I believe, been in the Hall.

John Adams to Benjamin Waterhouse, 29 October 1805

I am willing you should call this the Age of Frivolity . . . and would not object if you had named it the Age of Folly, Vice, Frenzy, Brutality, Daemons, Buonaparte, Tom Paine, or the Burning Brand from the Bottomless Pit, or anything but the Age of Reason. I know not whether any man in the world has had more influence on its inhabitants or affairs for the last thirty years than Tom Paine. There can be no severer Satyr on the Age. For such a Mongrel between Pigg and Puppy, begotten by a wild Boar on a Bitch Wolf, never before in any Age of the World was suffered by the Poltroonery of Mankind, to run through such a Career of Mischief. Call it then the Age of Paine.

Thomas Paine to John Inskip, Mayor of the City of Philadelphia, February 1806

My motive and object in all my political works . . . have been to rescue man from tyranny and false systems and false principles of government and enable him to be free, and establish government for himself. . . . And my motive and object in all my publications on religious subjects . . . have been to bring man to a right reason that God has given him; to impress on him the great principles of divine morality, justice, mercy, and a benevolent disposition to all men and to all creatures; and to excite in him a spirit of trust, confidence and consolation in his Creator, unshackled by the fable and fiction of books, by whatever invented name they may be called.

Benjamin Rush: Commonplace Book, 1809

T. Payne *thought* only. Thinking leads to principles. Facts—"fac totum" men. Like stones in a field, useless 'till collected and arranged in a building.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 21 January 1809

I have not seen, but am impatient to see Mr Cheetham's Life of Mr Paine. His political Writings I am Singular enough to believe have done more harm than his irreligious ones He understood neither Government nor Religion. From a malignant heart he wrote virulent Declarations, which the Enthusiastic Fury of the times intimidated all Men, even Mr Burke from answering as he ought. His Deism as it appears to me has promoted rather than retarded the Cause of Revealtion at least in America, and indeed in Europe. His Bilingsgate stolen from Blounts oracles of Reason from Bolinbroke, Voltaire, Berenger &c will never discredit Christianity: which will hold its ground in some degree as long as human Nature shall have any thing Moral, or Intellectual left in it.

Benjamin Rush: Commonplace Book, 8 June 1809

Died at New York Thomas Paine, author of "Common Sense," "Rights of Man," "Age of Reason," and many other political and deistical publications. I knew him well soon after his arrival in America in 1773, at which time he was unfriendly to the claims of America. He wrote "Common

Sense” at my request. I gave it its name. He possessed a wonderful talent of writing to the tempers and feelings of the public. His compositions, though full of splendid and original imagery, were always adapted to the common capacities. He was intemperate and otherwise debauched in private life. His vanity appeared in everything he did or said. He once said he was at a loss to know whether he was made for the times or the times made for him. His “Age of Reason” probably perverted more persons from the Christian faith than any book that ever was written for the same purpose. Its extensive mischief was owing to the popular, perspicuous, and witty style in which it was written, and to its constant appeals to the feelings and tempers of his readers.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 31 August 1809

Mr. Cheetham’s project* is of uncertain utility. The sooner Pain is forgotten perhaps the better. I fear he has done more harm than good. This is however speaking after the manner of Men, with submission to higher Powers.

*James Cheetham’s anticipated biography of Thomas Paine.

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 22 February 1811

Joel [Barlow] Should never think of any Thing but Poetry. He is writing an History in which Tom. Paine is to be recorded the greatest Statesman of his Age.

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 15 July 1813

There is not; there cannot be, a greater Abuse of Words than to call the Writings of Calender, Paine, Austin and Lowell or the Speeches of Ned. Livingston and John Randolph, Public Discussions. The Ravings and Rantings of Bedlam, merit the Character as well; and yet Joel Barlow was about to record Tom Paine as the great Author of the American Revolution! If he was; I desire that my name may be blotted out forever, from its Records.

Thomas Jefferson to Francis Eppes, Monticello, 19 January 1821

You ask my opinion of Lord Bolingbroke and Thomas Paine. They were alike in making bitter enemies of the priests and pharisees of their day. Both were honest men; both advocates for human liberty. Paine wrote for a country which permitted him to push his reasoning to whatever length it would go. . . . These two persons differed remarkably in the style of their writing, each leaving a model of what is most perfect in both extremes of the simple and the sublime. No writer has exceeded Paine in ease and familiarity of style, in perspicuity of expression, happiness of elucidation, and in simple and unassuming language. In this he may be compared with Dr. Franklin; and indeed his Common Sense was, for awhile, believed to have been written by Dr. Franklin, and published under the borrowed name of Paine, who had come over with him from England.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Quincy, Mass., 10 February 1823

Alexander Hamilton, and Thomas Paine. The two most extraordinary men, that this Country, this age or this World, ever produced.

“Ridendo dicere verum quid vetat?”*

*“What is to prevent one from telling truth as he laughs.”

Thomas Jefferson to John Cartwright, Monticello, 5 June 1824

Paine . . . thought more than he read.

John Parker

“Y.Z.,” to the Printer, *New Hampshire Spy*, 9 December 1788

In proposing to the public John Parker, Esq., as a suitable person for an [Presidential] Elector, you will meet the wishes of many of your readers. The candor and integrity of this gentleman are so universally acknowledged, that, to insure him the suffrages of the citizens of this state, it need only be known that he is a *candidate*.

Pierce Butler to President George Washington, New York, 29 July 1790

I had the honor of transmitting to You last Session a letter from Mr Parker of So Carolina—permit me to bring him once more before You; Mr. Parker is a Native of that Country, and connected with some of the first families in the State. When the War broke out he was possessed of a considerable Estate: by the devastations of the British Army he is with a large family reduced to slender circumstances; he is a just Man, and if You shall think proper to notice him I have no doubt but he will discharge the trust with fidelity & honor. I am not connected with Mr Parker either by blood or marriage, neither am I intimate with him, yet, as a Citizen of Carolina, I shall feel myself much obliged by any attention You may be pleased to shew to him.

Josiah Parker

**Nathanael Greene: Recommendation for Josiah Parker, Camp Round O, S.C.,
26 December 1781**

These may certify that Colonel Josiah Parker of the State of Virginia in the campaigns of 1776 and 1777 served under my immediate command in the Army of the United States in America and that upon all occasions he distinguished himself as a brave good officer; and upon several signalized himself in a way highly honorable to himself and beneficial to the service. In accomplishments I take leave to recommend him both to the Civil and Military World.

Samuel Holden Parsons

Samuel Holden Parsons to Nathanael Greene, Redding, Conn., 11 April 1779

I am sorry to say I know there are Parties in the Army and Factions in Congress but I am of no Party nor am I an adherent to any Faction nor do I intend to Sacrifice my own Sentiments or Conduct to the private Designs and ambitious Views of any Person; I have a good Opinion of some

Founders on the Founders

Gentlemen who are in the different Interests, but in their Party Concerns I have not any, the least Connection. I believe these Measures have been exceedingly detrimental to the Interest of the Country and will disgrace our History and many Gentlemen of more Honesty than their Accusers will be disgraced by the Malevolence of their Enemies.

Nathanael Greene to Samuel Holden Parsons, Middlebrook, N.J., post-11 April 1779

I cannot think the General would wish to fall out with you from reasons of policy as well as justice. It is a fact well known to the General that your influence is equal or superior to almost any man's in the State of Connecticut.

Winthrop Sargent: Diary, 25 November 1789

This Day we receive the Intelligence of Judge Parsons' Death in a Letter from Mr. McDowell stationed at the Falls of Beaver. He was drowned in attempting to come down that River (& perhaps near the Falls) in a Canoe with one Man. His Family have suffered a severe Loss, for though in years & thereby impaired in his Capacities, he still retained the Ability to have rendered them important Services; that his Death may be amply compensated to this Territory is fully my Opinion & that we may be made the happier in almost any Successor; for such has been the Conduct of the Judge while in Office here that he must have lost the Confidence of honest discerning Men—but he is no more and therefore I will endeavor to draw a veil over the numerous Mementos of his bad Habits—Alive, I was the Enemy of his *low Cunning*, and Practices which I conceived dishonorable.

Theophilus Parsons

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 10 June 1787

Mr. Parsons of Newbury-Port: a man of great wit, as well as of sound judgment and deep learning. . . .

Dined at Mr. Dana's, in Company with Mr. Parsons of Newbury-Port: a man of great wit, as well as of sound judgment and deep learning.*

*After graduating from Harvard, Adams read law with Parsons in Newburyport.

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 3 November 1787

There I found Mr. W. Parsons and his wife, Mr. T. Parsons, and Mr. J. Tracey. They started from thence before me, but I, came up with them again in Ipswich, where we dined at Homan's tavern. Parsons was quite witty, but strained rather too-much for it as he frequently does. "John," said he to Tracey "who made you adjutant general?"—"Mr. Bowdoin."—"Strange! how the wisest men, will err sometimes!" This kind of wit may I think be compared to a sky rocket, which spends all its force in hissing, and then disappoints us, with such a weak explosion that it can scarcely be heard. But wit to be pleasing, must, I think be unexpected, like the lightning which flashes in our eyes.

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 21 November 1787

I this morning requested of Mr. Parsons his opinion, whether it would be most advantageous for me to pursue, the professional study in those hours, when I should not attend at the office; or whether it would be best to devote those of my evenings, which I shall pass at my own lodgings, to other purposes, and a diversity of studies. He answered by observing, that I could not attend to any useful branch of Science, in which I should not find my account; he would rather advise me, to read a number of ethic writers: it was necessary for a person going into the profession of the law, to have principles strongly established; otherwise, however amiable, and however honest his disposition might be, yet the necessity he is under of defending indiscriminately, the good and the bad, the right, and the wrong would imperceptibly lead him into universal skepticism. He advised also Quintilian, and the best writers upon Christianity; He himself, he said, was convinced of the truth of the Christian religion; he believed revelation, and it was his reason, that had been convinced, for he entered upon the world rather prejudiced against revelation.

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 27 November 1787

Better than I have been for these ten days past: all the time again at the office, or at my own lodgings. It is of great advantage to us to have Mr. Parsons in the office. He is in himself a law-library, and a proficient in every useful branch of science. But his chief excellency is, that, no student can be more fond of proposing questions than he is of solving them. He is never at a loss, and always gives a full and ample account, not only of the subject proposed, but of all matters which have any intimate connection with it. I am perswaded, that the advantage of having such an instructor is very great, and I hope I shall not misimprove, it, as some of his pupils have done.

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 7 December 1787

Mr. Parsons, has recovered in a great measure from his illness: so that he was the chief part of this day in the office. I spent the evening in part with him. Play'd Backgammon, and draughts. At the former of these games he beats me; at the latter I beat him. I should suppose him to be a great proficient, at those games which require reflection, and a train of reasoning, which is very much the case with draughts; but much of this skill depends entirely upon practice in which he is deficient.

John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, Newburyport, Mass., 23 December 1787

In the beginning of September I came to this town, and began the study of the law with Mr. Parsons. I could not possibly have an instructor more agreeable than this gentleman. His talents are great, his application has been indefatigable, and his professional knowledge is surpassed by no gentleman in the Commonwealth.

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 11 February 1788

We have had this day little studying in the office. Mr. Parsons is so fond of telling of all the maneuvers which they used in and out of convention, that he has given the same story to every body that came into the office through the course of the day. He mentions with great complaisance, the formidable opposition that was made, as it naturally enhances the merit of the victory. He speaks with pleasure of every little trifling intrigue, which served to baffle, the intentions of the

antifederalists; though many of them to me exhibit a meanness which, I scarcely should expect a man would boast. Mr. Parsons makes of the science of politics the science of little, insignificant intrigue, and chicanery. These principles may possibly meet with success sometimes; but it is my opinion that fair, open and candid proceedings, add an influence, as well as a lustre to the most brilliant capacity.

George Richards Minot: Journal, November 1788

Mr. Parsons obtained such a character as a cunning man in the course of the elections as very much affected his influence in the House [Mass. House of Representatives]. Mr. [Theodore] Sedgwick, though in sentiment with him in almost every measure before, became now so disgusted with him as scarcely to name him with moderation.

John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Newburyport, Mass., 28 June 1789

As I believe his talents are much better calculated to administer laws than to make them, I wish he may succeed.

Christopher Gore to Rufus King, Boston, 22 August 1789

Whom to recommend as district judge I do not know. . . . Parsons, in a superior degree, is qualified as a lawyer, but as a man he possesses not one qualification.

James Iredell to Hannah Iredell, Exeter, N.H., 25 October 1792

I met in Boston with a Gentleman who lives at Newbury Port; of the name of Parsons, who appears to me to be the first Lawyer I have met within America, and is a remarkably agreeable Man. He insisted on my staying with him in Newbury Port, and upon our arrival invited Judge Wilson also, and we received great civilities indeed from him and Mrs. Parsons who seems a very amiable Woman.

Daniel Webster: Autobiography, 1804

TP is now about 55 years old, of pretty large stature, & rather inclining to corpulency. His hair is brown, & his complexion not light. His face is not marked by any striking feature, if we except his eye. His forehead is low, & his eye-brows prominent. He wears a blue coat, & breeches, worsted hose, and a brown wig, with a cocked hat. He has a penetrating eye, of an indescribable color. His manner is steady, forcible, & perfectly perspicuous. He does not address the Jury, as a mechanical body, to be put in motion by mechanical means. He appeals to them as men, & as having minds capable of receiving the ideas in his own. Of course, he never harangues; he knows by the Juror's countenance, when he is convinced, & therefore never disgusts him by arguing that of which is already sensible, or which he knows it is impossible to impress. He is not content with shining on occasions; he will shine every where. As no cause is too great, none is too small for him. He knows the great benefit of understanding small circumstances. It is not enough for him that he has learned the leading points in a cause; he will know every thing. His argument is therefore always consistent with itself, & its course so luminous that you are ready to wonder why any one should hesitate to follow him. Facts which are uncertain, he with so much art connects with others well proved, that you cannot get rid of the former, without disregarding also the latter. A

mind thus strong, direct, prompt, & vigorous, is cultivated by habits of most intense application. He has no fondness for public life, & is satisfied with standing where he is, at the head of his Profession.

Timothy Pickering to George Henry Rose, 1806

Mr. Parsons is so eminent a lawyer (and, I might add, a man of universal science) that in New England he is often designated by “The Giant of the Law.” He is now Chief Justice of Massachusetts.

John Adams to Francis Adriaan van der Kemp, Quincy, Mass., 30 April 1806

You ask me, whether Theophilus Parsons is really so eminent, as he is represented in the Port Folio? The Character of him, in that Paper is a boyish production. But Mr Parsons is undoubtedly one of the greatest Lawyers in the United States: and as eminent in Science and Litterature as any Man I know. Mr Parsons was not in the convention which formed the national Constitution: Mr Gerry, Mr Strong Mr King and Mr Gorham were Members from Massachusetts. But Mr Parsons was in the state convention that adopted the Federal Constitution.

George Partridge

“An Abashment,” Boston *Herald of Freedom*, 24 February 1789

A man of about fifty years of age, an inhabitant of Bridgewater, in the county of Plymouth, who has a large family of children, who looks with contempt and with the greatest abhorrence on *sterility*, and esteems *concubinage* as a sacred privilege, was lately accused of copulation—with a young girl of about 17 years old, who is now pregnant. He among the ANTIES, was talked for a Representative to Congress, for that district. His abilities now recommend him to fill some important office in the Egyptian government, where “polygamy and concubinage were allowed, except to priests.” So *he* is not excluded.

William Paterson

David Brearley to William Paterson, Philadelphia, 21 August 1787

[In the Constitutional Convention] We have lately made a rule to meet at ten and sit ’til four, which is punctually complied with. Cannot you come down and assist us,—we have many reasons for desiring this; our duty, in the manner we now sit, is quite too hard for three, but a much stronger reason is, that we actually stand in need of your abilities.

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

M. Paterson is one of those kind of Men whose powers break in upon you, and create wonder and astonishment. He is a Man of great modesty, with looks that bespeak talents of no great extent,—but he is a Classic, a Lawyer, and an Orator,—and of a disposition so favorable to his advancement that every one seemed ready to exalt him with their praises. He is very happy in the choice of time and manner of engaging in a debate, and never speaks but when he understands his subject well. This Gentleman is about 34 years of age, of a very low stature.

John Chetwood to William Paterson, Elizabethtown, N.J., 17 October 1788

. . . I must think you would be unanimously elected . . . (I would not wish to flatter) I am persuaded from your Character, and distinguished Abilities you must be immediately introduced into Business,—Besides a grateful Country cannot forget you.

William Paterson to Euphemia Paterson, New York, 24 March 1789

Miss Jane & Susan, I suppose, will be here soon to see with their own bright Eyes the great Works that are going on here, and the *marvelous Doings* there will be when *the President-general arrives*—It is strange, that in public Life we cannot be respectful without being expensive—Our Lives are short at best; short as they are, however, one half of them is spent in idle Ceremony and Show.

The federal Building is elegant; it far exceeds any Thing of the Kind I have seen; and all join in declaring, that there is Nothing equal to it in this Country. I shall not attempt to [describe?] it, because I have a poor Talent for such Things.

William Maclay: Journal, 16 July 1789

Of All the Members of our House, the Conduct of Patterson surprises me most. He has been characterized to me as a Staunch Revolution Man & Genuine Whig. Yet he has in every republican Question deserted and in some instances betrayed Us. I know not that there is such a thing as buying Members, but if there is he is certainly sold.

William Maclay: Journal, 11 March 1790

Patterson I find belongs to the Gladiatorial band. I have of ever thought, since I knew him. That he was a loaf and Fish Man. He talks of resigning, and I suppose we will hear of his being a Judge or something better than a Senator.

William Maclay: Journal, 2 June 1790

Mr. Patterson is not to be depended on, and indeed I have long considered him, as a most despicable Character.

William Maclay: Journal, 12 June 1790

Patterson, more taciturn and lurking in his Manner, and Yet when he speaks, commits himself hastily. A *Summum Jus*, Man. Both [Paterson and Rufus King] Lawyers, and both equally retained by the Secretary [Alexander Hamilton].

Founders on the Founders

William R. Davie to James Iredell, Halifax, N.C., 12 June 1793

I left Judge Patterson at Newbern, detained by the criminal business, his deportment as a Judge was highly approved; his fine understanding, affable manner, and social temper, make him a most agreeable man; you will be greatly pleased with him.

Jeremiah Smith to William Plumer, Philadelphia, 24 February 1795

Patterson is unquestionably the ablest Judge—Well I shall tell you more about it in the afternoon—[Smith reports in the afternoon on the Supreme Court’s decision in *Penhallow v. Doane’s Administrators*, especially praising Paterson’s decision.] You would have been delighted—The rest of the Court were like a mole-hills besides the Alps—I speak the general sentiment—How ridiculous to appoint old men to such offices. Patterson appears to be a young man, perhaps 45—It is astonishing how so good a man should ever have been appointed a Governor?

If we only had a few such men the Lord would save this Country as he promised to do Sodom—But you know I am extravagant in my praises as well as Censures—

William Johnson to Thomas Jefferson, Charleston, S.C., 10 December 1822

Patterson was a slow man & willingly declined the Trouble [to write judicial opinions].

Nathaniel Peabody

William Plumer to John Hale, Londonderry, N.H., 6 October 1786

I have no doubt General Peabody’s being the friend of the mob. His pecuniary circumstances led him to wish for paper money.

William Plumer: Autobiography, 1826

I was in favor of [Samuel] Livermore, and decidedly opposed to Peabody, whom I knew was an artful, cunning, intriguing man, destitute of moral principle, and an inmate with infamous characters. I thought his election [as a U.S. Senator] would reflect disgrace on the state, and I opposed him from principle.

Oliver Peabody

Josiah Bartlett to William Williams, Kingstown, N.H., 16 July 1792

As to an attorney in this State if you should think proper to employ one, I should recommend the Honble Oliver Peabody of Exeter who is Judge of Probate for this County and a practising attorney in our Courts of Law, upon whose candor, integrity and fairness of mind, I think you may Safely rely.

Charles Willson Peale

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 21 August 1776

Yesterday Morning I took a Walk, into Arch Street, to see Mr. Peele's Painters Room. Peele is from Maryland, a tender, soft, affectionate Creature. He shewed me a large Picture containing a Group of Figures, which upon Inquiry I found were his Family. His Mother, and his Wife's Mother, himself and his Wife, his Brothers and sisters, and his Children, Sons and Daughters all young. There was a pleasant, a happy Chearfulness in their Countenances, and a Familiarity in their Airs towards each other. He shewed me one moving Picture. His Wife, all bathed in Tears, with a Child about six months old, laid out, upon her Lap. This Picture struck me prodigiously. He has a Variety of Portraits—very well done. But not so well as Copeleys Portraits. Copeley is the greatest Master, that ever was in America. His Portraits far exceed Wests.

Peele has taken General Washington, Dr. Franklin, Mrs. Washington, Mrs. Rush, Mrs. Hopkinson. Mr. Blair McClenachan and his little Daughter in one Picture. His Lady and her little son, in another.

Peele shewed me some Books upon the Art of Painting, among the rest one by Sir Joshua Reynolds, the President of the English Accademy of Painters, by whom the Pictures of General Conway and Coll. Barry [i.e., Barre] in Fanuil Hall were taken. He shewed me too a great Number of Miniature Pictures, among the rest Mr. Hancock and his Lady—Mr. Smith, of S.C. whom you saw the other day in Boston—Mr. Custis, and many others.

He shewed me, likewise, Draughts, or rather Sketches of Gentlemen's Seats in Virginia, where he had been—Mr. Corbin's, Mr. Page's, General Washington's &c. Also a Variety of rough Drawings, made by great Masters in Italy; which he keeps as Modells. He shewed me, several Imitations of Heads, which he had made in Clay, as large as the Life, with his Hands only. Among the Rest one of his own Head and Face, which was a great Likeness. He is ingenious. He has Vanity—loves Finery—Wears a sword—gold Lace—speaks French—is capable of Friendship, and strong Family Attachments and natural Affections.

Gouverneur Morris to Alexander Hamilton, Philadelphia, 27 January 1784

This is a Politician by Birth, & a Painter by Trade, whose History, like that of the ancient Nobles, can be traced back till it is lost in the Clouds of Obscurity. He it seems is one of those who have supported the Revolution by the Powers of Eloquence, notably displayed at the Corners of Streets, to such Audiences as can usually be collected in such Places. In order to secure the afore-said Whigs, Captain Peale was employed to prepare Decorations & Devices for the triumphal Arch, & to superintend the Expenditure of the Sum of six hundred Pounds, appropriated by Government to the splendid Exhibition.

Theodore Sedgwick to Pamela Sedgwick, Philadelphia, 9 January 1791

Yesterday I veiwed the museum of Mr. Peale, This man has expended a pretty fortune in procuring the skins of beasts, & birds, minerals, fossils, coins, shells, insects, moss & dirt, He is now very poor, and subsists on the charity of those whose curiosity or benevolence leads them to veiw his collection. To you who know in how light estimation, I hold the business and learning of the virtuosi, it will be unnecessary to mention that I was not attracted by the former motive. The visit,

however, was not an unpleasant one, and I found certain social affections, which are perhaps inexplicable highly gratified. To explain this it is necessary to observe that he has in addition to the articles already mentioned, furnished a long gallery, with nearly an hundred portraits of those characters, who have made the most distinguished figure during the american revolution. Many of these men are now no more. the various affections with which my heart was expanded, as the likenesses of departed heroes & statesmen brought to my remembrance, the great events in the production of which they in the hands of providence were the instruments, cannot be described. I will say, however, till then I never so well knew the value of portraits.

Charles Willson Peale to Thomas Jefferson, Belfield, Pa., 7 July 1816

My fondness for mechanics has robed me of much precious time—and I very much regret my neglect of the Pencil—my late paintings are on all hands esteemed better than my former works.

Charles Willson Peale to Thomas Jefferson, Belfield, Pa., 9 August 1816

I have thought a great deal on the follies of my life—how much time I have consumed in mechanic labours—how much better it would have been for me to have choosen my other employment than indulged my fancies in making various Machines, and doing work that I had not been accustomed to do. Even at this moment I have to exert my resolutions to withstand tem[p]tations to oblige friends who ask my aid, or resist the impulse of doing whatever I want done—Within a short time I have studied effects I have seen in Landscapes which I had not noticed before, therefore in that line as well as in Portraits I conceive I can make considerable improvements on my former practice—I have weighed the consequences of certain modes of execution with Colours—by judging of the consequences of not only the use of certain colours, but also the quantity of oils, or varnishes imployed to produce certain effects. An earlier turn of the mind to these studies might have enabled me to produce works of some importance—but at my time of life I cannot promise myself a continuance of good Eye sight, even should my days be lengthened.

However I have this satisfaction in view, that if I can produce some good Paintings imbracing such effects as may merrit admiration, that I may shew to those practicing the art, such rules as may to them be advantageous.

Charles Willson Peale to Thomas Jefferson, Washington, 25 November 1818

I have no space to put my late Portraits, yet that, shall not discourage me, as I love the art and know that it is the best imployment of my time.

Charles Willson Peale to Thomas Jefferson, Belfield, Pa., 4 July 1820

I love the Art of Painting, but the greatest merit of execution on subjects that have not a virtuous tendency, loose all their value in my estimation.

Charles Willson Peale to Thomas Jefferson, Belfield, Pa., 3 January 1821

I have long thought on the means to preserve healthy, and have made many experiments to ascertain what would be the best food, as well as drink—and as I enjoy perfect health, many of my acquaintance ask me, what I eat &c my answer is, that it is not so much the quality as the quantity, yet a choise is to be made, and that which is not so easily digested I use very sparingly. And

although I drink only water, I do not take great draughts of it—but sip of it on going to bed, when I rise in the morning, and after every thing I eat—because it helps digestion better than any other liquid—therefore a cure for colick, if colick is caused by indigestion. I masticate well all my food, by which much saliva is thus mixt with it.

Charles Willson Peale to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 29 October 1822

I am rejoiced to hear of your good health, I remember that when you gave me your Pedometer, you told me that you should not use it, on account of a complaint of your hip. I am a poor Phisician, yet I want no aid of medical men; I trust to the aid of nature, giving her fair play, to cure every evil happening to me. I must tell you that for the good use of my limbs I make it my constant practice to rub all my muscles together with all my strength, not with a Brush, but with my hands. This I conceive removes all obstructions. For the purpose I take this exercise Naked. And I am at this moment as active as ever I have been when younger,—I never miss a meal, but eat only what I conceive is best to promote good health. My Eye sight is improving. I paint without spectacles—but my hearing is bad, perhaps injured by some of my experiments to get relief. Although I loose some enjoyments, yet I need not hear any thing disagreeable.

Rembrandt Peale

John Marshall to Rembrandt Peale, Washington, 10 March 1824

I have received your letter of yesterday, and shall, with much pleasure, communicate the impression I received from viewing your Washington.

I have never seen a Portrait of that great man which exhibited so perfect a resemblance of him. The likeness in features is striking, and the character of the whole face is preserved and exhibited with wonderful accuracy. It is more Washington, himself, than any Portrait of him I have ever seen.

William Pearce

Alexander Hamilton to Peter Colt, Philadelphia, 10 April 1793

Pearce has valuable qualities & some ill ones. He is prone to new projects & will require a watchful eye on that score. Probably it may be good policy to secure him, till further experiment of his discretion and *real* skill, by an augmentation of Salary.

Alexander Hamilton to Nicholas Low, Philadelphia, 15 April 1793

It is some time since I have been led to doubt whether Pearce has not given himself for much more than he is worth. He is unsteady, & I fear incapable of being kept within any bounds or order or economy. I believe it will not be difficult to have all the really useful Machines he can make made by others. Yet he is ingenious & inventive—And ought not precipitably to be dismissed.

What I here say is only to intimate my opinion that he may be spared and that the Society [of Establishing Useful Manufactures] ought not to receive the law from him.

Peter Colt to Alexander Hamilton, Hartford, Conn., 7 May 1793

Pearce is certainly a very ingenious Man, & at present very necessary to the Society but he has Substantial failings. He is intemperate; & I fear this evil will grow on him. From his natural temper he is easily led to hasty & inconsiderate Measures respecting his workmen &c.—& He seems too much prone to new projects.

Joseph Pearson

William Plumer to Samuel Plumer, Jr., Londonderry, N.H., 6 June 1786

Joseph Pearson Esq. is Secretary [of State], vice Ebenezer Thompson Esq. The change is thought to be for the better! The fact is the former is but a few removes from an idiot, and the latter is a shrewd, cunning man.

Israel Pemberton

John Adams to Joseph Palmer, Philadelphia, 5 July 1775

[Pemberton] is at the head of the Quaker interest

Edmund Pendleton

Silas Deane to Elizabeth Deane, Philadelphia, 10 September 1774

Mr. Pendleton is a Lawyer of eminence, of easy, and cheerful Countenance, polite in address, & elegant, if not eloquent in Style & elocution.

James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, Fredericksburg, Va., 12 July 1788

[As president of the Virginia ratifying convention] Pendleton tho' much impaired in health and in every respect in the decline of life showed as much zeal to carry it [i.e., the Constitution], as if he had been a young man. Perhaps more than he discovered in the commencement of the late revolution in his opposition to G. Britain.

George Washington to James Madison, New York, c. 23 September 1789

Mr. Pendleton could not I fear discharge, and in that case I am sure would not undertake, to execute the duties of an Associate [Justice of the Supreme Court] under the present form of the

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Act. But he may be able to fulfill those of the District—The Salary I believe is greater than what he now has; and he would *see* or it might be *explained* to him, the reason of his being preferred to the District Court rather than to the Supreme Bench; though I have no objection to nominating him to the latter, if it is conceived that his health is competent, and his mental faculties unimpaired, by age.

Edmund Randolph: History of Virginia

Edmund Pendleton held a high station as counsel, refuting by his success every symptom of aristocratic depression, even in the sons of a cottage where virtue and talents concur. At the bar, his influence was justly great. In the legislature, he for many years had assisted with his habits of business every burgess who was a stranger to parliamentary forms or unacquainted with debate. With a pen which scattered no classical decorations and with an education which debarred him from thorough grammatical accuracy, he performed the most substantial service by the perspicuity and comprehensiveness of his numerous resolutions, reports, and laws. Labor was his delight, although vivacity and pleasantry were never suppressed in their due place. His amiableness bordered on familiarity without detracting from personal dignity. He lived at home with the unadulterated simplicity of a republican; from abroad he imported into his family no fondness for show. He was not rich because from his own purse he had reared into respectability a body of collateral relations, without much regard to the admonitions of a narrow revenue.

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

Edmund Pendleton, the protégé of the speaker Robinson, was also among the most prominent members in the house. He had, in a great measure, overcome the disadvantages of an extremely defective education, and, by the force of good company and the study of correct authors, had attained to great accuracy and perspicuity of style. The patronage of the speaker had introduced him to the first circles, and his manners were elevated, graceful, and insinuating. His person was spare, but well-proportioned; and his countenance one of the finest in the world; serene—contemplative—benignant—with that expression of unclouded intelligence and extensive research, which seemed to denote him capable of any thing that could be effected by the power of the human mind. His mind itself was of a very fine order. It was clear, comprehensive, sagacious and correct; with a most acute and subtle faculty of discrimination; a fertility of expedient which could never be exhausted; a dexterity of address which never lost an advantage and never gave one; and a capacity for continued and unremitting application, which was perfectly invincible. As a lawyer and a statesman, he had few equals; no superiors. For parliamentary management, he was without a rival. With all these advantages of person, manners, address, and intellect, he was also a speaker of distinguished eminence. He had that silver voice* of which Cicero makes such frequent and honorable mention—an articulation uncommonly distinct—a perennial stream of transparent, cool, and sweet elocution; and the power of presenting his arguments with great simplicity and striking effect. He was always graceful, argumentive, persuasive; never vehement, rapid, or abrupt. He could instruct and delight; but he had no pretensions to those high powers which are calculated to “shake the human soul.”

*Vox argentea.

Thomas Jefferson: Autobiography, 1821

Mr. Pendleton, . . . who, taken all in all, was the ablest man in debate I have ever met with. He had not indeed the poetical fancy of Mr. Henry, his sublime imagination, his lofty and overwhelming diction; but he was cool, smooth and persuasive; his language flowing, chaste & embellished, his conceptions quick, acute and full of resource; never vanquished; for if he lost the main battle, he returned upon you, and regained so much of it as to make it a drawn one, by dexterous maneuvers, skirmishes in detail, and the recovery of small advantages which, little singly, were important altogether. You never knew when you were clear of him, but were harassed by his perseverance until the patience was worn down of all who had less of it than himself. Add to this that he was one of the most virtuous & benevolent of men, the kindest friend, the most amiable & pleasant of companions, which ensured a favorable reception to whatever came from him.

Nathaniel Pendleton

Nathanael Greene to Otho H. Williams, Headquarters near Bacon's Bridge, S.C., 6 June 1782

Pendleton as polite as ever.

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

Judge Pendleton of Georgia . . . writes well, is of respectable abilities and a Gentlemanlike smooth man. If I were sure of his political views I should be much disposed to advise his appointment under the circumstances. But I fear he has been somewhat tainted with the prejudices of Mr. Jefferson & Mr. Madison & I have afflicting suspicions concerning these men.

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

Since writing the above Judge Pendleton of Georgia has occurred to me [as Secretary of State]. He was a military man—Aide to General Greene & esteemed by him. He is certainly a man of handsome abilities. I have however within a few days heard that he had some agency in the purchase of the Georgia lands [i.e., Yazoo lands]. If he has had any interested concern in this transaction it would be an immense objection. Otherwise, if he would accept, all things considered I should prefer him [as Secretary of State]. He is tinctured with Jeffersonian Politics but I should be mistaken, if among good men & better informed, he did not go right.

Thomas Person

Hugh Williamson to James Madison, Edenton, N.C., 24 May 1789

We are told that Genl. Person, the bell Weather of Opposition in this State, continues indefatigable in his Endeavors to preserve the Spirit of Antifederalism in the State.

Richard Peters

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Philadelphia, 8 June 1789

I was out yesterday at a Farm of Judge Peters call'd, Belmont. It is in all its Glory. I have been twice there, when I lived at Bush Hill, but he has improved both the House and Gardens Since. After being six Months in a City, you can hardly conceive the delight one feels at Entering a Wilderness of sweets. The Grass, the Grain, the profusion of Beautifull flowers, Jassamine, Hyacinths & Roses, all in full Blum, climbing around the windows & Piazzas and Porticos of the neat building, formed such a pleasing contrast to the bare brick Buildings and the throng of Conechigo Waggons which are ranged in rows through our Street, that it appeared a mere Paradiice to me. The House is an ancient building with a Hall through it, like Jeffries at Milton which opens into the Garden. In front is a lawn and from the House there is a view of the Noble Hudson, and at the foot of the Hill much nearer flows the Schuykil

After walking in the Garden we returnd and found the table spread with 6 or 8 quarts of the large Hudson strawberry, gatherd fresh from the vines with a proportionable quantity of cream, wine & Sugar. Our taste and smell were both regaled, whilst ease, Sociability and good humour enhanced the pleasure of the repast. The Judge is an old Friend and acquaintance of the President from the first Congress & served with him as one of the Board of war. Mrs. Peters has all that ease and affability, united to good Sense and fine spirits which render her manner truly pleasing. They have a number of children, 2 Grown sons & a daughter with 3 younger. They reside in the City during the Winter.

Richard Peters to James Madison, Belmont, Pa., 20 July 1789

I am chained to my Chair by my old Tormentor, the Piles. . . .

Timothy Pickering to George Washington, Philadelphia, 7 January 1792

Among the great duties of your high station, the selection of proper characters for public offices is not the least difficult, nor the least important. The multiplicity of applications, the diversity, and sometimes the contrariety of opinions, must often produce painful embarrassments: while a constant aim to provide for the public service, will frequently oblige you to disregard private attachments, and the solicitations of those whom it would give you pleasure to oblige. Information, uninfluenced by interest or undistinguishing friendship, is desirable; but perhaps seldom attainable. With a sincerity, however, which it is hoped nothing has ever given room to question, I take the liberty of mentioning the name of Mr. Peters, as of a person who with great propriety would fill the office of district judge of Pennsylvania, vacant by the resignation of Mr. Lewis.

I have long and intimately known Mr. Peters. His conceptions are quick and his comprehension clear. Hence he decides with promptitude & executes with facility, where others must inquire and apply with laborious attention. These talents must ever be of singular utility to a judge, who in almost every cause is obliged instantly to determine a variety of subordinate questions.

Having in early life studied the rudiments of law, and attended courts, I beg your permission to notice an observation I then made—That although a professional knowledge of the law was useful to a judge, yet it was not to be put in competition with *talents*, accompanied with a knowledge of

the *language* of the law and of its *general principles*. But Mr. Peters studied the law for his profession: and although he early left the practice, yet the language & principles of the law are familiar to him. The application of those principles to particular cases it will be easy for him to recall and extend. His practical knowledge of law happens particularly to apply to the business of a district judge of *Pennsylvania*, which consists chiefly of *admiralty causes*. Mr. Peters was for many years Register of the Court of Admiralty; and at the commencement of the revolution, renounced that employment under the King, to engage in the service of his Country.

It is too well known for me to remark, that during several years past he has presided in the legislature of Pennsylvania, with punctual & patient attention, ability and dignity. This fact affords a satisfactory proof with what propriety as a judge he would conduct the business of a court of justice. Important & intricate cases will sometime occur; but these, according to the constant usage of courts, will be adjourned, to give time for research and inquiry. Such research and inquiry he will be equally able and disposed to make. And if books fail of satisfying a discerning mind, he will have easy access to the living depositories of the law in this city, of whom some of the most eminent are his intimate acquaintances.

To the qualifications already mentioned, I should be unjust to Mr. Peters if I did not add, as peculiarly pertinent to the present occasion, that in his whole conduct, during my long acquaintance with him, he has ever manifested a *strict impartiality* and *perfect integrity*.

Honored and pleased with the invariable friendship of such a fellow laborer, I should indeed be gratified by his appointment: but I do not know myself, if friendship or any other motive could induce me to make an unfounded representation. I should have been silent, if I did not firmly believe, that by a diligent, able and upright administration of justice. Mr. Peters would fulfill your wishes and the public expectation.

Richard Peters to Alexander Hamilton, Philadelphia, 8 January 1803

I *marvel* that you should be a *disappointed* Politician. I am a mortified but not disappointed one. You must have foreseen the Catastrophe which has befallen us. I was a Cassandra because more of a Looker on, than one playing the Game. Much useless Pains did I take in the Case of the House Tax &c &c to earn among my zealous Brother Feds the Character of a *Half paced* halting Politician. But I saw the Race would not be to the Swift; though no one laments more than I do their being distanced.

Charles Pettit

Nathanael Greene to Joseph Reed, Valley Forge, Pa., 9 March 1778

I wish Mr. Pettit to engage because I have a great opinion of his integrity.

Nathanael Greene to Joseph Reed, Fredericksburg, N.Y., 26 October 1778

Mr. Pettit's prudence, knowledge of business and constant attention I hope will go a great way to silence all complaints [against the Quartermaster Department]. I never was more happy in my life at any circumstance than that Mr. Pettit belongs to the department. His knowledge, his manners

and attention to business, are all so well adapted to the duties of the office that he is of the highest importance to me.

Joseph Reed to Nathanael Greene, Philadelphia, 5 November 1778

I am very glad you have found in Mr. Pettit those Qualities which I think will cement your Friendship and Interests; tho' he is my Brother[-in-law] I believe I may say without Partiality that he will wear well and that you will find him not only a Man of Business and Temper but unquestionable Honour and Patriotism.

Nathanael Greene to Jeremiah Wadsworth, Morristown, N.J., 2 March 1780

I find Mr. Pettit getting exceeding sick of Congress, and beginning to confess freely he has been duped from appearances. He has been the most duped with respect to the money of any Man I have heard speak or write upon the subject.

James Monroe to James Madison, New York, 31 May 1786

Pettit who is always here [in Congress] & the influential man from Pennsylvania is a speculator in certificates. He came forward under the patronage of Reid [Joseph Read] with impressions entirely Eastern and the opposition given the requisition last year by the delegation of Virginia has given him an opinion that she wishes to defraud the public creditors.

Charles Pettit to George Washington, Philadelphia, 5 August 1788

Having thus far intruded on your Excellency concerning the Public, permit me to solicit your Patience while I say a few Words concerning myself. To have served the Public with Fidelity has ever been a Recommendation to your favourable Notice: to have performed such Service with splendid Abilities, could not fail to strengthen the Recommendation. To the latter, however, I make no Claim, tho' I feel a Consciousness that I have some Title to the former. If I had attended to my own Interest with as much Care and Assiduity as I bestowed on that of the Public, the fair Emoluments of my Station would have been so improved as to place me in a Situation of Ease & Independence: if I had availed myself of the Opportunities my Situation afforded, to acquire all that I *legally* might have acquired, I might have abounded in Wealth. But the latter I could not perfectly reconcile to my Ideas of Fidelity; and the former I was restrained from, as well in some Measure to save Appearances lest the Public should suffer by an Opinion that its Servants were enriching themselves in a Time of Calamity, as because my Time was too much engaged in public Cares to admit of due Attention to private Concerns. At the same Time an undue Confidence (as the Event has proved it) in the Abilities & Justice of the Public, led me to deposit in their Hands not only the greater Part of my Earnings in the Service, but the Property I had before acquired. Hence I remain a public Creditor for nearly all that I am worth; not by speculative Purchases at a low Value, but by original Loans, and by Certificates taken in Exchange for Property at their nominal Value. I am not unaware that by this Declaration I arraign my own Prudence, and perhaps depreciate my Judgment. The Spirit of Party has imputed to me much more Wealth than I possess, together with considerable Acquisitions by speculating in the public Funds. The part I took in my Endeavours to obtain Justice to be done to the Public Creditors, will explain the Motives for raising such Reports, especially when it is known that they originated with, or at least obtained a Currency from a person of great Wealth, and at that Time in high Station, who took especial Care that the Public

should never become his Debtor, and who wished to avoid contributing anything towards the Payment of others. It is my Misfortune, however, that these Reports are void of Truth; and that on the Contrary I am, in the present Situation of public Credit, almost entirely dependant on the Produce of Industry for the Means of supporting a Family, at a Time of Life when I expected to enjoy Ease in domestic Affairs, if not Ability to advance my Progeny in the World. My Fellow Citizens have frequently honored me with their Suffrages, and are still desirous of placing me in a representative Capacity. It is not a little mortifying, after twenty years Employment chiefly in the public Service, to be obliged to decline Honors of this kind, and at the same Time to seek for Employment of more Emolument, tho' less honorable; and yet while my little Capital is thus withheld from me, Necessity imposes on me this Choice. The Organization of the new Government will necessarily call for confidential Servants of the Public. If I should be deemed worthy of your Excellency's Patronage, I may be thought of in the arrangement; at the same Time I beg Leave to assure you that I wish not to stand in the Way of more deserving Objects, nor to occasion you a Moment's Embarrassment on my Account.

Andrew Pickens

Daniel Morgan to Nathanael Greene, Camp at Burr's Mills, Thickette Creek, S.C., 15 January 1781

Colonel Pickens is a valuable, discreet, and attentive officer, and has the confidence of the militia.

Daniel Morgan to Nathanael Greene, Camp near Cane Creek, S.C., 19 January 1781

The Volunteers of North Carolina, South Carolina & Georgia under the Command of the brave and valuable Colonel Pickens. . . .

Daniel Morgan to Nathanael Greene, Camp Sherrald's Ford, N.C., 24 January 1781

Pickens is an enterprising man and a very judicious one, perhaps he might answer the purpose [i.e., taking the ill Morgan's place attacking the British in Georgia].

Nathanael Greene to Henry Lee, Jr., Camp before Ninety-Six, S.C., 29 May 1781

I am happy to hear that you and General Pickens are upon a perfect good footing; and I beg you will cultivate it by every means in your power. He is a worthy good Man and merits great respect and attention; and no Man in this Country has half the influence that he has.

Pierce Butler to Robert Anderson, Philadelphia, 5 January 1793

There is not a man on earth thinks more highly of General Pickens than I do. I know him to be a virtuous man. I regard him as such.

Pierce Butler to James Gunn, Abington, 12 Miles from Philadelphia, 3 October 1793

Pickens declined all proposals for good *reasons*. He is really a staunch republican, and good Man.

John Pickering

William Plumer to John Hale, Exeter, N.H., 18 September 1786

Mr. Pickering is a lawyer of considerable eminence. He is a man of strict integrity, unblemished honor and of great humanity. He has retentive memory, and possesses a vast fund of humor and pleasantry. His company is much sought for, and in him the poor have a substantial friend. As a lawyer he does more business, particularly as an advocate, than any other in the State; but obtains much less money from his practice than some little contemptible pettifoggers. He has no avarice; his fault is inattention to property. With a promising family of children, he has very little property for their support. He is very moderate in his fees. Of the poor he claims nothing; of those in easy circumstances he often trusts to their generosity, and frequently suffers thereby. Although the popular prejudices are strong against the Bar, yet no man accuses, but all repose entire confidence in him. As a member of the legislature he possesses the confidence of his brethren; but by his often speaking he has very much lessened his influence in that court. But he has read more than he has digested; his mind is a vast storehouse, in which the goods are placed in a promiscuous condition. He wants [i.e., lacks] clearness of perception, accuracy of distinction, decision and firmness. He is peculiarly afraid of water; he travels far to avoid a ferry. He is a very zealous and sincere professor of Christianity, and is a member of Mr. [Joseph] Buckminster's Church at Portsmouth.

John Langdon to Tobias Lear, New York, 26 August 1789

Honorable John Pickering Esq. is a Gentleman of a most Amiable Character, and one of the first Lawyers, in New England.

John Langdon to Joseph Whipple, New York, 17 April 1790

Your kind favor of the 6th. Inst. I've Recd. By which I see the State of N.H. is much divided as to President [i.e., governor], I am in great hopes J. P. will obtain it, as no doubt he is the most Suitable man. It was no Object with me, I only feared it would go out of Portsmouth.

John C. Ogden to George Washington, Portsmouth, N.H., 16 January 1793

[On a successor to John Sullivan as U.S. district judge.] The Honorable Mr. Pickering—a Gentleman of known learning and abilities, of stern integrity, and pure morality. A man who has no enemies because he is an universal friend. In him our country will find more qualities to give dignity and importance to the place of District Judge, than any other man in this State.

John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Washington, 8 March 1805

The attack by Impeachment, upon the Judicial Department of our National Government, began two years ago, and has been conducted with great address, as well as with persevering violence. The impeachment and conviction of Mr: Pickering; of a man notoriously, and confessedly insane, for acts committed in that State, and during the whole course of the Impeachment remaining in it, was but a preparatory step to the assault upon Judge Chase.

Timothy Pickering

Ezekiel Cornell to Nathanael Greene, Philadelphia, 13 August 1780

Your Enemies are or pretend to be exceeding Sanguine, in their expectations of Colonel Pickering's conducting the [Quartermaster's] department with economy. I must Confess I more fear his want of ability than the want of Economy. At the same time I wish him success.

Nathanael Greene to Joseph Webb, West Point, N.Y., 15 October 1780

There is great pride there, masked under the form of humility.

Marquis de Lafayette to the Vicomte de Noailles, At the light camp near Cranestown [Montclair], N.J., 28 October 1780

A worthless fool of a quartermaster general. . . .

Samuel Osgood to John Lowell, Philadelphia, 2 February 1782

We have also a Quarter Master General whose Economical Disposition & Integrity cannot be called in Question; I wish his Popularity equalled his Merit.

Paine Wingate to Timothy Pickering, New York, 25 March 1789

And while I am speaking of appointments I cannot forbear expressing my earnest wish that you might be placed in one where the public would have a renewed experience of your integrity, ability, industry and economy. Whether any consideration would induce you to quit your present domestic and state employment and whether it could be conducive to your interest or your happiness I cannot tell, but I am sure it will be agreeable to many of your friends, and I think for the honor and interest of your country.

William Maclay: Journal, 7 April 1789

This day we [in the Senate] made a Tryal for a Secretary. We were told that Mr. Thomson would serve if elected. He was put in nomination accordingly. Unless this office could be secured for him, It seems likely that he will be lost to the publick. And Yet we consider it as in some Measure his own fault, for if he had come forward heartily for the office, we believe he would have succeeded.

Paine Wingate to Samuel Hodgdon, New York, 13 July 1789

As to what you mention respecting Mr. Pickering I agree with you in sentiment. I know his abilities, industry & integrity & think that he might be eminently useful to the public in some important department of government. But My connection with him is such, & situation in the Senate, that I can not with so much propriety speak upon the subject as some others, I know that he will seek for nothing, and there are so many applicants that no body need to be sought after for an office. If a suitable place was offered to him I rather think he would accept, for the sake of doing good, though it might interfere with his present plans & interrupt his beloved retirement. You probably know Mr. Pickering's inclinations & what will be worth his while better than I do, & I do not doubt but you will do whatever you shall judge proper, by suggestions to others, to bring him into view. I shall most heartily second your endeavors so far as will be proper in my situations. Much must depend on the President's nomination, I think he must know Mr. Pickering's merits; but whether he will think of him is uncertain.

Oliver Wolcott, Jr., to Oliver Wolcott, Sr., Philadelphia, 6 January 1795

Col. Pickering has succeeded General Knox in the War Department, and he will be found an able and respectable officer. You will hear of no complaints of profusion and extravagance even though the expenditure of the department should increase. Mr. Pickering is a plain man, of personal economy, and the public will presume that he will presume that he will be economical as an officer.

Oliver Wolcott, Jr., to Alexander Hamilton, Philadelphia, 6 October 1795

He is as firm, industrious and intelligent as any body could wish.

Alexander Hamilton to George Washington, New York, 5 November 1796

I am the more particular in these observations because I know that Mr. Pickering, who is a very worthy man, has nevertheless something warm and angular in his temper & will require much a vigilant moderating eye.

William Smith Shaw to Abigail Adams, Cambridge, Mass., 2 April 1798

The pamphlet sent me, I give you my sincere thanks. Is not Mr. Pickering the author. As soon as I read it, I thought I could see in it his simple style and forcible reasoning.

James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Orange, Va., 8 February 1799

[On Gerry's report of his peace mission to France and Secretary of State Pickering's reception of the report.] I have had a glance at Gerry's communication and P's report on it. It is impossible for any man of candor not to see in the former, an anxious desire on the part of France for accommodation, mixed with the feelings which Gerry satisfactorily explains. The latter [i.e., Pickering] displays a narrow and a most malignant heart.

Timothy Pickering to George Washington, Trenton, N.J., 24 October 1799

Once I would have relied on the good sense of the people for a remedy of the mischiefs when assailing us: but my opinion of that good sense is vastly abated: a large proportion seem more

Founders on the Founders

readily to embrace falsehood than truth. But I will still hope in the interposition of Providence to save our country: I have been ever fond of the motto—"Never to despair."

James McHenry to George Washington, Philadelphia, 10 November 1799

The Secretary of State I believe to be an upright man, who has served the United States faithfully and to the utmost of his abilities.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Philadelphia, 11 December 1799

There is a man in the cabinet, whose manners are forbidding, whose temper is sour and whose resentments are implacable, who nevertheless would like to dictate every Measure. He has to deal with *one*, who knows full well their respective departments—and who chooses to feel quite independent, and to act so too, but for this He is abused. But I am mistaken if this dictator does not get himself ensnared in his own toil. He would not now remain in office, if the President possessed such kind of resentments as I hear from various quarters, he permits himself to utter—From this fountain have flowed all the unpopularity of the Mission to France, which some of the Federalists have been so deluded as to swallow large drafts of.

William Plumer: Memorandum, 1 March 1806

Mr. Pickering is honest, but passionate, & imprudent. His passions often produce as fatal consequences to society as the wickedness of other men. His manners & habits are too abrupt & disgusting. Today, in the absence of Mr. Wright, & in debate, his reflections were personal & very gross. If he advocates an opinion he generally does it fatally, & arms some of the Senate against him. I really wish he had more prudence—& would content himself with voting only.

John Adams to William Cunningham, Quincy, Mass., 15 October 1808

Mr. Pickering would have made a good collector of the customs; but, he was not so well qualified for a Secretary of state. He was so devoted an Idolater of Hamilton, that he could not judge impartially of the sentiments and opinions of the President of the U. States. Look into Hamilton's Pamphlet. Observe the pretended information of things which could have only passed between me and my cabinet. False and abusive as they were, where could he pretend to have derived them? But, I am not yet to reveal the whole mystery. What I have said is to remain in your own breast. I have no disposition to enter into newspaper controversies with Pickering, or his friends or Editors.

John Adams to William Cunningham, Quincy, Mass., 7 November 1808

You shall now give me your opinion whether I was wrong in giving Mr: Pickering his congé. He is, for any thing I know a good Son, husband, father, Grandfather, brother, Unckle and cousin; but he is a man in a mask; sometimes of silk, sometimes of iron, and sometimes of brass; and he can change them very suddenly and with some dexterity, as I could shew you in many instances, though I have said little or nothing about him till now for nine or ten years.

John Adams to William Cunningham, Quincy, Mass., 25 November 1808

To return to the famous Gentleman. He is extremely susceptible of violent and inveterate prejudices, and yet, such are the contradictions to be found in human characters, he is capable of very violent and sudden transitions from one extreme to an opposite extreme. Under the simple appearance of a bald head and straight hair, and under professions of profound Republicanism he conceals an Ardent ambition, envious of every superior and impatient of obscurity. I always think of a coal-pit covered over with red earth, glowing within, but unable to conceal its internal heat for the interstices which let out the smoke and now and then a flash of flames. He has been several years in Senate, but so totally obscure and insignificant as to keep him in an agony. Almost always in a minority of two, three, four or five in thirty-four, rarely saying anything that has been worth reporting, he broke out at last in a rage and threw a fire-brand into our Massachusetts Legislature against his colleague. The stubble was dry and the flame easily took hold. He has an hereditary right to this distinction, I mean a strong desire of celebrity with feeble means of obtaining it. If ever you should see the Salem Newspapers published forty or fifty years ago, you will find them abounding with the writings of the good Deacon his father in vindication of the rights and prerogatives of the first Church in Salem. He became so emboldened by the noise he made that he wrote and published several letters to the King, subscribed with his name. One part of the publick was amused, another diverted and a third fatigued with his ostentatious vanity for some years. Some 35 or 36 years ago I was engaged in a cause at Salem Court in which the Deacon was a witness; while he was under examination, though I treated him with the utmost respect and civility, he broke out without the smallest provocation into a rude personal attack upon me. I was then as a Son of liberty, obnoxious to the Judges, to the government, to the British Ministry and to the king. Though I was astonished at the Deacon's manners I took no notice of them, till I came to examine his testimony in my arguments to the Jury. I then said I could not account for his unprovoked animosity to me, an entire Stranger to him, unless he meant to recommend himself to somebody to whom I was obnoxious, and I should not be surprized if in his next letter to the King he should do me the honour to denounce me to his Majesty. This little folly raised a general laugh at the Deacon's expence, and as I suppose the Son was present he has never forgiven me. The concatenation of little and great events in this world is often very whimsical and very ridiculous. Have you never seen the Son's speech to the Indians in 1794 or thereabouts? If you have not I may send you a copy of it. Great light may be thrown upon his character by this document. No man I ever knew had so deep a contempt for Washington. I have had numerous proofs of it from his own lips; yet he appears to the World a devout adorer of him. No man was a more animated advocate for the french; yet now he is as zealous for the English. But enough of this unpleasant subject.

John Adams to Theodore Foster, Quincy, Mass., 6 October 1811

These are all mysteries involved in much traditional and Historical obscurity: and I should be extremely obliged to you for any information concerning any of them. You know more of the Subteraneous fires kindled by Pickering and his two devoted Friends Hillhouse and Goodhue; all three Puppets danced upon the wires of Alexander Hamilton: than perhaps you may think it prudent to communicate.

Benjamin Stoddert to John Adams, Bladensburg, Md., 27 October 1811

Colonel Pickering, like most honest, warm-tempered men, may be too partial, perhaps, in tracing to the best motives the actions of his friends, and too prone to ascribe to the worst the conduct of those whom he does not like.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 22 April 1812

I called at the office of State and conversed with Pickering. I was now elected and Washington upon the point of his departure from Philadelphia. Pickering, to my utter astonishment, began to talk about Washington in the same strain as in Mrs. Kepple's house six or seven years before. He said, "Washington was so extremely illiterate! He could not write a sentence without misspelling some word, not three paragraphs without false grammar."

I was displeased at this ill nature and astonished that after so many years' service under Washington he should have retained the same malevolence and contempt which he had indulged so foolishly in my presence six or seven years before. I took no other notice of his indiscretion, however, than to say, with the utmost mildness, "Col. Pickering, you seem to me to be too much prejudiced. Washington certainly was not so extremely illiterate as you represent him; his letters and public performances show him quite otherwise." Pickering replied very sharply, "He did not write them." I asked who did? He answered, "His aides and secretaries." . . . I said from all the conversations I had held with him from the year 1774 he appeared to me to have a good deal of information. "Information?" said Pickering, "he had never read anything; not even on the military art; he told me he had never read anything but (I forgot what, probably Sime's *Military Guide*). He never had read Muller."

This is the Colonel Pickering who is now holding himself up as the Friend and Admirer and lover of Washington; a member of the Washington benevolent societies, affiliated with societies under the same appellation and for the same purposes in Canada.

This is the same Colonel Pickering who has opened his tiger jaws upon me in the newspapers and represented me to the universe as having sacrificed him to a corrupt bargain with Samuel and Robert Smith.

I do not stand on equal ground with Mr. Pickering. A President of U.S. cannot vindicate himself without setting a dangerous example. I have written, however, to the Smiths and enclose the correspondence. Give me your advice. Shall I meet this rancorous caitiff in the newspapers?

Thomas Jefferson to Martin Van Buren, Monticello, 29 June 1824

I could not have believed, that for as many years, and to such a period of advanced age, he could have nourished passions so vehement and viperous. It appears, that for thirty years past, he has been industriously collecting materials for vituperating the characters he had marked for his hatred; some of whom, certainly, if enmities towards him had ever existed, had forgotten them all, or buried them in the grave with themselves. As to myself, there never had been anything personal between us, nothing but general opposition of party sentiment; and our personal intercourse had been that of urbanity, as himself says. But it seems he has been all this time brooding over an enmity which I had never felt, and that with respect to myself, as well as others, he has been writing far and near, and in every direction, to get hold of original letters, where he could, copies, where he could not, certificates and journals, catching at every gossiping story he could hear of in any quarter, supplying by suspicions what he could find nowhere else, and then arguing on this motley farrago as if established on gospel evidence. . . .

He arraigns me on two grounds, my actions and my motives. The very actions, however, which he arraigns, have been such as the great majority of my fellow citizens have approved. The approbation of Mr. Pickering and of those who thought with him, I had no right to expect. My motives he chooses to ascribe to hypocrisy; to ambition, and a passion for popularity. Of these the world must judge between us. It is no office of his or mine. To that tribunal I have ever submitted my actions and motives, without ransacking the Union for certificates, letters, journals and gossiping tales to justify myself and weary them. . . . I leave to its fate the libel of Mr. Pickering, with the thousands of others like it, to which I have given no other answer than a steady course of similar action.

Timothy Pickering to John Marshall, Salem, Mass., 2 January 1828

I am grateful to the author of my being for its preservation through so many years, in the possession of vigorous health & strength of body, and much more for the continuance (to which your remark refers) of my mental faculties; which I please myself in thinking have yet sustained no fall from that moderate standard where my consciousness ever placed them. Their exercise will fill the space of my remaining life; & I hope without abatement. Of our bodily power it is proverbially said—"Use Strength and have it." So I fondly wish—I am almost tempted to say I expect—that, being now free from constant manual labours (for I have quitted my farm) the steady & nearly exclusive exercise of the power of my mind, may preserve their force. God forbid that I should survive my understanding.

William Pickman

Nathaniel Peaslee Sargeant to John Adams, Worcester, Mass., 25 April 1789

Mr. Pickman's pretensions are briefly these—he is a Son of one of the most respectable families in the county of Essex—has had a liberal Education is a representative for the town of Salem—in the course of the war, he was a Friend to his country's cause, was largely concerned in Privateering which his Patrimony enabled him to engage in, but that interest was nearly destroy'd in the Penobscut expedition, which with other misfortunes in navigation has almost annihilated his interest—in private life his character is amiable, his integrity, I believe, is unspotted—his Friends, I believe, will be Sureties for his good conduct, to any amount, & their ability will be undoubted—I believe Mr. [Paine] Wingate of the Senate & mr. [Benjamin] Goodhue, who are intimately acquainted with him, will confirm this character—as desirous as I am that he may obtain some public employment, Yet I don't so far forget my country as to wish that he may be employed to the exclusion of any one, who will serve it better—his employment has been wholly in the mercantile line—

William Pierce

Nathanael Greene to Anthony Wayne, Headquarters, near Bacon's Bridge, S.C., 9 June 1782

[Introduces Pierce] as a Gentlemen of good sense great merit and of agreeable manners.

Anthony Wayne to Nathanael Greene, Ebenezer, Ga., 15 June 1782

Your favor of the 9th was handed me by Capt. Pearce who answers the Character you have so justly drawn, but his stay is much shorter than I could wish indeed we have nothing to Induce him to remain except the society of the Gentlemen of the Army, that of *Ladies* is out of the Question.

William Pierce to Nathanael Greene, Kiawah Island, S.C., 14 September 1782

The language of adulation and flattery I despise from my soul, and leave the arts of dissimulation to be practiced by those who as Shakespeare says can "smile and smile and still be villains."*

*Paraphrased from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, act 1, scene 5, line 108, which reads "That one may smile and smile, and be a villain."

William Pierce to Nathanael Greene, Kiawah Island, S.C., 15 October 1782

Idleness, is of all things, the most disagreeable to me, because it occasions the mind to be sluggish and inactive; and it has been my misfortune to have been in this state for upwards of four Months. The hours have passed away in gloom and mortification; scarcely a pleasing moment has crept in to rouse the natural cheerfulness of my disposition. But General I am not to blame for it, for I have a degree of ambition to excel in whatever I undertake, if I am properly countenanced.

Nathanael Greene to Whom It May Concern, Charleston, S.C., 18 March 1783

As a Soldier he is much esteemed, as a Gentleman highly respected. His genius and education do him honor, and his honor and principles are unquestionable.

Nathanael Greene to Don Bernardo de Gálvez, Headquarters, Charleston, S.C., 22 March 1783

I have not the honor of your acquaintance; but from your general character for politeness and philanthropy. I take the liberty to recommend a young Gentleman to your good offices who has lived in my family an Aid de Camp and Secretary since I have had the honor to command the forces of the United States in the Southern department and for whom I feel a particular esteem and friendship. He has been in the Army from the beginning of the revolution in the United States, and is highly respected as a good officer; but the profession of arms not affording him such flattering prospects as the field of commerce he retires from the army on half pay to push his fortune in trade.

The genius of a republic is different from that of a Monarchy. What is highly reputable in one is not so in the other. In America nothing is more common than to leave the splendor of arms for commercial emoluments and the benefit of trade for the glory of Mars. These changes neither dignify nor degrade further than the public stands connected with the individual's determination. I have

taken the liberty to make these few observations lest Capt. Pierce from leaving the Army may suffer in your good opinion.

Nathaniel Pendleton to Otho Holland Williams, Charleston, S.C., 26 March 1783

Pierce will set out in two or three days to the Havanna in quest of gold.

Nathaniel Pendleton to Otho Holland Williams, Charleston, S.C., 6 May 1784

Pierce is married and is gone to Savannah to live. He has been successful in his first commercial essays; but I fear he wants stability, for such an employment. You know he was a warm advocate for great and astonishing flights of Genius. A Soberer, and more plodding turn of mind would be better suited to Commercial Concerns.

James Seagrove to Samuel Blachley Webb, Savannah, Ga., 11 December 1786

Permit me to make you acquainted with the Barer (& his Lady) Major Pierce who goes to Congress from this State—He is a worthy Fellow, and she an agreeable lady.

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

My own Character I shall not attempt to draw, but leave those who may choose to speculate on it to consider it in any light that their fancy or imagination may depict.—I am conscious of having discharged my duty as a Soldier through the course of the late revolution with honor and propriety;—and my services in Congress and the Convention were bestowed with the best intention towards the interest of Georgia, and towards the general welfare of the Confederacy.—I possess ambition, and it was that, and the flattering opinion which some of my Friends had of me, that gave me a seat in the wisest Council in the World, and furnished me with an opportunity of giving these short Sketches of the Characters who composed it.

Charles Pinckney

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

Mr. Charles Pinckney is a young Gentleman of the most promising talents. He is, altho' only 24 years of age, in possession of a very great variety of knowledge. Government, Law, History and Philosophy are his favorite studies, but he is intimately acquainted with every species of polite learning, and has a spirit of application and industry beyond most Men. He speaks with great neatness and perspicuity, and treats every subject as fully, without running into prolixity, as it requires. He has been a Member of Congress, and served in that Body with ability and eclat.

George Washington to James Madison, Mount Vernon, 22 October 1787

Mr. C. Pinckney is unwilling . . . to lose any fame that can be acquired by the publication of his sentiments.*

*Washington refers to two pamphlets Pinckney had published: one with his plan of government proposed in the Constitutional Convention and the second his speech in Congress on August 16, 1786, responding to John Jay's negotiations with Spanish envoy Gardoqui.

James Madison to George Washington, New York, 28 October 1787

Mr. P.'s Character is as you observe well marked by the publications which I enclosed. His printing the secret paper at this time could have no motive but the appetite for expected praise.

John Kean to Susan Kean, 11 April 1788

This day it is said blesses C P with the possession of all the beauties and charms of the accomplished miss Laurens*—the Lord have mercy upon her—

*Charles Pinckney and Mary Eleanor Laurens, the daughter of Henry Laurens, were married on 27 April 1788.

George Mason to John Mason, Gunston Hall, Va., 26 July 1790

It may be well also to wait on young Charles Pinkney—altho' he is a little of a C—b [coxcomb], he is a Man of Parts, an influential Character in that State, and I believe their present Governor.

Charles Pinckney to James Madison, Charleston, S.C., 6 August 1791

From our former intimacy While I had the pleasure to serve with you in Congress & the [Constitutional] Convention I am induced to make you the following communication in the confidence of friendship assured that you will only mention it to the person & in the manner I wish—as it is upon a subject of some Delicacy.

It has been suggested to me that several foreign ministerial appointments will take place at the commencement of the session in October or November and that this state from her rank in the Union, & particularly from her commercial importance, will be considered as entitled *to one*. All the gentlemen who might, from their Experience & standing in public life, be supposed to have a better claim than myself are in situations in this state, to prevent their accepting it, was it offered to them. Several of my friends have supposed that from the knowledge the President has of me & of my situation in this country, it is not impossible if it was mentioned to him that I would accept the appointment of a Minister plenipotentiary, that it might be made, particularly as the appointment is to come from this state & I believe there can be little doubt that it is the wish of most of the influential men here that I should have it. It was too lately thought of for them to write by this Vessel, but I believe by the next the President will receive some Letters upon the subject. It is my request that it should not appear as *coming from myself* but that it should be understood that I wish to go to Europe for some years in a public character & that if appointed it will be agreeable. Knowing your intimacy with the President & the deserved confidence he has in you, it is my wish you would mention this to him as my friend & at the same time intimate that you believe he will receive several Letters Upon the subject by the next packets from hence. I take it for granted, that the Executive never makes promises upon these occasions—that he hears every thing which can be

said in favor of each pretension, & leaves himself free to nominate whom he thinks from every circumstance best qualified. Upon this footing I wish it put. You know me & how far I am qualified for public business. I can only add that having a fondness for public life I have unremittingly applied myself to the studies necessary to form a public man, since I had the pleasure to see you—the situation I hold has given me a full scope; & I can assure you I have as much industry as when you knew me & that by becoming a married man I have only added steadiness & I hope solidity to it. It is true I am not an old man, but I think I have lived Long enough to have at least acquired the knowledge to this situation. Besides, it is the age of young men—in France, in England & in our own Government—most of the influential offices are filled by men as young & in some instances younger than myself. Although I view a knowledge of its duties to be the Basis of the Qualifications of a Minister yet there are certain other things to be attended to in order to render him respectable. By these I mean Family* & the manner in which his circumstances enable him to live; for there is a decency to be observed in public characters & their manner of living, a departure from which may derogate from the respect that is due to the nation they represent. On this account only I will mention to you in the confidence of our friendship that I shall, if appointed have some advantages in having a wife bred altogether in France and England—to whom the French Language is properly her native tongue, as she writes & speaks it full as fluently as she does English & whose Father from the large sums of Money he has in Europe & his extensive acquaintances will be enabled to make my situation in any part of it very agreeable & respectable. In wishing to obtain an European appointment I shall make considerable sacrifices—in being obliged to resign my present situation, which I shall have a right to hold for near two years to come, or to January or February 1793 & which from its salary & other appurtenances is an honorable & respectable one [i.e., as governor of S.C.] in being obliged to give up for a time. Ease & I might almost add Affluence and in being under the necessity of leaving a number of affectionate & agreeable friends.

With respect to my Right to expect an office of this kind I can only say that I was three years in Congress & a member of the federal Convention, in both of which you well know I used every Exertion to bring about the present Constitution, & always contended for the Establishment of even more extensive powers. In my own State I have held every honorable & respectable situation it was in their power to give me & my Exertions to induce them to ratify the federal system are well known. Without Vanity I may say, that I think I possess their most unlimited confidence.

You see by these statements & opinions, the unreserved manner in which I have mentioned my Wishes & pretensions. I have never been in Europe & when I go, I am anxious to do so in a character that will enable me effectually to benefit from the information & Experience that are to be collected there. I have devoted myself to a public life & I am sure you will do every thing in your power to assist me in rendering myself useful. I hope at the time you mention it to the President, you will do it as from yourself & use all or any of the Arguments I have stated, which you think proper. I am told Appointments are to be made for London, Paris & the Hague. Either will be agreeable to me, but I should prefer London.

*By Family I mean his Wife, Children &ca—not his descent.

Pierce Butler to Robert G. Harper, Philadelphia, 18 February 1792

I am in sentiment with You that Our Governor suffers himself to be misled often by the passions You mention.

Charles Pinckney to James Madison, Charleston, S.C., 26 October 1800

. . . you know I always Loved Politics & I find as I grow older I become more fond of them.

Charles Cotesworth Pinckney

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

The second [C. C. Pinckney] is a man of good judgment, profound knowledge in his profession, and force in his argument, his eloquence, however, is neither as brilliant nor as sonorous as that of the first [Edward Rutledge].

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

Mr. Chs. Cotesworth Pinckney is a Gentleman of Family and fortune in his own State. He has received the advantage of a liberal education, and possesses a very extensive degree of legal knowledge. When warm in a debate he sometimes speaks well,—but he is generally considered an indifferent Orator. Mr. Pinckney was an Officer of high rank in the American army, and served with great reputation through the War. He is now about 40 years of age.

Elbridge Gerry to Ann Gerry, Philadelphia, 1 September 1787

Yesterday I dined with General Pinckney and Mrs. Pinckney made particular inquiry for you and the baby. There was considerable company, and she was very agreeable and attentive. The General is as we always thought the cleverest being alive. I love him better every time I meet him.

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

A Colonel since Sept. 16th, 1776; but appointed a Brigadier by brevet at the close of the War, *only*. In this gentleman many valuable qualities are to be found. He is of unquestionable bravery. Is a man of strict honor, erudition and good sense: and it is said has made Tactics a study. But what his spirit for enterprise is, whether active or indolent; or fitted for arrangement, I am unable to say, never having had any opportunity to form a judgment of his talents as a Military character. The capture of Charleston put an end to his Military Service: but his junior Rank, and being little known in this part of the Union, are the two considerations most opposed to him; particularly the latter, as it is more than probable his being a prisoner prevented his promotion: which ought not to be any bar to his ranking as a Brigadier from the time that others of his standing as a Colonel, were promoted.

James Madison to James Monroe, Orange, Va., 29 September 1796

You know as well nearly as I the character of your successor [as U.S. minister to France]. Being deemed a man of rectitude and independence and not a votary of Britain as appeared by his being of the Charlestown committee against the [Jay] treaty it may be hoped he will not be a mere instrument of party and pernicious purposes; but will be led by respect for reputation as well as still higher motives to embrace fair openings for advancing the solid interests of his country.

Joseph Jones to James Madison, Fredericksburg, Va., 9 December 1796

Should Pinckney get in [as President], it is to be hoped he will pursue such courses as a fair construction will justify, and stamp his administration with the Character of Republican. But my fear has been, and I confess still is, that this Gentleman will be disposed to take council from those men who have had too much influence hitherto in our councils and will practice every art and stratagem to continue it. Mr. P. may possess Talents sufficient to enable him to think for himself, and firmness to act accordingly—from J. & A. [Jay and Adams] this might be expected, and it is of great importance that we should have a president at this crisis well acquainted with the Laws of nations, and particular States, with European politicks, and the politicks and true policy of our own Country, to enable him to act for himself and for ourselves independent and free from the danger of being misled by artful and designing men.

Oliver Wolcott, Jr., to George Cabot, Philadelphia, 27 March 1797

In point of rank, General Pinckney was invested with a character *equal* to that enjoyed by Mr. Jay, and was moreover designated, as has been shown, as the *messenger of conciliation*.

Alexander Hamilton to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., New York, 5 April 1797

Pinckney is a man of honor & loves his Country.

John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, Maassluis, The Netherlands, 6 July 1797

Our situation with that Country is still equivocal and dangerous. General Pinckney acts with great Prudence and Wisdom, and I am persuaded will do every thing possible in the disadvantageous situation in which he still remains. But there are many very wicked agents and many very bad Passions at work against the interest and the friendship of the two Nations.

We have had an agreeable acquaintance with General Pinckney and his family, who for the last three months have generally resided at the Hague. He is himself a very pleasant and agreeable, as well as an able and well informed man. Mrs. Pinckney both in person and manners has considerable resemblance with you. They are great botanists, and the General has undertaken to make one of me. I have a better opinion of the master's abilities, than of the scholar's docility.

William Vans Murray to John Marshall, The Hague, 2 September 1797

General Pinckney (as well as I am) is very anxious to see you. You will find him a clear-sighted and honorable man, & of pleasing friendly manners. He knows you well, though he never saw you, & is prepared to appreciate everything good about you with cordiality & partiality.

George Washington to Alexander Hamilton, Mount Vernon, 14 July 1798

[Washington gives reasons for giving Pinckney seniority over Hamilton in the Provisional Army.] If these premises are just, the inference is obvious, that the services and influence of General Pinckney in the Southern States would be of the highest, and most interesting importance. Will he serve then, under one whom he will consider a Junior Officer? and what would be the consequence if he should refuse, and his numerous, & powerful connections & acquaintances in those

parts, get disgusted? You have no doubt heard that his Military reputation stands high in the Southern States, that he is viewed as a brave, intelligent and enterprising Officer; and, if report be true, that no Officer in the late American Army made Tactics, & the art of War so much his Study. To this account of him, may be added, that his character has received much celebrity by his conduct as Minister & Envoy at Paris.

George Washington to Henry Knox, Mount Vernon, 16 July 1798

General Pinckney's character as an active, spirited and intelligent Officer you are acquainted with, and know that it stands very high in the Southern Hemisphere; it being understood *there*, that he made Tactics as much, if not more his study, than any Officer in the American Army during the last War. His character in other respects, in that quarter before his late Embassy, was also high; and throughout the Union it has acquired celebrity by his conduct as Minister & Envoy. His connections are numerous—their influence extensive; but most of all, with me, when to these considerations I add, as my *decided* opinion (for reasons unnecessary to enumerate) that if the French intend an Invasion of this Country *in Force*, their operations will commence South of Maryland; probably of Virginia; you will see at once the importance of embarking this Gentleman and all his connections *heartily* in the active scenes that would follow, instead of damping their ardour, and thereby giving more activity to the leaven that is working to others, where unity of sentiment would be most desirable.

John Adams Draft of a Letter to the *Boston Patriot*, [1809?]

[Reason for Adams not appointing Pinckney as a peace commissioner to France.] General Pinckney, although no doubt a worthy Man, and of high Character in the Southern States, was not known in the northern, and very little known in the middle States. The whole American People were too little acquainted with his Person and Character to rest upon it with entire Confidence and Satisfaction: and he had too little Experience in the political affairs of the United States, to be able, probably, to form a perfect Estimate of the present Views and temper of the whole Continent.

John Marshall to Joseph Story, Richmond, Va., 25 July 1827

General Pinckney concurred with me in sentiment [during the XYX Affair] and we acted most cordially together. I found in him a sensible man, and one of high and even romantic honour.

Mary Stead Pinckney

John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, Maassluis, The Netherlands, 6 July 1797

We have had an agreeable acquaintance with General Pinckney and his family, who for the last three months have generally resided at the Hague. He is himself a very pleasant and agreeable, as well as an able and well informed man. Mrs. Pinckney both in person and manners has considerable resemblance with you. They are great botanists, and the General has undertaken to make one of me. I have a better opinion of the master's abilities, than of the scholar's docility.

Thomas Pinckney

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

The last [T. Pinckney] is finished in nothing as yet, though many think him a prodigy in everything. He has received a good education in Europe, is still young, and gives very good hopes, without his progress showing as yet anything out of the ordinary.

Thomas Jefferson to Joel Barlow, Philadelphia, 20 June 1792

This will be conveyed by Mr. Pinckney, an honest sensible man and good republican. He goes [as] our Minister Plenipotentiary to London.

Rufus King to Alexander Hamilton, Philadelphia, 2 May 1796

Mr. Pinckney has asked leave to return home, and waits only for Permission. To his former stock of Popularity, he will now add the Good will of those who have been peculiarly gratified with the Spanish Treaty; should we concur in him will he not receive as great, perhaps greater southern and western Support [for President] than any other man?

Rufus King to Alexander Hamilton, New York, 4 May 1796

I am entirely of opinion that P.H. [Patrick Henry] declining [to be the Federalists candidate for President], Mr. P[inckney] ought to be our man. It is even an idea of which I am fond in various lights. Indeed on latter reflection, I rather wish to be rid of P.H., that we may be at full liberty to take up Pinckney.

Jonathan Dayton to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., Elizabethtown, N.J., 4 September 1796

I am likewise much pleased with the appointment of General Pinckney as his successor. Possessing great frankness, candor, and integrity, he unites with a nice sense of honor, talents, which, though not the most brilliant, are nevertheless good and may be equally useful.

Robert G. Harper to His Constituents, 5 January 1797

I give a decided preference to Mr. Adams above Mr. Jefferson. . . . But I am one of those who would have preferred Major Pinckney to either, as conceiving him to be possessed, in a higher degree than either, of those qualities which fit a man for holding the reins of government. Prudence, moderation, sound judgment, great coolness and discretion, calm steady firmness of character, and uniformity of conduct.

Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Pinckney, Philadelphia, 29 May 1797

I am happy to assure you that the conduct of Gen. Pinckney has met universal approbation. It is marked with that coolness, dignity, and good sense which we expected from him.

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Philadelphia, 13 April 1798

Mr. Pinckney is here as member of Congress. His plain affable Manners are agreeable to every one. He is Esteemed and beloved. He is quite the Gentleman.

Letter from Alexander Hamilton Concerning the Public Conduct and Character of John Adams, New York, 24 October 1800

It was evidently of much consequence to endeavor to have an eminent Federalist Vice-President. Mr. Thomas Pinckney, of South Carolina, was selected for this purpose. This gentleman, too little known in the North, had been all his lifetime distinguished in the South, for the mildness and amiableness of his manners, the rectitude and purity of his morals, and the soundness and correctness of his understanding, accompanied by a habitual discretion and self-command, which has often occasioned a parallel to be drawn between him and the venerated Washington. In addition to these recommendations, he had been, during a critical period, our Minister at the Court of London, and recently Envoy Extraordinary to the Court of Spain; and in both these trusts, he had acquitted himself to the satisfaction of all parties. With the Court of Spain he had effected a Treaty, which removed all the thorny subjects of contention, that had so long threatened the peace of the two countries, and stipulated for the United States, on their Southern frontier, and on the Mississippi, advantages of real magnitude and importance. . . . My position was, that if chance should decide in favor of Mr. Pinckney, it probably would not be a misfortune; since he, to every essential qualification for the office, added a temper far more discreet and conciliatory than that of Mr. Adams.

William Pinckney

James Monroe to James Madison, London, 10 August 1804

Mr Pinkney will take charge of this. I think he will succeed, or rather has, for there was one or two slight points to be adjusted. . . . He is a man of respectable talents, in principle a republican. . . . Mr P has some peculiarities about him; sensible to his own pretensions, he will feel every thing he would deem a slight from any one. He has acquired much of the etiquette of this place wh he will probably soon get rid of in getting home. In the management of the business at the board, and in his deportment here generally he has shewn no little portion of descretion or address. He preserved the ascendancy there, and the respect of the people in power here, to whom he was known, while it was understood that he professed republican principles. I doubt not that he has at no time held conversation relative to those principles, or inculcated any wh might be offensive to this govt. I presume he has at all times been silent on those topicks in the company of Englishmen, or others of opposit principles. It is just to remark that this is not the theatre for an American to attempt to propagate such principles & that perhaps had he less prudence he might have had less success in the business entrusted to him. What sacrifice he would make in support of republican principles I cannot pretend to say, nor am I sufficiently acquainted with him to judge. I have occasionally found him useful in his communications with me here. I have avoided seeking to compromit him, and therefore never led the conversation to topicks of a delicate nature.

James Madison to Henry Wheaton, Montpelier, Va., 15 October 1823

I have recd. Your letter of Sepr. 29 touching on your proposed biography of the late Mr. Pinkney. You have chosen a subject furnishing an opportunity of at once doing justice to your own pen, & to a memory with which a rich assemblage of rare gifts is associated.

I should take pleasure in contributing any private recollections that might aid in finishing that portrait: but my intercourse with Mr. P. was almost entirely by written correspondence on public subjects. I never even had the gratification of hearing any of those splendid displays of eloquence so much admired for the diversified merits united in them. . . . The letters do equal honor to his penetration & to his patriotism, and are in the lucid & graceful style so familiar to him.

John Pintard

Elisha Boudinot to Alexander Hamilton, Newark, N.J., 23 May 1796

I am very happy that your endeavors to extricate Mr. Duer will occasion your so far investigating his affairs, as to enable you to do justice to a very injured character. When the misfortunes of life, or the frowns of fortune have thrown a man in the shade the generality of the world have too little feeling to investigate before they Judge, and too great a propensity to censure unheard, he is therefore at once condemned and kept in oblivion as long as malice & envy can have their effects. I know your conduct is swayed by entirely different motives; and that if convinced of the rectitude of a man's conduct, misfortunes will not prevent, but urge, your helping hand to restore him to life again. It is this belief of your character that induces me to trouble you with what I know of my friend's conduct in his connection with Mr. Duer. I *know* his *virtue*, his *integrity*, his *purity of intention*, and therefore if the whole world should forsake him, I would support him to the utmost of my ability, trusting for *his* and *my* vindication, to that awful day when the secrets of all hearts will be revealed.

When Mr. Pintard first engaged in the line of a Broker, he was young, sanguine and full of spirits, his abilities soon introduced him to very handsome business. It was then Mr. Duer made a proposition to him, to go to Europe for him, offering him certain conditions. He consulted his Uncle [Lewis Pintard], who was cautious, and had not the best opinion of Mr. D.—he advise him against it—he sent for me. I told him, to make out an account of the profits of his business for two Months then past, to go to Mr. D. show it to him, and inform him, “that he had a young growing family, was inexperienced, and threw himself entirely on his generosity—if he knew the business he wanted to send him upon, would be more advantageous to him than that in which he was in, he would go” and I was confident Mr. D. as a man of science, character and liberality would never deceive him. He did so, and Mr. D—— said at once, that his business was so good, he would not advise him to continue in the line he was in, and he would increase his business by giving him his own—complaining that he had employed several agents who had made their own fortunes, and then turned their backs on him, and treated him with ingratitude. This frankness entirely won the heart of Mr. P—— and he soon after engaged in his business; but as I understood the matter, not to become bound for him in any instance. The Saturday after our return from organizing the manufacturing Society at Trenton, I received an express from Mr. P. that he wanted to see me; I went in, and found his Uncle with him in great distress—saying that during the weeks absence of Mr. D. he had been called upon unexpectedly, to pay off several of his notes due at the bank, which Mr. D.

had not given him any notice were due and that he might not be charged with *ingratitude*, in the absence of Mr. D—— he had been induced to endorse notes, to redeem those at the bank—and they wanted me to go to Mr. D. and endeavor to find out how his circumstances were &c. My answer was that from the little acquaintance I had with Mr. D—— I believed him to be a man of honor, delicacy and pride—that he would feel himself hurt, at the Idea of Johnny’s doubting his ability and his pride would be wounded at his communicating it to me—that I would therefore advise him to go with the same openness and candor as at first and know from himself his true situation, and whether he was safe in what he had done for him. This advice he said he would follow—and it being Saturday afternoon, I left town. The result will appear in the extract of a few lines from two or three letters I received from him at that time which I kept, and which he does not know are in existence—and which will be more forcible than pages of comments from me—first giving an extract from a letter brought me by Mr. D. on his way to Trenton—as an inlet to what followed.

26 November 1791. “You will find from Duer who is my friend & who has my best services; that his prospects are unbounded—and were I to work night & day he alone would furnish me ample employment & that profitable. I have unbounded confidence in him, which I believe is reciprocal and I am determined to conduct myself in such a way by strict attention to my accounts that I will be a Caesar’s wife to him. I flatter myself he never was better served, I am sure never more honestly. I fear nothing whilst he has life, for as to resource he is a most wonderful man, he is really an Atlas!”

4 December 1791 (the day after I left him to follow the advice I mentioned before)

“I have spent the whole of this afternoon with Col. Duer, who dined with me. You will be kind enough not to drop a lisp of my communications to you to any one else in the world. With respect to contingencies, I must risk the event, but he assures me that he is solid & immensely rich. My greatest risk is his not investigating his accounts with me and leaving every thing to my discretion. However I shall walk straight and trust to an upright conduct of his affairs for his approbation.”

6 December 1791. “Col. Duer spent yesterday evening with me, when we had a long conversation and full investigation of his business committed to me. From every circumstance, his assurance, and more his honor, I feel perfectly secure in committing myself to any extent on his account. I consider him next to yourself my best friend, and where I fix my confidence is unbounded. I find a reciprocal sentiment on his part, indeed what proof so clear, as laying himself entirely at my mercy; I trust the issue will prove his opinion of my Zeal & friendship not misplaced. I shall from this moment go forward into every engagement on his account with as much alacrity as ever I undertook anything in my life.”

I will not trouble you farther with extracts; these are sufficient to convince a candid mind; that he engaged in the business with a warm, inexperienced though sincere mind, and not that of a swindler or sharper. The consequence of this Zeal & confidence is too well known—the sufferings, the torture of mind, as well as distress of body he has undergone for these four years past—if known, would be sufficient to soften the hearts of his most obdurate creditors even those of a LeRoy & Bayard, although *they* may suppose *their hearts & feelings* so incruscated with Gold, as to be impervious to the darts of distress & misfortune.

I have informed Mr. P. of your wish to have a short journal of his endeavors to satisfy Mr. D. and his creditors which he will make out and forward you immediately. He has constantly offered to surrender every farthing he has in the world to his creditors that his worst enemies might be the assignees—and that if ever it should appear a farthing was kept back, that the whole should be void. I am confident that if they had given him a letter of license for ten years, from his exertions,

he would have been enabled to have paid them all off—but nothing short of his death appears will be satisfactory to them and they would have been gratified in that long ago, if his lot had been cast anywhere, but where he is.

Gulian ver Plank

Alexander Hamilton to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., Albany, N.Y., 22 April 1797

Gulian ver Plank (now President of the Bank of New York). He is a man of superior mental endowments to any of those who have been named [as possible collector of taxes] of superior acquirements. His moral character is of the most estimable sort. His habits have not led to a familiarity with accounts—& he is supposed not much addicted to labor. But I think he would *upon principle* apply himself closely to a good execution of whatever he should undertake. He is a man of moderate fortune & has no particular pursuit—so that I think he might be willing to accept though I am not certain.

Zephaniah Platt

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

[Platt] is a man of plain sense, thoroughly acquainted with agriculture. He intends to do well whenever he can hit upon what is right.

Elizabeth Powel

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

Mrs. Powell, rival of the former [Mary Morris] in occupying first place at the public concourses, as her qualities are very different; she is of genteel birth and has received an excellent education, the beginning of which she has carried forward with unusual progress, through application and ability. If a magisterial tone and pedantic affectation did not mar her discourse, she would be the most delightful conversationalist one could wish.

Joseph Priestley

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 27 June 1788

. . . a new publication of Dr. Priestley, whose literary powers may be truly called athletic.

Angelica Church to Alexander Hamilton, 1–7[?] April 1794

You will have the pleasure to receive this letter by Dr. Priestly, a man dear to virtue and to science. Without the advantage and satisfaction of his acquaintance, I revere him for his works, and take a particular interest that he should be well received in America. That happy country which seems reserved by Providence as an Asylum from the crimes and persecutions which make Europe the pity and disgrace of the age.

You my dear Brother will receive with distinguished kindness this worthy stranger (if he whose breast teems with the love of mankind may anywhere be called a stranger), and make our country so dear to him as to cause him to forget that which he leaves at an advanced period of Life and which he has most ably served.

Benjamin Rush to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 4 February 1797

Dr. Priestly, who will be in town at that time, longs for the pleasure of your acquaintance. You will be charmed with his extensive information and amiable simplicity of manners. I will give you a specimen of his republicanism. “The time,” said he to me, “will I hope one day come when *laws* shall govern so completely that a man shall be a month in America without knowing who is President of the United States.”

Thomas Jefferson to Joseph Priestley, Washington, 21 March 1801

Yours is one of the few lives precious to mankind, & for the continuance of which every thinking man is solicitous. Bigots may be an exception. What an effort, my dear Sir, of bigotry in Politics & Religion have we gone through! The barbarians really flattered themselves they should be able to bring back the times of Vandalism, when ignorance put everything into the hands of power & priestcraft. All advances in science were proscribed as innovations. They pretended to praise and encourage education, but it was to be the education of our ancestors. We were to look backwards, not forwards, for improvement; the President himself declaring, in one of his answers to addresses, that we were never to expect to go beyond them in real science. This was the real ground of all the attacks on you. Those who live by mystery & *charlatanerie*, fearing you would render them useless by simplifying the Christian philosophy,—the most sublime & benevolent, but most perverted system that ever shone on man,—endeavored to crush your well-earned & well-deserved fame. But it was the Lilliputians upon Gulliver. Our countrymen have recovered from the alarm into which art & industry had thrown them; science & honesty are replaced on their high ground; and you, my dear Sir, as their great apostle, are on its pinnacle. It is with heartfelt satisfaction that, in the first moments of my public action, I can hail you with welcome to our land, tender to you the homage of its respect & esteem, cover you under the protection of those laws which were made for the wise and good like you, and disdain the legitimacy of that libel on legislation, which under the form of a law, was for some time placed among them.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 19 September 1806

Dr. Priestley’s *Life* I should be very glad to see and hope that some of them will be sent to Boston for sale. He was a man of very extraordinary talent and incredible application. If he had written but a tenth of his works, he would have left a ten times greater reputation. If he had written nothing but his *Chemistry*, he would have been thought a prodigy.

Casmir Pulaski

Marquis de Lafayette: Memoirs of 1776–1777

The American forces included some dragoons under Pulaski, the only member of the Polish Confederation who had refused to accept a pardon. He was an intrepid and virtuous chevalier, who was both devout and licentious, and a better captain than a general. He insisted upon being a Pole wherever he went, and M. Lafayette, after having helped him obtain a command, often labored to reconcile him with the Americans.

Benjamin Franklin to George Washington, Paris, 13 June 1777

Count Pulaski, who was a general of the confederates in Poland, and who is gone to join you, is esteemed one of the greatest officers in Europe.

Marquis de Lafayette to James Lovell, Headquarters, 21 August 1777

. . . one of the first member of the confederation of Poland, the most distinguished officer, and the most dangerous enemy of the tyrants of his country.

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

The Polish General Polasskey is appointed to raise an Independent Corps of sixty Dragoon, with 200 light Infantry, to Rank a Brigadier General; I believe he will prove a valuable Officer.

Marquis de Lafayette to Henry Laurens, Camp at Valley Forge, Pa., 10 April 1778

I have no doubt but that Count de Pulaski will obtain what he desires. If ever a good, active, indefatigable officer, a brave and honest man as far as those expressions can be extended and a man of notice and reputation in the world is entitled to the consideration of Congress the Count deserves it on every respect.

John Thaxter to Abigail Adams, York, Pa., 18 April 1778

Since I had the pleasure of addressing you last, I have found in the office a Narrative respecting Count Pulaski, a copy of which is enclosed. He is a great Character. Congress, in confidence of his military skill and prowess, and attachment to the American Cause, have authorized him to raise sixty-eight Horse and two hundred Foot. The Horsemen are to be armed with Lancets, and the Foot in the manner of Light Infantry. This Corps is called Count Pulaski's *Legion*. *He is* the Brigadier general of it. Many gentlemen, distinguished for military Experience, affirm, that this Legion will be very serviceable in harassing the Enemy, in private expeditions, &c.

Pulaski is a Hero in Grain. He inherits his Ancestors' Love of and inflexible attachment to, the Liberties of Mankind, as well as their martial Virtues. He was very active last campaign at the head of some light Horse. His post becoming very disagreeable to him on account of some difficulties, which originated from no better principle than ENVY, he resigned. He is now provided for in a mode agreeable to his wishes.

John Henry Purviance

James Monroe to James Madison, Richmond, Va., 14 January 1802

Mr Purviance was bred to commerce not to the law; yet having an active mind, far from dissipation, he appears to have read on most subjects, perhaps less on the law than others. For many years he has enjoyed a delicate state of health which has made him more sedentary than he probably otherwise would have been. He is diffident modest or rather a meek character, tho firm in his pursuits & principles: no person can be more so. His knowledge of the principles and details of commerce and the forms connected with it must be very comprehensive and accurate. His mind is an enlarged one his judgment sound: in certain cases he might overrate difficulties and want enterprise, but few men would be less apt to want prudence or to take a wrong course when he did act. He is honorable, upright, possessed of generous feelings, and capable of warm friendships. There are many stations for which he might not be fully qualified: for such he would not be thought of, as others who are better known would have stronger pretensions. But for those which are secondary (I mean in reference to the highest grades) in almost any line, I think him well qualified. His style is correct and certainly much above that which is used in the ordinary course of business. I send a specimen of it in a letter addressed to me sometime since, which you will be so good as return after perusing it. I informed him that I had written to Mr Jefferson & yourself as he desired but had recd no answers to those letters, it not being usual to give any. I shall certainly say nothing as to the present enquiry.

Samuel Purviance

Samuel Adams to Elizabeth Adams, Baltimore, Md., 26 December 1776

I am at present in good health and am exceedingly happy in an Acquaintance with Mr Samuel Purviance a Merchant of this Place, with whom I have indeed before corresponded, but I never saw him till I came here. He is a sensible, honest and friendly Man, warmly attached to the American Cause, and has particularly endeared himself to me by his great Assiduity in procuring Relief in this part of the Continent for the Town of Boston at a Time when her Enemies would have starved her by an oppressive Port bill.

Israel Putnam

Samuel Blachley Webb to Silas Deane, Cambridge, Mass., 11 July 1775

You'll find the Generals Washington and Lee are vastly fonder and think higher of Putnam than any man in the army: and he truly is the Hero of the day.

Silas Deane to Elizabeth Deane, Philadelphia, 20 July 1775

Your's of the 13th I received last Evening & am glad to find the Good, & virtuous of Connecticut are willing to stand by the Resolutions of the Congress who in the Appointment of General Putnam Acted on principles as much superior to Those which actuate the dissatisfied as Heaven is superior to Earth. Putnam's Merit Rung through this Continent, his Fame still increases and every day justifies the Unanimous applause of this Continent. Let it be remembered he had every Voice of the Congress, and his health has been the second or third at almost all Our Tables in this City, but it seems he does not Wear a large Wig nor screw his Countenance into a form that belies the sentiments of his generous Soul. He is no adept either at political or religious canting & cozening, he is no shake hand body, he therefore is totally unfit for every thing, but only fighting. That Department I never heard that these intriguing Gentry wanted to interfere with him in. I have scarce any patience. O Heav'n! blast, I implore Thee everyone such low, narrow, selfish, envious maneuver in the bud, nor let one such succeed far enough to stain the fair page of American patriotic politics!

James Lovell to Horatio Gates, York, Pa., 5 November 1777

I hope the brave men who are under your command will restore our affairs on the north river, under your future plans. I wish good old Putt may not think hard of the proposals of congress sent you at this Time. He is really wanted in the neighbourhood of Philada. He is a brave man and will not rest long without Enterprise, tho he cannot maintain posts and fight battles without Soldiers. He was Stripped almost to the Skin, and if Harry Clinton had moved 8 Days Sooner up the River, Albany & your army into the bargain would have been lost.

Alexander Hamilton to George Washington, New Windsor, N.Y., 10 November 1777

Governor Clinton will do every thing in his power. I wish General Putnam was recalled from the command of this post, and Governor Clinton would do it. The blunders and caprices of the former are endless.

Alexander Hamilton to George Washington, New Windsor, N.Y., 12 November 1777

. . . I believe the past delay is not owing to any fault of his [i.e., General Enoch Poor], but is wholly chargeable on General Putnam. Indeed, Sir, I owe it to the service to say that every part of this Gentleman's conduct is marked with blunders and negligence, and gives general disgust.

George Washington to George Clinton, 12 January 1778

The hints which you were pleased to give of mismanagement in the North River command came also from several other hands, and did not a little embarrass me, as they contain charges rather resulting from want of judgment than any real intention to do wrong. It is much to be lamented that we should have officers of so high a rank as to entitle them to claim separate commands with so moderate a share of abilities to direct them in the execution of those commands.

Robert R. Livingston to George Washington, 14 January 1778

Your Excellency is not ignorant of the extent of General Putnam's capacity and diligence; and how well soever these may qualify him for this most important command, the prejudices to which his imprudent levity to the disaffected, and too great intercourse with the enemy, have given rise, have greatly injured his influence. How far the loss of Fort Montgomery and the subsequent ravages of the enemy are to be attributed to him, I will not venture to say; as this will necessarily be determined by a court of inquiry, whose determinations I would not anticipate. Unfortunately for him, the current of popular opinion in this and neighboring States, and as far as I can learn in the troops under his command, runs strongly against him. For my own part, I respect his bravery and former services, and sincerely lament, that his patriotism will not suffer him to take that repose, to which his advanced age and past services justly entitle him.

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

I know not what to say relative to General Putnam's Command, it appears to me that Gentlemen wish him away, & at the same time are loath to offend the good Man—if it be from his unfitness their wishes arise, the sacrifice is very politic & unwarrantable.

George Lux to Nathanael Greene, Baltimore, Md., 26 May 1778

We hear here that Genl P—t—m has resigned. I am glad of it, as his Ignorance disqualifies him from rendering us any essential Service.

Samuel Holden Parsons to Nathanael Greene, Redding, Conn., 11 April 1779

The Case of Genl. Putnam I think to be a very conspicuous Instance of Ingratitude and Malevolence: I believe We don't differ in our Sentiments of the man and however Wise he might have been to have chosen to retire to private Life at his Age it must greatly affect a feeling Mind to reflect upon the Measures taken to remove from office a faithful Servant who has grown old in honest Endeavors to do Good to his Country. And the Means used to induce him to relinquish his Office are such as render it impossible to retire with Honor and who can wish Disgrace to attend him in his last Days? I confess I think when the public have no longer Occasion for the Exertions of their Servants it requires no great Skill to dismiss them in a manner which will not wound the Feelings of a Good Man.

Peter Oliver: Origin & Progress of the American Rebellion, 1782

Amidst this general Confusion, the famous Mr. Putnam, now a Brigadier General in the Rebel Service, went to Boston, & offered his Service to Genl. Gage, & proposed for himself a Birth in the royal Artillery; but Mr. Gage having no Vacancy above 3/6 p. Day, he did not incline to accept, saying at the same Time, that 10/ p. Day was the utmost of his Ambition. It hath been wished by many, that Genl. Gage had secured him to the royal Interest. It possibly might have turned out *well*, had he have done so, but I imagine it hath turned out *better*, by not engaging him; for Mr. Putnam hath not only been the least obnoxious Man in their Service, but he hath really exercised great Humanity to Prisoners taken by the Rebels; & had there been no worse Men to conduct their Opposition than he is, I have no Doubt that he Rebellion would have ceased long since.

As Mr Putnam hath been a Subject for News Paper Paragraphs, & as his Picture hath been exposed in the Windows of Print Shops, both of Town & Country, although very unlike him, it may not be amiss to give you some Traits of a Semblance. I am pretty sure, that they will be less disgusting than some others I feel myself obliged to give you very soon. Know then, that he was a Person who commanded a ranging Party when General Amherst reduced Canada to British Subjection [in the French and Indian War]. In that Service he distinguished his self with Fidelity, Intrepidity & Success. After the Campaign was over, he returned to his small Farm in Connecticut, & to his old Business, as a retailer of Cider & Spirits, in which he gained something to the Support of his Family. He was well esteemed by those who knew him, according to the provincial Phrase, as an *honest, good Sort of Man*—his Parts are not brilliant, but he is hardy, bold, & daring in Execution. His Courage is of that Sort which hath sometimes been deemed, fool hardiness. An Anecdote or two, which have been currently believed in New England, may be explanatory of the latter. It is said, that some Years ago, he had a few Sheep upon his farm, which a Wolf had destroyed, he was determined to avenge his loss by the Death of the Robber. He accordingly took a Companion, & repaired to his Den, then tied a Rope around his Waist, & with his Gun crawled on his Hands & Knees into the Den; when he soon perceived the Wolf with his Eyes glaring, at the further End of it; he fired his Gun & killed him; & seizing him by the Ears, gave the Signal to his Comrades, who pulled them both out. The rash Action was bruited about, & his Minister undertook to expostulate with him upon it; but he closed the Dispute by saying, “that if the Devil himself had stolen as many of his Sheep as the Wolf had, he would have gone into his Dominions & pulled *him* out by the Ears.” Another Story they tell of him, is that he was taken by the Indians in the last War & having destroyed many of their Tribe, they were determined to destroy him; & accordingly bound him to a Tree, & retreated to a Distance, to fling their Hatchets into him; when he, just as the fatal Stroke was to be given, laughed in their full View. The Indians, being always pleased with a brave Action, immediately released him. These Instances are Characteristic of some Sort of bravery, which though it may not be justified upon the Principles of true Courage, it will confirm that part of Mr. Putnam’s Character which I at first mentioned, agreeable to that Maxim, vizt. “a Man of true Courage is always a Man of Humanity”: & I make not the least Doubt, that when a List of the Barbarities which have been committed by Washington & his Savages may be published, Putnam’s Name will be in vain searched for as one of the Perpetrators.

Rufus Putnam

Samuel H. Parsons to John Adams, c. May–August 1789

General Putnam is a Gentleman of a Strong Mind; judicious in his Arrangements, and indefatigable in his pursuits.

George Washington: Opinion of General Officers, 9 March 1792

Possesses a strong mind, and is a discreet man. No question has ever been made (that has come to my knowledge) of his want of firmness. In short, there is nothing conspicuous in his character. And he is but little known out of his own State, and a narrow circle.