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Oliver Wolcott, Sr.

Oliver Wolcott to Laura Wolcott, Philadelphia, 19 March 1776
Benjamin Rush: Sketches
Thomas Rodney's Characters of Some Members of Congress, post-8 March 1781
Oliver Wolcott, Sr., to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., Philadelphia, 15 March 1783

Joseph Wood

Joseph Delaplaine to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 10 February 1816

Benjamin Workman

William White to John Adams, Philadelphia, 1 August 1787
John Adams to Benjamin Waterhouse, Quincy, Mass., 10 September 1800
Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, Plymouth, Mass., 9 January 1810

George Wythe

John Adams: Diary, 15 September 1775
John Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 23 October 1775
Unknown Source
Walker Maury to Thomas Jefferson, Williamsburg, Va., c. 20 April 1784
Thomas Jefferson to Peter Carr, Paris, 10 August 1787
William Pierce: Sketches of Delegates to the Constitutional Convention, c. September 1787
Thomas Jefferson to Ralph Izard, Paris, 17 July 1788
Benjamin Rush: Sketches
John Quincy Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, Cambridge, Mass., 22 June 1806
Louisa Catherine Adams to John Quincy Adams, Washington, 30 June 1806
Edmund Randolph: History of Virginia
William Wirt: Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry, 1817
Thomas Jefferson to John Saunderson, 31 August 1820
Thomas Jefferson: Autobiography, 17 January 1821

Abraham Yates, Jr.

Alexander Hamilton to Robert Morris, Albany, N.Y., 13 August 1782
Thomas Tillotson to Robert R. Livingston, May 1784
Nathan Dane to Rufus King, New York, 16 July 1787
Otto's Biographies, Fall 1788
John Adams to the Printers of the *Boston Patriot*, June 1812

Robert Yates

Alexander Hamilton to Robert Morris, Albany, N.Y., 13 August 1782
James Madison to George Washington, New York, 18 March 1787
William Pierce: Sketches of Delegates to the Constitutional Convention, c. September 1787

New York City Federalists (Alexander Hamilton) to the Supervisors of the City of Albany, New York,
18 February 1789

Massachusetts Magazine, March 1789

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

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

John Joachim Zubly

John Adams: Diary, 15 September 1775

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 17 September 1775

Jeremiah Wadsworth

George Washington to Richard Henry Lee, White Marsh, Pa., 18 November 1777

[Being considered for quartermaster general.] Wadsworth has the reputation of being clever at business. In the Commissary's department he was found active and understanding; but how far he may be qualified for the Chief management of so extensive a department as that of Quarter Master General, I know not.

Committee of Congress at Camp* to Henry Laurens, Valley Forge, Pa., 29 January 1778

We beg leave to acquaint Congress that our Inquiries into this Department have rather confirmed than Changed this Opinion [that the army is not properly supplied]. We are therefore induced to recommend to the earliest Attention of Congress the Choice of a suitable Successor, a Man of Abilities, extensive Connection & Influence. We have not been able to fix upon any Person in our Opinion so proper as Jeremiah Wadsworth Esqr. of Connecticut [to be Commissary General].

*The committee consisted of Francis Dana (chair), Nathaniel Fulsom, Joseph Reed, John Harvie, and Gouverneur Morris.

Francis Dana to Elbridge Gerry, York, Pa., 29 January 1778

This day we have recommended Mr. Wadsworth for Commissary Genl. If you approve of him, pray push forward the election and do not let so valuable a man withdraw from his Country, at a time we meet with so great difficulty to find proper characters for the public service. We shall go on to do all the good in our power, tho' I expect our measures will be highly censured by some.

Nathanael Greene to Jeremiah Wadsworth, Middlebrook, N.J., 6 March 1779

I am sorry to find you and General Sullivan are in a fair way of renewing your trouble again, quarrel I mean.

I find you are in the gall of bitterness. Pray don't get too Angry. It will give your Enemy an unfair advantage over you. . . . I wish you had such a cool man as Mr. Flint with you. I am afraid of your heat and fire. Remember a good politician never gets angry but views every thing with as much impartiality as if he wasn't concerned.

Nathanael Greene to Catherine Greene, New Windsor, N.Y., 8 July 1779

I am now writing in a markee. Col. Wadsworth lies stretched upon my little field bed, in his Sailor dress. To be in this habit is his greatest pride. He is an odd mortal, of an unchristian temper. Col. Wadsworth says Mrs. Greene won't believe a word of this.

Nathanael Greene to Griffin Greene, West Point, N.Y., 10 September 1779

I received a letter last evening from brother Jacob, who writes me you are to be at Hartford this week in order to sell your Wine. I am glad of it, as you will have an opportunity to consult Col. Wadsworth on the subject. Whatever advice he gives you, you may depend upon its being his real

sentiments. His friendship for me, as well as his probity and candor, will secure you against any kind of imposition. He is a Gentleman of great merit, and one of the most valuable friends I have met with since I have been in the Army.

Nathanael Greene to John Trumbull, Morristown, N.J., 22 January 1780

Our good friend Col. Wadsworth is on his way home, having resigned the Office of Commissary General. I am afraid both the Army and the public will feel the loss of him as there is no man in America equalified to discharge the duties of that Office.

Nathanael Greene to Jeremiah Wadsworth, Headquarters near Bacon's Bridge, S.C., after 1 July 1782

You I am told are burthened with wealth. I am glad of it. There is no man who deserves it more or who I wish to possess the good things of this world in greater plenty than you.

Nathanael Greene to John Trumbull, Headquarters, Ashley River, S.C., 29 September 1782

I am happy to hear the Colonel is in the high road to wealth. In this fortune cannot be charged with blindness for no man has a better claim to her gifts. He has a noble soul and a generous temper and will diffuse happiness all around him. I love him as a brother and admire him as a friend.

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

Colonel Wadsworth is about two and thirty, very tall and well made, and has a noble as well as agreeable countenance. He lived formerly on Long Island; and from his infancy was engaged in commerce and navigation: he had already made several voyages to the Coast of Guinea* and the West Indies, when according to the American expression, the present *constellation* began. He then served in the army, and was in several actions; but General Washington discovering that his talents might be still more usefully employed, made him Commissary of provisions. This is a military post in America, and those who fill it, are as much respected as the first officer of the line. . . . This reflection alone will afford sufficient subject for the eulogium of Col. Wadsworth, when it is known that throughout all America, there is not one voice against him, and that his name is never pronounced without the homage due to his talents and his probity. The particular confidence of General Washington puts the seal upon his merit.

*This is vehemently denied by Brissot de Warville.

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

For the pleasures of society, Hartford is considered one of the most agreeable towns in Connecticut. It is the home of one of the most respected men in the United States, Colonel Wadsworth. He enjoys a considerable fortune, which he owes entirely to his own labors and industry. He is perfectly versed in the arts of agriculture, in animal husbandry, and in the East India trade. During the last war he rendered the greatest services to the American and French armies, and he is generally liked and respected and has many fine qualities and virtues, the greatest of which is a singular modesty. His manner is frank, his countenance open, and his speech simple. You cannot help liking

him as soon as you meet him, and you like him even more when you come to know him well. I give here the impression he made on me.

Otto's Biographies, Fall 1788

A very important man in his state. Frank, honest, having solid principles which he has never deviated from. Charged with provisioning the French army, he has made a great fortune without giving the slightest suspicion to his integrity. He is personally attached to M. de Lafayette, M. le Marquis de Chastellux and M. de la Luzerne, with whom he corresponds from time to time. He has many good natural instincts, but is a little arrogant. As he is the richest man in his state, he has great influence there and it is often said that he should be made governor. He traveled to France principally to study the commercial relations between the two nations and he acquired some extensive and very accurate knowledge there. This is a man to treat with respect and to cultivate.

Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz: *Travels through America*, 11 July 1798

Colonel Wadsworth, to whom I had been recommended, the best-known and richest citizen in the state, was proud of the fact that he had been a simple sailor, earning a dollar a week. Today though counting his wealth in thousands, he still works himself on the farm, more from force of habit than from need.

George Walton

Cornelius Harnett to William Wilkinson, York, Pa., 10 October 1777

I refer you to the Bearer Colonel Walton for News as he has every necessary information with him. He is a Georgia Delegate [to Congress] returning home. I beg you will be Civil to him & Introduce him to all our friends. *He is a worthy Man.*

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 17 December 1795

Gen. Jackson of Georgia has resigned and my old Friend Walton is coming in his Place. [James] Gunn writes that he is for order and good Government.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 24 December 1795

The Senate is as firm as a Rock and had received I believe an Accession of Strength in the new Member from Georgia.

Robert Morris to George Washington, Philadelphia, 13 September 1796

. . . I recommend my Old Colleague in Congress, Geo. Walton, Esqr. to Succeed Judge Pendleton who I am informed has resigned. Mr. Walton has already acted as Chief Justice of the State of Georgia, is deemed a sound good Lawyer and a very Honest Man.

Benjamin Rush: Sketches

A sensible young man. He possessed knowledge and a pleasing manner of speaking. He was the youngest member of Congress, being not quite three and twenty when he signed the Declaration of Independence. He filled the offices of governor and chief justice for many years in Georgia, and evinced in his public conduct the same attachment to government and order, that he had done in 1776 to liberty and independence.

Samuel Ward

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 29 March 1776

We have this Week lost a very valuable Friend of the Colonies, in Governor Ward of Rhode Island, by the small Pox in the natural Way. He never would hearken to his Friends who have been constantly advising him to be inoculated ever since the first Congress began. But he would not be persuaded. Numbers, who have been inoculated, have gone through the Distemper, without any Danger, or even Confinement, but nothing would do. He must take it in the natural Way and die

He was an amiable and a sensible Man, a stedfast Friend to his Country upon very pure Principles. His Funeral was attended with the same Solemnities as Mr. Randolphs. Mr. Stillman being the Anabaptist Minister here, of which Perswasion was the Governor, was desired by Congress to preach a sermon, which he did with great Applause.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 18 August 1776

My Friend Warren, the late Governor Ward, and Mr. Gadsden, are three Characters in which I have seen the most generous disdain of every Spice and Species of such Meanness. The two last had not great abilities, but they had pure Hearts. Yet they had less Influence, than many others who had neither so considerable Parts, nor any share at all of their Purity of Intention.

James Warren

John Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 6 July 1775

Your Letters were very usefull to me last fall. Your Character became then known, and much esteemed. The few Letters I have received from you this Time, have increased the Desire of more, and some other Gentlemen who happen to now you, particularly Governor [Stephen] Hopkins and [Samuel] Ward of Rhode Island have confirmed, every Good opinion which had been formed.

John Adams to William Cushing, Philadelphia, 9 June 1776

Warren has an excellent Head and Heart, and Since the Province cannot be favored and honored with the Judgment of regularly educated Lawyers I know not where a better Man could have been found [as an associate justice of the Massachusetts Superior Court of Judicature]. I hope he will not decline.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 18 August 1776

My Friend Warren, the late Governor Ward, and Mr. Gadsden, are three Characters in which I have seen the most generous disdain of every Spice and Species of such Meanness. The two last had not great abilities, but they had pure Hearts. Yet they had less Influence, than many others who had neither so considerable Parts, nor any share at all of their Purity of Intention. Warren has both Talents and Virtues beyond most Men in this World, yet his Character has never been in Proportion. Thus it always is, has been, and will be.

James Warren to Elbridge Gerry, Boston, 22 January 1778

A strong Enthusiastic Faith has supported me in many stages of this Contest. I firmly believe we shall get through, and this faith operates like a Mathematical demonstration.

James Warren to John Adams, 31 May 1778

[On not being elected to the state legislature] If you Enquire how all this came to pass I must tell you it is owing to various Causes. The people feel themselves uneasy and don't know the reason, they have therefore shifted their Members more generally than ever. I scorned to make or suffer any Influence in my favour. The Tories and the Influence from Boston, and some other places had their full play, which are the reasons I am not in the House. The greater part of the C[ourt] from Envy, and other reasons never loved me and the Complexion of the House, Consisting of Members (the most Influential of them) whose politicks are very different from mine, and who are of the moderate Class which you know I never belonged to, may account for my not being Elected. But above all the partiality of my Friends which has rendered me Obnoxious to a Certain great Man, and his numerous party by holding me up to view in Competition with him, the Policy therefore has been to get me out of sight and prevent my being an Obstacle to his Glory and Ambition.

James Warren to John Adams, Boston, 7 June 1778

[Explaining why he was not reelected to Congress.] But above all the partiality of my Friends which has rendered me Obnoxious to a Certain great Man [John Hancock], and his numerous party by holding me up to view in Competition with him, the Policy therefore has been to get me out of sight and prevent my being an Obstacle to his Glory and Ambition.

Nor shall the Distance or uncertainty of Conveyance which forbids the hope of a speedy answer, Check my inclination to Converse with a Gentleman, made dear to me by the high style of friendship subsisting between him and the person who Deservedly holds the first place in my Heart, and as I have thus early mentioned this unshaken patriot I will just hint to you that Wearied with the perplexities and Embarrassments of public life, sickened by the Ingratitude and Baseness of Mankind, and sighing for the felicity of Domestic peace, He is about to leave the Mazy paths of politics, and War, and Return to the still, unvariegated scenes of the sequestered Roof.

Abigail Adams (Nabby) to Elizabeth Cranch, 9 November 1782

Mr. W. is sociable and agreeable.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, 13 November 1782

Our Friend General W——n is chosen Member of Congress. I should be loath he should for the 3d time refuse as it leaves impression upon the minds of our good Citizens no ways to his advantage. But this good Man is some how or other embittered. His *Lady* opposes if not by words, by that which has as strong an influence.

James Warren to John Adams, Milton, Mass., 27 October 1783

Your Favours . . . found me on this Hill, at Work among my Potatoes, instead of being in Congress “at the great Wheel,”—Nor do I regret this on my own Account. I am quite contented with a private Life, & my Ambition is quite satisfied by excelling in the perfection of my Composts, the Culture of my Lands, & the Quality & Abundance of my Crops;—but I own I sometimes wish to be at the Wheel to serve my Country, & to support her Friends, & my Own.

Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, Milton, Mass., 27 April 1785

Mr. Warren . . . in whatever Departments or wherever he resides be assured You have There a *Friend*. You know his attachments are strong & when he likes or dislikes, Either men or measures, The shaking of a leaf will not alter his opinion.

John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, Auteuil near Paris, 6 May 1785

When shall I have the Pleasure to hear again of my Friend Warren in public? His Retreat has been a great Mortification and misfortune to me. Yet I cannot blame him, for I catch myself wishing myself on the next Hill, half a dozen times in a day. I hope however to hear by some of the next opportunities that he is again called to the Service of his Country.

Abigail Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, London, 24 May 1786

Let not the popular torrent which at present Sets against your Worthy Partner distress you. Time will convince the World who are their approved and unshaken Friends, whatever mistaken judgments they at present form. I foresaw this when I so earnestly pressed the general to accept his last appointment and attend Congress, if only for a few Months.

Caleb Gibbs to George Washington, Boston, 9 February 1788

Genl. Warren who was Pay Master General in '76 is one of the greatest *Antifederalists* we have among us, but he could not obtain to get his Election for Convention. *He acts like the snake in the grass.*

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 25 April 1788

The General's political character has undergone of late a great alteration. Among all those who were formerly his friends he is extremely unpopular; while the insurgent and antifederal party (for it is but one) consider him in a manner as their head; and have given him at this election many votes for lieutenant governor. Mrs. Warren complained that he had been abused shamefully, and very undeservedly; but she thought me too federal to talk freely with me.

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 5 July 1788

Mrs. Warren, with her son Harry stop'd here this night on their way to Plymouth; to which place General Warren has removed back, after living about eight years at Milton. He was formerly a very popular man, but of late years he has thought himself neglected by the People; his mind has been soured, and he became discontented, and querulous: he has been charged with using his influence in favour of Tender acts and paper money; and it has even been very confidently asserted, that he secretly favoured the insurrections and rebellion of the winter before last. Whether his conduct has been misrepresented or not, is a point that must for the present remain undetermined. But he has certainly given some reason for suspicion by his imprudence; and when in a time of rebellion a man openly censures the conduct in general, and almost every individual act of an administration, an impartial public will always judge, that such a man cannot be greatly opposed to a party who are attacking the same measures.

Mrs. Warren however positively declared there was no truth in those allegations, and was very confident, that they were nothing more than the suggestions of the general's enemies, and envy could not disturb his happiness.

Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, Plymouth, Mass., 7 May 1789

But Mr Adams: is the last man in the united states who I should suppose would listen to the misrepresentations: or be impressed by the Calumnies of open or disguised Enemies to the prejudice of an old & a tryed Friend—A friend whose zeal & exertions in the public Cause You are acquainted with & whose integrity you never Could suspect. perhaps no other person has for so many years possessed so Great a share of his Esteem & Confidence as yourself: of Consequence it must be supposed that you know his undisguized temper & sentiments much better than any one of the several descriptions of men who have stuck at no Falshoods or even forgeries to prostrate his political character.

James Warren to Elbridge Gerry, Plymouth, Mass., 23 August 1789

I find my antifederal Sin in once thinking the Constitution not infinitely wise, just & politic is not to be forgiven or forgotten & what is still more is like Father Adams to descend to posterity.

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

I was told last week, that the reputed Cato of Plimouth openly declares his dislike to the [Massachusetts] constitution [of 1780], and Wants to have a Single assembly, when such Men of experience, Men Who have borne a part in one revolution and Who call themselves Lovers of Liberty, profess pure and disinterested Principles, come forward & hold Such Sentiments what are we to think? Can we suppose that they were ever Sincere? Or shall we with the Tenth Muse Guillotina

“These are the Men who fiercely burn
Your constitution to overturn
To blast the Sages of Your Choice
They weild the pen, and Ply the voice.”*

*Guillotina; or, “The Annual Song of the Tenth Muse,” *Connecticut Courant*, 4 January 1796, lines 229–32. The author was likely Lemuel Hopkins.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 29 January 1796

Pray are our Plymouth Friends become Frenchified as well as Antifederal. If they Avow such Opinions as you hear, although I shall never disturb their Repose, I shall never have any Confidence in them. But Doatage appears to me from every quarter among my Old Friends.

Mercy Otis Warren

John Adams to James Warren, Passy, France, 2 December 1778

Remember me, Sir, in the most respectful Manner to your good Lady, whose Manners, Virtues, Genius, and Spirit will render her immortal, notwithstanding the general Depravity.

John Adams to James Warren, Paris, 18 March 1780

Pray introduce, Mr. [Jean Baptiste] Petry to Madame Warren the most accomplished Lady in America, next to one whom I will not mention, but whose Prerogative of being the first I can never give up.

Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, Plymouth, Mass., 21 December 1780

I have more than a Balance for all the Amusements the City or the *Court* can give, when my best Friend is my Companion, my Children are well, and Domestic peace reigns under my Roof.

Abigail Adams (Nabby) to Elizabeth Cranch, April 1782

Mrs. W. possesses the happy talent of ever rendering herself pleasing to all.

Abigail Adams (Nabby) to Elizabeth Cranch, 9 November 1782

Mrs. Warren, as ever, instructive, improving and agreeable. She has most certainly gained that point, that whatever she does or says, is universally pleasing. I think I never saw the great, the amiable, and the agreeable so happily blended as in her character. A gentleman once said he had heard instruction given, he had felt reproof, but he had ever received them in a disadvantageous light, till he saw Mrs. W. She possessed the happy talent of conveying instruction under the pleasing mask of sentiment. Every sentence conveyed a reproof, without seeming pointed. When he beheld Mrs. Warren, he saw virtue in its most amiable light. With her endearing partner you are pleased.

Alexander Hamilton to Mercy Otis Warren, Philadelphia, 1 July 1791

Madam,—In making you, thus late, my acknowledgements for the honor you did me, by presenting me with a volume of your poems, I dare not attempt an apology for the delay. I can only throw myself upon your clemency for a pardon.

I have not however been equally delinquent towards the work itself, which I have read, more than once, with great interest. It is certain that in the Ladies of Castille, the sex will find a new

occasion of triumph. Not being a poet myself, I am in the less danger of feeling mortification at the idea, that in the career of dramatic composition at least, female genius in the United States has outstripped the Male.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 29 January 1796

Pray are our Plymouth Friends become Frenchified as well as Antifederal. If they Avow such Opinions as you hear, although I shall never disturb their Repose, I shall never have any Confidence in them. But Doatage appears to me from every quarter among my Old Friends.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 3 April 1797

The Correspondence with Plymouth amused me much—The Answer is Superiour to the Letter both in Delicacy, and keenness.—You might have told her, if Chance decides in Elections, it is no better than Descent. But she knows not what she wants. The Letter is the fruit of a mind poisoned with Envy, Malice and disappointed Ambition.

Thomas Jefferson to James Warren, Washington, 21 March 1801

I pray you to present the homage of my great respects to Mrs. Warren. I have long possessed evidence of her high station in the ranks of genius; and have considered her silence as a proof that she did not go with the current.

Abigail Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, Quincy, Mass., 31 December 1809

Standing as we do upon the confines of the other world, you at the age of four-score, and I at three score and near a half, no other sentiment ought to possess our Bosoms but those of benevolence and good will towards each other. A Friendship upon my part was instilled into my mind by one who knew you earlier in life and who estimated your virtues, and talents as they justly deserved—

And from a judgement which I respected, and qualities, which I found upon acquaintance so worthy to be cultivated and cherished, my regard was matured into a Friendship and intimacy which I fondly hoped, would end, but with our Lives.

A difference in opinion upon the great political questions, which have divided, and still agitate the Nation, might have subsisted between us, without imparing our Friendship. If in a History to be transmitted to posterity you had not misrepresented and mis-construed, not merely facts, but principles, views, and designs, all together foreign to the Character you have delineated, and whom from a long and intimate acquaintance and a frequent correspondence with him, I should have supposed it, impossible you could have thus mistaken.

John Adams to Elbridge Gerry, Quincy, Mass., 17 April 1813

History is not the Province of the Ladies. These three Volumes nevertheless contain many Facts, worthy of Preservation. Little Passions and Prejudices, want of Information, false Information, want of Experience, erroneous Judgment, and frequent Partiality, are among the Faults.

Bushrod Washington

Benjamin Henry Latrobe: Journals, 31 May 1796

Mr. Bushrod Washington is my friend. Could I think impartially of him, I might place some value upon my judgment and commit it to paper. The public voice places him in the triumvirate of eminence, with [James] Innes and [John] Marshall. But if purity and honesty of heart be a disqualification in a Lawyer he cannot deserve that rank.

John Marshall to Joseph Hopkinson, Richmond, Va., 17 December 1830

I have received with much pleasure and read with real gratification and approbation your eloquent eulogium on our inestimable departed friend the late Judge Washington. You have drawn his portrait in such vivid colours and with such fidelity that a reader intimately acquainted with the person for whom it was intended could I think have pointed him out though you had not designated him. He was indeed one of the worthiest and best, and therefore one of the most beloved of men. In amiableness of manners, in excellence of heart, in professional acquirements and in soundness of intellect, he was all that you have represented him. His loss is deplored by no person more than myself.

George Washington

Charles Willson Peale: Recollection of 28 December 1773

One afternoon several young gentlemen, visitors at Mount Vernon, and myself were engaged in pitching the bar, one of the athletic sports common in those days, when suddenly the colonel appeared among us. He requested to be shown the pegs that marked the bounds of our efforts; then, smiling, and without putting off his coat, held out his hand for the missile. No sooner . . . did the heavy iron bar feel the grasp of his mighty hand than it lost the power of gravitation, and whizzed through the air, striking the ground far, very far, beyond our utmost limits. We were indeed amazed, as we stood around, all stripped to the buff, with shirt sleeves rolled up, and having thought ourselves very clever fellows, while the colonel, on retiring, pleasantly observed, "When you beat my pitch, young gentlemen, I'll try again."

Silas Deane to Elizabeth Deane, Philadelphia, 10 September 1774

Col. Washington is nearly as Tall a Man as Col. Fitch and almost as hard a Countenance, yet with a very young Look, & an easy Soldierlike Air, & gesture. He does not appear above Forty-five, yet was in the first Action in 1753 & 1754 on the Ohio, & in 1755 was with Braddock, & was the means of saving the remains of that unfortunate Army. It is said That in the House of Burgesses in Virginia, on hearing of the Boston port Bill, he offered to raise & Arm & lead One Thousand Men himself at his Own Expense for the defense of the Country were there Need of it. His Fortune is said to be equal to such an Undertaking. . . . [Richard Bland is a tolerable speaker] as is Col. Washington who speaks very Modestly, & in cool but determined Style & Accent.

Elkanah Watson: Memoirs, 1775

I delivered my letter to Gen Washington in person, and was deeply impressed with an awe I cannot describe in contemplating that great man, his august person, his majestic mien, his dignified and commanding deportment, more conspicuous perhaps at that moment from the fact that he was in the act of admonishing a militia colonel with some animation.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 17 June 1775

I can now inform you that the Congress have made Choice of the modest and virtuous, the amiable, generous and brave George Washington Esqr. to be the General of the American Army, and that he is to repair as soon as possible to the Camp before Boston. This Appointment will have a great Effect, in cementing and securing the Union of these Colonies. . . . I hope the People of our Province, will treat the General with all that Confidence and Affection, that Politeness and Respect, which is due to one of the most important Characters in the World. The Liberties of America, depend upon him, in a great Degree.

Eliphalet Dyer to Joseph Trumbull, Philadelphia, 17 June 1775

You will hear that Coll. Washington is Appointed General or Commander in Chief over the Continental Army by I don't know but the Universal Voice of the Congress. I believe he will be Very Agreeable to our officers & Soldiery. He is a Gentleman highly Esteemed by those acquainted with him, though I don't believe as to his Military, & for real service he knows more than some of ours, but so it removes all jealousies, more firmly Cements the Southern to the Northern, and takes away the fear of the former lest an Enterprising eastern New England General providing Successful, might with his Victorious Army give law to the Southern & Western Gentry. This made it absolutely Necessary in point of prudence, but he is Clever, & if any thing too modest. He seems discrete & Virtuous, no harum Starum ranting Swearing fellow, but Sober, steady, & Calm. His modesty will Induce him I dare say to take & order every step with the best advice possible to be obtained in the Army.

John Adams to Elbridge Gerry, Philadelphia, 18 June 1775

There is something charming to me in the conduct of Washington. A gentleman of one of the first fortunes upon the continent, leaving his delicious retirement, his family and friends, sacrificing his ease, and hazarding all in the cause of his country! His views are noble and disinterested. He declared, when he accepted the mighty trust, that he would lay before us an exact account of his expenses, and not accept a shilling for pay.

George Washington to Martha Washington, Philadelphia, 18 June 1775

My Dearest, I am now set down to write to you on a subject which fills me with inexpressible concern—and this concern is greatly aggravated and Increased when I reflect upon the uneasiness I know it will give you. It has been determined in Congress, that the whole army raised for the defense of the American Cause shall be put under my care, and that it is necessary for me to proceed immediately to Boston to take upon me the Command of it. You may believe me my dear Patsy, when I assure you in the most solemn manner, that, so far from seeking this appointment, I have used every endeavor in my power to avoid it, not only from my unwillingness to part with

you and the Family, but from a consciousness of its being a trust too great for my capacity and that I should enjoy more real happiness and felicity in one month with you, at home, than I have the most distant prospect of reaping abroad, if my stay were to be seven times seven years. But as it has been a kind of destiny, that has thrown me upon this service, I shall hope that my undertaking of it is designed to answer some good purpose. You might, and I suppose did perceive, from the Tenor of my letters, that I was apprehensive I could not avoid this appointment, as I did not even pretend to intimate when I should return—that was the case—it was utterly out of my power to refuse this appointment without exposing my Character to such censures as would have reflected dishonor upon myself, and given pain to my friends. This, I am sure, could not, and ought not to be pleasing to you, and must have lessened me considerably in my own esteem. I shall rely therefore, confidently, on That Providence which has heretofore preserved, and been bountiful to me, not doubting but that I shall return safe to you in the fall. I shall feel no pain from the Toil or the danger of the Campaign. My happiness will flow, from the uneasiness I know you will feel from being left alone. I therefore beg of you to summon your whole fortitude and Resolution, and pass your time as agreeably as possible—nothing will give me so much sincere satisfaction as to hear this, and to hear it from your own Pen.

John Adams to William Tudor, Philadelphia, 20 June 1775

You will be pleased with him. He is brave, wise, generous and humane.

Thomas Cushing to James Bowdoin, Sr., Philadelphia, 21 June 1775

You will doubtless have been informed that the Congress have unanimously appointed George Washington, Esqr., General & Commander in Chief of the American forces. I beg leave to recommend him to your respectful notice. He is a complete gentleman. He is sensible, amiable, virtuous, modest, & brave. I promise myself that your acquaintance with him will afford you great pleasure, and I doubt not his agreeable behavior & good conduct will give great satisfaction to our people of all denominations.

Charles Carroll of Annapolis to Charles Carroll of Carrollton, 24 June 1775

I am pleased with Washington's appointment to be Generalissimo, there may be as brave & as good Officers to the Northward, but we know Him to be a Cool, prudent Man.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Braintree, Mass., 16 July 1775

I was struck with General Washington. You had prepared me to entertain a favorable opinion of him, but I thought the one half was not told me. Dignity with ease, and complacency, the Gentleman and Soldier look agreeably blended in him. Modesty marks every line and feature of his face. Those lines of [John] Dryden instantly occurred to me

“Mark his Majestick fabrick! he's a temple
Sacred by birth, and built by hands divine
His Souls the Deity that lodges there.
Nor is the pile unworthy of the God.”

Benjamin Rush to Thomas Ruston, Philadelphia, 29 October 1775

General Washington has astonished his most intimate friends with a display of the most wonderful talents for the government of an army. His zeal, his disinterestedness, his activity, his politeness, and his manly behavior to General Gage in their late correspondence have captivated the hearts of the public and his friends. He seems to be one of those illustrious heroes whom providence raises up once in three or four hundred years to save a nation from ruin. If you do not know his person, perhaps you will be pleased to hear that he has so much martial dignity in his deportment that you would distinguish him to be a general and a soldier from among ten thousand people. There is not a king in Europe that would not look like a valet de chamber by his side.

William Hooper to the North Carolina Provincial Convention, Philadelphia, 26 October 1776

Our General stands high in the opinion of those who know him, as the soldier, the Citizen, the Man his character is great.

William Hooper to Joseph Hewes, Philadelphia, 30 November 1776

Oh how I feel for Washington that best of men. The difficulties which he has now to encounter are beyond the power of language to describe but to be unfortunate is to be wrong & there are men, you know who, who are villains enough to brand him.

Thomas Paine: "The American Crisis" I, 19 December 1776

Voltaire has remarked, that King William never appeared to full advantage but in difficulties and in action; the same remark may be made on General Washington, for the character fits him. There is a natural firmness in some minds which cannot be unlocked by trifles, but which, when unlocked, discovers a cabinet of fortitude; and I reckon it among those kind of public blessings, which we do not immediately see, that GOD hath blest him with uninterrupted health, and given him a mind that can even flourish upon care.

Samuel Shaw to Francis Shaw, Morristown, N.J., 7 January 1777

Our army love our General very much, but yet they have *one thing against him*, which is the little care he takes of himself in any action. His personal bravery, and the desire he has of animating his troops by example, make him fearless of any danger. This, while it makes him appear great, occasions us much uneasiness. But Heaven, who has hitherto been his shield, I hope will still continue to guard so valuable a life.

William Hooper to Robert Morris, Baltimore, Md., 1 February 1777

I congratulate you upon the new face which our affairs have assumed in the Jerseys under every difficulty that a military genius could possibly have to struggle with. General Washington sometimes almost without an army, at best with one composed of raw undisciplined troops, impatient of Command & vastly inferior in numbers to the Enemy, has been able to check a victorious army, with every thing that could afford a probability of Success, thundering at the very gates of the Capital of America, to change their Course, & is now pursuing them in turn to the only spot which

they have possession of in America. Will Posterity believe the Tale? When it shall be consistent with policy to give the history of that man from his first introduction into our service, how often America has been rescued from ruin by the mere strength of his genius, conduct & courage encountering every obstacle that want of money, men, arms, Ammunition could throw in his way, an impartial World will say with you that he is the Greatest Man on Earth. Misfortunes are the Element in which he shines. They are the Groundwork on which his picture appears to the greatest advantage. He rises superior to them all, they serve as foils to his fortitude, and as stimulants to bring into view those great qualities which in the serenity of life his great modesty keeps concealed. I could fill the side in his praise, but anything I can say cannot equal his Merits or raise your Idea of them.

Robert Morris to George Washington, Philadelphia, 27 February 1777

I do not like to be too sanguine & yet it is very necessary in a Contest like this we are engaged in to view the best side of the picture frequently, remember good Sir, that few men ever Keep their feelings to themselves, & that it is necessary for example sake, that all leaders should feel & think old in order to inspirit those that look up to them. Heaven (no doubt for the Noblest purposes) has blessed you with a Firmness of Mind, Steadiness of Countenance and patience in Sufferings that give You infinite advantages over other Men. This being the case You are not to depend on other People's exertions being equal to your own. One Mind feels & thrives on misfortunes by finding resources to get the better of them, another sinks under their weight, thinking it impossible to resist and as the latter description probably includes the Majority of Mankind we must be cautious of alarming them. Under this Idea I have been backward about removing the public Stores, well knowing that a panic is sooner Caused than retrieved, and I confess myself much hurt At finding you Concerned. Your admonitions on that score were not attended to; during our greatest alarm here and when our prospects were at the Worst. When my inward feelings were most wrung, I put a good face on things and was then Convinced it was of infinite us. I hate deception and cannot wish any thing like it should ever escape You, but I really think if the bright side of our affairs were sometimes to be painted by your pen or Sanctified by your Name it would draw forth the exertions of Some good Men sooner than distress does from others.

Thomas Burke to Richard Caswell, Philadelphia, 11 May 1777

Our Commander in Chief is very justly admired by all the world.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 1 September 1777

We however must disappoint them [i.e., the British], by renouncing all Luxuries, and by a severe Economy. General Washington setts a fine Example. He has banished Wine from his Table and entertains his Friends with Rum and Water. This is much to the Honour of his Wisdom, his Policy, and his Patriotism, and the Example must be followed, by banishing sugar, and all imported Articles, from all our Families. If Necessity should reduce Us to a Simplicity of Dress, and Diet, becoming Republicans, it would be an happy and a glorious Necessity.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, York, Pa., 26 October 1777

[After word of the victory over Burgoyne at Saratoga.] Congress will appoint a Thanksgiving, and one Cause of it ought to be that the Glory of turning the Tide of Arms, is not immediately due

Founders on the Founders

to the Commander in Chief, nor to southern Troops. If it had been, Idolatry, and Adulation would have been unbounded, so excessive as to endanger our Liberties for what I know.

Now We can allow a certain Citizen to be wise, virtuous, and good, without thinking him a Deity or a saviour.

Jonathan Dickinson Sergeant to James Lovell, Lancaster, Pa., 20 November 1777

Things look gloomy enough below. We want a General; thousands of Lives & Millions of Property are yearly sacrificed to the Insufficiency of our Commander in Chief. Two Battles he has lost for us by two such Blunders as might have disgraced a Soldier of three Months Standing; and yet we are so attached to this Man that I fear we shall rather sink with him than throw him off our Shoulders. And sink we must under his Management. Such Feebleness & Want of Authority, such Confusion & Want of Discipline, such Waste, such Destruction will exhaust the Wealth of both the Indies & annihilate the Armies of all Europe & Asia. Twenty Thousand Recruits annually would be absolutely necessary to maintain an Army of forty thousand. I believe this is the most moderate Calculation. In the mean Time People are so disaffected to the Service that no more Recruits can be got. In short, I am quite a Convert to Abraham Clarke's Opinion; that we may talk of the Enemy's Cruelty as we will, but we have no greater Cruelty to complain of than the Management of our Army.

John Adams: Autobiography, December 1777

The News of my Appointment was whispered about, and General Knox came up to dine with me, at Braintree. The design of his Visit was as I soon perceived to sound me in relation to General Washington. He asked me what my Opinion of him was. I answered with the utmost Frankness, that I thought him a perfectly honest Man, with an amiable and excellent heart, and the most important Character at that time among Us, for he was the center of our Union. He asked the question, he said, because, as I was going to Europe it was of importance that the General's Character should be supported in other Countries. I replied that he might be perfectly at his ease on the Subject for he might depend upon it, that both from principle and Affection, public and private I should do my Utmost to support his Character at all times and in all places.

Marquis de Lafayette to the Duc d'Ayen, In Camp at Gulph, Pa., 16 December 1777

If the difference of circumstances, of terrain, and of proportion between the two armies were not so manifest, General Gate's success would be quite surprising, compared with recent events here, especially in view of the notable superiority of General Washington over General Gates. Our general is a man truly made for this revolution, which could not succeed without him. I am closer to him than anyone else, and I find him worthy of his country's veneration. His warm friendship and his complete confidence in me regarding all military and political matters, great and small, put me in a position to know all that he has to do, to reconcile, and to overcome. I admire him more each day for the beauty of his character and his spirit. Certain foreigners piqued because they did not receive commissions (although such things were not within his authority), others whose ambitious projects he did not wish to serve, and still other jealous intriguers would like (perhaps) to tarnish his reputation, but his name will be revered down through the centuries by all those who love liberty and humanity.

Henry Laurens to Marquis de Lafayette, York, Pa., 12 January 1778

All Men acknowledge General Washington's virtue, his personal Bravery, nor do I ever hear his Military abilities questioned.

Robert Morris to Richard Peters, Manheim, Pa., 25 January 1778

I am sure you are sincere when you say you neither are nor will be concerned in any party Work, for Heavens Sake & for the sake of your Country & of Justice keep firm to that resolution, for I really think it a horrid thing that mankind shou'd ever combine to support each other in unworthy attacks on Worthy Characters. General Washington's is too well established to be easily injured, it is too important to be sported with and I think the Man or Men that dare to do it on insufficient grounds are justly obnoxious to chastizement. The General will not suffer alone in any loss of Character, his Country & his Country's Cause will inevitably suffer more or less with him. His private Character has been too long & too amiably & well supported to suffer by the Combined Force & Arts of Malice, Envy, Hatred & detraction. But His Military Character does not so much depend on himself or his Conduct, as on the Success of his measures & therefore in my opinion, injurious Reflections on the want of Success, should be avoided by Good Men & discouraged on their first appearance amongst People of another Cast. Let us therefore withstand these attempts against the first Man in this World & unite our endeavours to procure him such Force as will enable him to shine with that Splendour he Merits. His Enemies must then hide their Heads & silently witness the Triumph of that Virtue which first excited their Envy.

Henry Laurens to Isaac Motte, York, Pa., 26 January 1778

We have been from time to time for above a Month past alarmed by accounts from the Commander in Chief of the near & almost inevitable dispersion of the Army from a want of provision. Nakedness is cheerfully submitted. The General has made the most affecting complaints of neglect in the principal departments, has proceeded even to say, that "never was Officer so impeded as he has been," yet I intimate it with deep feeling & much regret, too little regard has been paid to his sensible, spirited, Manly Representations. This great & virtuous Man has not acted the *half patriot*, by a hasty resignation. His Complaints are well founded, nevertheless he will not take a Step which may greatly injure thirteen United States because of the inconsiderate conduct, design, ignorance or negligence of a Majority of *twenty-one*, too often only of *fifteen* Men. No internal Enemy can hurt him without his own consent.

James M. Varnum to Nathanael Greene, Valley Forge, Pa., 1 February 1778

[On Washington not sending troops to Rhode Island.] I know the great General in [this] as in all his other Measures, acts from a Goodness of Soul and arrives at a View only to the public Weal. But the best may err, and it is a dishonor to retract where convinced of the Impropriety of an Opinion.

You have often heard me say, and I assure you I feel happy in the Truth of it, that next to God Almighty and my Country, I revere General Washington. And nothing fills me with so much Indignation as the Villainy of some who dare speak disrespectfully of him! I fear, I greatly fear his Character will suffer in that State which you and I hold most dear! The People may begin to think his Ear is deaf to the Cries of the distressed; That he feels no Sympathy in the Misfortunes of

others, and that his Attachments are too confined. Forbid it gracious Heaven, And suffer not private Motives to influence us to condemn what we do not fully comprehend!

Benjamin Harrison to Robert Morris, 19 February 1778

The general is fully inform'd of all those Cabals, they prey on his Constitution, sink his Spirits, and will in the end I fear prove fatal to him, if this should be the case excuse me for once more repeating it, America, will lose perhaps her only prop. He well knows bad consequences would follow his resignation, or he would not leave it in the power of the wicked and designing, thus to insult him, with a few words more I shall finish this painful Subject.

Marquis de Lafayette to the Baron von Steuben, Albany, N.Y., 12 March 1778

Allow me, sir, to congratulate you on being so near General Washington. This great man has no enemies but those of his own country, and yet every noble and sensitive soul must love the excellent qualities of his heart. I think I know him as well as anyone, and that is precisely the idea I have of him. His honesty, his candor, his sensitivity, his virtue in the full sense of the word are above all praise. It is not for me to judge his military abilities, but as far as my feeble judgment can discern, his opinion in the council always seemed to me to be the best, though his modesty sometimes kept him from sustaining it, and his predictions have always been fulfilled. In all sincerity, it has been a pleasure for me to give you some idea of the character of my friend, because some people would have tried perhaps to deceive you in this matter.

Samuel Shaw to the Rev. Mr. Eliot of Boston, Artillery Park, about 24 west of Philadelphia, 12 April 1778

It would be paying very little attention to that warm attachment which you so justly have to our illustrious Commander-in-chief, were I to omit acquainting you, that he enjoys a perfect state of health, and is the same steady, amiable character he ever has been. His fortitude, patience, and equanimity of soul, under the discouragements he has been obliged to encounter, ought to endear him to his country,—it has done it exceedingly to the army. When I contemplate the virtues of the man, uniting in the citizen and soldier, I cannot too heartily coincide with the orator for the Fifth of March last, who so delicately describes him, as a person that appears to be raised by Heaven to show how high humanity can soar. It will afford you no small pleasure to be told, that the faction which was breeding last winter in order to traduce the first character on the Continent is at an end.

Nathanael Greene to Governor Nicholas Cooke of Rhode Island, Providence, R.I., 19 April 1778

It gives me pains to hear how slowly the Recruits come in to you there. General Washington, whom God long preserve, had need like Moses of old to have the assistance of a son and heir to assist him in this trying day, but I trust in God as his day is, so his Strength shall be, for I believe he was Raised up on purpose for the defence of his bleeding Country in this day of tribulation, and I trust God will support him and protect him against all his Enemies.

Thomas Burke to the North Carolina Assembly, York, Pa., 29 April 1778

[After a debate in Congress over a draft letter responding to General Washington's criticism of Congress' inconsistent policy toward prisoners.] I have penetrated the personal character of General Washington. In my Judgment he is a good officer and most excellent Citizen, moved only by the most amiable and disinterested Patriotism, he perseveres in encountering extreme difficulties, dangers and fatigues under which he seems Sensible of no uneasiness but from the misfortunes of his Country, and of no pleasure but from her success. His few Defects are only the Excess of his amiable Qualities, and though I am not of opinion that any Individual is absolutely Essential to the success of our Cause, yet I am persuaded his loss would be very severely felt, and would not be easily supplied. With this Idea of him, I could not but deem it very impolitic to hazard giving him disgust when no good cause required it. Nor could I avoid deeming it unjust, and ungenerous to give unnecessary offense and Insult to so worthy a man who had so well deserved of his Country.

Henry Laurens to John Laurens, York, Pa., 11 May 1778

I, who love order & etiquette & particularly love your General, participate your pleasure; go on improve till that which was impudently said & sarcastically intended shall be verified, Washington in War shall be equal to Frederic—in many respects he is far superior.

William Henry Drayton to Baron Steuben, York, Pa., 21 May 1778

I cannot express to you, the Pleasure in which I travelled from Camp, reflecting upon the rapid advance of our young Soldiers in the art military under your auspices. You are my Dear Baron, intitled to the thanks of every American; & you have mine in the warmest sense.

Alexander Hamilton to Elias Boudinot, New Brunswick, N.J., 5 July 1778

[On Washington at the Battle of Monmouth.] As we approached the supposed place of action we heard some flying rumors of what had happened in consequence of which the General rode forward and found the troops retiring in the greatest disorder and the enemy pressing upon their rear. I never saw the general to so much advantage. His coolness and firmness were admirable. He instantly took measures for checking the enemy's form and make a proper disposition. He then rode back and had the troops formed on a very advantageous piece of ground; in which and in other transactions of the day General Greene & Lord Stirling rendered very essential service, and did themselves great honor. The sequel is, we beat the enemy and killed and wounded at least a thousand of their best troops. America owes a great deal to General Washington for this day's work; a general rout, dismay and disgrace would have attended the whole army in any other hands but his. By his own good sense and fortitude he turned the fate of the day. Other officers have great merit in performing their parts well; but he directed the whole with the skill of a Master workman. He did not hug himself at a distance and leave an Arnold to win laurels for him; but by his own presence, he brought order out of confusion, animated his troops and led them to success.

Henry Laurens to George Washington, Philadelphia, 7 July 1778

I arrived here on Thursday last, but hitherto have not collected a sufficient number of States to form a Congress, consequently I have received no Commands. Your Excellency will therefore be pleased to accept this as the address of an Individual intended to assure you Sir of my hearty

congratulations with my Country Men on the success of the American Arms under Your Excellency's immediate Command in the late Battle of Monmouth & more particularly of my own happiness in the additional Glory achieved by Your Excellency in retrieving the honor of these States in the Moment of an alarming dilemma.

It is not my design to attempt encomiums upon Your Excellency. I am as unequal to the task as the Act is unnecessary, Love & respect for Your Excellency is impressed on the Heart of every grateful American, & your Name will be revered by posterity. Our acknowledgements are especially due to Heaven for the preservation of Your Excellency's person necessarily exposed for the Salvation of America to the most imminent danger in the late Action; that the same hand may at all times guide & Shield Your Excellency is the fervent wish of, Dear sir, Your much obliged & faithful humble servant.

Elias Boudinot to Alexander Hamilton, Philadelphia, 8 July 1778

With the utmost sincerity I congratulate you & my Country on the kind Interposition of Heaven in our favour on the 28 Ultimo. It seems as if on every Occasion we are to be convinced that our political Salvation is to be as through the fire. . . . The General I always revered & loved ever since I knew him, but in this Instance he has rose superior to himself. Every Lip dwells on his Praise for even his pretended Friends (for none dare to acknowledge themselves his Enemies) are obliged to croak it forth. The share that his family (for whom I retain a real friendship) has in the Honors of the day has afforded me real Pleasure, and among the rest none more than that of your Lordship.

John Jay to George Washington, Philadelphia, 21 April 1779

I have perused the several papers with which favoured me. The delicacy, candour, and temper diffused through your letters form a strong contrast to the evasions and design observable in some others.

Marquis de Lafayette to George Washington, St. Jean d'Angely, near Rochefort Harbor, France, 12 June 1779

Forgive me for what I am going to say. But I can't help reminding you that a commander in chief should never too much expose himself, that in case General Washington was killed, Nay was seriously wounded, there is no officer in the army who might fill that place. The Battle or action whatsoever should most certainly be lost, and the American army, the American cause itself would perhaps be entirely Ruined.

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

Should peace arrive after another Campaign or two, and afford us a little Leisure, I should be happy to see your Excellency in Europe, and to accompany you, if my Age and Strength would permit, in visiting some of its ancient and most famous Kingdoms. You would, on this side of the Sea, enjoy the great Reputation you have acquir'd, pure and free from those little Shades that the Jealousy and Envy of a Man's Countrymen and Contemporaries are ever endeavouring to cast over living Merit. Here you would know, and enjoy, what Posterity will say of Washington. For 1000 Leagues have nearly the same Effect with 1000 Years. The feeble Voice of those grovelling Passions cannot extend so far either in Time or Distance. At present I enjoy that Pleasure for you, as I frequently hear the old Generals of this martial Country (who study the Maps of America, and

mark upon them all your Operations), speak with sincere Approbation and great Applause of your conduct; and join in giving you the Character of one of the greatest Captains of the Age.

Moses Hazen to Nathanael Greene, Preakness, N.J., 24 July 1780

[George Washington] is the very Idol of His Country, and who I love, regard, and Esteem, as one of the best men since the Creation of Adam.

Nathanael Greene to Alexander Hamilton, Camp on Pedee River, S.C., 10 January 1781

It is my opinion that General Washington's influence will do more than all the Assemblies upon the Continent. I always thought him exceeding popular; but in many places he is little less than adored; and universally admired. His influence in this Country might possibly effect something great. However I found myself exceedingly well received; but more from being the friend of the General's than from my own merit.

Alexander Hamilton to Philip Schuyler, New Windsor, N.Y., 18 February 1781

I always disliked the office of an Aide de Camp as having in it a kind of personal dependence. I refused to serve in this capacity with two Major Generals at an early period of the war. Infected however with the enthusiasm of the times, an idea of the General's character which experience soon taught me to be unfounded, overcame my scruples and induced me to accept his invitation to enter into his family. I believe you know the place I held in the General's confidence and councils of which will make it the more extraordinary to you to learn that for three years past I have felt no friendship for him and have professed none. The truth is our own dispositions are the opposites of each other & the pride of my temper would not suffer me to profess what I did not feel. Indeed when advances of this kind have been made to me on his part they were received in a manner that showed at least I had no inclination to court them, and that I wished to stand rather upon a footing of military confidence than of private attachment. You are too good a judge of human nature not to be sensible how this conduct in me must have operated on a man to whom all the world is offering incense. . . .

The General is a very honest man. His competitors have slender abilities and less integrity. His popularity has often been essential to the safety of America, and is still of great importance to it. These considerations have influenced my past conduct respecting him, and will influence my future. I think it is necessary he should be supported.

Marquis de Lafayette to the Prince de Poix, Camp near Yorktown, Va., 20 October 1781

As for the commander in chief, his genius, his greatness, and the nobility of his manners attach to him the hearts and veneration of both [American and French] armies.

Thomas McKean to George Washington, Philadelphia, 31 October 1781

Words fail me when I attempt to bestow my small tribute of thanks and praise to a Character so eminent for wisdom, courage and patriotism, & one who appears to be no less the Favorite of Heaven than of his Country; I shall only therefore beg you to be assured, that you are held in the most grateful remembrance; and with a peculiar veneration, by all the wise and good in these United States. That you may long possess this happiness; that you may be enabled speedily to

annihilate the British power in America, which you have so effectually broken by this last capital blow; that you may be ever hailed The Deliverer of your Country and enjoy every blessing Heaven can bestow, is the sincere and ardent Prayer of one, who professes himself to be, with every sentiment of regard and all possible attachment.

John Jay to Henry Knox, Madrid, 10 December 1781

General Washington has favored me with copies of the articles of capitulation and returns of the prisoners, etc. It gives me very sensible pleasure to find that he commanded in person on this glorious occasion, and had the satisfaction of bringing deliverance to his native, and, consequently, favorite part of America. If Providence shall be pleased to lead him, with safety and success, through all the duties of his station, and carry him home with the blessings of all America on his head, I think he will exhibit to the world the most singular instance of virtue, greatness, and good-fortune united which the history of mankind has hitherto recorded.

James Madison to Edmund Randolph, Philadelphia, 25 February 1783

It is added and I fear with much certainty, that the influence of General [Washington] is rapidly decreasing in the army insomuch that it is even in contemplation to substitute some less scrupulous guardian of their interests.

Stephen Higginson to John Lowell, Philadelphia, 4 March 1783

I arrived here the 26th ult. . . . Three days We spent at head Quarters with Genl. Washington, with whose steadiness & great prudence I was much pleased, he surely was made expressly for these times & no other than such a Character could have answered Our purpose.

James Madison to Edmund Randolph, Philadelphia, 18 March 1783

The conduct of Washington does equal honor to his prudence and to his virtue.

Chevalier de la Luzerne to Comte de Vergennes, 29 March 1783

General Washington conducts himself with his usual wisdom. It conciliates to him more and more the respect and affection of the people. After a war of eight years, during which he has scarcely ever left his army, and has never taken any repose, he has received the news of the peace with the greatest joy. It made him shed tears, and he said it was the happiest hour of his life. It will be in vain for him to wish to conceal himself and to live as a private man. He will always be the first citizen of the United States; and, although military men are not agreed as to his military talents, all the world is agreed touching his republican virtues, and agreed that there is no character more eminent among those who have taken part in this grand revolution.

Samuel Shaw to the Rev. Eliot, Newburgh, N.Y., April 1783

[At a meeting of the officers of the Continental Army at Newburgh, N.Y., to force Congress to live up to its promises to compensate the officers.] The meeting of the officers was in itself exceedingly respectable, the matters they were called to deliberate upon were of the most serious nature, and the unexpected attendance of the Commander-in-chief heightened the solemnity of the

scene. Every eye was fixed upon the illustrious man, and attention to their beloved General held the assembly mute. He opened the meeting by apologizing for his appearance there, which was by no means his intention when he published the order which directed them to assemble. But the diligence used in circulating the anonymous pieces rendered it necessary that he should give his sentiments to the army on the nature and tendency of them, and determined him to avail himself of the present opportunity; and, in order to do it with greater perspicuity, he had committed his thoughts to writing, which, with the indulgence of his brother officers, he would take the liberty of reading to them. It is needless for me to say any thing of this production; *it speaks for itself*. After he had concluded his address, he said, that, as a corroborating testimony of the good disposition in Congress towards the army, he would communicate to them a letter received from a worthy member of that body, and one who on all occasions had ever approved himself their fast friend. This was an exceedingly sensible letter; and, while it pointed out the difficulties and embarrassments of Congress, it held up very forcibly the idea that the army should, at all events, be generously dealt with. One circumstance in reading this letter must not be omitted. His Excellency, after reading the first paragraph, made a short pause, took out his spectacles, and begged the indulgence of his audience while he put them on, observing at the same time, that he had grown gray in their service, and now found himself growing blind. There was something so natural, so unaffected, in this appeal, as rendered it superior to the most studied oratory; it forced its way to the heart, and you might see sensibility moisten every eye. The General, having finished, took leave of the assembly. . . .

I cannot dismiss this subject without observing, that it is happy for America that she has a *patriot army*, and equally so that a *Washington* is its leader. I rejoice in the opportunities I have had of seeing this great man in a variety of situations;—calm and intrepid where the battle raged, patient and persevering under the pressure of misfortune, moderate and possessing himself in the full career of victory. Great as these qualifications deservedly render him, he never appeared to me more truly so, than at the assembly we have been speaking of. On other occasions he has been supported by the exertions of an army and the countenance of his friends; but in this he stood single and alone. There was no saying where the passions of an army, which were not a little inflamed, might lead; but it was generally allowed that longer forbearance was dangerous, and moderation had ceased to be a virtue. Under these circumstances he appeared, not at the head of his troops, but as it were in opposition to them; and for a dreadful moment the interests of the army and its General seemed to be in competition! He spoke,—every doubt was dispelled, and the tide of patriotism rolled again in its wonted course. Illustrious man! what he says of the army may with equal justice be applied to his own character. “Had this day been wanting, the world had never seen the last stage of perfection to which human nature is capable of attaining.”

John Adams to William Lee, Paris, 10 April 1783

The title of “Founder of the American Empire,” which as you observe the Eng[lish] Newspapers give him [i.e., Benjamin Franklin], does not, most certainly belong to him: and it is extremely fortunate for our Country that no one man has the least Color of a just pretension to that popular & bewitching Appellation—Gen. W. himself, who has undoubtedly acted his part, as well as any Citizen whatever, has no just pretension to it—There has been such a Swarm, such a republic of Characters, in every State, acting material & essential parts in the great Drama, that it is very difficult to say who has done the most—[Adams goes on to say that Samuel Adams is the most deserving.]

Robert R. Livingston to John Adams, Philadelphia, 14 April 1783

The want of permanent funds and the opposition which some States have given to every attempt to establish them, The demands of public Creditors, and particularly of the Army have excited much uneasiness here, satisfactory measures will I hope be adopted to calm it, and do ample justice—The army whose proceedings I transmit have done themselves honor by their conduct on this occasion, too much praise could not be given to the Commander in Chief for the share he had in this transaction, if he was not above all praise—

John Jay to George Washington, Passy, France, 13 June 1783

I have, within these few days past, read and admired your address to the army, and their proceedings in consequence of it. Such instances of patriotism are rare, and America must find it difficult to express, in adequate terms, the gratitude she owes to both. Such a degree of glory, so virtuously acquired, and so decently sustained, is as new as our political constellation, and will for ever give luster to it. May every blessing be yours.

John Adams to Robert R. Livingston, Paris, 16 June 1783

The happy turn given to the discontents of the army by the General is consistent with his character, which, as you observe, is above all praise, as every character is whose rule and object are duty, not interest nor glory, which I think has been strictly true with the General from the beginning, and I trust will continue to the end. May he long live and enjoy his reflections and the confidence and affections of a free, grateful, and virtuous people.

Marquis de Lafayette to George Washington, Chavaniac in the Province of Auvergne, France, 22 July 1783

I must again tell you how happy you made your friend by your letters enclosing the proceedings of the army. In every instance, My dear General, I have the satisfaction to love and to admire you. The conduct you had on that occasion was highly praised throughout all Europe, and your returning to a private station is called the finishing stroke to an unparalleled character. Never did a man exist who so honorably stood in the opinions of mankind, and your name, if possible, will become still greater in posterity. Everything that is Great, and everything that is Good were not hitherto united in one man. Never did one man live whom the soldier, statesman, patriot, and philosopher could equally admire, and never was a Revolution brought about, that in its motives, its conduct, and its consequences could so well immortalize its Glorious Chief. I am proud of you, My dear General, your Glory makes me feel as if it was my own—and while the world is gaping at you, I am pleased to think, and to tell, the qualities of your heart do render you still more valuable than anything you have done.

David Howell to William Greene, Princeton, N.J., 9 September 1783

In consequence of a polite card from his Excellency the General to his Excellency the President [of Congress]—The latter, with all the present members, Chaplains & great officers of Congress had the Honor of dining at the General's Table last Friday. The Tables were spread under a Marquis, or tent taken from the British. The repast was elegant—but the General's Company crowned the whole. As I had the fortune to be seated facing the General; I had the pleasure of hearing all

his Conversation. The President of Congress was seated on his right & the minister of France on his left.

I observed with much pleasure that the General's front was uncommonly open & pleasant—the contracted, pensive Air betokening deep thought & much care, which I noticed on Prospect Hill in 1775 is done away; & a pleasant smile sparkling vivacity of wit & humor succeeds. It will please you to hear the following which occur out of many. On the president observing that in the present Situation of our affairs he believed that *Mr. Morris had his HANDS full*. The General replied at the same Instant—“*He wished he had his POCKETS full too.*” . . .

Congress have ordered an Equestrian Statue of General Washington to be erected at the place where they may establish their permanent residence. No honor short of those, which the Deity vindicates to himself, can be too great for Gen. Washington.

John Jay to Robert R. Livingston, Passy, France, 12 September 1783

General Washington's letter does him credit as a soldier, patriot, and Christian. I wish his advice may meet with the attention it merits.

John Price to John Jay, Great Bourton, Near Banbury, Oxfordshire, England, 29 October 1783

Immortal Washington . . . has outshined and Eclipsed all Asiatic, African, and European Generals, and Commanders from the Creation of the World, to this Day.

Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Harrison, Philadelphia, 11 November 1783

I had the happiness of seeing Genl. Washington the other day after an interval of 7 years. He has more health in his countenance than I ever saw in it before.

William Ellery to Francis Dana, Philadelphia, 3 December 1783

You may have seen Genl. Washington's farewell letter to the States, which somebody, in a Pennsylvania paper confidently pronounced was dictated by the immediate Spirit of God.

Elbridge Gerry to Samuel Holgten, Annapolis, Md., 20 December 1783

The General is in Town, & dined this Day at the presidents House in Company with Congress, the Governor, a Number of general officers, & other Gentlemen. On Monday he is invited to a publick Entertainment by Congress, & to another by the State. On Tuesday, when he is to have an Audience of Congress & resign his Commission. Thus will he retire to private Life a finished Character, for it may be justly said of him, he is a great, & a good Man.

James McHenry to His Fiancée Margaret Caldwell, Annapolis, Md., 23 December 1783

Today my love the General at a public audience made a deposit of his commission and in a very pathetic [i.e., emotional] manner took leave of Congress. It was a Solemn and affecting spectacle; such an one as history does not present. The spectators all wept, and there was hardly a member of Congress who did not drop tears. The General's hand which held the address shook as he read it. When he spoke of the officers who had composed his family, and recommended those who had

continued in it to the present moment to the favorable notice of Congress he was obliged to support the paper with both hands. But when he commended the interests of his dearest country to almighty God, and those who had the superintendence of them to his holy keeping, his voice faltered and sunk, and the whole house felt his agitations. After the pause which was necessary for him to recover himself, he proceeded to say in the most penetrating manner, "Having now finished the work assigned me I retire from the great theater of action, and bidding an affectionate farewell to this august body under whose orders I have so long acted I here offer my commission and take my leave of all the employments of public life." So saying he drew out from his bosom his commission and delivered it up to the president of Congress. He then returned to his station, when the president read the reply that had been prepared—but I thought without any show of feeling, though with much dignity.

This is only a sketch of the scene. But, were I to write you a long letter I could not convey to you the whole. So many circumstances crowded into view and gave rise to so many affecting emotions. The events of the revolution just accomplished—the new situation into which it had thrown the affairs of the world—the great man who had borne so conspicuous a figure in it, in the act of relinquishing all public employments to return to private life—the past—the present—the future—the manner—the occasion—all conspired to render it a spectacle inexpressingly solemn and affecting.

James Tilton to Gunning Bedford, Jr., Annapolis, Md., 25 December 1783

The General came to town last Friday, and announced his arrival, by a letter to Congress, requesting to know in what manner they choosed he should resign his authority; whether by private letter or public audience? The latter was preferred without hesitation. Some etiquette being settled on Saturday, a public dinner was ordered on Monday and the audience to be on Tuesday. The feast on Monday was the most extraordinary I ever attended. Between 2 and 3 hundred Gentlemen dined together in the *ball-room*. The number of cheerful voices, with the clangor of knives and forks made a din of a very extraordinary nature and most delightful influence. Every man seemed to be in heaven or so absorbed in the pleasures of imagination, as to neglect the more sordid appetites, for not a soul got drunk, though there was wine in plenty and the usual number of 13 toasts drank, besides one given afterwards by the General which you ought to be acquainted with: it is as follows. "Competent powers to Congress for general purposes."

In the evening of the same day, the Governor gave a ball at the State House. To light the rooms every window was illuminated. Here the company was equally numerous and more brilliant, consisting of ladies and Gentlemen. Such was my villainous awkwardness, that I could not venture to dance on this occasion, you must therefore annex to it a cleverer Idea, than is to be expected from such a mortified whelp as I am. The General danced every set, that all the ladies might have the pleasure of dancing with him, or as it has since been handsomely expressed, *get a touch of him*.

Tuesday morning, Congress, met, and took their seats in order, all covered [i.e., wearing their hats]. At twelve o'clock the General was introduced by the Secretary, and seated opposite to the president, until the throng, that filled all the avenues, were so disposed of as to behold the solemnity. The ladies occupied the gallery, as full as it would hold, the Gentlemen crowded below stairs. Silence ordered, by the Secretary, the General rose & bowed to Congress, who uncovered but did not bow. He then delivered his speech, and at the close of it, drew his commission from his bosom & handed it to the president. the president replied in a set speech, the General bowed again to Congress, they uncovered & the General retired. After a little pause, the company withdrew, Congress adjourned. The General then stepped into the room again, bid every member farewell and

rode off from the door intent upon eating his Christmas dinner at home. Many of the spectators particularly the fair ones shed tears, on this solemn & affecting occasion.

Benjamin Franklin: Toast at State Dinner in France, 1784

George Washington, Commander of the American armies, who, like Joshua of old, commanded the sun and the moon to stand still, and they obeyed him.*

*Joshua 10:1–15.

John Marshall to James Monroe, Richmond, Va., 3 January 1784

At length then the military career of the greatest Man on earth is closed. May happiness attend him wherever he goes. May he long enjoy those blessings he has secured to his Country. When I speak or think of that superior Man my full heart overflows with gratitude. May he ever experience from his Countrymen those attentions which such sentiments of themselves produce.

Marquis de Lafayette to George Washington, Paris, 10 January 1784

My dear general Now is at Mount Vernon where He Enjoys those titles Every Heart Gives Him, As the Saviour of His Country, the Benefactor of Mankind, the Protecting Angel of liberty, the pride of America, and the Admiration of the two Hemispheres—and Among all those Enjoyments I know He Will Most tenderly feel the pleasure of Embracing His Best His Bosom friend, His Adopted Son, who Early in the Spring Will Be Blessed With a direct Course to the Beloved landing that leads to the House at Mount Vernon.

George Washington to the Marquis de Lafayette, Mount Vernon, 1 February 1784

At length my Dear Marquis I am become a private citizen on the banks of the Potomac, & under the shadow of my own Vine & my own Fig-tree, free from the bustle of a camp & the busy scenes of public life, I am solacing myself with those tranquil enjoyments, of which the Soldier who is ever in pursuit of fame—the Statesman whose watchful days & sleepless nights are spent in devising schemes to promote the welfare of his own—perhaps the ruin of other countries, as if this Globe was insufficient for us all—& the Courtier who is always watching the countenance of his Prince, in hopes of catching a gracious smile, can have very little conception. I am not only retired from all public employments, but I am retiring within myself; & shall be able to view the solitary walk, & tread the paths of private life with heartfelt satisfaction. Envious of none, I am determined to be pleased with all, & this my dear friend, being the order for my march. I will move gently down the stream of life, until I sleep with my Fathers . . . at Annapolis where Congress were then, and are now sitting, I did, on the 23d of December present them my Commission, & made them my last bow—& on the Eve of Christmas entered these doors, an older man by near nine years, than when I left them, is very uninteresting to any but myself.

John Adams to Joseph Reed, The Hague, 11 February 1784

General Washington's Retreat,* is the Completion of his Character, which is the greatest our Country ever produced. She will never want a greater; a Succession of Such will insure her Felicity, and Prosperity. May he however live, and be again our great Pillar, if We shd have another

War. But my Friend, is the next Generation, likely to produce Such Characters? Are those mortals and that Education which produced Such Men to be preserved or are they in danger? Are the Eyes of our People to be fixed as they have been upon Virtues, or upon Ribbons?

*A reference to Washington surrendering his commission as commander in chief to Congress in December 1783.

George Washington to James Craik, Mount Vernon, 25 March 1784

I do not think vanity is a trait of my character.

Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, Annapolis, Md., 16 April 1784

The moderation and virtue of a single character has probably prevented this revolution from being closed as most others have been by a subversion of that liberty it was intended to establish; that he is not immortal, and his successor or some one of his successors . . . may adopt a more mistaken road to glory.

George Washington to the Marquis de Lafayette, Mount Vernon, 8 December 1784

In the moment of our separation upon the road as I travelled, & every hour since—I felt all that love, respect & attachment for you, with which length of years, close connection & your merits, have inspired me. I often asked myself, as our Carriages distended, whether that was the last sight, I ever should have of you? And though I wished to say no—my fears answered yes. I called to mind the days of my youth, & found they had long since fled to return no more; that I was now descending the hill, I had been 52 years climbing—& that though I was blessed with a good constitution, I was of a short lived family—and might soon expect to be entombed in the dreary mansions of my father’s. These things darkened the shades & gave a gloom to the picture, consequently to my prospects of seeing you again: but I will not repine. I have had my day.

Robert Morris to George Washington, Philadelphia, 1 January 1785

The Brilliancy of your Character attracts the attention of the World, they cannot pass to the Southward without gratifying their Wishes by an interview with the first Man of the Age, and I am sure they will meet a kind reception.

Elkanah Watson: Memoirs, 23–25 January 1785

I had feasted my imagination for several days in the near prospect of a visit to Mount Vernon, the seat of Washington. No pilgrim ever approached Mecca with deeper enthusiasm. I arrived there in the afternoon of January 23d, ’85. I was the bearer of the letter from Gen. Greene [introducing Watson] with another from Col. Fitzgerald, one of the former aids of Washington, and also the books from Granville Sharp. Although assured that these credentials would secure me a respectful reception, I trembled with awe as I came into the presence of this great man. I found him at table with Mrs. Washington and his private family, and was received in the native dignity and with that urbanity so peculiarly combined in the character of a soldier and eminent private gentleman. He soon put me at ease, by unbending, in a free and affable conversation.

The cautious reserve, which wisdom and policy dictated, whilst engaged in rearing the glorious fabric of our independence, was evidently the result of consummate prudence, and not characteristic of his nature. Although I had frequently seen him in the progress of the Revolution, and had corresponded with him from France in '81 and '82, this was the first occasion on which I had contemplated him in his private relations. I observed a peculiarity in his smile, which seemed to illuminate his eye; his whole countenance beamed with intelligence, while it commanded confidence and respect. The gentleman who had accompanied me from Alexandria, left in the evening, and I remained alone in the enjoyment of the society of Washington, for two of the richest days of my life. I saw him reaping the reward of his illustrious deeds, in the quiet shade of his beloved retirement. He was at the matured age of fifty-three. Alexander and Caesar both died before they reached that period of life, and both had immortalized their names. How much stronger and nobler the claims of Washington to immortality! In the impulses of mad and selfish ambition, they acquired fame by wading to the conquest of the world through seas of blood. Washington, on the contrary, was parsimonious of the blood of his countrymen, and stood forth, the pure and virtuous champion of their rights, and formed for them (not himself), a mighty Empire.

To have communed with such a man in the bosom of his family, I shall always regard as one of the highest privileges, and most cherished incidents of my life. I found him kind and benignant in the domestic circle, revered and beloved by all around him; agreeably social, without ostentation; delighting in anecdote and adventures, without assumption; his domestic arrangements harmonious and systematic. His servants seemed to watch his eye, and to anticipate his every wish; hence a look was equivalent to a command. His servant Billy, the faithful companion of his military career, was always at his side. Smiling content animated and beamed on every countenance in his presence.

The first evening I spent under the wing of his hospitality, we sat a full hour at table by ourselves, without the least interruption, after the family had retired. I was extremely oppressed by a severe cold and excessive coughing, contracted by the exposure of a harsh winter journey. He pressed me to use some remedies, but I declined doing so. As usual after retiring, my coughing increased. When some time had elapsed, the door of my room was gently opened, and on drawing my bed-curtains, to my utter astonishment, I beheld Washington himself, standing at my bedside, with a bowl of hot tea in his hand. I was mortified and distressed beyond expression. This little incident, occurring in common life with an ordinary man, would not have been noticed; but as a trait of the benevolence and private virtue of Washington, deserves to be recorded.

George Washington to Francis Hopkinson, Mount Vernon, 16 May 1785

[Washington responds favorably to Hopkinson's request that he sit for his portrait by Robert Edge Pine.] In for a penny, in for a pound, is an old adage. I am so hackneyed to the touches of the Painter's pencil, that I am *now* altogether at their beck, and sit like patience on a Monument whilst they are delineating the lines of my face.

It is a proof among many others, of what habit & custom can effect. At first I was as impatient at the request, and as restive under the operation, as a Colt is of the Saddle—The next time, I submitted very reluctantly, but with less flouncing. Now, no dray moves more readily to the Thill, than I do to the Painters Chair.

William Smith: Intelligence from New York, 4 June 1785*

Mr. Washington at Mount Vernon—injoying very little of his former Reputation—Almost all the soldiery charge their present distressed condition to his private ambition. H disbanded them unpaid to gain popularity, and with views, as they conceive, of acquiring a Dictatorial ascendancy in the Councils of the Continent. They despise him as a weak man, who could not serve himself but by the army, and who has ruined them by dismissing them without satisfaction.

*Smith was a New York Loyalist.

Catherine Sawbridge Macaulay Graham to George Washington, New York, 13 July 1785

When we address ourselves to characters so eminently distinguished Sir as yours we wish to describe the impressions which very extraordinary virtues never fail to make on the candid mind. There are some scenes however too lively for painting to do justice too in the representation, and some sentiments too strong even for Oratory to express.

The voice of flattery has so often swelled moderate virtues into all the magnitude of excellence which speech can convey to the imagination, that we in vain search in the language of panigeric for some arrangement of words adequate to that superiority of praise which is due to the first character in the world—My present feebleness obliges me for the present to desist from the arduous undertaking especially as I know the delicacy of your mind makes you as backward to meet applause as you are forward to deserve it. You must however give me leave to say that you above all the human race seem happily distinguished in the privilege of preserving and encreasing the esteem of mankind through the opportunity of a more intimate and correct knowledge of your character and talents.

The more attentively Sir you are examined by the inquisitive mind the more it finds, that the voice of fame tho noted for exaggerating the puny merit of mortals into a gigantic form of virtue has in your case even lessened truth; and whilst we contemplate with an exalted admiration the grand features of your public character we indulge with delight those softer sentiments of friendship which your domestic and private virtues are so well calculated to inspire. With impressions such as these Sir you may imagine that the virtues of the Great Hero of the Western World, the benevolence of Mrs. Washingtons temper with that polite and captivating attention with which she excercises the virtues of hospitality to all the numerous visitors which resort to Mount Vernon are the favorite topicks of conversation on which we have dwelt ever since we have had the honor of being entertained under your roof. Those topicks are fortunately universally pleasing.

That Heaven may long preserve that mode of existence in which so many bright, useful, and aimiable qualities, are united, and that it may long preserve to you Sir, every pleasing circumstance which marks the felicity of the present day is the sincere wish Of Your Most Obliged And Humble Servant.

George Washington to the Marquis de Chastellus, Mount Vernon, 5 September 1785

If I had as good a nack my dear Marquis, as you have at saying handsome things, I would endeavor to pay you in kind for the flattering expressions of your letters, having an ample field to work in; but as I am a clumsy workman in the manufactory of compliments, I must first profess my unworthyness of those which you have bestowed on me, and my inability to meet you on that ground; and therefore will not expose myself in the attempt. . . .

I give the chief of my time to rural amusements.

George Washington to Jonathan Trumbull, Jr., Mount Vernon, 1 October 1785

My principal pursuits are of a rural nature, in which I have great delight, especially as I am blessed with the employment of good health—Mrs. Washington on the contrary is hardly ever well.

Robert Hunter, Jr.: Travel Diary, 16 November 1785

. . . at half past eleven we left Alexandria with Mr. [Richard Henry] Lee, the president of Congress, his son, and the servants. You have a fine view of the Potomac, till you enter a wood. A small rivulet here divides the General's estate from the neighboring farmer's. His seat breaks out beautifully upon you when you little expect, being situated upon a most elegant rising ground on the banks of the Potomac, ten miles from Alexandria. We arrived at Mount Vernon by one o'clock—so called by the General's eldest brother, who lived there before him, after the admiral of that name.

When Colonel Fitzgerald introduced me to the General, I was struck with his noble and venerable appearance. It immediately brought to my mind the great part he had acted in the late war. The General is about six foot high, perfectly straight and well made, rather inclined to be lusty. His eyes are full and blue and seem to express an air of gravity. His nose inclines to the aquiline; his mouth small; his teeth are yet good; and his cheeks indicate perfect health. His forehead is a noble one, and he wears his hair turned back, without curls (quite in the officer's style) and tied in a long queue behind. Altogether, he makes a most noble, respectable appearance, and I really think him the first man in the world. After having had the management and care of the whole Continental Army, he has now retired without receiving any pay for his trouble. And though solicited by the King of France and some of the first characters in the world to visit Europe he has denied them all and knows how to prefer solid happiness in his retirement to all the luxuries and flattering speeches of European courts.

The General was born and educated near Fredericksburg on the Rappahannock. He must be a man of great abilities and a strong natural genius, as his master never taught him anything but writing and arithmetic. People come to see him here from all parts of the world; hardly a day passes without. But the General seldom makes his appearance before dinner, employing the morning to write his letters and superintend his farms, and allotting the afternoon to company. But even then he generally retires for two hours, between tea and supper, to his study to write.

He is one of the most regular men in the world. When no particular company is at his home, he goes to bed always at nine, and gets up with the sun. It's astonishing the packets of letters that daily come for him, from all parts of the world, which employ him most of the morning to answer, and his secretary Mr. Shaw (an acquaintance of mine) to copy and arrange. The General has all the accounts of the war yet to settle. Shaw tells me he keeps as regular books as any merchant whatever—and a daily journal of all his transactions. It's amazing the number of letters he wrote during the war. There are thirty large folio volumes of them upstairs, as big as common ledgers, all neatly copied. The General is remarked for writing a lost elegant letter. Like the famous Addison, his writing excels his speaking.

But to finish this long digression—when I was first introduced to him, he was neatly dressed in a plain blue coat, white cashmere waistcoat, and black breeches and boots, as he came from his farms. After having sit with us some time, he retired and sent in his lady, a most agreeable woman about fifty, and Major Washington, his nephew, married about three weeks ago to a Miss Besser. She is Mrs. Washington's niece, and a most charming young woman; she is about nineteen. After

chatting with them for half an hour, the General came in again, with his hair neatly powdered, a clean shirt on, a new plain, drab coat, white waistcoat, and white silk stockings.

At three dinner was on table, and we were shown by the General into another room, where everything was set off with a peculiar taste and at the same time very neat and plain. The General sent the bottle about pretty freely after dinner, and gave success to the navigation of the Potomac for his toast, which he has very much at heart, and when finished will, I suppose, be the first river in the world. He never undertakes anything without having first well considered of it and consulted different people. But when once he has begun anything, no obstacle or difficulty can come in his way but what he is determined to surmount. The General's character seems to be a prudent but a very persevering one. He is quite pleased at the idea of the Baltimore merchants laughing at him and saying it was a ridiculous plan and would never succeed. They begin now, says the General, to look a little serious about the matter, as they know it must hurt their commerce amazingly.

The Colonel and I had our horses ready after dinner to return to Alexandria, and, notwithstanding all we could do, the General absolutely insisted upon our staying, on account of the bad afternoon. We therefore complied . . . as I could not refuse the pressing and kind invitation of so great a general. Though our greatest enemy, I admire him as superior even to the Roman heroes themselves.

After tea the General retired to his study and left us with the President, his lady, and the rest of the company. If he had not been anxious to hear the news of Congress from Mr. Lee, most probably he would not have returned to supper but gone to bed at his usual hour, nine o'clock—for he seldom makes any ceremony. We had a very elegant supper about that time.

The General with a few glasses of champagne got quite merry, and being with his intimate friends laughed and talked a good deal. Before strangers, he is generally very reserved and seldom says a word. I was fortunate in being in his company with his particular acquaintances. I'm told during the war he was never seen to smile. The care indeed of such an army was almost enough to make anybody thoughtful and grave. No man but the General could have kept the army together without victuals or clothes. They placed a confidence in him that they would have had in no other person. His being a man of great fortune and having no children showed them it was quite a disinterested part that he was acting with regard to money-making, and that he only had the good of his country at heart. The soldiers, though starving at times, in a manner adored him.

We had a great deal of conversation about the slippery ground, as the General said, that Franklin was on; and also about Congress, the Potomac, improving their roads, etc.

At twelve I had the honor of being lighted up to my bedroom by the General himself.

George Washington to the Marquis de Chastellux, Mount Vernon, 18 August 1786

Having been thus unwarily, and I may be permitted to add, almost unavoidably betrayed into a kind of necessity to speak of myself, and not wishing to resume that subject, I chuse to close it forever by observing; that as, on the one hand, I consider it as an indubitable mark of mean-spirit-edness & pitiful vanity to court applause from the pen or tongue of man; so on the other, I believe it to be a proof of false modesty or an unworthy affectation of humility to appear altogether insensible to the commendations of the virtuous & enlightened part of our species. Perhaps nothing can excite more perfect harmony in the soul, than to have this string vibrate in unison with the internal consciousness of rectitude in our intentions, and an humble hope of approbation from the supreme disposer of all things.

Francisco Rendón to George Washington, Philadelphia, 4 December 1786

I would have wished it had been in my power to take your commands before my departure [for Spain], but it is so sudden that I have not time to allow myself the satisfaction. It will be to me a heartfull pleasure in giving an account to his Majesty of the distinguished Character of America, to expatiate particularly on the private Virtues of Genl. Washington, and to delineate to the best of Kings the picture of the best of Citizens, I am sure that this is the light in which you will please him best; others have already taught him to admire your talents, and publick Virtues, it will be my business to teach him to love your Person. . . . allow me to repeat my wishes that you may all your life enjoy that happiness which you have insured to thousands.

James Madison to George Washington, Richmond, Va., 7 December 1786

Notwithstanding the communications in your favor of the 18th Ult: which has remained til now to be acknowledged, it was the opinion of every judicious friend whom I consulted that your name could not be spared from the Deputation to the Meeting in May in Philada. It was supposed that in the first place, the peculiarity of the mission and its acknowledged pre-eminence over every other public object, may possibly reconcile your undertaking it, with the respect which is justly due & which you wish to pay to the late officers of the army; and in the second place that although you should find that or any other consideration an obstacle to your attendance on the service, the advantage of having your name in the front of the appointment as a mark of the earnestness of Virginia, and an invitation to the most select characters from every part of the Confederacy, ought at all events to be made use of. In these sentiments I own I fully concurred, and flatter myself that they will at least apologize for my departure from those held out in your letter. I even flatter myself that they will merit a serious consideration with yourself, whether the difficulties which you enumerate ought not to give way to them

George Washington to Henry Knox, Mount Vernon, 3 February 1787

My first wish is, to do for the best, and to act with propriety; and you know me too well, to believe that reserve or concealment of any circumstance or opinion, would be at all pleasing to me.

Henry Knox to George Washington, New York, 19 March 1787

As you have thought proper my dear Sir, to request my opinion respecting your attendance at the convention, I shall give it with the utmost sincerity and frankness.

I imagine that your own satisfaction or chagrin and that of your friends will depend entirely on the result of the convention—For I take it for granted that however reluctantly you may acquiesce, that you will be constrained to accept of the president's chair. Hence the proceedings of the convention will more immediately be appropriated to you than to any other person.

Were the convention to propose only amendments, and patch work to the present defective confederation, your reputation would in a degree suffer—But were an energetic, and judicious system to be proposed with Your signature, it would be a circumstance highly honorable to your fame, in the judgment of the present and future ages; and doubly entitle you to the glorious republican epithet—THE FATHER OF YOUR COUNTRY.

John Langdon to Joshua Bracket, Philadelphia, 1 August 1787

The Convention, well now see the Convention; Figure to yourself the Great Washington, with a Dignity peculiar to himself, taking the Chair.

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

Genl. Washington is well known as the Commander in chief of the late American Army. Having conducted these states to independence and peace, he now appears to assist in framing a Government to make the People happy. Like Gustavus Vasa, he may be said to be the deliverer of his Country;—like Peter the great he appears as the politician and the States-man; and like Cincinnatus he returned to his farm perfectly contented with being only a plain Citizen, after enjoying the highest honor of the Confederacy,—and now only seeks for the approbation of his Country-men by being virtuous and useful. The General was conducted to the Chair as President of the Convention by the unanimous voice of its Members. He is in the 52d. year of his age.

“An Old Whig” II, Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 17 October 1787

Although we have seen one illustrious character in our own times resisting the possession of power when set in competition with his duty to his country, yet these instances are so very rare, that it would be worse than madness to trust to the chance of their being often repeated.

Gouverneur Morris to George Washington, Philadelphia, 30 October 1787

I have observed that your Name to the new Constitution has been of infinite Service. Indeed I am convinced that if you had not attended the Convention, and the same Paper had been handed out to the World, it would have met with a colder Reception, with fewer and weaker Advocates, and with more and more strenuous Opponents. As it is, should the Idea prevail that you would not accept of the Presidency it would prove fatal in many Parts. Truth is, that your great and decided Superiority leads Men willingly to put you in a Place which will not add to your personal Dignity, nor raise you higher than you already stand: but they would not willingly put any other Person in the same Situation because they feel the Elevation of others as operating (by Comparison) the Degradation of themselves. And however absurd this Idea. you will agree with me that Men must be treated as Men and not as Machines, much less as Philosophers, & least of all Things as reasonable Creatures; seeing that in Effect they reason not to direct but to excuse their Conduct.

Thus much for the public Opinion on these Subjects, which must not be neglected in a Country where Opinion is every Thing. I will add my Conviction that of all Men you are best fitted to fill that Office. Your steady Temper is *indispensably necessary* to give a firm and manly Tone to the new Government. To constitute a well poised political Machine is the Task of no common Workman; but to set it in Motion requires still greater Qualities. When once a-going, it will proceed a long Time from the original Impulse. Time gives to primary Institutions the mighty Power of Habit, and Custom, the Law both of Wise Men and Fools, serves as the great Commentator of human Establishments, and like other Commentators as frequently obscures as it explains the Text. No Constitution is the same on Paper and in Life. The Exercise of Authority depends on personal Character; and the Whip and Reins by which an able Charioteer governs unruly Steeds will only hurl the unskillful Presumer with more speedy & headlong Violence to the Earth. The Horses once trained may be managed by a Woman or a Child; not so when they first feel the Bit. And indeed among these thirteen Horses now about to be coupled together there are some of every Race and

Character. They will listen to your Voice, and submit to your Control; you therefore must I say *must* mount the Seat. That the Result may be as pleasing to you as it will be useful to them I wish but do not expect. You will however on this, as on other Occasions, feel that interior Satisfaction & Self Approbation which the World cannot give; and you will have in every possible Event the Applause of those who know you enough to respect you properly.

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

You have heard me criticize M. Chastellux for having put so much art in his character sketch of the general. To paint a pretentious portrait of an unpretentious man is nonsense. The general's kindness of heart shines in his eyes, which, although they no longer have the piercing gleam his officers knew when he was at the head of the army, still grow animated in conversation. His face has no distinctive features, which is why it has always been difficult to paint a good likeness of him, and why few of his portraits resemble him. His answers to queries are full of common sense. He is very cautious and hesitant about committing himself, but once he has made a decision he is firm and unshakable. His modesty is astonishing, particularly to a Frenchman. He speaks of the American War as if he had not been its leader, and of his victories with a greater indifference than even a foreigner would. I saw him lose his characteristic composure and become heated only when he talked about the present state of affairs in America. The schisms within his country torture his soul, and he feels the necessity of rallying all lovers of liberty around one central issue, the need to strengthen the government. He is still ready to sacrifice his peaceful life, which gives him such happiness. "Happiness like this," he told me, "is not to be found in great honors or in the tumult of life." This philosopher believed in this truth so strongly that from the moment of his retirement he severed every political connection and renounced all offices. And yet, despite his spirit of abnegation, his disinterestedness, and his modesty, this astonishing man has enemies! He has been viciously attacked in the newspapers and has been accused of being ambitious and conniving, when all his life, when indeed all America, can testify to his selflessness and integrity. Virginia is perhaps the only state where he does have enemies, for everywhere else I have heard his name pronounced with nothing but respect mingled with affection and gratitude. Americans speak of him as they would of a father. Perhaps Washington is not to be compared to the most famous military leaders, but he has all the qualities and all the virtues of the perfect republican. . . .

After spending about three days in the home of this famous man, who showered me with kindness and gave me a great deal of information both on the recent war and on present conditions in America, I reluctantly returned to Alexandria.

Thomas Jefferson to Edward Carrington, Paris, 27 May 1788

Our jealousy is only put to sleep by the unlimited confidence we all repose in the person to whom we all look as our president. After him, inferior characters may perhaps succeed and awaken us to the danger which his merit has led us into.

John Armstrong, Jr., to Horatio Gates, New York, 30 May 1788

The Baron passed the winter at the same lodging house with me. To this he has come at last. The tower is now dismantled & deserted, & he is once more upon the Justice or generosity of the public. But the public has neither—& he has only to choose between starving here or begging in

Europe. This is calamitous to him & disgracefull to Us. He is now with [William] North who by the way is married to Duane's daughter & exit'd to the Mohawk.

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

The conduct of Genl. Washington upon this occasion has no doubt been right and meritorious. All parties had acknowledged defects in the federal system, and been sensible of the propriety of some material change. To forsake the honorable retreat to which he had retired & risk the reputation he had so deservedly acquired, manifested a zeal for the public interest, that could after so many and illustrious services, & at this stage of his life, scarcely have been expected from him. Having however commenced again on the public theater, the course which he takes becomes not only highly interesting to him but likewise so to us: the human character is not perfect; if he partakes of those qualities which we have too much reason to believe are almost inseparable from the frail nature of our being, the people of America will perhaps be lost. Be assured his influence carried this Government; for my own part I have a boundless confidence in him nor have I any reason to believe he will ever furnish occasion for withdrawing it. More is to be apprehended if he takes a part in the public councils again, as he advances in age, from the designs of those around him than from any disposition of his own.

George Washington to Henry Lee, Mount Vernon, 22 September 1788

Though I prize, as I ought, the good opinion of my fellow citizens; yet, if I knew myself, I would not seek or retain popularity at the expence of one social duty or moral virtue. While doing what my conscience informed me was right, as it respected my God, my Country and myself, I could despise all the party clamor and unjust censure, which must be expected from some, whose personal enmity might be occasioned by their hostility to the government. I am conscious, that I fear alone to give any real occasion for oblique, and that I do not dread to meet with unmerited reproach. And certain I am, whenever I shall be convinced the good of my country requires my reputation to be put in risque; regard for my own fame will not come in competition with an object of so much magnitude.

Henry Lee to James Madison, Alexandria, Va., 19 November 1788

I had a full confidential conversation with our Sachem on all these points. He agreed precisely with me in the above opinion. He will come forward, if the public happiness demands it, although his love of domestic repose renders him deaf to all the allurements of ambition & power—on nobler principles & with more generous views he will quit his happy situation, & if he quits, he will expect & with justice too, the united & firm assistance of all friends to their country.

St. John de Crevecoeur to William Short, New York, 5 December 1788

We must hope that everything will be tempered when the Congress is united and presided over by General Washington who has great talents as a conciliator.

Benjamin Franklin: Codicil to His Will, 1789

My fine crab-tree walking-stick, with a gold head curiously wrought in the form of the cap of liberty, I give to my friend, and the friend of mankind, *General Washington*. If it were a Sceptre, he has merited it, and would become it.

Thomas Jefferson to Francis Hopkinson, Paris, 13 March 1789

With respect to the re-eligibility of the president, I find myself differing from the majority of my countrymen, for I think there are but three states of the 11 which have desired an alteration of this. And indeed, since the thing is established, I would wish it not to be altered during the life of our great leader, whose executive talents are superior to those I believe of any man in the world, and who alone by the authority of his name and the confidence reposed in his perfect integrity, is fully qualified to put the new government so under way as to secure it against the efforts of opposition. But having derived from our error all the good there was in it I hope we shall correct it the moment we can no longer have the same person at the helm.

Thomas Jefferson to David Humphreys, Paris, 18 March 1789

[on favoring term limits for the U.S. President] I would wish it to remain uncorrected as long as we can avail ourselves of the services of our great leader, whose talents and whose weight of character I consider as peculiarly necessary to get the government so under way as that it may afterwards be carried on by subordinate characters.

Extract from the Marquis de Chaselaux's *Travels through America*, *Middlesex Gazette*, 4 April 1789

“What can my testimony add to the idea already formed of G. Washington?—The Continent of America, from New-Hampshire to Georgia, is a great volume, every page of which presents his Eulogium. I know that having had the opportunity of a year inspection, and closely observing him, some more particular details may be expected from me; but the strongest characteristic of this respectable man is the perfect union which reigns between the physical and moral qualities which compose the individual; one alone will enable you to judge of all the rest. If you are presented with the medels of Cæsar, Trajan, or Alexander, on examining their features, you will be led to ask, what was their stature, from the form of their person; but if you discover in a heap of ruins the head or limb of an antique Apollo, be not curious about the other parts, but rest assured that all were conformed to those of a Heathen God.

“Let not this comparison be attributed to Enthusiasm.—I wish only to express the impression it has left on my mind—the idea of a perfect whole—Brave, without temerity,—labourous, without ambition,—generous, without prodigality,—noble, without pride,—virtuous, without severity: He seems always to have confined himself within those limits where the virtues, by cloathing thmeselves in more lively but more changeable and doubtful colours, may be mistaken for faults.—Let it be repeated that Conde was intrepid, Turenne prudent, Eugene adroit, Catina disinterested—it is thus that, Washington will be characterised.—It will be said of him, *At the end of a long civil war, he had nothing which he could reproach himself*. If any thing can be more marvelous than such a character, it is the unanimity of the public suffrages in his favour. Soldier, magistrate, citizen, all love him, and admire him; all speak of him in terms of tenderness and veneration—Does

there exist a virtue capable of restraining the injustice of mankind, or are glory and happiness too recently established in America, for Envy to have deigned to pass the seas?"

Samuel Phillips, Jr., to Benjamin Goodhue, Ipswich, Mass., 8 April 1789

I well remember the plain neat appearance of Genl. Washington when he first came to Cambridge in 1775 had a surprising effect on the whole army: on his parting with his earlocks the Officers at once followed his example, & the time & expense saved in so small an article, was not inconsiderable.

Gov. John Pickering to John Langdon, Portsmouth, N.H., 17 April 1789

I rejoice that the American FABIUS & SOLON are chosen President and Vice-President of the United States—their known & tried integrity and talents bode well to the Union.

Ebenezer Hazard to Jeremy Belknap, New York, 25 April 1789

Both the President & Vice President have arrived; both were duly attended to, but the Evidences of universal Attachment to the former cannot be described; every Countenance discovered gladness of heart, & Curiosity, excited by Love, crowded every Street through which “the Man of the People” was to pass: it was indeed a Day of Joy.

Comte de Moustier: Description of the Inauguration, 30 April 1789

The day of 30th April 1789 is remarkable for the most solemn and the most imposing ceremony that has so far taken place in the United States. The Senate and the House of Representatives have designated this day for the reception of the head of this vast republic who under the modest title of President enjoys several royal prerogatives. Washington the only man who merits filing this eminent position has been unanimously elected by a populace whose gratitude is commensurate with the virtues of their former General. . . .

The memory of the former services of this great man, his current exaltation, his modesty, all this helps lend greater influence to his words. The procession left the room to go to St. Paul’s Church where the Anglican Bishop who is Senate Chaplain [Samuel Provost] recited prayers appropriate to the ceremony. The President returned to his residence in this same procession.

John Langdon to Gov. John Pickering, New York, 2 May 1789

You have no doubt seen by the papers, the Manner in which we Received our President—I had the honor to be Chairman of a Committee or Delegation, from Both houses of Congress to Receive and Conduct him from the Jersey Shore to his Residence in this City—His Installation, was Truly Solemn and Magnificent—he Delivered his Speech to Both Houses, with a Majesty, Dignity and propriety, that almost exceeded himself. All his movements are Truly Natural, and he Appears in the Cabinet, as in the Field *A Washington*.

Fisher Ames to George Richards Minot, New York, 3 May 1789

I was present [at the inauguration of Washington] in the pew with the President, and must assure you that, after making all deductions for the delusion of one’s fancy in regard to characters, I still

think of him with more veneration than for any other person. Time has made havoc upon his face. That, and many other circumstances not to be reasoned about, conspire to keep up the awe which I brought with me. He addressed the two Houses in the Senate chamber; it was a very touching scene, and quite of the solemn kind. His aspect grave, almost to sadness; his modesty, actually shaking; his voice deep, a little tremulous, and so low as to call for close attention; added to the series of objects presented to the mind, and overwhelming it, produced emotions of the most affecting kind upon the members. I, Pilgric, sat entranced. It seemed to me an allegory in which virtue was personified, and addressing those whom she would make her votaries. Her power over the heart was never greater, and the illustration of her doctrine by her own example was never more perfect.

Newburyport, Mass., *Essex Journal*, 13 May 1789

The scenes of this week, that have passed before Congress, and the people collected in this city to partake of the joy occasioned by the ceremony of our most beloved President's qualifying himself to undertake the execution of his High, Important office, agreeably to the Constitution, were truly sublime and affecting. His speech to his "*Fellow-Citizens* of the Senate and House of Representatives," cannot be commented upon without injustice—nor panegyricized without absurdity. How must the hearts of *all his fellow citizens*, on the reading this glorious performance, beat with confidential gratitude to that Being, whose finger has pointed out this man, as one on whom, under God, they can rely? If the perusal will give such consummate happiness, what an astonishing effect it must have had on those who had the good fortune to hear him deliver this address! With a most graceful dignity did he arise—advance—and salute the two Houses—With a celestial countenance, and heart-felt sensibility, did he proceed to speak—but the importance of the object was almost too much for him before he had finished.

The great collection of people, of every age and description, that crowded every street and alley, where there was a probability of having a peep at this Great Good Person, *one and all*, seemed as inspired with a shared joy on the occasion—Nor, as is unusual with mobs, a single interruption to the procession—nor a disagreeable scene in the streets, appeared thro' the whole day—and in the evening, when the whole were collected for the purpose of seeing a beautiful, splendid set of Fireworks, remarkable order and decency prevailed. About nine o'clock, the President walked out amongst the crowd—even this, did not cause with the people a noisy expression of joy—rather, a solemn pause of contemplation on the happy prospects before them. I could fill a sheet on the subject if time permitted; but will conclude with adding that, in my opinion, the character ever given of General WASHINGTON, falls greatly short of his merit—and that Heaven has designed him as the instrument whereby we may be saved from ourselves, if we please.

Benjamin Gale to Benjamin Huntington, Killingworth, Conn., 14 May 1789

I congratulate You and My Country on the Unanimous Election of General Washington In whose Wisdom & Prudence I Place the Highest Confidence at the same time I must Tell You That Military Officers are not In General the best Calculated for Civil Rulers as their Maxim is the *Volo sic Jubeo*.*

**Hoc volo sic jubeo, sit pro ratione voluntas*: The fact that I wish it is sufficient argument (Juvenal).

Fisher Ames to Nathaniel Bishop, New York, c. 17 May 1789

I saw and listened to Washington with as much emotion as you have supposed. It seemed to be a deception—a kind of allegorical vision, which over-whelmed the senses with vast objects, and the mind with vast reflections. The crowd was great—but not a stupid one—each expressing as much admiration and joy as a painter would have on his canvas. The modesty, benevolence and dignity of the President cannot be described. Your own feeling heart must finish the picture.

Erkuries Beatty to Josiah Harmar, New York, 23 May 1789

I attend the President's Levee (which is on Tuesdays & Fridays between two & three O'Clock) generally every ten days or two Weeks, & I have the Honor to say that the Old Gentleman looks kindly yet on a Regimental Coat—He lives very retired, neither entertains Company, nor dines out, frequently walks the Streets with no other person but Colo. Humphreys & sometimes rides.

Benjamin Hawkins to James Madison, Warren, N.C., 1 June 1789

The character of the president will give dignity and energy to our government, and will together with the favorable appearances stated by you tend to reconcile all parties to it. I, having known the determination of the president never more to take any share in transactions, of a public nature was fearful that even our melancholy situation would not (altho' the choice should be unanimous) call him forth. My fears arose from my love for him. I thought his character was as perfect as human nature is capable of being that he wanted no additional lustre and might eventually lose. But I was wrong and he is right undubitably.

John Adams to Richard Peters, New York, 5 June 1789

Your confidence in the thoughtful Temper and prudent Foresight of the President is perfectly well founded, and these qualities will be greatly assisted by proper Ministers.

Daniel George to George Thatcher, Portland, Maine, 5 June 1789

The difference in opinion, between the senate and the house, on the subject of *titles*, has excited the wonder of many wise heads. The opinion of the house, I humbly conceive, was truly republican, and philosophical; and I pray to God that it may prevail. There is more majesty in "GEORGE WASHINGTON, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA," than there is in all the pompous titles of Europe and the East! Nobody used to say Mr. Cesar; and nobody ought to add titles to GEORGE WASHINGTON. The name cannot be magnified. Besides, the title proposed by the senate is a servile imitation: for it is almost the very title that Oliver Cromwell wore—but I have said too much.

Comte de Moustier to Comte de Montmorin, New York, 9 June 1789

In reflecting on the character of General Washington, and especially on the remark he made to me that he did *not like to do things in obscurity*, one would believe that it is his intention not to be merely the instrument of the two other branches of Government. I would think rather that he would want them to serve him, but in such affairs there are many angles to take and this is an area the Americans seem to excel in. The strategy generally used by General Washington in the past, and

with which he has always succeeded, is always to appear ready to defer to the will of others. He can only make use of this to a certain extent today, since he is no longer in the same relationship with the Congress as before. He depended on the former one, and is the head of this one, and in fact an integral part of it, like the King of England is of the British Parliament. But, as General Washington has studied his countrymen carefully, while avoiding the revelation of his own mind, he will probably be able to find the most suitable means of achieving his ends. The great patience and great power he possesses over himself will serve him well with men who will easily put these qualities to the test. It costs him nothing to give marks of his affection or consideration when it is certain that he will be repaid a hundred fold what he advances. Nature has favored him particularly well in this regard, with an appearance that lends itself to such expressions. Benevolence and nobility are stamped on his countenance, and so happily combined that the one quality easily controls the overconfidence born of the other. His manner is analogous to the character of his appearance. His moderation has yet to be compromised. He gave remarkable proof of this at the ceremony for the response of the two Houses of Congress to the speech he addressed to them the day of the inauguration and of which he had given a copy, after finishing his reading of it, to the President of the Senate and another to the Speaker of the House, who were seated to the right to the right and left of him, respectively, when he rose to make his speech to the standing members of both Houses. He wanted to remain absolutely neutral in the arrangement of this ceremony, just as he had been for that of his inauguration, and he complied without objection to what each House resolved even though he was free to direct the arrangements himself. The House of Representatives was the first to direct the arrangements himself. The House of Representatives was the first to make its response, but they did not deem it appropriate to go and deliver it, and proposed to the President of the United States (whom they want Foreigners to regard as the equal of a King) to come and receive it in a hall adjoining the House chamber. This was a sort of special audience that the House granted to the Head of the Republic. The House had decided that he would have no other honorific title than that given in the Constitution, which is to say none at all. The motive of the majority was to not raise the President up too high. Those who wanted to look at the bright side of this decision said that the title of President of the United States was grand enough by itself as not to have need of being enhanced by titles borrowed from Europe, which could not serve as examples to a republic constituted like that of the United States. Others say that soon the more lofty title will be the name of Washington which will become the title of the President of the United States as the name of *Caesar* became that of the Emperors. Behold the incense smoke that the Americans lavish on themselves.

Abraham Baldwin to Joel Barlow, New York, 14 June 1789

Montezuma [i.e., Washington] feels well, has two levees a week, and now and then a small circle without form to dine with him.

William Smith of South Carolina to Edward Rutledge, New York, 21 June 1789

While we were struggling & contending about the President's prerogatives [in Congress over the President's power to remove officers without the consent of the Senate], he was lying extremely ill in bed—it was not known at the time, but we have been since told, that he was in some danger—I had a long conversation yesterday with his Doctor [Samuel Bard], who informed me that the President had been troubled with a Bile on his Seat, which had been so inflamed by his riding on horseback as to grow into an Imposthume as large as my two fists—this occasioned a fever of a

threatening nature—it was apprehended that it would turn to a malignant one & the Doctor sat up with him one night—the fever however abated & the Imposthume has been opened—he is now considerably better & out of all danger, but will be prevented for some time from sitting up. . . .

What a blessing to this Country is a Man in this high Station who is so generally beloved that those things which would alarm & give uneasiness if committed by any one else are overlooked when done by him. I am in hopes that before his death, a number of questions will be settled, the discussion of which under his Successor would give rise to parties & factions: there is danger however to be apprehended on the other hand that some points may be conceded to him from a Sense of his virtues & a confidence that he will never make an improper use of his power, which ought not to be yielded from a dread of his Successor being less virtuous & moderate.

James Madison to Edmund Randolph, New York, 24 June 1789

The President has been *ill*, but is now in a safe way. His fever terminated in an abscess which was itself alarming, but has been opened with success, and the alarm is now over. His death at the present moment would have brought on another crisis in our affairs.

Alexander White to Horatio Gates, New York, 29 June 1789

The President has been very ill of an Imposthume in the thigh, it has been opened suppurates well. He is now able to walk with a Crutch, though he was for a time confined to his Bed.

Theophilus Parsons to John Adams, Newburyport, Mass., 8 July 1789

I trust our beloved president will feel the influence of them [i.e., applications for federal office]—He can, with the most perfect propriety, act agreeably to them—He is not obliged to court friends—and he has a weight of character, that will support him firm as Atlas—

Samuel Nason to George Thatcher, Sanford, Maine, 9 July 1789

Suffer me to tell you in few words what is now Spreading in this Country—you know that I am in friendship with allmost all the Revd. Clergy in this Country [i.e., Maine] or at least they pretend friendship for me although it may be for Nothing more than they can turn it to advantadge that when they travil they may know where to Call for a Dinner or lodging thus much for the Prologue.

Now for the Play that is acting they praise your President to me for all his Virtues but none more than for his attendance to Publick Worship for this they allmost Adore him and I Joyn with them and Could allmost fill a Volome with his Virtues but why Should I attempt to paint the Sun.

Theodore Sedgwick to Pamela Sedgwick, New York, 10 July 1789

[At a presidential levee with George Washington.] He did me the honor particularly to distinguish me, with great cordiality took me by the hand, and expressed much satisfaction to see me here. He is very peculiarly qualified to shine in his exalted station; he has a personal dignity I have not seen in any other man, while the unaffected simplicity of his manners makes one easy in his presence. A recollection of his meritorious virtues, and the obligations they have laid one under, excite a pleasing sensation of gratitude difficult to describe.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Richmond Hill, N.Y., 12 July 1789

Our August President is a singular example of modesty and diffidence. He has a dignity which forbids Familiarity mixed with an easy affability which creates Love and Reverence.

Fisher Ames to John Lowell, New York, 28 July 1789

His mode of conducting the executive business is very secret. He does not ask the Advice of the Senators individually, in order to determine beforehand whom it will be proper to nominate to office. The revenue officers will be appointed very soon and I understand that some of the Senate are disgusted that he leaves—or is likely to leave to the Senate, the power of rejecting the person nominated and nothing more. They expected to act more in quality of an executive council. We are, therefore, left to conjecture what nominations he will make.

Archibald Stuart to James Madison, Staunton, Va., 31 July 1789

I never knew the Minds of men so much disposed to acquiesce in public Measures as at present. Their Language is all is well. While G. Washington lives he will crush both men & Measures that would abridge either our happiness or Liberty. In short we are all in the same State of Security with Passengers on board a Vessel navigated by an Able captain & skillful Mariners.

Elbridge Gerry to John Lowell, New York, 1 August 1789

I have waited on the President, agreeably to his own proposal, with a list of such persons as had signified to me their desire of being in office. . . . In making nominations, the President declared to me he had no friend to serve or predilection for any man, but wished to bring into office men of the best abilities and integrity. . . . As he cannot in the first instance consult Senators who are to be a check on him, and as he depends much on the members of the House for his nominations, I have mentioned the matter to some of our members.

Theodore Sedgwick to Pamela Sedgwick, New York, 8 August 1789

Our President is indeed every thing that is great and good in man.

John Adams to Silvanus Bourn, New York, 30 August 1789

I must caution you, my dear Sir, against having any dependence on my influence or that of any other person. No man, I believe, has influence with the President. He seeks information from all quarters, and judges more independently than any man I ever knew. It is of so much importance to the public that he should preserve this superiority, that I hope I shall never see the time that any man will have influence with him beyond the powers of reason and argument.

Comte de Moustier to Comte de Montmorin, New York, 3 October 1789

The idea that You have, Sir, of Gen. Washington and his disposition toward France, seems very well founded and if the proofs are often limited or restrained one can still be consoled that it is as a result of his great circumspection, which leads him to want never to appear to be guided in his public conduct by personal feelings, though he is as sustible to them as other men generally. There still exist among members of the Government many people in America, whose feelings with regard

to France are not very favorable and Gen. Washington takes great care not to expose himself to their malicious interpretations. Thus on that account one must limit oneself to enjoying useful results without imagining that you will have the pleasure born of a free expression of feelings. I am in general well received by the President, but the importance he attaches to his dignity and his natural reserve render his communication infinitely cold. Nevertheless in an informal visit that I paid him yesterday and at which I was tête à tête with him for an hour he was much more open than usual and on the subject of recently arrived accounts of events in France he expressed a concern for His Majesty and the nation which I believe is firmly in his heart.

Benjamin Hawkins, Warranton, N.C., 6 October 1789

Our change [in North Carolina public opinion] is owing more to the Character of the president of the United States than to the adoption by eleven States, surely so much never did depend on the life of one man as has and do[e]s depend on his!

Fisher Ames to Thomas Dwight, Boston, 21 October 1789

I wish you and all my Springfield friends may be gratified with the sight and conversation of the great and good President. God bless him.

Martha Washington to Mercy Otis Warren, New York, 26 December 1789

I little thought, when the war was finished, that any circumstances could possibly have happened which would call the General into public life again. I had anticipated that from this moment we should have been left to grow old in solitude and tranquility together. That was, my dear madam, the first and dearest wish of my heart; but in that I have been disappointed. I will not, however, contemplate with too much regret disappointments that were inevitable. Though the General's feelings and my own were perfectly in unison with respect to our predelection for private life, yet I cannot blame him for having acted according to his ideas of duty in obeying the voice of his country. The consciousness of having attempted to do all the good in his power, and the pleasure of finding his fellow-citizens so well satisfied with the disinterestedness of his conduct, will doubtless be some compensation for the great sacrifices which I know he has made. Indeed, in his journeys from Mount Vernon to this place,—in his late tour through the Eastern States,—by every public and every private information which has come to him,—I am persuaded that he has experienced nothing to make him repent his having acted from what he conceived to be alone a sense of indispensable duty. On the contrary, all his sensibility has been awakened in receiving such repeated and unequivocal proofs of sincere regard from all his countrymen.

James Kent: Memoirs

I visited the President at one of his public levees. They are every Tuesday from three to four o'clock P.M. You enter, make a bow; the President and company all stand with their hats in their hands, and after exchanging a few words retire *sans cérémonie*. . . . The President was dressed in a suit of plain cloth of a snuff color, with silk stockings, and a sword by his side. His manners were easy, but distant and reserved. His eye was expressive of mildness and reflection. His person was tall and full of dignity. No person can approach him without being penetrated with respect and reverence. Without the brilliancy of Caesar's talents, or the daring exertions of Frederick, such has

been his steadiness, discretion, good sense, and integrity that no man ever attained a greater ascendancy over free minds or ever reigned so long and so completely in the hearts of a sober and intelligent people.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, New York, 5 January 1790

[Washington] has so happy a faculty of appearing to accommodate & yet carrying his point, that if he was not really one of the best intentioned men in the world he might be a very dangerous one. He is polite with dignity, affable without familiarity, distant without Haughtiness, Grave without Austerity, Modest, Wise & Good. These are traits in his Character which peculiarly fit him for the exalted station he holds, and God Grant that he may Hold it with the same applause & universal satisfaction for many many years, as it is my firm opinion that no other man could rule over this great people & consolidate them into one mighty Empire but He who is set over us.

Louis Guillaume Otto to Comte de Montmorin, New York, 31 March 1790

Since the president moved into the Comte de Moustier's mansion, he lives with much more pomp than before and fulfills perfectly the expectations of the public. In order to make him resemble the King of England in every way they celebrate his birthday in every state and the Society of the Cincinnati especially has resolved to celebrate every year. Those [Cincinnati] of South Carolina have even presented him with a congratulatory address expressed in the most flattering terms. Always careful not to give offense, the president has replied in the most gracious manner but without once using the term *Cincinnati* which alarms the extreme democrats because it suggests an order of nobility. In Philadelphia they have struck a medal of the president for subscription and the legislature of New York has voted \$20,000 to build him a residence; by his prudence and moderation the president continues to merit all the marks of affection and despite his great care not to display any prejudice for any foreign nation he has permitted himself finally to say for the first time *in public* a kind word for France. In responding to an address presented to him by Catholics he added "I hope that you my fellow citizens never forget the part that you have had in the establishment of our government, *nor the important assistance of a great nation that professes the Catholic religion.*" Although the president's sentiments with regard to France may be well known, Sir, I have always attributed his reserve to the impression that must have been made on him by the rumor raised among the English during the war that he had been secretly paid by the French. The president is ordinarily very gracious and modest in those sorts of responses, but he knows to take a firmer and more elevated tone when his dignity is compromised. Georgia having presented him with an address that included some indirect reproaches that he had not supplied more effective aid against the Indians, he replied curtly "that he used the powers the Constitution gave him in the manner that seemed to him the most suitable."

John Adams to John Trumbull, New York, 2 April 1790

The first man in the nation must not be worse accommodated and make a meaner appearance than ordinary gentlemen of fortune do in our separate States and Capital towns—This would be evidence not only of a sordid character in the Nation but of a false, affected and hypocritical policy. There is therefore a medium to be observed. I do however know that magnificence imposes on this people as much as on any other. It has been one great cause of the influence and popularity of

Washington, Hancock and others. The Number who worship splendor are greater than that of those who despise it.

George Clymer to Henry Hill, New York, 11 April 1790

I don't know the exact state of the Presidents health for a day or two past—but it is observed here with a great deal of anxiety that his general health seems to be declining—For some time past he has been subject to a slow fever—[William] Jackson seems to think that as soon as the adjournment will let him he will begin a long journey to the southward, which will probably reinstate him, that to the Eastward sometime ago having for a time wrought a very favourable alteration in his health.

Robert Morris to Mary Morris, New York, 25 April 1790

The President of the U.S. went last Monday Morning over to Long Island on purpose to get room for Exercise and to change the Air, and Returned last Night. He looked very Ill before he went. I have not Seen him Since his Return so that I don't know wether he has derived much benefit from his jaunt. Mrs. Washington looks as well as ever and by all appearance is as happy as can be, but as to the President I think it would do him good if we could change his place of Residence & bring him to our City. I intend soon to make a new attempt, but this to yourself for the present.

Abraham Baldwin to Joel Barlow, New York, 8 May 1790

Our great and good man has been unwell again this spring. I never saw him more emaciated, he has been out for a ride on Long Island for ten days, and since his return appears manifestly better. If his health should not get confirmed soon, we must send him out to Mount Vernon to farm it a-while, and let the Vice manage here; his habits require so much exercise, and he is so fond of his plantation, that I have no doubt it would soon restore him. It is so important to us to keep him alive as long as he can live, that we must let him cruise as he pleases, if he will only live and let us know it. His name is always of vast importance but any body can do the greater part of the work that is to be done at present, he has got us well launched in the new ship.

Pierce Butler to Edward Rutledge, New York, 15 May 1790

Our excellent President is dangerously indisposed at this moment. I give You the very words of his Physicians; of which body he has four attending him. His disorder is a peripinumany. Too much hangs on the life of this good man. The House of Representatives are not the best united body at present—what effect the loss of him, who unites all parties, would have I need not say to You.

Samuel Osgood to Henry Knox, 22 May 1790

All upset at President's illness. As Sancho said to the Don, He must not, he shall not die, at least not for 10 years. God knows where our troubles would end. . . . He alone has the confidence of the People. In Him they believe and through him they remain United.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, New York, 30 May 1790

He has been in a most dangerous state, and for two or three days I assure you I was most unhappy. I dreaded his death from a cause that few persons, and only those who know me best, would believe. It appears to me that the union of the states, and consequently the permanency of the Government depend under Providence upon his Life. At this early day when neither our Finances are arranged nor our Government sufficiently cemented to promise duration, His death would I fear have had most disastrous consequences. I feared a thousand things which I pray I never may be called to experience. Most assuredly I do not wish for the highest Post.

John Adams to Thomas Brand-Hollis, New York, 1 June 1790

Franklin is no more, and we have lately trembled for Washington. Thank God, he has recovered from a dangerous sickness and is likely now to continue many years. His life is of vast importance for us.

Louis Guillaume Otto to Comte de Montmorin, 13 June 1790

I have never doubted the good intentions of the President, although his reserve is always extreme and sometimes icy. . . . It is demonstrated more than ever, My Lord, that nothing can impair the respect and affection of Americans for their President although there are several traits in his character which are not entirely agreeable to some of his compatriots. If it depended only on Mr. Adams, the President would affect the whole display of royalty, but his good sense keeps him in limits, which could be restrained more without harming his dignity. One sees him with regret in a coach with six horses, accompanied by his aides-de-camp on horseback and followed by the Secretaries of State [*department heads*], taking a drive in the country. The choice of his aides-de-camp who perform the functions of gentlemen of the chamber is at least bizarre; not one of them is esteemed and as the President is a perfect judge of men there is reason to believe that he is so badly escorted only to convince the public that he does everything by himself and that no one holds the pen for him nor the staff of command. Almost all his letters are written in his hand and notwithstanding his great reputation as statesman and warrior, he does not disdain that of a pure and elegant writer. He seems in all things to wish to resemble Caesar whose *Commentaries* are constantly on his table,* but in several respects he is much above his model and the public hardly notices some little blemishes that human nature has left on one of its masterpieces and which the American patriot likes to cover with a thick veil. Although great and generous in public, he gives in private the example of the frugality and economy which ought to reign in a household. He is usually up and dressed at five o'clock in the morning; he wakens his domestics, looks over his house and stables, giving the orders necessary for the day's work himself. From there he goes into his office where he is busy until noon. He rides horseback with his aides-de-camp, dines at two o'clock and returns to his office at five where he remains till nine, his bedtime. Dignity, foresight, circumspection, love of work, perseverance, all are united in this great man; and as he has the prudence necessary to display only the qualities proper to his situation, one is tempted to believe that he possesses all those which it would be useless and even dangerous to show. Nobody has ever been more impenetrable than General Washington; even the people who constantly surround him know his way of thinking only by the orders he gives. The mystery which envelops him makes his demeanor so icy that with the exception of the days of public audience his house is deserted and it can be said that he enjoys all the advantages possible excepting the comforts of friendship, which seem incompatible with his rank in public and which he does not seek even in private. Judging by

the decline of his health, one would say that he is unfortunate. It is certain that the constraint in which he lives, either by choice or by necessity, can leave him no other joys than those of a satisfied ambition; but even this flower is not without thorns.

*Julius Caesar's famous "Commentaries" *On the Gallic War* was his chronicle of Rome's final conquest of Gaul (present-day France, the Low Countries, and Germany west of the Rhine) between 58 and 50 B.C.

John Brown to Harry Innes, 18 June 1790

The President's life was lately despaired of by all in this place but it is with great pleasure I can assure you of his recovery—Perhaps the happiness of a Country never depended so much upon the life of one man as that of America does upon his.

George Washinhton to Don Diego de Gardoqui, New York, 1 July 1790

I thank you, Sir, for the interest you take in my welfare and personal happiness, and it is with pleasure I can inform you that I now enjoy a tolerable share of health after several weeks of severe illness which had nearly terminated my existance.

Marquis de Lafayette to George Washington, Paris, 28 August 1790

For God's sake, my dear General, take care of your health! Do not devote yourself so much to the Cabinet, while your habit of life has, from your young years, accustomed you to constant exercise. Your conservation is the life of your friends, the salvation of your country. It is for you a religious duty, not to neglect what may concern your health.

Louis Guillaume Otto to Comte de Montmorin, 10 December 1790

For the first time since the Revolution, Congress finds itself assembled within a few days of the time set at its adjournment. The day before yesterday commenced the third session of that assembly, and the two chambers having notified the President that they had formed, that Magistrate went in formality to Congress' meeting place to communicate the most important things that happened since its recess, and to recommend those objects worthy of its deliberations during that session. The President's speech is full of nobility and simplicity, like almost everything that issues from his pen; he includes moreover the most satisfactory details on the general prosperity, which may be contrasted either with the foreign wars or with the domestic convulsions of the majority of European nations, and according to him is a fresh proof of the benevolence of the particular protection of the Supreme Being.

William Maclay: Journal, 20 January 1791

[L]et me take a review of him As he really is. In Stature about Six feet, with An Unexceptionable Make, but lax Appearance, his frame Would seem to Want filling Up. His Motions rather slow than lively, tho he showed no Signs of having suffered either by Gout or Rheumatism. His complexion pale Nay Almost Cadaverous, his Voice hollow and indistinct Owing As I believe to Artificial teeth before in his Upper Jaw.

Thomas Jefferson to William Short, Philadelphia, 16 March 1791

To overdo a thing with him is to undo it.

John Jay to Alexander Hamilton, New York, 11 April 1793

It is happy for us that we have a Presidt. Who will do nothing rashly—and who regards his own Interest as inseparable from the public good—

Robert R. Livingston to James Monroe, Clermont, N.Y., 8 April 1794

[Speaking against the Hamilton-Schuyler faction] I well knew that if the public sentiment should be awakened to the injuries we had received that the party opposing that sentiment would soon be deprived of their confidence & that the p—— was too fond of popularity to support them against the opinion of the people.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 7 December 1794

There has been a great Mortality I think of late among our old patriotic Chiefs civil and military. The President wears the best of any of them that I have seen: and may he long continue his Vigour of Body as well as Mind.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 30 December 1794

But the Man the most to be pitied is the President. With his Exertions, Anxieties Responsibilities for twenty Years without fee or reward or Children to enjoy his Renown to be the Butt of the Insolence of Genets and Clubbs is a Tryal too great for human Nature to be exposed to—Like The Starling he cant get out of his Cage but [Henry] Knox says and I believe it, he is Sick very sick in it—I could tell you a great deal more but this must be reserved for a Tête a Tête.—

Mathew Carey: Memoirs, post-1794

The following incident displays the majestic and awe inspiring air of Gen Washington so well known among his friends and acquaintances.

When I was engaged in the year 1794 in the publication of an edition of Guthrie's Geography improved, I learned that the General had, during the war, made a large collection of Topographical Maps which might make me render the Atlas of my work more complete than it would otherwise be. I accordingly requested that he wd allow me to have the use of them, to which he unhesitatingly agreed. I went to his house and the whole collection was placed on a table, at one side of which Sat the General & I at the other. He behaved with as much kindness and attention as I could wish—but nevertheless I was so awe stricken that I perspired so freely as to require to wipe my forehead more than once during the interview. I had been before and have been since in the company of illustrious men, as Dr. Franklin, Mr. Jefferson, Carroll & others & never felt myself little, or abashed.

Charles Adams to John Adams, New York, 26 December 1795

The President of the United States was for sometime an object too high for the shafts of calumny to be aimed at but faction has made such Giant strides that nothing is any longer sacred.

Founders on the Founders

Thomas Jefferson to William Branch Giles, Monticello, 31 December 1795

. . . [The President] errs as other men do, but errs with integrity.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 21 January 1796

Upon My pillow I shall reflect fear and tremble, and pray that the President of the united states may long long continue to hold the Reigns of Government, and that his Valuable Life may be prolonged for that purpose.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 10 February 1796

The P. looks to me worried and growing old faster than I could wish and his Lady complains of Infirmities of Age and lowness of Spirits for the first time.

Gouverneur Morris: Diary, London, 22 February 1796

[Speaking of Washington after the disgrace of Edmund Randolph] That Randolph says his Heart is black as that of Caligula and in so saying makes some Disciples.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 3 March 1796

The Power of the P. may be too great to keep or to resign. If it is, he may meet with the Fate of Harley.*

It is, Somehow, Strangely, the Opinion of many and among those are some of his best Friends that he ought to retire. No one, that I have heard, has presum'd to say he would not if he were in the P.s case.—

He has now, settled all Disputes with foreign Nations and may retire with undiminish'd Glory.

*Robert Harley, first earl of Oxford (1661–1724), had served as speaker of the Commons and chancellor of the exchequer when he became lord treasurer in 1711; at the time he was the most powerful member of Parliament. Oxford was dismissed on 27 July 1714 by Queen Anne over a political dispute, and in 1715 he was committed to the Tower of London and faced impeachment charges for his role in the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht. (DNB)

Thomas Boylston Adams to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 29 June 1796

There are I believe *many* honest men, good citizens and excellent patriots, who originated in that State—every body knows there is *one* in whom all these qualities and many more are concentrated. His single reputation, like christian charity, hides and cancels a multitude of sins and follies, which some of his Countrymen seem well inclined to commit.

Benjamin Henry Latrobe: Journals, 19 July 1796

When my youngest Brother was about six years old he went with the family to see the king of England go through St. James's park in State to the House of Lords. Upon being told that he rode in such and such a carriage, he would scarcely believe that the person he saw could be the king; and being assured that he really was so, he cried out: "*Good lord, papa, how like a man he looks.*" The Sentiment *expressed* by the boy, is, I believe, *felt* by every man who sees for the first time a man raised by merit or reputation above the common level of his fellow creatures. It was impressed upon me, upon seeing one of the greatest men that Nature ever produced, but in a less degree that

even when I saw that least-like-a-man-looking-king Frederic the Second of Prussia. Washington has something uncommonly majestic and commanding in his walk, his address, his figure and his countenance. His face is characterized however more by intense and powerful thought, than by quick and fiery conception. There is a mildness about its expression; and an air of reserve in his manner lowers its tone still more. He is 64, but appears some years younger, and has sufficient apparent vigor to last many years yet. He was frequently entirely silent for many minutes during which time an awkwardness seemed to prevail in every one present. His answers were often short and sometimes approached to moroseness. He did not at any time speak with very remarkable fluency:—perhaps the extreme correctness of his language which almost seemed studied prevented that effect. He seemed to enjoy a humorous observation, and made several himself. He laughed heartily several times and in a very good humored manner. On the morning of my departure he treated me as if I had lived for years in his house; with ease and attention, but in general I thought there was a slight air of moroseness about him, as if something had vexed him.

Abigail Adams to Ruth Hooper Dalton, c. 24 September 1796

The expected Event You mention in Your Letter has just been made publick here. There is but one more that could have caused a more universal mourning throughout America, I mean the Death of the Greatest Character that America ever produced and the closing Scene of this Great & Good Man's political Life adds a Dignity & Lusture to his former actions, and will cover him with unfadeing Lawrels untill Time shall be no more. Whomever the people may call to succeed him will find no easy task to fill his place. Should the Lot fall where You are pleased to hope it may, I can only say may the Mantle of Elijah rest upon Him.

Abigail Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 8 November 1796

I feel perhaps too keenly the abuse of Party. Washington endured it, but he had the Support of the people, and their undiminished Confidence to the Hour of his Resignation and a Combination of circumstances which no other Man can look for. First a unanimous Choice, 2ly personally known to more people, by having commanded their Armies, than any other Man. 3ly possessed of a Large Landed Estate, 4ly refusing all Emoluments of office both in his Military & civil capacity. Take his Character all together, and we Shall not look upon his like again, notwithstanding which he was reviled and abused, his administration perplex'd and his measures impeded. What is the expected Lot of a Successor? He must be armed as Washington was, by integrity, by firmness, by intrepidity. These must be his sheild, and his wall of Brass, and with Religion too, or he will never be able to stand Sure and steadfast.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 27 November 1796

My best my Sincerely affectionate Regards to the President and Mrs. Washington if any people are to be envyd they are the ones: not for what they have been in power and Authority, but for their transit.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 16 December 1796

I shall not suffer so much in retiring as the P. whose tender feelings are excited both by Kindness & Unkindness. I shall retire without much of either to harrow up my soul. It is rather a dull Prospect

to see nothing but one's Ploughshare between one and the Grave but I am confident I can bear it as well as the P.—

Abigail Adams to Elbridge Gerry, Quincy, Mass., 31 December 1796

There is not any Man, in whom again, can be united, such an assemblage of fortunate circumstances, to combine all Hearts in his favour, and every voice in unison, as has been the Singular Lot of the President of the United States. Yet even he, with the full tide of favour, and affection, has tasted the bitter Cup, a foreign Mixture, a poison so subtle as to have infected even Native American. What must a successor expect who has near half the Country opposed to his Election? As well as all the Friends of the Rival Candidates mortified at their Defeat.

John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 8 February 1797

The address of the President declaring his intention to retire from the public service, has been republished, translated and admired all over Europe.—But in France the usual arts of french intrigue in all their impudence and all their falsehood have been used against it. The most barefaced forgeries have been palmed upon the public in France under the name of translations and extracts of this address, and I know not whether one faithful french translation of it has appeared in that Country.—The Leyden Gazette has given one here, together with such encomiums upon the piece itself and its author, as both deserve and obtain from every virtuous mind, and has noticed the infidelity of the pretended translations published in the Paris papers.—The french Directory, or their guide, have taken a dislike to the principles and Fame of Washington, and have among other of their little projects undertaken to *run him down*. They have been at work two years upon it, and are now in a perfect frenzy at the thought that he has placed himself beyond the reach of their weapons.—Yet they have been unable to succeed generally, even in France, where at this moment the generality of the Nation revere his character, and where his name will be remembered with veneration when they will escape detestation only inasmuch as they shall sink into oblivion.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 5 March 1797

A Solemn Scene it was indeed and it was made more affecting to me, by the Presence of the General, whose Countenance was as serene and unclouded as the day. He Seem'd to me to enjoy a Triumph over me. Methought I heard him think Ay! I am fairly out and you fairly in! see which of Us will be happiest. When the Ceremony was over he came and made me a visit and cordially congratulated me and wished my Administration might be happy Successful and honourable.

George Washington to James McHenry, Mount Vernon, 29 May 1797

[Washington relates a typical day in his life.] I begin my diurnal course with the Sun; that if my hirelings are not in their places at that time I send them messages expressive of my sorrow for their indisposition—then having put these wheels in motion, I examine the state of things farther; and the more they are probed, the deeper I find the wounds are, which my buildings have sustained by an absence, and neglect of eight years. By the time I have accomplished these matters, breakfast (a little after seven o'clock, about the time I presume you are taking leave of Mrs. McHenry) is ready. This over, I mount my horse and ride round my farms, which employs me until it is time to dress for dinner; at which I rarely miss seeing strange faces—come, as they say, out of respect to me. Pray, would not the word curiosity answer as well? And how different this, from having a few

social friends at a cheerful board? The usual time of sitting at Table—a walk—and Tea—brings me within the dawn of Candlelight; previous to which, if not prevented by company, I resolve, that as soon as the glimmering taper, supplies the place of the great luminary, I will retire to my writing Table and acknowledge the letters I have received; but when the lights are brought, I feel tired, and disinclined to engage in this work, conceiving that the next night will do as well; the next comes, and with it the same causes for postponement, & effect; and so on.

This will account for *your* letters remaining so long unacknowledged—and having given you the history of a day, it will serve for a year; and I am persuaded you will not require a second edition of it: but it may strike you, that in this detail no mention is made of any portion of time allotted for reading; the remark would be just, for I have not looked into a book since I came home, nor shall be able to do it until I have discharged my workmen; probably not before the nights grow longer; when, possibly, I may be looking in doomsday book.

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

As to Washington's character, it is one of the fortunate things of his fortunate life, to be attacked by such beings as Randolph and Payne, and this pamphleteer; that is by men of some talents, and more popularity, full to the brim of the foulest and most malignant venom that the human heart can engender. Against such a life and such virtues, secured and sanctioned as they are by retirement, no talents, no malice can avail, and publications like those which have been levelled at him, only expose the authors to disgrace, and will serve in future to be quoted as the tests by which his virtue was proved, as the fires from which it issued only brightened in its lustre.

James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 18 February 1798

There never was perhaps a greater contrast between two characters, than between those of the present President & of his predecessor, although it is the boast & prop of the latter, that he treads in the steps of the former: The one cold considerate & cautious, the other headlong & kindled into flame by every spark that lights on his passions: the one ever scrutinizing into the public opinion, and ready to follow where he could not lead it: the other insulting it by the most adverse sentiments & pursuits: W. a hero in the field, yet over-weighing every danger in the Cabinet—A. without a single pretension to the character of Soldier, a perfect Quixote as a Statesman: the former chief Magistrate pursuing peace every where with sincerity, though mistaking the means; the latter taking as much pains to get into war, as the former took to keep out of it. The contrast might be pursued into a variety of other particulars—the policy of the one in shunning connections with the arrangements of Europe, of the other in holding out the U.S. as a makeweight in its Balances of power: the avowed exultation of W. in the progress of liberty every where, & his eulogy on the Revolution & people of France posterior even to the bloody reign & fate of Robespierre—the open denunciations by Adams of the smallest disturbance of the ancient discipline, order & tranquility of Despotism, &c. &c. &c.

Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz: *Travels through America*, 21 May 1798

We arrived there [at Thomas Peters' house near Georgetown] between six and seven o'clock. (I saw him through the window and I recognized him immediately.) One can guess how my heart was beating; I was going to see the man for whom, since my youth, I had had such a great respect, such a man as my unhappy fatherland lacked for its own salvation. There were about ten people

coming out toward us. I saw only him. I was presented to him by Mr. Law. He held out his hand to me and shook mine. We went into the parlor; I sat down beside him; I was moved, speechless. I had not eyes enough to look on him. He is a majestic figure in which dignity and gentleness are united. The portraits that we have of him in Europe do not resemble him much. He is nearly six feet tall, square set, and very strongly built; aquiline nose, blue eyes, the mouth and especially the lower jaw sunken, a good head of hair. In a word "*I am senior, sed cruda Deo viridisque Senectus.*"* He wore a coat of deep nut brown, black stockings, a waistcoat and breeches of satin of the same color. He began by questioning me about General Kosciuszko. . . . He continued then— "*How long are you in this country?*"— "*Eight Months*"— "*How do you like it?*" "*I am happy, Sir, to see in America those blessings which I was so ardently wishing for in my own country. To you, Sir, are the Americans indebted for them—*" He bowed his head with a modest air and said to me, "*I wished always to your country well and that with all my heart.*" He uttered these last words with feeling.

*"Now aged, but a god's old age is hardy and green." Virgil, *Aeneid*, VI, line 304.

Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz: *Travels through America*, 5 June 1798

Since his retirement he has led a quiet and regular life. He gets up at 5 o'clock in the morning, reads or writes until seven. He breakfasts on tea and cakes made from maize; because of his teeth he makes slices spread with butter and honey. He then immediately goes on horseback to see the work in the fields; sometimes in the middle of a field he holds council of war with Mr. Addison [the overseer]. He returns at two o'clock, dresses, goes to dinner. If there are guests, he loves to chat after dinner with a glass of Madeira in his hand. After dinner he diligently reads the newspapers, of which he receives about ten of different kinds. He answers letters, etc. Tea at 7 o'clock; he chats until nine, and then he goes to bed.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Philadelphia, 8 June 1798

It was General W.'s wish to make Friends of foes, and he aimed at converting over those who were lukewarm.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Philadelphia, 3 July 1798

Yesterday the President Nominated Gen'l. Washington to be commander in chief of the Army to be raised, and as soon as the Senate pass upon it, the Secretary of War will be sent express to announce it to him. His Country calls. No Man can do so much for it in that Line. "The knowledge that he lives" is a Bulwark. It will unite all Parties in the Country. It will give weight, force and energy to the People, & it will dismay our Enemies.—I cannot think that he will decline the station.

Benjamin Rush: *Commonplace Book*, 21 August 1798

Mr. Liston* . . . told me at the same time that General Washington was the only man he ever knew in public life who gave no answer to a question, of any kind, that he did not chuse to resolve. He said during the five days he was at his house he observed him to be passionate with his servants and imposed upon by his overseer.

*Robert Liston was British minister to the United States, 1793–1796.

James Madison: Speech in the Virginia General Assembly, 18 December 1799*

Death has robbed our country of its most distinguished ornament, and the world of one of its greatest benefactors. George Washington, the Hero of Liberty, the father of his Country, and the friend of man is no more. The General Assembly of his native state were ever the first to render him, living, the honors due to his virtues. They will not be the second to pay to his memory the tribute of their tears.

*Published in the *Richmond Examiner*, 20 December 1799.

John Marshall: Speech in U.S. House of Representatives, Philadelphia, 19 December 1799

The melancholy event which was yesterday announced with doubt, has been but too certain. Our Washington is no more! The hero, the sage, and the patriot of America—the man on whom in times of danger every eye was turned and all hopes were placed, lives now, only in his own great actions, and in the hearts of an affectionate and afflicted people.

If, sir, it had even not been unusual openly to testify respect for the memory of those whom Heaven had selected as its instruments for dispensing good to men, yet such has been the uncommon worth, and such the extraordinary incidents which have marked the life of him whose loss we all deplore, that the whole American nation, impelled by the same feelings, would call with one voice for public manifestations of that sorrow which is so deep and so universal.

More than any other individual, and as much as to one individual was possible, has he contributed to found this our wide spreading empire, and to give to the western world its independence and its freedom.

Having effected the great object for which he was placed at the head of our armies, we have seen him converting the sword into the plough-share, and voluntarily linking the soldier in the citizen.

When the debility of our federal system had become manifest, and the bonds which connected the parts of this vast continent were dissolving, we have seen him the chief of those patrons who formed for us a constitution, which, by preserving the union, will, I trust, substantiate and perpetuate those blessings our revolution had promised to bestow.

In obedience to the general voice of his country, calling on him to preside over a great people, we have seen him once more quit the retirement he loved, and in a season more stormy and tempestuous than war itself, with calm and wise determination, pursue the true interests of the nation, and contribute more than any other could contribute, to the establishment of that system of policy, which will, I trust, yet preserve our peace, our honor and our independence.

Having been twice unanimously chosen the Chief Magistrate of a free people, we see him, at a time when his re-election with the universal suffrage, could not have been doubted, affording to the world a rare instance of moderation, by withdrawing from his high station to the peaceful walks of private life.

However the public confidence may change, and the public affections fluctuate with respect to others, yet with respect to him they have, in war and in peace, in public and in private life, been as steady as his own firm mind, and as constant as his own exalted virtues.

Let us then, Mr. Speaker, pay the last tribute of respect and affection to our departed friend—Let the grand council of the nation display those sentiments which the nation feels. . . .

Resolves, That a committee, in conjunction with one from the Senate, be appointed to consider on the most suitable manner of paying honour to the memory of the man, first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen.

Alexander Hamilton: General Orders, Philadelphia, 21 December 1799

'Tis only for me to mingle my tears with those of my fellow soldiers, cherishing with them the precious recollection, that while others are paying a merited tribute to "*The man of the age,*" we in particular allied as we were to him by a close tie, are called to mourn the irreparable loss of a kind and venerated Patron and father!

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Philadelphia, 22 December 1799

I wrote to you the day after we received the account of the death of General Washington. This Event so important to our Country at this period, will be universally deplored. No Man ever lived, more deservedly beloved and Respected. The praise and I may say adulation which followed his administration for several years, never made him forget that he was a Man, subject to the weakness and frailty attached to human Nature. He never grew giddy, but ever maintained a modest diffidence of his own talents, and if that was an error, it was of the amiable and engaging kind, tho it might lead sometimes to a want of decisions in some great Emergencies. Possessed of power, possessed of an extensive influence, he never used it but for the benefit of his Country. Witness his retirement to private Life when Peace closed the scenes of War; When called by the unanimous suffrages of the People to the chief Majestracy of the Nation, he acquitted himself to the satisfaction and applause of all Good Men. When assailed by faction, when reviled by Party, he suffered with dignity, and Retired from his exalted station with a Character which malice could not wound, nor envy tarnish. If we look through the whole tenor of his Life, History will not produce to us a Parallel. Heaven has seen fit to take him from us. Our Mourning is sincere, in the midst of which, we ought not to lose sight of the Blessings we have enjoyed and still partake of, that he was spared to us, until he saw a successor filling his place, pursuing the same system which he had adopted, and that in times which have been equally dangerous and Critical. It becomes not me to say more upon this Head.

Alexander Hamilton to Tobias Lear, New York, 2 January 1800

Your letter of the 15 of December last was delayed in getting to hand by the circumstance of its having gone to New York while I was at Philadelphia and of its having arrived at Philadelphia after I had set out on my return to New York.

The very painful event which it announces had, previously to the receipt of it, filled my heart with bitterness. Perhaps no man in this community has equal cause with myself to deplore the loss. I have been much indebted to the kindness of the General, and he was an Aegis very essential to me. But regrets are unavailing. For great misfortunes it is the business of reason to seek consolation. The friends of General Washington have very noble ones. If virtue can secure happiness in another world he is happy. In this the Seal is now put upon his Glory. It is no longer in jeopardy from the fickleness of fortune.

P.S. In whose hands are his papers gone? Our very confidential situation will not permit this to be a point of indifference to me.

Alexander Hamilton to Rufus King, New York, 5 January 1800

The irreparable loss of an inestimable man removes a control [over factiousness] which was felt and was very salutary.

Daniel Webster to James Hervey Bingham, Salisbury, 5 February 1800

Washington, the great political cement dead.

Timothy Dwight: Discourse on the Character of Washington, 22 February 1800

. . . wherever he appeared, an instinctive awe and veneration attended him on the part of all men. Every man, however great in his own opinion, or in reality, shrunk in his presence, and became conscious of an inferiority, which he never felt before. Whilst he encouraged every man, particularly every stranger, and peculiarly every diffident man, and raised him to self possession, no sober person, however secure he might think himself of his esteem, ever presumed to draw too near him. . . .

To his conduct, both military and political, may, with exact propriety, be applied the observation, which has been often made concerning his courage; that in the most hazardous situations no man ever saw his countenance change.

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

Very different from the practice of Mr. Adams was that of the modest and sage Washington. He consulted much, pondered much, resolved slowly, resolved surely.

Thomas Jefferson to the Earl of Buchan, Washington, 10 July 1803

I feel a pride in the justice which your Lordship's sentiments render to the character of my illustrious countryman, Washington. The moderation of his desires, and the strength of his judgment, enabled him to calculate correctly, that the road to that glory which never dies is to use power for the support of the laws and liberties of our country, not for their destruction; and his will accordingly survives the wreck of everything now living.

Thomas Jefferson to James Sullivan, Washington, 21 May 1805

I may say, from intimate knowledge, that we should have lost the services of the greatest character of our country, had he been assailed with the degree of abandoned licentiousness now practiced. The torture he felt under rare and slight attacks, proved that under those of which the federal bands have shown themselves capable, he would have thrown up the helm in a burst of indignation.

John Trumbull to John Adams, Hartford, Conn., 19 October 1805

I have said, that Washington was not a Scholar, and never trusted to his own skill in composition, in any of his public addresses—I will add that he was not a Man of much general science. But he was a Man of the highest natural talents. As a General, he far surpassed any one, who ever acted on the American Theatre—nor do I believe, if we could have had our choice of all the military Commanders, who shone in the last century, that we could have found his equal. Frederic of Prussia, at the head of our armies, would have ruined us in two campaigns—

His temper was naturally ardent, impetuous, open & passionate. Finding he suffered many disadvantages from its indulgence in early life, he determined at all events to check its ebullitions—and when he again came forward in stations of the highest dignity, he ever acted under a mask of

the deepest reserve, & assumed the most impenetrable character I ever knew. He never trusted any more persons, with his plans or designs, than were absolutely necessary, to the carrying of them on, nor till the moment of action. He often called Councils of War for the purpose of discovering the plans & sentiments of his Officers, & as often for the purpose of discovering his enemies & concealing his own designs, by consulting on projects, which he had no idea of attempting. *Marshall* in his life of Washington in the three volumes already published, has given a just representation, so far as it goes, in general, but he either did not know, or was afraid to tell a thousand particulars; which would have much more explained the real character & talents of his Hero.—You are sensible I have no reason to be partial to Washington—I was never his confident, nor was any person ever completely so—Indeed one of his principal modes of deception consisted in making persons believe they were trusted.

Gouverneur Morris to John Marshall, 26 June 1807

In approving highly your character of Washington, permit me to add that few men of such steady, persevering industry ever existed, and perhaps no one who so completely commanded himself. Thousands have learned to restrain their passions, though few among them had to contend with passions so violent. But the self-command to which I allude was of higher grade. He could, at the dictate of reason, control his will and command himself to act. Others may have acquired a portion of the same authority; but who could, like Washington, at any moment command the energies of his mind to a cheerful exertion?

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, September 1807

[On Washington's real disinterestedness.] Washington had great advantages for obtaining credence. He possessed a great fortune, immense lands, many slaves, an excellent consort, no children. What could he desire more for felicity here below? His professions therefore of attachment to private life, fondness for agricultural employments, and rural amusements were easily believed; and we all agreed to believe him and make the world believe him. Yet we see he constantly betrayed apprehensions that he should not be seriously believed by the world. He was nevertheless believed, and there is not an example in history of a more universal acknowledgment of disinterestedness in any patriot or hero than there is and will be to the latest posterity in him. . . .

I have sometimes amused myself with inquiring where Washington got his system. Was it the natural growth of his own genius? Had there been any examples of it in Virginia? Instances enough might have been found in history of excellent hypocrites, whose concealments, dissimulations, and simulations had deceived the world for a time; and some great examples of real disinterestedness, which produced the noblest efforts and have always been acknowledged. But you know that our beloved Washington was but very superficially read in history of any age, nation, or country. When then did he obtain his instruction? I will tell you what I conjecture.

Rollin's *Ancient History*, you know, is very generally diffused through this country because it has been and is in England. The reading of most of our men of letters extends little further than this work and Prideaux's *Connections of the Old and New Testament*. From Rollin I suspect Washington drew his wisdom, in a great measure. In the third chapter of the third book . . . there are in the character of Dejoces several strokes which are very curious as they resemble the politics of so many of our countrymen, though the whole character taken together is far inferior in purity and magnanimity to that of Washington.

“He retired from public business, pretending to be over fatigued with the multitudes of people business, pretending to be over fatigued with the multitudes of people that resorted to him.” “His own domestic affairs would not allow him to attend those of other people” &c. . . .

Benjamin Rush to John Adams, 31 October 1807

It is indeed a rare virtue. . . . I do not think the gentleman you alluded to in your letter upon this subject formed himself or his conduct upon the model of the character described in Rollin. He was self-taught in all the arts which gave him his immense elevation above all his fellow citizens. An intimate friend of Colonel Hamilton’s informed me that he once told him that he had never read a single military book except Sime’s *Guide*. . . .

Our great man wrote a great deal, thought constantly, but read (it is said) very little, and hence the disrespect with which his talents and character have been treated by his aide-de-camp.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 11 November 1807

Self-taught or book-learned in the arts, our hero was much indebted to his talents for “his immense elevation above his fellows.” Talents! You will say, what talents? I answer. 1. An handsome face. That this is a talent, I can prove by the authority of a thousand instances in all ages: and among the rest Madame Du Barry, who said “Le véritable royaut, est la beauté.” 2. A tall statue, like the Hebrew sovereign chosen because he was taller by the head than the other Jews. 3. An elegant form. 4. Graceful attitudes and movements. 5. A large, imposing fortune consisting of a great landed estate left him by his father and brother, besides a large jointure with his lady, and the guardianship of the heirs of the great Custis estate, and in addition to all this, immense tracts of land of his own acquisition. There is nothing, except bloody battles and splendid victories, to which mankind bow down with more reverence than to great fortune. . . .

Mankind in general are so far from the opinion of the lawyer that there are no disinterested actions, that they give their esteem to none but those which they believe to be such. They are oftener deceived and abused in their judgments of disinterested men and actions than in any other, it is true. But such is their love of the marvelous, and such their admiration of uncommon generosity, that they will believe extraordinary pretensions to it, and the Pope says, “Si bonus populus vult decipi, decipiatur.”*

Washington. However, did not deceive them. I know not that they gave him more credit for disinterestedness than he deserved, though they have not given many others so much. 6. Washington was a Virginian. This is equivalent to five talents. Virginian geese are all Swans. Not a bairn in Scotland is more national, not a lad upon the Highlands is more clannish, than every Virginian I have ever known. . . . The Philadelphians and New Yorkers, who are local and partial enough to themselves, are meek and modest in comparison with Virginian Old Dominionism. Washington, of course, was extolled without bounds. 7. Washington was preceded by favorable anecdotes. The English had used him ill in the expedition of Braddock. They had not done justice to his bravery and good counsel. They had exaggerated and misrepresented his defeat and capitulation, which interested the pride as well as compassion of Americans in his favor. President Davies had drawn his horoscope by calling him “that heroic youth, Col. Washington.” Mr. Lynch of South Carolina told me before we met in Congress in 1774 that “Colonel Washington had made the most eloquent speech that ever had been spoken upon the controversy with England, viz. that if the English should attack the people of Boston, he would raise a thousand men his own expense and march at their head to New England to their aid.” . . . 8. He possessed the gift of silence. This I esteem as one of

the most precious talents. 9. He had great self-command. It cost him a great exertion sometimes, and a constant constraint, but to preserve so much equanimity as he did required a great capacity. 10. Whenever he lost his temper as he did sometimes, either love or fear in those about him induced them to conceal his weakness from the world. Here you see I have made out ten talents without saying a word about reading, thinking, or writing, upon all which subjects you have said all that need be said. You see I use the word talents in a larger sense than usual, comprehending every advantage. Genius, experience, learning, fortune, birth, health are all talents, though I know not how the word has been lately confined to the faculties of the mind.

*Pope Paul IV (Carlo Carafa): "If the good people wish to be deceived, let them be deceived."

Benjamin Rush to John Adams, 15 December 1807

I admire the correctness of your history of the *ten* talents committed to the subject of your letter. Upon the talent of his taciturnity, Mr. Liston* gave me the following anecdote: "That he was the only person he had ever known (and he had conversed with several crowned heads and many of the first nobility in Europe) who made *no reply* of any kind to a question that he did not choose to answer."

*Robert Liston, the British minister to the United States.

John Jay to Richard Peters, Bedford, N.Y., 29 March 1811

His administration raised the nation out of confusion into order, out of degradation and distress into reputation and prosperity. It found us withering—it left us flourishing.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 21 June 1811

[In speaking of the "masters of the theatrical exhibitions of politics."] Washington understood this art very well, and we may say of him, if he was not the greatest President, he was the best actor of presidency we have ever had. His address to the states when he left the army, his solemn leave taken of Congress when he resigned his commission, his Farewell Address to the people when he resigned his presidency: these were all in a strain of Shakespearian and Garrickal excellence in dramatical exhibitions.

Benjamin Rush to John Adams, Philadelphia, 4 September 1811

I have heard the Booksellers say that a book wch: is well received when it is first published, seldom commands a durable sale, and that *Stock* books, as they call them, generally lie for years upon their Shelves before they become known, After which they acquire a fame & currency which grow with time. The same remark may be applied to public men. Washington is probably the only exception to it that is to be met with in common times. He was devoured as soon as the he came from the press, and he will probably descend like a stock book, with increasing reputation to the latest posterity.

Benjamin Rush to John Adams, 12 February 1812

In the summer of 1775 or thereabouts I dined in company with General, then Colonel, [Adam] Stephen on his way from Virginia to the camp. I sat next to him. In a low tone of voice he asked

me who constituted General Washington's military family. I told him Colonel J. Reed and Major Thomas Mifflin. "Are they men of talent?" said he. "Yes," said I. "I am glad to hear it," said the General, "for General Washington will require such men about him. He is a *weak man*. I know him well. I served with him during the last French war." . . .

I do not even wish it to be known that General W. was deficient in that mark of true greatness which so preeminently characterized Julius Caesar, Henry the 4th of France, and Frederick the 2nd of Prussia—the talent to forgive.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 22 April 1812

Washington had Friends, real Friends: So had Cromwell, and So has Napoleon, and So had Louis 14th.—Which of the four had most hypocritical Friends, which most political Friends, I pretend not to conjecture.

That Washington was not a Schollar is certain. That he was too illiterate, unlearned, unread, for his Station and reputation is equally past dispute. He had derived little Knowledge from Reading; none from Travel, except in the United States, and excepting one Trip in his youth to one of the West India Islands and directly back again. From Conversation in publick and private, he had improved considerably and by Reflection in his Closet, a good deal. He was indeed a thoughtful Man.

The most experienced and Scientific Officers about him, Lee, Gates, Steuben Conway &c thought little of him: Some of them despised him too much. Green Knox, Clinton, without thinking highly of him except for his honesty were his Sworn and invariable Friends. Of all his Aids and Secretaries, David Humphreys alone has been discreet enough to let no Levity escape him. Never Poet was truer to his Patron.

Mifflin one of his Generals, Hamilton Burr have been very indiscreet. Pickering, his Quarter Master, has at times been outrageous. Now I will give you a little true History.

In the Year 1791 When I lived in Mrs, Keppel's house, at the corner of Arch Street and fourth Street in Philadelphia, Colonel Pickering made me a Visit, and finding me alone, Spent a long Evening with me. We had a multitude of Conversation. I had then lately purchased Mathew Cary's American Museum, the Ninth Volume of which, then lay upon my Table. Colonel Pickering observing the Book said he was acquainted with the Work and particularly with that volume of it: and there was a Letter in it, that he was extremely Sorry to See there. I asked what Letter is that? C. Pickering answered, it is a Letter from General Washington. I said I had read it and attended to it. You my Friend Rush, by looking into the 282d. page of that 9th. Volume will find a Letter from George Washington dated Mount Vernon July 31st. 1788. Col Pickering Said he was extremely Sorry to See that Letter in print. I asked him why? What do you See amiss in it? What harm will it do? Col Pickering, Said it will injure General Washings Character. How will it injure him? Stratagems are lawful in War. Colonel Pickering answered me, it will hurt his moral Character. He has been generally thought to be honest and I own I thought his Morals were good, but that Letter is false and I know it to be So. I know him to be vain and weak and ignorant, but I thought he was well meaning: but that Letter is a Lye and I know it to be so. I objected and queried. Pickering explained, and descended to particulars. He Said it was false in Washingt. to pretend, that he had meditated before hand to deceive the Enemy, and to that End to deceive the Officers and Soldiers of his own Army; that he had Seriously meditated an Attack upon New York, for near a twelve month and had made preparations at an immense Expence for that purpose. Washington never had a thought of marching to the South ward, till The Count de Grasses Fleet appeared upon the Coast. He knew it, and Washington knew it. consequently that Letter was a great disgrace. As I had never

before heard Washingtons Veracity assailed, I was uneasy, and argued and queried with him. But Pickering persisted, repeated, and urged Facts, and orders which I knew nothing of, and could not answer. But he dwelt with most delight on Washingtons Ignorance, Weakness and Vanity. He was So ignorant, that he had never read any Thing, not even on military Affairs: he could not write A Sentence of Grammar, nor Spell his Words. &c &c &c. To this I objected. I had been in Congress with Washington in 1774 and in May and part of June 1775 and had heard and read all his Letters to Congress in 1775. 1776. 1777, and had formed a very different Opinion of his literary Talent. His Letters were well written and well Spelled. Pickering replied “he did not write them, he only copied them.” Who did write them? “His Secretaries and Aids, and I think he mentioned Reed Harrison and Tilghman.

Pickering had come from Wioming to Solicit Employment, as I Suppose. he obtained the Post office, the Secretaryship of War and of State under Washington, who could not Spell or write Grammar but would lie. General Knox who was his Friend told me, he had a *dreadfull Task*, that was his Phrase, to get Washington and Hamilton to consent to his appointment to any Thing. Pickering in his Letter to Governor Sullivan, acknowledges that Washington knew him, and that he told him when he made him Secretary of State that he had offered the Place to others whom he mentioned to Pickering but Pickering did not mention to the Publick. (I conjecture Chancellor Livingston and Mr Madison were the Persons).

Pickering however drudged on, as Post Master and as Secretary under a President who could not Spell, nor write Grammar, but yet would lie, till 1797 when I was chosen P. of U.S. I had never had much intercourse with any of the Secretaries of Department: but now it became my duty to look into them. Washington had appointed them and I knew it would turn the World Upside down if I removed any one of them. I had then no particular objection against any of them. I called at the Treasury and conversed with Wolcott. 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 Keppeles House, Six or Seven Years before. He said “Washington was So extreamly illiterate! He could not write a Sentence withoutlg Some Word; nor three parragraphs with out 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 “Coll Pickering you Seem to me to be too much prejudiced. Washington certainly was not So extreamly illiterate as you represent him; his Letters and publick performances Show him quite otherwise. Pickering replied, very Sharply “He did not write them.” I asked who did? He answered “His Aids and Secretaries; in the Army his Secretaries and aids wrote his Letters; the best of them were written by Colonel Harrison &c.” 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 any Thing; not even on the Military Art; he told me he had never read any Thing but (I forget what, probably Sims’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.

Benjamin Rush to John Adams, Philadelphia, post-22 April 1812

It is said the Revd Dr Mason has been persuaded not to publish the life of Hamilton, least it should injure the fame of your “Character”. Copies it is said of most of his popular letters, messages, addresses &c have been found in Col: Hamilton’s hand writing among his Other papers.

The Detractors from the fame of most military menI been thier enemies—the Detractors from the fame of your “Character,” are his *personal* friends, most of whom have lived in his family, and received favors from him.

Benjamin Rush to John Adams, Philadelphia, 4 June 1812

General Washington I have heard felt public abuse in the most sensible manner. Mr. Jefferson told me he once saw him throw the *Aurora* hastily upon the floor with a “damn” of the author, who had charged him with the crime of being a slaveholder. It is even said that paper induced him to retire from the President’s chair of the United States.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 12 June 1812

I have heard much of Washington’s impatience under the lash of scribblers, some of it from his own mouth. Mr. Lear related to me one morning the General’s ripping and rascalling Philip Freneau for sending him his papers full of abuse.

Benjamin Rush to John Adams, 8 July 1812

Among the national sins of our country that have provoked the wrath of Heaven to afflict us with a war, I ought to have mentioned in my last letter the idolatrous worship paid to the name of General Washington by all classes and *nearly* all parties of our citizens, manifested in the impious application of names and epithets to him which are ascribed in Scripture only to God and to Jesus Christ. The following is a part of them: “our Saviour,” “our Redeemer,” “our cloud by day and our pillar of fire by night,” “our star in the east,” “to us a Son is borne,” and “our Saviour,” “our Redeemer,” “our cloud by day and our pillar of fire by night,” “our advocate in Heaven.”

Thomas Jefferson to John Melish, Monticello, 13 January 1813

General Washington did not harbor one principle of federalism. He was neither an Angloman, a monarchist, nor a separatist. He sincerely wished the people to have as much self-government as they were competent to exercise themselves. The only point on which he and I ever differed in opinion, was, that I had more confidence than he had in the natural integrity and discretion of the people, and in the safety and extent to which they might trust themselves with a control over their government. He has asseverated to me a thousand times his determination that the existing government should have a fair trial, and that in support of it he would spend the last drop of his blood. He did this the more repeatedly, because he knew General Hamilton’s political bias, and my apprehensions from it.

John Adams to Benjamin Waterhouse, Quincy, Mass., 9 May 1813

[Washington’s] Cincinnati Society, was his Hobby. He loved Adulation and could not resist her Charms.

Thomas Jefferson to Walter Jones, Monticello, 2 January 1814

I think I knew General Washington intimately and thoroughly; and were I called on to delineate his character, it should be in terms like these.

His mind was great and powerful, without being of the very first order; his penetration strong, though not so acute as that of a Newton, Bacon, or Locke; and as far as he saw, no judgment was ever sounder. It was slow in operation, being little aided by invention or imagination, but sure in conclusion. . . . He was incapable of fear, meeting personal dangers with the calmest unconcern. Perhaps the strongest feature in his character was prudence, never acting until every circumstance, every consideration, was maturely weighed; refraining if he saw a doubt, but, when once decided, going through with his purpose, whatever obstacles opposed. His integrity was most pure, his justice the most inflexible I have ever known, no motives of interest or consanguinity, of friendship or hatred, being able to bias his decision. He was, indeed, in every sense of the words, a wise, a good, and a great man. His temper was naturally high toned; but reflection and resolution had obtained a firm and habitual ascendancy over it. If ever, however, it broke its bonds, he was most tremendous in his wrath. In his expenses he was honorable, but exact; liberal in contributions to whatever promised utility; but frowning and unyielding on all visionary projects and all unworthy calls on his charity. His heart was not warm in its affections; but he exactly calculated every man's value, and gave him a solid esteem proportioned to it. His person, you know, was fine, his stature exactly what one would wish, his deportment easy, erect and noble; the best horseman of his age, and the most graceful figure that could be seen on horseback. Although in the circle of his friends, where he might be unreserved with safety, he took a free share in conversation, his colloquial talents were not above mediocrity, possessing neither copiousness of ideas, nor fluency of words. In public, when called on for a sudden opinion, he was unready, short and embarrassed. Yet he wrote readily, rather diffusely, in an easy and correct style. This he had acquired by conversation with the world, for his education was merely reading, writing and common arithematic, to which he added surveying at a later day. His time was employed in action chiefly, reading little, and that only in agriculture and English history. His correspondence became necessarily extensive, and with journalizing his agricultural proceedings, occupied most of his leisure hours within doors. On the whole, his character was, in its mass, perfect, in nothing bad, in few points indifferent; and it may truly be said, that never did nature and fortune combine more perfectly to make a man great, and to place him in the same constellation with whatever worthies have merited from man an everlasting remembrance. For his was the singular destiny and merit, of leading the armies of his country successfully through an arduous war, for the establishment of its independence; of conducting its councils through the birth of a government, new in its forms and principles, until it had settled down into a quiet and orderly train; and of scrupulously obeying the laws through the whole of his career, civil and military, of which the history of the world furnishes no other example.

. . . He was no monarchist from preference of his judgment. The soundness of that gave him correct views of the rights of man, and his severe justice devoted him to them. He has often declared to me that he considered our new constitution as an experiment on the practicability of republican government, and with what dose of liberty man could be trusted for his own good; that he was determined the experiment should have a fair trial, and would lose the last drop of his blood in support of it.

. . . I felt on his death, with my countrymen, that "verily a great man hath fallen this day in Israel."

Pierre Samuel Du Pont to Thomas Jefferson, 12 May 1816

If Washington had not been a virtuous man, and if his virtue had not been helped and supported by five or six courageous men, you would have had *a king* and *peers*. Regret at not being peers sowed the seed of your Federalists.

Donald Fraser to Thomas Jefferson, New York, 30 June 1817

I frequently ruminates of the three Corinthian Pillars, of the American Revolution—*George Washington, Thomas Jefferson & Benjn. Franklin*: whose names, will doubtless, be held in high veneration, by the American Nation, for many Centuries to come; & revered, & admired, by all the lovers of rational Liberty, throughout the civilized world.

Thomas Jefferson to William Johnson, Monticello, 27 October 1822

Greene was truly a great man. He had not perhaps all the qualities which so peculiarly rendered Genl. Washington the fittest man on earth for directing so great a contest under so great difficulties, difficulties proceeding not from luke-warmness in our citizens or their functionaries, as our military leaders supposed; but from the pennyless condition of the people, totally shut out from all commerce & intercourse with the old, and therefore without any means of converting their labor into money.

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

I agree with you most unequivocally in the Opinion that Genl. Washington was the only man who could have conducted us through the War of the Revolution. There was a Momentum necessary, which he alone could have given to the mighty Operations then going on. I trust I have faithfully persisted in the Acknowledgment of his Pre-eminence.

James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Montpelier, Va., 27 June 1823

It was never understood that Washington valued himself on his writing talent, and no secret to some that he occasionally availed himself of the friendship of others whom he supposed more practiced than himself in studied composition.

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

General Washington was himself sincerely a friend to the republican principles of our constitution. His faith, perhaps, in its duration, might not have been as confident as mine; but he repeatedly declared to me, that he was determined it should have a fair chance for success, and that he would lose the last drop of his blood in its support, against any attempt which might be made to change it from its republican form. He made these declarations the oftener, because he knew my suspicions that Hamilton had other views, and he wished to quiet my jealousies on this subject.

John Marshall to Timothy Pickering, Washington, 15 March 1827

You give a great many interesting anecdotes of General Washington which serve to develop his character. Your opportunities of personal observation enable you to take a near view of the man. I have seen him only at a distance. I have looked at him through those actions which were the result

of mature deliberation, and consultation with those to whom he gave his confidence. The conclusion to which this view of him has conducted me is extremely favorable to his judgment, his wisdom and his virtue. If he did not possess that rapidity of decision which distinguishes many men of genius, there seems to have been a solidity in his mind which fitted him in a peculiar manner for occupying the high place he filled in the United States in the critical times in which he filled it. No feature in his character was more conspicuous than his firmness. Though prizing popular favor as highly as it ought to be prized, he never yielded principle to obtain it, or sacrificed his judgment on its altar. This firmness of character added to his acknowledged virtue enabled him to stem a torrent which would have overwhelmed almost any other man, and did I believe save his country.

Such is my impression of Washington, an impression certainly not formed on a near view of him, but on a very attentive consideration of his character, his conduct, and his papers.

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

I was happy that you took in good part my frank statement of facts respecting General Washington. Of his “firmness” in critical periods you doubtless found abundant proofs among his papers, as well as in your own observation of public occurrences. I recollect, in a cabinet consultation with the heads of departments, he once spoke to this effect—“Let me see my way clear, and nothing shall turn me aside.” On this point you express precisely the idea I entertain of his character, where you say—“Though prizing popular favour as highly as it ought to be prized, he never yielded principle to obtain it, or sacrificed his judgement on its altar.” Diffident of his own opinion, in public questions of importance, he always sought information, & thankfully received it, from those whom he thought entitled to his confidence. In his elevated public stations this was eminently useful; and especially in his civil administration, in which instant decision was not necessary. For he would diligently and patiently examine every such question; and aided by all attainable adventitious lights, form his judgement; and this, therefore, would seldom be erroneous. All his views, indeed, being scrupulously directed to the promotion of the public welfare, correct judgements were justly to be expected.

James Madison: Conversation with and recorded by Jared Sparks, April 1830

Washington was not fluent nor ready in conversation, and was inclined to be taciturn in general society. In the company of two or three intimate friends, however, he was talkative, and when a little excited was sometimes fluent and even eloquent. The story so often repeated of his never laughing Mr. Madison says wholly untrue; no man seemed more to enjoy gay conversation, though he took little part in it himself. He was particularly pleased with the jokes, good humor, and hilarity of his companions.

James Madison: Detached Memorandum, before 1832

The strength of his character lay in his integrity, his love of justice, his fortitude, the soundness of his judgment, and his remarkable prudence to which he joined an elevated sense of patriotic duty, and a reliance on the enlightened & impartial world as the tribunal by which a lasting sentence on his career would be pronounced. Nor was he without the advantage of a Stature & figure, which however insignificant when separated from greatness of character do not fail when combined with it to aid the attraction. But what particularly distinguished him, was a modest dignity

which at once commanded the highest respect, and inspired the purest attachment. Although not idolizing public opinion, no man could be more attentive to the means of ascertaining it. In comparing the candidates for office, he was particularly inquisitive as to their standing with the public and the opinion entertained of them by men of public weight. On important questions to be decided by him, he spared no pains to gain information from all quarters; freely asking from all whom he held in esteem, and who were intimate with him, a free communication of their sentiments, receiving with great attention the different arguments and opinions offered to him, and making up his own judgment with all the leisure that was permitted. If any erroneous changes took place in his views of persons and public affairs near the close of his life as has been insinuated, they may probably be accounted for by circumstances which threw him into an exclusive communication with men of one party, who took advantage of his retired situation to make impressions unfavorable to their opponents.

Martha Washington

George Washington to Richard Washington, Mount Vernon, 20 September 1759

I am now I believe fixed at this Seat with an agreeable Consort for Life and hope to find more happiness in retirement than I ever experienced amidst a wide and bustling World.

Edmund Pendleton to Unknown, September 1774

I was much pleased with Mrs. Washington and her spirit. She seemed ready to make any sacrifice and was cheerful though I knew she felt anxious. She talked like a Spartan mother to her son on going to battle. "I hope you will stand firm—I know George will," she said. The dear little woman was busy from morning until night with domestic duties, but she gave us much time in conversation and affording us entertainment. When we set off in the morning, she stood in the door and cheered us with the good words, "God be with you gentlemen."

John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, Philadelphia, 25 November 1775

The General is amiable and Accomplished and judicious and cool; You will soon know the Person and Character of his Lady. I hope She has as much Ambition for her Husband's Glory, as Portia [Abigail Adams] & Marcia [Mercy Otis Warren] have, and then the Lord have Mercy on the Souls of [Generals William] Howe and [John] Burgoyne & all the [British] Troops in Boston.

Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, Watertown, Mass., 17 April 1776

I Arrived at my Lodgings before Dinner the day I Left you: found an obliging Family, Convenient Room and in the Main an agreeable set of Lodgers. Next Morning I took a Ride to Cambridge and waited on Mrs. Washington at 11 o'clock, where I was Received with that politeness and Respect shown in a first interview among the well bred and with the Ease and Cordiality of Friendship of a much Earlier date. If you wish to hear more of this Lady's Character I will tell you I think the Complacency of her Manners speaks at once the Benevolence of her Heart, and her affability,

Candor and Gentleness Qualify her to soften the hours of private Life or to sweeten the Cares of the Hero and smooth the Rugged scenes of War.

Elizabeth Drinker: Diary, 6 April 1778

Requested an audience with the General—set with his Wife (a sociable pretty kind of Woman) until he came in.

Catharine Macauley Graham to George Washington, New York, 13 July 1785

. . . the benevolence of Mrs. Washington's temper with that polite and captivating attention with which she exercises the virtues of hospitality to all the numerous visitors which resort to Mount Vernon are the favorite topics of conversation on which we have dwelt ever since we have had the honor of being entertained under your roof.

George Washington to John Trumbull, Mount Vernon, 1 October 1785

My principal pursuits are of a rural nature, in which I have great delight, especially as I am blessed with the enjoyment of good health. Mrs. Washington, on the contrary, is scarcely ever well, but thankful for your kind remembrance of her.

George Washington to Robert Morris, Mount Vernon, 5 May 1787

Mrs. Washington is become too Domestick, and too attentive to two little Grand Children to leave home.

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

Everything was simple in the general's home. He provides a good table but not a sumptuous one, and his household is run with regularity and order. Mrs. Washington keeps an eye on everything. She combines with the qualities of an excellent countrywoman the simple dignity which befits a wife whose husband has played the greatest role in his country's history. She is gracious as well, and she shows strangers that courtesy which is the flower of hospitality.

Martha Washington to Fanny Bassett Washington, Mount Vernon, 25 February 1788

We have not a single article of news but politic which I do not concern myself about.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Richmond Hill, N.Y., 28 June 1789

I took the earliest opportunity (the morning after my arrival [in New York City]) to go & pay my respects to Mrs. Washington. Mrs Smith [Abigail Adams Smith] accompanied me. She received me with great ease & politeness. She is plain in her dress, but that plainness is the best of every article. She is in mourning. Her Hair is white, her Teeth beautiful, her person rather short than otherways, hardly so large as my Ladyship, and if I was to speak sincerely, I think she is a much better figure. Her manners are modest and unassuming, dignified and feminine, not the Tincture of hauteur about her.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Richmond Hill, N.Y., 12 July 1789

Mrs. Washington is one of those unassuming characters which creates Love & Esteem. A most becoming pleasantness sits upon her countenance & an unaffected deportment which renders her the object of veneration and Respect. With all these feelings and Sensations I found myself much more deeply impressed than I ever did before their Majesties of Britain.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Richmond Hill, N.Y., 9 August 1789

I propose to fix a Levee day soon. I have waited for Mrs. Washington to begin and she has fixed on every Friday 8 o'clock. I attended upon the last, Mrs. Smith & Charles. I found it quite a crowded Room. The form of Reception is this, the servants announce & Col. Humphries or Mr. Lear, receives every Lady at the door, & Hands her up to Mrs. Washington to whom she makes a most Respectful courtsey and then is seated without noticing any of the rest of the company. The President then comes up and speaks to the Lady, which he does with a grace dignity & ease, that leaves Royal George far behind him. The company are entertained with Ice creames & Lemonade, and retire at their pleasure performing the same ceremony when they quit the Room.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Richmond Hill, N.Y., 11 October 1789

Mrs. Washington does not Love the water. . . .

Whilst the Gentlemen are absent we propose seeing one another on terms of much sociability. Mrs. Washington is a most friendly, good Lady, always pleasant and easy, dotingly fond of her Grandchildren, to whom she is quite the Grandmamma.

Martha Washington to Fanny Bassett Washington, New York, 23 October 1789

I live a very dull life here and know nothing that passes in the town—I never go to the public place—indeed I think I am more like a state prisoner than anything else, there is certain bounds set for me which I must not depart from—and as I can no do as I like I am obstinate and stay at home a great deal.

Martha Washington to Mercy Otis Warren, New York, 26 December 1789

When I was much younger, I should, probably, have enjoyed the innocent gaities of life as much as most of my age; but I had long since placed all the prospects of my future worldly happiness in the still enjoyments of the fireside at Mount Vernon. . . .

With respect to myself, I sometimes think the arrangement is not quite as it ought to have been; that I, who had much rather be at home, should occupy a place with which a great many younger and gayer women would be prodigiously pleased.

As my grandchildren and my domestic connections made up a great portion of the felicity which I looked for in this world, I shall hardly be able to find any substitute that would indemnify me for the loss of a part of such endearing society. I do not say this because I feel dissatisfied with my present situation. No. God forbid! for every body and every thing conspire to make me as contented as possible in it. Yet I know too much of the vanity of human affairs to expect felicity from the splendid scenes of public life. I am still determind to be cheerful and to be happy, in whatever situation I may be; for I have also learned from experience that the greater part of our happiness

or misery depends upon our dispositions, and not upon our circumstances. We carry the seeds of the one or the other about with us, in our minds, wherever we go.

I have two of my grandchildren with me, who enjoy advantages in point of education, and who, I trust, by the goodness of Providence, will continue to be a great blessing to me. My other two grandchildren are with their mother in Virginia.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, New York, 29 August 1790

Mrs. Washington . . . sets out tomorrow for Mount Vernon. I am [going] into Town . . . and shall part with her, tho I hope only for a short time, with much Regret. No Lady can be more deservedly beloved & esteemed than she is, and we have lived in habits of intimacy and Friendship. In short the Removal of the principal connections I have here serves to render the place, delightful as it is, much less pleasant than it has been.

Frances Seney to Hannah Nicholson, Philadelphia, 12 January 1791

Last friday evening I waited upon Mrs. Washington their was a very large collection of both sexes assembled but never did I see such a parcel of ugly women—Mrs. [Ann] Bingham was who is a shewy woman enough she was dress'd very elegant but excepting her & a Mrs. Craig they were all very homely I almost forgot to except Mrs. [Elizabeth] Monroe too who th[r]ewing aside all the partiality of a New Yorker I thought by far the handsomest woman ther, she is at present in New York I wish you would visit her you will find her an very agreeable little woman—

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 12 January 1794

My best Respects to Mrs. Washington with many thanks for the honor done me by her repeated kind inquiries. I honor her for a prudence, which I know I do not possess. I could not keep silence as She does.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 10 February 1796

The P. looks to me worried and growing old faster than I could wish and his Lady complains of Infirmities of Age and lowness of Spirits for the first time.

Benjamin Henry Latrobe: Journals, 19 July 1796

Upon my return to the house [Mount Vernon], I found Mrs. Washington and her granddaughter Miss Custis in the hall. I introduced myself to Mrs. Washington as a friend of her Nephew, and she immediately entered into conversation upon the prospect from the Lawn and presently gave me an account of her family in a good humored free manner that was extremely pleasant and flattering. She retains strong remains of considerable beauty, seems to enjoy very good health and to have as good humor. She has no affectation of superiority in the slightest degree, but acts completely in the character of the Mistress of the house of a respectable and opulent country gentleman.

Abigail Adams to Ruth Hooper Dalton, c. 24 September 1796

For myself—the declining State of my Health leads me much more to contemplate a residence in the World of Spirits, than becoming Successor to one of the most amiable inoffensive and best of women.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 29 January 1797

I shall think myself the most fortunate among women if I can glide on for four Years with as spotless a Reputation, beloved and esteemed by all as that Good and amiable Lady has done. My endeavors shall not be wanting.

Abigail Adams to Martha Washington, 9 February 1797

The universal satisfaction, Love, esteem and Respect which you have ensured from all Ranks of persons, Since you have been in publick Life and more particularly for these 8 years past when your Situation has made you more universally known “so that the Tongue of Slander, the pen of Calumny,” nor the bitterness of envy have never once to my knowledge assailed any part of your conduct, a pattern so exemplary a Character, so irreproachable whilst it cannot fail to excite an Emulation in the Bosom of your Successor, must at the Same time fill her mind with an anxious Solicitude least she should fall far short of her most amiable predecessor. To have seen You Still Sustaining your part in publick would have given much more pleasure to me my Dear Madam, that I can possibly receive from succeeding you as it has fallen to Me. I will endeavour to follow Your steps and by that means hope I Shall not essentially fall Short in the discharge of My Duties with this view I Shall be obliged to you Madam to communicate to Me those Rules which you prescribed & practised upon as it respected receiving & returning visits, both to strangers [i.e., foreigners] and citizens as it respected invitations of a publick or private nature.

Abigail Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, Quincy, Mass., 4 March 1797

I shall esteem myself peculiarly fortunate, if at the close of my publick Life, I can retire, esteemed beloved and equally respected with my predecessor.

Martha Washington to Lucy Knox, Mount Vernon, post-May 1797

I cannot tell you, My dear friend, how much I enjoy home after having been deprived of one so long, for our dwelling in New York and Philadelphia was not home, only a sojourning. The General and I feel like children just released from school or from a hard taskmaster, and we believe that nothing can tempt us to leave the sacred roof-tree again, except on private business or pleasure. We are so penurious with our enjoyment that we are loath to share it with anyone but dear friends, yet almost every day some stranger claims a portion of it, and we cannot refuse. . . .

Our furniture and other things sent to us from Philadelphia arrived safely; our plate we brought with us in the carriage. How many dear friends I have left behind. They fill my memory with sweet thoughts. Shall I ever see them again? Not likely, unless they shall come to me here, for the twilight is gathering around our lives. I am again fairly settled down to the pleasant duties of an old fashioned Virginia house-keeper, steady as a clock, busy as a bee, and as cheerful as a cricket.

Martha Washington to Elizabeth Powel, Mount Vernon, 18 December 1797

It was indeed with sympathetic concern we heard of the late calamitous situation of Philadelphia; and of the death and indisposition of some of your friends. These occurrences, however, are inflicted by an invisible hand as trials of our Philosophy, resignation, and patience, all of which it becomes us to exercise.

Paul Ferdinand Fevot to George Washington, Baltimore, Md., 4 April 1798

I am distressed for proper words to express my gratitude for the reception Your very respectable Lady had favoured me with; Her gracious civility, the anxiousness The Lady had for my being obliged to wait for Your Excellency; Her condescendency to keep up a conversation, in short those manners of the Lady of the highest birth, & the most refined education, has raised in me the most precious & most thankful remembrance.

Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz: *Travels through America*, 21 May 1798

I then went up to Mrs. Washington. She is the same age as the General (both were born in 1732), small, with lively eyes, a gay air and extremely kind. She had on a gown, with an even hem, of stiff white cotton, fitting very tightly, or rather attached from all sides with pins. A bonnet of white gauze, ribbons of the same color, encircling her head tightly, leaving the forehead completely uncovered and hiding only half of her white hair which in back was done up in a little pigtail. She was at one time one of the most beautiful women in America and today there remains something extremely agreeable and attractive about her. She has never had any children by General Washington. She had four by her first husband, Mr. Custis.

Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz: *Travels through America*, 5 June 1798

Mrs. Washington is one of the most estimable persons that one could know, good, sweet, and extremely polite. She loves to talk and talks very well about times past.

Oliver Wolcott, Jr., to Mrs. Wolcott, Washington, 17 July 1800

In May last, I mentioned my intentions of visiting Alexandria and Mount Vernon, which I have since done. . . . Mrs Washington received me with great cordiality, and inquired after you and the children with lively affection. She appeared to be grieved that you were not of the party. Her mind is generally serene, but the decay of strength, the increasing marks of age, and occasional suffusion of countenance, plainly show that the zest of life has departed.

Manasseh Cutler: *Journal*, 2 January 1802

When our coaches entered the yard [at Mount Vernon], a number of servants immediately attended, and when we had all stepped out of our carriages a servant conducted us to Madam Washington's room, where we were introduced by Mr. Hillhouse, and received in a very cordial and obliging manner. Mrs. Washington was sitting in rather a small room, with three ladies (granddaughters), one of whom is married to a Mr. Lewis, and has two fine children; the other two are single. Mrs. Washington appears much older than when I saw her last at Philadelphia, but her countenance very little wrinkled and remarkably fair for a person of her years. She conversed with

great ease and familiarity, and appeared as much rejoiced at receiving our visit as if we had been of her nearest connections. She regretted that we had not breakfast sooner, for she always breakfasted at seven, but our breakfast would be ready in a few minutes. In a short time she rose, and desired us to walk into another room, where a table was elegantly spread with ham, cold corn beef, cold fowl, red-herring, and cold mutton, the dishes ornamented with sprigs of parsley and other vegetables from the garden. At the head of the table was the tea and coffee equipage, where she seated herself, and sent the tea and coffee to the company. We were all Federalists, which evidently gave her particular pleasure. Her remarks were frequently pointed, and sometimes very sarcastic, on the new order of things and the present administration. She spoke of the election of Mr. Jefferson, whom she considered as one of the most detestable of mankind, as the greatest misfortune our country had ever experienced. Her unfriendly feelings toward him were naturally to be expected, from the abuse he has offered to General Washington, while living, and to his memory since his decease. She frequently spoke of the General with great affection, viewing herself as alone, and her life protracted, until she had become a stranger to the world. She repeatedly remarked the distinguished mercies heaven still bestowed upon her, for which she had daily cause of gratitude, but she longed for the time to follow her departed friend.

Thomas Boylston Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 28 May 1802

You will hear of Mrs: Washington's death before my letter can reach you, and mourn, in common with all, who knew her. She shared largely in the esteem of the public, both for her own & her husband's merits; and she has left to her descendants a rich inheritance, in her "spotless reputation."

Benjamin Waterhouse

John Adams to Joseph Bradley Varnum, Quincy, Mass., 7 December 1812

Dr Waterhouse is an injured Man. You know, the Influence of a certain System of Politicks and a certain Circle of Gentlemen, over Science Litterature and Taste, in our University, in our Academy of A. & S. our Agricultural, Historical, Medical Societies. Waterhouse has run the Gauntlet of Persecution till he is arrived I fear at the End. . . .

Waterhouse is an ingenious, learned Man. There is no more elegant Pen. No Man has higher Merit; and is as amiable as meritorious. I wish to know whether any Thing can be done for him with the Government. He knows not that I have any Such Thoughts. You may make Use at your discretion of this Letter. The Public will be justly reproachable if this Man is Suffered to be trampled under foot. I wish you would converse with The President on his Subject.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 21 December 1812

There is a Gentleman here more unfortunate than you are, from the same Causes. I assure you, my Sensibilities are rent and torn for him. Such another Instance of persevering and overwhelming Persecution of Merit, I have never yet known in America. Dr. Waterhouse I mean: Can nothing be done to save an amiable Family and a Man of first rate Merit from Oppression, from becoming a Sacrifice to Tory Vengeance, and professional Envy?

John Adams to Benjamin Waterhouse, Quincy, Mass., 16 January 1813

I know not two Characters more alike than Rushes and yours. I know not two more ingenious Men; nor too better informed Men; nor two better Men. Yet you See the Fortunes of both. The Kingdom of Virtue is not of this World. No, nor the Kingdom of Science; nor the Kingdom of Merit.

John Adams to James Madison, Quincy, Mass., 2 February 1813

There is one gentleman whose Character and situation lies with much weight on my mind.

I am constrained to acknowledge, tho with great reluctance that a great majority of all the literary corporations in this state have been in systematic opposition for the last twelve years to the national administration. And I must add that they have countenanced measures, in some of our Seaport towns, and in the Legislature that have appeared to me intemperate and unwise. Dr Benjamin Waterhouse has never united with them and this conduct has brought upon him resentments and oppositions which have ended in his deprivation of his employment which he has held for thirty years with reputation Of his literary character, which has been long known and established in Europe, and America, it would be idle in me to speak. I have known him more than thirty years and have never seen a stain upon his moral character I scarcely know a more benevolent or exemplary character. Though I am not minutely acquainted with the circumstances which has occasioned his removal from an office under the U.S. I have reason to believe that his error proceeded from his ardent zeal to place the hospital in the best possible order: without any intention of deviating from the strict line of integrity. It is perhaps improper to mention anything in particular. If it is I beg your pardon for suggesting that if Congress should establish an office of Surgeon general and another of physician general and I know it to be the opinion of the best judges that both ought to be established; perhaps Waterhouse might fill that of Physician General to advantage. I mean not however to recommend him, for any particular employment: but if there should be any opening adequate to his age experience and character in my opinion, his professional, moral, literary and political Character is such as to give a fair claim for his being a Candidate.

Elkanah Watson

James Warren to John Adams, Plymouth, Mass., 29 July 1779

There goes Passenger in this Packet Mr. Elkanah Watson A Young Gentleman I am told of very good Character. He is Son of Capt. Watson of this Town, and a remote relation of Mine. He has lived and served his Time with John Browne of Providence, and I suppose is now in pursuit of Commercial plans. He Intends to go to Paris, and seems to be possessed of distinction. You will therefore by some Attention to him Cherish a good Principle in the Mind of a Youth and oblige Your Friend and Humble. Servt.

Anthony Wayne

Thomas Burke to Anthony Wayne, Philadelphia, 19 July 1779

I congratulate you on the Signal and brilliant Success of your Enterprise against Stony point.

This gallant and Important affair, has fitted us all, with very high Satisfaction and mine, I assure you, is peculiarly improved; because an Officer, of whom I had Conceived a very high Opinion, and for whom I have very great Esteem and regard, has conducted it, and obtain'd Such Singular glory.

The happy Effect of your good Conduct, has saved your humanity, the pain it would have felt, how your Enterprise cost you the lives of many of your brave Soldiers, and gallant officers; and even had you been under the Necessity of Slaughtering many of the Enemy—to the humane (and Such are all the brave and good) this is a very pleasing Circumstance attending your Success. Every one remarks, that your magnanimous Generosity, has triumphed over the Enemy, as much as your Courage and Conduct.

I was much concerned when I heard you were wounded: but, learning on Enquiry, that it was but Slight, I considered it as not worth attention in so great an affair, and I find, by your letter to General Washington, you did not think it of consequence enough to mention it.

Having mentioned your letter, I must declare, I think it a Just model of martial eloquence; equal'd by none, but Caesar's *veni vidi vici*. I wish your example may be followed in this, as well as in the other parts of your Military Character. I wish you long life; I need not add glory, for you will have it.

John Jay to Anthony Wayne, Philadelphia, 27 July 1779

Your late glorious atchievements have merited and now receive the Approbation & Thanks of your Country. They are contained in the enclosed Act of Congress which I have the honor to transmit. This brilliant Action has added fresh lustre to our Arms, and will teach the Enemy to respect our Power, if not to imitate our Humanity. You have nobly reaped laurels in the cause of your Country, & in fields of danger and death. May these prove the earnest of more, and may victory ever bear your Standard, and Providence be your Shield.

James Warren to John Adams, Plymouth, Mass., 29 July 1779

You will find by the Papers that a Detachment from Genl. Washington's Army under Genl. Wayne has shewn what the Spirit of Enterprise may do if Exerted.

Benjamin Rush to Anthony Wayne, Philadelphia, 6 August 1779

There was but one thing wanting in your late successful attack upon Stoney Point to complete your happiness, and that is, the wound you received should have affected your *hearing*, for I fear you will be stunned through those organs with your own praises. Our streets for many days rung with nothing but the name of General Wayne. You are remembered constantly next to our great and good General Washington over our claret and madeira. You have established the national character of our country. You have taught our enemies that bravery, humanity, and magnanimity are the national virtues of the Americans. Accept, my dear sir, of *my* share of gratitude for the honor and services you have done our cause and country. Mrs. Rush joins in the offering, and when

our little ones are able to repeat your name we shall not fail to tell them in recounting the exploits of our American heroes how much they are indebted to *you* for their freedom and happiness.

Samuel Shaw to the Rev. Mr. Eliot of Boston, New Windsor, N.Y., 6 January 1781

Be prepared, my dear Eliot, for a shock, and attend to an event which must sensibly affect every honest heart. The accumulated distresses of the army have at length produced most dreadful effects. The noncommissioned officers and privates of the Pennsylvania line, stationed at Morristown, have mutinied, broken up their cantonments, and in a body are marching to Philadelphia to demand redress of their grievances from Congress.

The particulars of this revolt, as nearly as I have been able to collect them, are as follow. On the 1st instant, the whole line, except three regiments, by a signal given for that purpose, turned out under arms, without their officers, and declared for a redress of grievances. General Wayne and the officers did every thing that could be expected to quell the tumult, but in vain. Numbers of them were wounded, and one (a captain) killed. The three regiments above mentioned paraded under their officers, but, being called on by the others to join, threatened with death in case of refusal, and actually fired on, they complied. They then seized upon the field-pieces, and forcing the artillerymen, who had not yet joined them, to do it instantly, under penalty of being every man bayoneted, the mutiny became general.

Besides the many and complicated injuries, arising from the want of clothing, pay, and provision, which the army at large have for so long a time groaned under, there was one circumstance peculiarly aggravating to the soldiers of the Pennsylvania line, and which conduced and not a little to hasten the catastrophe. A deputation from the State had arrived in camp a few days before, with six hundred half-joes, to be given, three to each man, as a bounty to such of the six-month levies, whose times were then expired, as would enlist again for the war. This was too much for veterans who had borne the burden of the day to put up with. They made it the principal article of grievance, and told their officers they neither could nor would be any longer amused; that they were determined, at every hazard, to march in a body to Congress and obtain redress. On General Wayne's cocking his pistols there were a hundred bayonets at his breast. "We love you, we respect you," said they, "but you're a dead man if you fire"; and added,—“Do not mistake us; we are not going to the enemy; on the contrary, were they now to come out, you should see us fight, under your orders, with as much resolution and alacrity as ever.” They began their march that night, and the next day General Wayne forwarded after them provisions, to prevent the otherwise inevitable depredations which would be made on private property, himself and three principal officers, supposed highest in their esteem, following to mix with them, assist them with their advice, and endeavor to prevent any outrages. They were civilly received, have acquired much of the confidence of the troops, and are conducting them to Pennsylvania.

William S. Livingston to Samuel Blachley Webb, Beverwick, 28 May 1781

There has been a Mutiny in the Pennsylvania Line at York Town, [Pa.] previous to their Marching. Wayne like a good officer quelled it soon as Twelve of the Fellows stepped out & persuaded the Line to refuse to March in Consequence of the Promises made to them not being complied with. Wayne told them of the Disgrace they brought on the American Arms when in Jersey in general & themselves in particular. That the feelings of the Officers on that Occasion were so wounded that they had determined never to experience the like & that he begged they would now fire on him & them or on those Villains in front. He then called to such a Platoon. They presented

at the Word, fired and killed six of the Villains. One of the others badly wounded he ordered to be Bayonnetted. The Soldier on whom he called to do it, recovered his Piece & said he could not for he was his Comrade. Wayne then drew his Pistol and told him he would kill him. The fellow then advanced and bayonnetted him. Wayne then marched the Line by Divisions round the Dead & the rest of the fellows are ordered to be hanged. The Line marched the next Day Southward—Mute as Fish.

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

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

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

You must know you are the Idol of the Legion; and both [Henry] Lee and myself have wished for you most heartily many a day. I hope we shall soon meet; and in meeting take an opportunity to give the Noble Earl [Cornwallis] a Southern breakfast.

Anthony Wayne to Robert Morris, Williamsburg, Va., 14 September 1781

You know that I am of a desponding disposition.

Nathanael Greene to John Barnwell, Headquarters Round O, S.C., 11 January 1782

General Wayne marches this morning for Georgia with a body of regular horse and some artillery. You will correspond with him and afford him all the aid and assistance he may require both with respect to Men and supplies. He is an officer of whom I have the highest opinion, and for whom I have the greatest esteem.

Nathanael Green to Anthony Wayne, Headquarters near Stono, S.C., 22 January 1782

Before you left here I forgot to impress you with an idea of not hazarding too much. Our affairs requires caution; and your reputation depends more on avoiding a misfortune than on achieving some thing very great. Brilliant actions may fade; but a prudent conduct never can. Your reputation can receive no additional luster from courage, while a prudent conduct will render it complete.

George Washington: Opinion of General Officers, 9 March 1792

More active and enterprising than Judicious and cautious. No economist it is feared. Open to flattery; vain; easily imposed upon; and liable to be drawn into scrapes. Too indulgent (the effect perhaps of some of the causes just mentioned) to his Officers and men. Whether sober, or a little addicted to the bottle, I know not.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 13 February 1796

I went with Charles last night to the Drawing Room—as the Evening was fair and mild, there was a great Circle of Ladies and a greater of Gentlemen. General Wayne was there in Glory. This Man's Feelings must be worth a Guinea a Minute. The Pennsylvanians claim him as theirs, and show him a marked respect.

Mathew Carey: Memoirs, June 1829

Gen Wayne's oratory was much like that of Mr Whitehill, and was in a great measure made up of trite common places: and if there occasionally a good idea in it as was sometimes the case, he repeated it two or three times with a mere change of phraseology. Having a sincere respect for him as a brave revolutionary officer, whenever he rose I was in pain to see such a hero in such a situation for which nature had never intended him.

Samuel Blachley Webb

W. Popham to Dr. Vrooman, New York, 30 December 1787

I have received a Letter from Mr. Hogeboom which I should have answered but by the Interruption of Company I must defer to another Post. I beg you will make my best Respects to him and Mrs. Hogeboom—tell them I most sincerely congratulate them on the pleasing Prospect of seeing their Daughter happily united to a Man of Worth, who in the estimation of all his Friends possesses every qualification to make a woman happy.

I cannot close this Letter without observing that this Gentleman is a Native of Connecticut, of genteel Connections, pleasing Person, agreeable manners, and as far as I can understand in independent Circumstances; he has been regularly brought up in a Compting house, but is at present in no Business except that of settling the Estate left him by his late Wife. He is about 32 years of age—thus endeth the first Lesson.

Samuel Blachley Webb to Catherine Hogeboom, New York, 6 July 1788

You need not fear of my reproving you with the term *female politician*. I do not hold your Sex in that trifling point of view, Men generally do.—I can readily conceive, that your sensations are lively when you think your friends or Country in danger—and I know not why you may not speak your opinions as well as those who *term themselves the Lords of the Creation*.—In short I would not give a halfpenny for a female void of Sentiment & feeling,—nor would I in any account see them wanting in Delicacy.

Noah Webster

Noah Webster to James Greenleaf, Boston, 1 February 1789

Since my last, I have exchanged my residence. You will hear of me in future in Boston. My clear loss by business the last year was about £100, with my time and expenses, or about £250 in the whole. This hurts me sensibly, as it affects my best friends and benefactors. Still I have resources, and I shall exert myself to call them forth to repay their generosity.

I still adhere to my resolution of following a profession. . . . I have done with making books. I shall enter upon the pursuit of law immediately and practice either in Hartford or this town, for my license will introduce me here.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 26 December 1789

Columbus is republishing in New York, in a public Paper of whose Title I am ignorant, whose Editor is Mr. Noah Webster who is lately removed from Hartford to that City and is said to conduct his Gazette with Judgment and Spirit upon good Principles.

Pelataiah Webster

Charles Pettit to Nathanael Greene, Philadelphia, 20 February 1780

I send you enclosed, Pelataiah's fourth Essay, in which he seems to have wrought himself into a Frenzy and to have lost the reason he set out within his former numbers, though in them he saw but part of the subject. In this you will perceive madness and folly in the extreme. In one part you will find the public debt 11,000,000 of Dollars two years ago; in another it is reduced to 5 millions at the present day. Pursue his Logic a little farther and the public debt is annihilated without farther trouble. Any knave may get rid of his debts in the same way; but he stands a fair chance of being imprisoned for it, or at least never to be trusted again.

James Madison: Preface to Debates in the Convention of 1787

Pelataiah Webster an able though not conspicuous Citizen. . . .

“A Countryman” VI (Hugh Hughes), *New York Journal*, 14 February 1788

As remarkable as the Federal Farmer is for candor and fair reasoning, just so remarkable is the pamphlet, said to be written by P——h W——r, of Philadelphia, for a farrago of falsehood and a want of reasoning. But I know the man and his creed: I have several of his essays, &c. &c. He is a creature of M——'s [Robert Morris] and a child of the bank [the Bank of North America], if I may be allowed the phrase.

Benning Wentworth

John Jay: Circuit Court Diary, 28 November 1790

He had been Surveyor of the wood, for preserving Trees fit for masts & recd. For it 1000 Sterl. Pr. Annum. & made as much more by permitting people to cut those very Trees. He was an—unprincipled man, and wd. Grant Land any where & to any Body who wd. Pay the Fees—

John Wreat

Robert Morris to John Wreat, Office of Finance, 10 December 1781

Having the best Opinion of your Zeal and Integrity . . .

William West

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

The present Judges of the State are not known to Mr. B[owen] except Mr. West the Chief Judge who is a man of infamous Character—and he has been informed that his associates are but little better—

William Wetmore

Christopher Gore to Rufus King, Boston, 22 August 1789

Whom to recommend as district judge I do not know. . . . Tudor & Wetmore are likewise candidates, as I am told. You know them as well as I do. They are both honest men, and the latter a *painstaking* lawyer, as the phrase is.

Samuel Wharton

Arthur Lee to Samuel Adams, Philadelphia, 21 April 1782

The Session of the Assembly of Virginia in May, calls me from Congress for a month or two to attend my duty there. Indeed I do not see of what material use my attendance here can be, where I can only lament what I can not prevent, and make vain efforts to redeem an infatuated Majority from the bondage of folly & private interest. For what can be expected from an Assembly in which

a Member is allowed to sit, who is avowedly an Agent for the Enemies to our cause & Country, an Insolvent & a profligate Adventurer. I mean Mr. Samuel Wharton.* This man, Sir, that in a Petition on the table of Congress declares himself insolvent, not only sits & votes, but treats the Members with magnificent Dinners. I am perfectly persuaded that it is the interest of the Companies which this Man is an Agent for and a member of to reduce us to the domination of G. Britain, because their Members being chiefly British & of great influence they would by that means be secure of obtaining the Lands which it is impossible they should do while we are independent. And as these Agents are using every art to seduce us & to sow dissention among the States, I think they are more dangerous than the Enemy's Arms.

*Wharton, a Delaware delegate to Congress, was supposedly an agent of the Indiana Company.

Thomas Wharton

Silas Deane to Elizabeth Deane, Philadelphia, 11 September 1774

We dined Yesterday with Mr. Wharton a plain, hospitable, Quaker Family, of great Connections in this City, & on this Continent as well as in Europe but I think has as much of the Serpent, as the Dove in his Composition. He treated Us, with the utmost politeness and Carried Us in his Coach after Dinner to his Country Seat, & about Ten Miles South of this City to view the Country which is fine, & rich, almost beyond Comparison. The Industry of this City exceeds anything You can have an Idea of.

William Whipple

Samuel Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 18 June 1777

This Letter will be delivered to you by my worthy Friend Colonel Whipple, a Delegate of the State of New Hampshire. He is a Gentleman of Candor, and I wish he may have an opportunity of conversing freely with some one of Influence in the Massachusetts Bay upon Matters which concern that State particularly. I know of no one to whom I can recommend him on the Occasion with more Propriety, than to yourself.

Samuel Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 9 November 1778

General Whipple is again returned to Congress; and as he is a Man of Sense and great Experience in Marine Affairs, and was formerly of the Marine Committee, I was solicitous that he should again be of the Number. Congress have added him to the Committee, and I hope he will act as Chairman during the Absence of Col. [Richard Henry] Lee who is gone to Virginia.

William Whipple to Josiah Bartlett, Philadelphia, 14 April 1779

I don't know why you should suppose I should think you Gloomy. Your letters have not that complexion. I agree with you that Members of Congress ought to be informed of every difficulty

& danger & I am sensible it is their duty to Guard against them, this I shall always endeavour at with all my might, but I am determined never to suffer a cloud to environ my Heart.

William Whipple to Joseph Whipple, Philadelphia, 16 April 1779

This goes by Mr. [George] Frost. I wish his place [in Congress] may be well filled, no one should be here who is capable of indulging Gloomy Ideas or who is not a thorough Republican.

Henry Laurens to William Whipple, Philadelphia, 28 September 1779

The present delightful weather presents to my view, my good friend General Whipple in his usual cheerfulness & serenity, ambling forward toward Boston & Portsmouth, this will overtake him at the former.

Arthur Lee to Samuel Adams, Philadelphia, 29 January 1783

Nothing could be a greater disappointment to me, than not seeing that most excellent Patriot Genl Whipple. My Brother Richard had given me so high an idea of his character, that I respect him as one of the most worthy of our Countrymen.

John Adams: Autobiography, 8 March 1805

On the 29 of February 1776 William Whipple Esq. appeared as one of the Delegates from New Hampshire, another excellent Member in Principle and Disposition, as well as Understanding.

. . . Mr. William Whipple from New Hampshire appeared: an excellent Member and a valuable Addition to our Phalanx.

Alexander White

Horatio Gates to James Duane, Travellers Rest, Va., 22 February 1789

I have the pleasure to introduce to your acquaintance Mr. Alexander White . . . a Staunch Fed: and a Gentleman I Flatter myself you will be pleased in knowing. He has long been at the Head of the Bar in this County, & much esteem'd in his profession.

Anthony Walton White

William Heth to George Washington, Shillelah, Va., 14 August 1798

The appointment of A. W. White a Brigadier, will in case of a general call, keep many an old soldier out of service, who might be wanting. Carrington and every other old officer whom I have met with, as well as many others who knew this man to the southward in the late war, cannot Speak of the appointment, with common patience, or temper. His *services*, if they be so called only served to prove that he was totally unfit for *command*, or for any thing else, but to *dress*, and *parade thro'*

the Country. Great imbecility of mind, & frivolity of character, were not all that he was charged with: for I have had it from good authority that Colo. Washington while serving with him in South Carolina, charged him publickly with being a liar, and actually separated from the regiment. I knew but little of the man myself; but fame spoke so freely of him as an Officer, as to impress me with a strong contempt for his character. Believe me, Sir, if the President can with propriety give him a hint to resign the sooner it is done, the better.

George Washington to James McHenry, Mount Vernon, 14 September 1798

White's name was placed in the list of Field Officers (for New Jersey) merely as one that might be considered in that grade when the general organization came on: but I had no idea when you left this place, that General Officers would be appointed at the time they were, for the Provisional Army: and taking it for granted that it was a work for after consideration, I bestowed no thought thereon. Of all the characters in the Revolutionary Army, I believe one more obnoxious to the Officers who composed it could not have been hit upon for a General Officer than White—especially among those to the Southward where he was best known, & celebrated for nothing but frivolit—dress—empty show—& something worse—in short for being a notorious L—r [Liar]. This appointment will, I am told, exclude many valuable Officers who will not serve as his juniors.

Robert Whitehill

James Wilson to John Montgomery, Philadelphia, 9 July 1776

I have shown Whitehill's Letter* to the other Delegates of this Province. They seem to think that it is not worth while to take public Notice of him. The greatest Kindness that can sometimes be shown to such obscure and contemptible Wretches, is to bring them forth to public Views even though under the blackest Colors. He, and those who have employed him, will by and by become equal Objects of Indignation and Disdain.

*On June 20, 1776, Whitehill wrote various friends attacking Wilson for his hypocrisy in delaying his vote in Congress in favor of independence.

Mathew Carey: Memoirs, June 1829

Robert Whitehill—Some men by great quackery & management contrive to acquire a reputation for talent far beyond what they are entitled to. Few men more fully exemplified this than the Citizen whose name figures at the head of this article. He was about 6 foot high—of a most demure and puritanical countenance—delivered his words with a most oracular dignity—and was exalted among the leaders of his party. He justified the [space] of Young.

“Abe this truth eternal ne'er forgot
Solemnity's the Cover for a Sot—
I find the fool, when I behold the screen
For 'tis the wise man's interest to be seen.”

He was in the Assembly for two sessions during which I took down the debates. Tautology and verbiage so much abounded so in his speeches, that when I came to write them down for the press,

they melted away like snow before the sun. A speech of Finlay's of a quarter of an hour occupied as much space on paper as one of Whitehill's of three quarters. And yet W. was regarded as file [?] leader of the party.

James Wilkinson

George Washington to Richard Henry Lee, White Marsh, Pa., 18 November 1777

Wilkinson, I can say less of, because he has served for the most part in the Northern department. General Gates, I understand, speaks highly of him. He is, I believe, a good Grammatical Scholar, but how diligent I know not.

Nathaniel Folsom to Josiah Bartlett, York, Pa., 1778

As to the Promotion of Colonel Wilkinson, who at the Request of General Gates Received a Brevet as a Brigadier general which you Say has given you Pain I most Sincerely Sympathize with you, and Can Say it has given me Sensible Pain ever Since it was Done. I was glad he asked no more at that time, for assured I am that if he had it would have been granted. Whilst they were Rejoicing for the goodness of God in Delivering our enemies into our hands: a Plan is laid by Sundry members of Congress which I believe will be Carried to Remove him out of the way by appointing him Secretary to the Board of War or by Sending him to Georgia.

Abraham Clark to William Alexander, York, Pa., 15 January 1778

Upon such a disagreeable Subject as contained in Genl. Gates' Letter to General Washington, I received some Consolation at finding the offense so highly complained of fall (as it must fall somewhere) upon a person for whom General Gates's unbounded friendship and earnest solicitation had procured a promotion very injurious & disgustful to the Army. I was not in Congress at that Time, but think the measure injudicious. To remedy this hasty Step, Congress lately took Mr. W—— from the Military line by appointing him Secretary to the board of War of which, Mr. gates is President; what will be done with him next I can't say. If he betrayed the Confidence of his Patron he may do the same by his Country, and from the opinion Mr. Gates seems to have of such a Character, I think he will not hereafter choose to have him near his person.

John Sullivan to Henry Laurens, 20 January 1778

Nothing can be more painful to me than to hear the universal Murmuring of the officers in the Army respecting the irregular promotions which have Frequently taken place among them. One which has universally Disgusted the Field officers of the Northern Army is the Giving to Colonel Wilkinson the Rank of a Brigadier. . . . The Field officers Say that General Wilkinson was not Even Exposed to Danger nor did he in any manner Distinguish himself. . . . With Respect to General Wilkinson I can Say nothing as I know nothing of his Conduct in the Army Except what I have heard from others. I Lament Exceedingly that So many brave officers are Disgusted at his promotion & wish Some method might be found out to prevent its Effects—

Nathanael Greene to Clement Biddle, Ramopough, N.J., 29 June 1780

General Wilkinson was with me the other day in the Action of Springfield [, N.J.]; and was very active in discovering the Enemies motions. It is a pity so good an officer is lost to the service.*

*Wilkinson had been appointed Clothier General.

Maryland Delegates to Congress to Thomas Sim Lee, Philadelphia, 26 September 1780

It has always been the object of Congress and the Duty of the Clothier General to distribute the Cloth that was provided with impartiality, if it has not been the case, we shall be able soon to give your Excellency information upon the subject. The present Clothier General is a native of Maryland, a man of Honor and a good officer and we believe no partial distribution has been made since his appointment.

Alexander Hamilton to George Washington, New York, 15 June 1788

I have just received a letter from General Wilkinson dated the 13 of April, in which he assures me that he will set out in the ensuing month for the seat of Government. The interview with him will be useful.

It strikes me forcibly that it will be both right and expedient to advance this Gentleman to the grade of Major General—He has been long steadily in service and long a Brigadier. This in a so considerable an extension of the military establishment gives him a pretension to promotion.

I am aware that some doubts have been entertained of him, and that his character on certain sides gives room for doubts. Yet he is at present in the service—is a man of more than ordinary talent—of courage and enterprise—has discovered upon various occasions a good zeal—has embraced military pursuits as a profession and, will naturally find his interest as an ambitious man in deserving the favour of the Government; while he will be apt to become disgusted, if neglected, and through disgust may be rendered really what he is now only suspected to be—Under such circumstances, it seems to be good policy to avoid all just ground of discontent and to make it the interest of the individual to pursue his duty.

George Nicholas to James Madison, Kentucky, 16 September 1791

My friend Genl. Wilkinson is desirous of getting on the military establishment. I believe he will make an excellent officer; and as long as the troops are kept in the Western country he may be highly useful as he is perhaps better acquainted with that country than any man in it, and as he possesses the confidence of the militia in a high degree. I refer you for a confirmation of these assertions to Mr. [John] Brown.

John Hurt to George Washington, near Lexington, Ky., 1 January 1792

General Wilkinson is the paramount character in this country, & is thought by many will have the Chief command in the next expedition [against the Indians], & I really believe he has abilities equal to it; & far superior to what his enemies, or even friends, are aware of.

George Washington: Opinion of General Officers, 9 March 1792

Is, *by brevet* Senior to those whose names follow; but the appointment to this rank [brigadier general] was merely honorary, and as he was but a short time in Service, little can be said of his abilities as an Officer. He is lively, sensible, pompous and ambitious; but whether sober, or not, is unknown to me.

George Nicholas to James Madison, Kentucky, 5 September 1792

I am happy to be able to assure you that those who have had any hand in Wilkinson's appointment have no cause to be ashamed of it. He has done great things circumstanced as he was, and would have done more if it had been practicable. He has as many follies at least as other men, but they are of a kind which would rather increase his value to the community in his present situation than take from it. Perhaps notwithstanding all of them, government will not be able to find a man in America who will do the business he is now engaged in as well as he can.

James Wilkinson to Alexander Hamilton, Loftus' Heights, Mississippi Territory, 20 April 1799

Believe me sir, I am sensibly affected by the expression of kindness in which you address me, and although professions in general be vain & illusory, I will hazard the propriety of the assurance, that you shall find me, in all the relations of our profession, obedient, prompt, & zealous. Wedded to the sword, I have no ambition but that of military Fame, fairly earned & soundly Established, & I am persuaded such views will find advocates in the Candor & the expansion of your Breast.

Alexander Hamilton to James McHenry, New York, 25 June 1799

General Wilkinson is soon expected. I am strongly inclined to see him made a Major General. He has now had a great deal of experience—he possesses considerable military information—he has activity, courage and Talents. His pretensions to promotion in every view are strong. If he should become disgusted without it, it would not be extraordinary.

Half-confidence is always bad. This officer has adopted Military life as a profession. What can his ambition do better than be faithful to the Government if it gives him fair play?

George Washington to Alexander Hamilton, Mount Vernon, 25 June 1799

I think with you, that policy dictates the expediency of promoting Brigadier Wilkinson to the Rank of Major General, and will suggest the measure to the Secretary of War in a private communication. It would feed his ambition, soothe his vanity, and by arresting discontent, produce the good effect you contemplate. But in the appointment of this Gentleman, regard must be had to time, circumstances, and dates; otherwise by endeavoring to avoid Charibdas we might run upon Scylla.

James McHenry to Alexander Hamilton, Philadelphia, 27 June 1799

General W. has certainly claims to promotion, and so far as it respects myself I shall not oppose it. It will be proper however, that General Washington be consulted before the last step be taken in the business. Your maxim is in general a good one: half confidence is bad. Of this however be

assured that until the commercial pursuits of this gentleman with, and expectations from Spain are annihilated, he will not deserve the confidence of government. Further I recommend it to you most earnestly to avoid saying any thing to him which would induce him to imagine government had in view any hostile project, however remote or dependent on events, against any of the possessions of Spain. I require this caution on good grounds.

Alexander Hamilton to John Adams, New York, 7 September 1799

General Wilkinson, who has been some weeks in the City, in consequence of an invitation having for object the readjustment of our Western Military affairs, is about to make a journey to *Braintree* to pay his respects to you. On such an occasion, I hope it will not be thought improper that I should address you on the subject of this officer; since what I shall say will accord with what I know to be the views of General Washington and with what I have reason to believe has been already suggested to you, with his support, by the Secretary of War.

You are apprised, Sir, that General Wilkinson served with distinction in our revolutionary war, and acquired in it the rank of Brigadier General—that for many years since that war he has been in the military service of the Government with the same rank, in which rank he for some time had the chief command of the army—That he has also served with distinction, in this latter period, General Wayne, who was not his friend, has, in one instance within my knowledge, very amply testified.

The decided impression on my mind as the result of all that I have heard or known of this Officer, is that he is eminently qualified as to talents, is brave, enterprising, active and diligent, warmly animated by the genuine spirit of his profession and devoted to it. The recent communications between us have satisfied me more than ever that he is well entitled to the character I have just given of him.

So circumstanced and so qualified, all military usage and analogy give the General a very strong claim to promotion. His sensibility would suffer with reason, if he has it not, and it would require more than usual patriotism and magnanimity to preserve him from discontent and disgust.

I, as well as others, have heard hard things said of the General, but I have never seen the shadow of proof, and I have been myself too much the victim of obloquy, to listen to detraction unsupported by facts.

Permit me to add, that I hold nothing so unsafe in public affairs as *half confidence*—that in my opinion to employ a man in delicate and important stations, and to act towards him so as to convince him that he is not trusted and is not to receive the common share of public reward, is the most effectual way that can be adopted to make him unfaithful: while, if we only allow him a well-informed ambition, his fidelity may be assured by letting him see that it will best advance the interest of his ambition.

In hazarding these remarks, I do not mean to present to you observations which could possibly escape your own reflections; but merely to indicate the manner of viewing the subject which determines my judgment that it is both right and expedient to promote General Wilkinson to the rank of Major General in the present army. . . .

I will make no apology for the liberty I take by this letter. The solitariness of the example will I trust evince that it is not my wish to travel out of the regular and ordinary road of communication.

James Wilkinson to Alexander Hamilton, Hampton Road, Va., 15 December 1799

The Man who has been so frequently assailed by insidious slanders as myself, cannot be too circumspect or too vigilant.

James Wilkinson to Alexander Hamilton, Pataipsco at Sea off the Capes of Virginia, 22 December 1799

[Seeking promotion to major general] I cannot more safely consign my own Interests, than to the delicacies & the sensibilities of your own Bosom—20 years a Brigadier, a *patient* one too, I pant for promotion, yet I shall be content with my present Commission, so long as I hold my relative rank.

James Wilkinson to Alexander Hamilton, Mobile, Mississippi Territory, 15 November 1803

To divorce my Sword is to rend a strong Ligament of my affections & to wear it without active service is becoming disreputable. I have revolved the question in my Mind. I have paused for a resolution, & am still waiting Events.

William Plumer: Memorandum, 12 January 1807

All parties & all classes of people who are informed, appear to distrust Genl. Wilkinson the commander of our armies. They are apprehensive he will support the cause of Aaron Burr. His friends, distrust him—their confidence in him is not for his virtues—but they hope his *interest* will restrain him from committing treason.

William Plumer: Memorandum, 9 February 1807

The plain English of which is That Wilkinson has men in pay to *assassinate* Burr!

William Plumer: Memorandum, 22 February 1807

He told me last evening, that he was well acquainted with Genl. Wilkinson—That he was vain—deceitful—intriguing, & the most *corrupt man* he ever knew. That the people of Kentucky held him in so much detestation that he did not believe a single company of their militia would, on any occasion, serve under him. . . .

He said he thought he knew Genl. Wilkinson—but that his present conduct was so wild & ruinous that he considered him as a *deranged man*. . . . Wilkinson seems destitute of common sense—& lost of all sense of propriety.

Benjamin Rush to John Adams, Philadelphia, 21 October 1808

General Wilkinson is now in our city receiving daily marks of homage from our militia such as General Washington used to receive in his occasional visits to our city during the war. He is visited and entertained chiefly by the citizens of the Democratic party.

John Adams to Benjamin Waterhouse, Quincy, Mass., 15 September 1812

You ask my Opinion, (if I understand you) whether Duane or General Hull, be the fittest Man for Secretary of War. I answer. In my opinion, Wilkinson was fitter than either. But his Vanity and the Collisions of Faction have rendered his Appointment improper and impossible.

John Adams to Thomas McKean, Quincy, Mass., 26 November 1815

I agree with you, that General Wilkinson's talents are by no means inconsiderable. His openness of soul, and a little too much pomp, have as usual made him enemies and given them advantages.

Josephus B. Stuart Visit with Thomas Jefferson, 24 December 1816

He is a great friend of Genl. Wilkinson, & knows no one thing he ever did amiss.

Joseph Willard

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 11 March 1787

In the evening I went down to Judge Dana's, but did not see him: the president* was there: stiff as ever.

*Willard was president of Harvard College.

John Quincy Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, Quincy, Mass., 30 September 1804

I was yesterday with my father at Cambridge, to attend the last melancholy tribute of respect, to the remains of Mr: Willard the President of the College—It is but six weeks since he was the principal performer in solemnities of the same nature for Dr: Howard, of which I wrote you at the time—Mr: Willard died, absent from home—At New-Bedford; on his return from a tour he had been making during the vacation at College after the annual Commencement—An Eulogy on his character was delivered by Mr: Webber, one of the Professors, and a procession, preceded by the Students of the College, attended the mortal part of this excellent man to its last home.

Marinus Willett

New York Delegates to Congress to the New York Committee of Safety, Philadelphia, 5 May 1776

His Merit is with us unquestionable.

James Duane to George Washington, Philadelphia, 2 January 1781

I wish I knew what to do for Col. Willet. An officer of his Gallantry and Zeal for the Service ought not to be mortified with a Retirement.

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John Adams to Robert R. Livingston, Amsterdam, 19 February 1782

I rejoice the more in Colo. Willet's glorious Services, for a personal Knowledge and Esteem I have for that officer.

"H. G." (Alexander Hamilton) to Marinus Willett, New York *Daily Advertiser*, 21 March 1789

You have been pleased to preface it with some general observations, and among the rest to make a profession of your faith in the virtue of the present Governor.* This at least you might have spared yourself the trouble of doing. He has long been considered as the keeper of your political conscience; and you as the votary of his infallibility. You call yourself his *friend*; it is supposed you might have added to the description an epithet of more obsequious import.

*Willett had defended Governor George Clinton in a piece in the New York *Daily Advertiser*, March 19, 1789.

Thomas Jefferson: Memorandum on Appointments, March 1801

Willett is not popular, but esteemed. Lived in adultery. A tool. Not approved by [George] Clinton. Devoted to Burr.

Otho H. Williams

James McHenry to Alexander Hamilton, Baltimore, Md., 3 May 1791

I did not receive your letter of the 26th till the morning of the 2d. I immediately after saw Gen. Williams and made such communication of your wishes as I thought most likely to be attended with success. You know his ambitious cast, and that he thinks he could be more serviceable at the head of a great department than collector of a district. I mentioned the death of the comptroller, and the probability in *my opinion* that the President from the knowledge he had of the present auditor's habits, experience and capacities for business would fix upon him for a successor; in which case the auditorship which was a very important office would become vacant. I observed on the advantages of a residence at the seat of Congress if he still inclined to mount higher, that he knew your power and disposition, and said I would take upon myself to make the necessary suggestions. The idea of the auditor's office being a step to a still more desirable one had its weight, but he finally declined, alleging his ill state of health, and the recent death of a brother in law Col. Stull which has devolved upon him the care of his children and estate. In short he was not to be induced to be auditor, though I thought could I have said comptroller he might, notwithstanding his present state of health would unfit him for discharging the duties of either.

George Washington: Opinion of General Officers, 9 March 1792

Is a sensible man, but not without vanity. No doubt, I believe, is entertained of his firmness: and it is thought he does not want activity; but it is not easy, where there is nothing conspicuous in a character, to pronounce decidedly upon a Military man who has always acted under the immediate orders of a superior Officer; unless he had been seen frequently in Action. The discipline, interior economy and police of his Corps is the best evidence one can have of his talents in this

line and of this, in the case of Genl. Williams I can say nothing; as he was appointed a Brigadier after he left the Northern to join the Southern army. But a material objection to him is delicate health (if there has been no change in his Constitution), for he has gone to the Sweet Springs two or three years successively in such bad health as to afford little hope of his ever returning from them.

Otho H. Williams to Alexander Hamilton, Baltimore, Md., 5 April 1792

I am much gratified by your intimation that my name has occurred in conversation about a successor to the unfortunate St. Clair—and I thank you for your concern about my health. I am so happy as to tell you that my health is much restored. But, my Dear friend, if I had the best health, and all the best qualifications for such a command, what is there in it to excite ambition, or to gratify any other passion?

Happy in my family, and possessing a decent sufficiency, what should induce me to hazard the fate of Harmar, or the more hapless St. Clair—Or even if I were prosperous and Should even prove myself as great as Greene I might, like him, be traduced in my grave: while my family might beg, in vain, for protection.

William Williams

Benjamin Rush: Sketches

A well meaning weak man, and often misled by State prejudices.

Eliphalet Dyer to Joseph Trumbull, York, Pa., 15 December 1777

I should have thot that both the Govr & you had been long enough acquainted with Coll Williams, I mean the suddenness of his Temper, the warmth of his Imagination, the strong Impression sometimes a little matter makes on his mind (tho of an honest good heart), to lay so great a Stress upon his painting. I found he had wrote & feard as for some other of his letters they were unguarded & would have no good effect but the Contrary.

Hugh Williamson

Charles Thomson to Hannah Thomson, Princeton, N.J., 26 July 1783

Nothing is yet done respecting the Address [of Philadelphia citizens requesting Congress to return to Philadelphia]. There were only six states in town, and I am apprehensive it will be the same today. So that business will rest till next week. I am inclined to think the report of the committee will not be much to my liking. I saw Duane & Williamson yesterday in Consultation on the Address. They are two of the committee. They seemed to agree in Opinion & the latter seemed uncommonly pleased, which to me augurs no good, for I never knew him much pleased but when mischief was brewing, & in proportion to his pleasure I always judge of the degree of mischief.

Jacob Read to Annis Stockton, Annapolis, Md., 1 February 1784

Doctr. WmSon. is with us & makes as many wry faces as ever. He is my present oracle & prescribes for my lovely Miss Calvert.

George Partridge to Elbridge Gerry, Trenton, N.J., 24 November 1784

Who will be President [of Congress] a few Days will probably determine. For my own part I don't know who is thought of. Mr. W——n (noted for his Bravery) probably thinks of himself, but he is generally singular in his opinion.

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

Mr. Williamson is a Gentleman of education and talents. He enters freely into public debate from his close attention to most subjects, but he is no Orator. There is a great degree of good humour and pleasantry in his character; and in his manners there is a strong trait of the Gentleman. He is about 48 years of age.

Samuel A. Otis to George Thatcher, New York, 18 May 1788

There is a Doctor Williamson arrived [in Congress] who seems to have got with him from No. Carolina a quantum of self consequence. . . . I find it is the general opinion that the New wheel [i.e., the Constitution] will revolve—N. Carolina, our pompous brother Williamson thinks there will be no fear of. . . .

Otto's Biographies, Fall 1788

Physician and former professor of astronomy—bizarre to an excess, loves to harangue but speaks with sense. It is difficult to know his character well; it is even possible that he might not have any, but his lengthy service has given him much influence in Congress.

John Dawson to James Madison, c. 6 January 1789

Williamson from N. C. was married a few days since to a Miss Aphthorp, a beautiful girl, about twenty two. She appears much pleased with her bargain. May she never repent. [Williamson was fifty-three.]

William Maclay: Journal, 17 July 1790

Having some Leisure this Morning I called on Dr. Williamson, and told him my intention of going home. He got into a long tale of his settling his Children in Phila. and taking a More northern position for his Family than N. Carolina. &c. &ca. By the way would only remark he has one Child only born, but he has begotten another, as he says. but no Gray headed Man ever was fuller of future arrangements for a numerous progeny.

Archibald Maclaine to Edward Jones, 23 November 1790

How do you advance in your grand scheme to defeat Congress. Is the all-knowing doctor Williamson, instead of being on the road to attend his duty as a representative of the United States,

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torturing his ingenuity how to evade the laws of that body, of which he has the undeserved honor to be a member? He would have made a good pettifogging attorney; but nature never intended him for a legislator.

Thomas Jefferson to David Hosack, 20 October 1819

We served together in congress, at Annapolis, during the winter of 1783 and 4; there I found him a very useful member, of an acute mind, attentive to business, and of an high degree of erudition.

Dr. David Hosack: Oration at the New-York Historical Society, New York, 1 November 1819

In person, Dr. Williamson was considerably taller than the general standard, he was large, well proportioned frame, but was not fleshy. His forehead was high and open; his cheekbones were elevated. His eyes were dark gray, penetrating, and steady. In his conversation, Dr. Williamson was pleasant, facetious, and animated; occasionally indulging in wit and satire; always remarkable for the strength of his expression, and an emphatic manner of utterance, accompanied with a peculiarity of gesticulation . . . when he met with persons who either displayed great ignorance, want of moral character, or a disregard to religious truth, he expressed his feelings in such a manner, as distinctly to show that they had no claim to his respect. Dr. Williamson was slow in forming friendships, but when formed, it was immovable, and could not be changed by time or distance.

Thomas Willing

John Adams: Diary, Philadelphia, 11 September 1774

Mr. Willing is the most sociable, agreeable Man of all.

John Adams to Joseph Palmer, Philadelphia, 5 July 1775

[Willing] is very rich and very timid

Fisher Ames to Alexander Hamilton, Boston, 31 July 1791

[In considering Thomas Willing as the possible first president of the Bank of the United States.] It is said that he is President of the N. Ama. Bank [Bank of North America], that his name will be useful to the circulation, that his appointment would quiet, perhaps destroy, a faction in the city &c. Allow me to state the other side of the question.

They urge here, that the President ought to be free from all suspicion of management—above the influence of favorites—that Mr. Morris, whom they fear as a man of talents & intrigue, with his connections, will make a property of this man & govern him at their pleasure. I fear that his appointment would create a faction here. His friends will not pretend that he has talents to make him worth forcing upon the stockholders in the eastern quarter. An idea that the Bank will be hazarded by partiality to men who will make desperate speculations would be a bad one to get a currency. The President & Directors should be solid and fair. I only wish to have you possessed of

the fact that our prudent and respectable stockholders will entertain the opinions I have suggested, and I leave it to your judgment whether Mr. Willing is a proper man for President.

Timothy Pickering to John Marshall, Salem, Mass., 26 December 1828

When in Philadelphia, about ten years ago, I called to see Thomas Willing. He tho' in good health, was confined to his house; being a cripple in consequence of having broken his thigh two years before. He was 86 or 87; but in good spirits and in the full enjoyment of his mental faculties.

James Wilson

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 23 July 1775

There is a young Gentleman from Pennsylvania whose Name is Wilson, whose Fortitude, Rectitude, and Abilities too, greatly outshine his Masters.

Robert Whitehill to various friends, Philadelphia, 10 June 1776

Dickinson, Wilson, and the others, have Rendered themselves obnoxious to Every Whig in town, and Every Day of their Existence are losing the Confidence of the people.

William Hooper to Robert Morris, Baltimore, Md., 1 February 1777

I have the next delegation of your State much at heart & should be very sorry that any change should take place to the exclusion of Wilson. He is a Character some what particular, but after a long and pretty intimate acquaintance with him I am extremely deceived, if pure Integrity & love to America, a just and generous Attachment to the State which he represents, a strong natural Capacity improved by extensive reading & retentive memory where cool Judgment has matured & digested what he has read are not the genuine Characteristics of my friend Wilson. His removal from Congress in my opinion would work an essential political Evil.

William Churchill Houston to Robert Morris, Philadelphia, 4 October 1779

Be sure to press Mr. Wilson to return to the Assembly. He is a worthy and capable Man, and fully justifies the Character you gave of him to me the first Time I saw him. I well recollect it.

Common Sense (Thomas Paine), *Pennsylvania Packet*, 16 October 1779

That Mr. Wilson is not a favorite in the State, is a matter which I presume, he is fully sensible of.

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

Mr. Wilson ranks among the foremost in legal and political knowledge. He has joined to a fine genius all that can set him off and show him to advantage. He is well acquainted with Man, and understands all the passions that influence him. Government seems to have been his peculiar

Study, all the political institutions of the World he knows in detail, and can trace the causes and effects of every revolution from the earliest stages of the Grecian commonwealth down to the present time. No man is more clear, copious, and comprehensive than Mr. Wilson, yet he is no great Orator. He draws the attention not by the charm of his eloquence, but by the force of his reasoning. He is about 45 years old.

**“Cincinnatus” VI (Arthur Lee): To James Wilson, Esq., *New York Journal*,
6 December 1787**

Perhaps some of its framers, might have had its honors and emoluments in view. When you have let loose suspicions, Mr. Wilson, there is no knowing where it will end. Perhaps some may be audacious enough to suspect even—YOU. They may think, that the emoluments of an attorney generalship, or of a chief justice largely provided for, under a government gifted with almost chemic powers to extract gold from the people, might happily repair your shattered fortunes. Let us, Sir, suppose a man fallen from opulence into the most gloomy depths of monied distress, by an insatiable love of wealth and as unwise a pursuit of it: would not such a man be a fit instrument in the hands of others to agitate the introduction of the new constitution. Such a man would have no objection to the golden speculations which such a constitution holds forth. Such a man, albeit unused to speak without a fee, and a large one too, would deign to harrangue gratis for such an object. His crest would be brightened, his eloquence animated by an anticipation of that happy hour, when he might sail down this new pactolean channel, accompanied by his pathetic Doctor [i.e., Benjamin Rush], to sing a requiem to our expired liberties, and chant hallelujahs to his approach—to wealth and consequence. Such a man, Sir, in such a mood, would, as you do, regard the new constitution, in every point of view, with a candid and disinterested mind, and be bold to assert, “that it is the best form of government which has ever been offered to the world.”

Such a man as I have painted, you know, Mr. Wilson, is not a fiction. What I have said was not to insult his distresses, but to admonish his discretion. He ought not to have touched ground, on which he, and his swelled superior [Robert Morris], who dances him forth to the people, is so very vulnerable. Upon my honor, Sir, I do not know two men in the United States more tender in this point.

Francis Hopkinson to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 14 December 1787

[In the Pennsylvania ratifying Convention] Mr. Wilson exerted himself to the astonishment of all Hearers. The Powers of Demosthenes and Cicero seemed to be united in this able Orator.

Otto’s Biographies, Fall 1788

Distinguished lawyer. This is the man who was designated by M. Gerard as lawyer of the French nation, a position which has since been recognized as useless. Known by the name of *James the Caledonian*, which his enemies have given him. His active involvement in public affairs has deranged his fortune and has not permitted him to set his affairs straight. Moderately attached to France.

Benjamin Rush to Tench Coxe, Philadelphia, 26 February 1789

J——n is indefatigable—& confident—But more unpopular than ever. His appointment [as Chief Justice] would be very disagreeable to some of the best men in the State of Pennsylvania.

Philadelphia *Federal Gazette*, 9 March 1789

It is with singular pleasure we hear that James Wilson, esq. of this state, is destined by the voice of many thousand federalists, to fill the state of CHIEF JUSTICE of the UNITED STATES. This worthy citizen devoted himself to the cause of American freedom in 1774, and has shared in every toil and danger of the revolution. His hand, his heart, his tongue and his pen, have ever been at the command of his country. To his laborious investigations into the principles and forms of every species of government that has ever existed in the world—and to his powerful reasonings in the late federal convention, the United States are indebted for many of the perfections of the new constitution.

The office allotted for that distinguished patriot and legislator by his grateful countrymen, will require an uncommon share of *legal* and *political* abilities and information. A new system of federal jurisprudence must be formed; a new region in the administration of justice must be explored, in which genius alone can supply the defect of precedent; and who so equal to those great and original undertakings as that favorite son of Pennsylvania, James Wilson, esq.

Frederick A. Muhlenberg to Benjamin Rush, New York, 21 March 1789

Nor is there a Man in the U. States who entertains a more favorable Opinion of Mr. Wilson than myself. In Point of abilities I do not know is equal nor any one so well calculated for the Duties of that important Station [i.e., Chief Justice of the United States]. From my personal Regard for him I would sooner forego any Advantage [i.e., the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives] than be in any Manner the Means of injuring him or his Views.

Benjamin Rush to John Adams, Philadelphia, 22 April 1789

Your influence in the Senate over which you have been called to preside, will give you great weight (without a vote) in determining upon the most suitable Characters to fill the first offices in government. Pennsylvania looks up with anxious Solitude for the commission of Chief Justice for Mr. Wilson. It was from an expectation of this honor being conferred upon him, that he was left out of the Senate, and House of Representatives. His Abilities & knowledge in framing the Constitution, & his zeal in promoting its establishment, have exposed him to a most virulent persecution from the Antifederalists in this state. With these our president general Mifflin has joined. . . . Should Mr. Wilson be left to sink under this opposition, I shall for ever deplore the ingratitude of republics.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, New York, 17 May 1789

Mr. Wilson, I have long known esteemed and respected: but, if I had a Vote, I could not promise to give it for him to be Chief Justice. All Things considered, that have ever come to my Knowledge I feel myself inclined to wish, because I am fully convinced that Services, Hazards, Abilities and Popularity, all properly weighed, the Ballance, is in favor of Mr. Jay. One of the judges, I wish Mr. Wilson to be: and the difference is not great between the first and the other Judges.

Boston *Federal Gazette*, 10 June 1793

Friday last the Circuit Court of the United States opened in this town.

It is said that a Charge has been delivered “replete with the happiness of *equal* government.” This idea comes with an ill grace from a man, who parades our streets with a coach and four horses, when it is known his exorbitant salary enables him to make this *flashy parade*, and the money is taken from the pockets of the industrious part of the community.—Query. Where is the “*equality*” when an officer of government is enabled by his excessive salary, to live in a style vastly superior to any member in the society that supports him?

John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Boston, 23 June 1793

The most extraordinary intelligence, which I have to convey is that the wise and learned Judge & Professor Wilson, has fallen most lamentably in love with a young Lady in this town, under twenty, by the name of Gray. He came, he saw, and was overcome. The gentle Caledon, was smitten at meeting with a first sight love—unable to contain his amorous pain, he breathed his sighs about the Streets; and even when seated on the bench of Justice, he seemed as if teeming with some woeful ballad to his mistress eye brow—He obtained an introduction to the Lady, and at the second interview proposed his lovely person and his agreeable family to her acceptance; a circumstance very favorable to the success of his pretensions, is that he came in a very handsome chariot and four. In short his attractions were so powerful that the Lady actually has the subject under consideration, and unless the Judge should prove as fickle as he is amorous and repent his precipitate impetuosity so far as to withdraw his proposal, you will no doubt soon behold in the persons of those well assorted lovers a new edition of January and May.—Methinks I see you stare at the perusal of this intelligence, and conclude that I am attempting to amuse you, with a *bore* [i.e., a trick]; no such thing. It is the plain and simple truth that I tell—and if you are in the habit of seeing the Miss Breck’s as frequently as your wishes must direct you to see them, you may inform them, that their friend and mine, *Miss Hannah Gray*, has made so profound an impression upon the Heart of judge Wilson, and received in return an impression so profound upon her own, that in all probability they will soon see her at Philadelphia, the happy consort of the happy judge.

Cupid himself must laugh at his own absurdity, in producing such an Union; but he must sigh to reflect that without the soft persuasion of a deity who has supplanted him in the breast of modern beauty, he could not have succeeded to render the man ridiculous & the woman contemptible.

Henry Jackson to Henry Knox, Boston, 23 June 1793

Judge Wilson is violently in love with Miss Gray—the second daughter of Mr. Ellis Gray, she is about 18 or 19—& he it’s said is 55—he saw her for the first time at Doctor Thatcher’s meeting, and Cupid with his dart *instantly* struck him in the heart—he has accordingly addressed her on the subject of Love—which she has under consideration until his return from the Circuit Court—it is conjectured from all circumstances that this Passion will not prove tragical, and that the wound will be healed by the Lady’s giving him her fair hand—it will be highly flattering to see one of our Boston Girls in her *Coach & four* rolling the streets of Philadelphia—

Benjamin Rush: Commonplace Book, December 1794

Judge Wilson deeply distresse; his resource was reading novels constantly.

William R. Davie to James Iredell, Halifax, N.C., 15 December 1794

Judge Wilson's affability and politeness gave great satisfaction to both the bar and the people; a circumstance I mention with pleasure because I have observed its conciliatory effect with respect to the Government.

James Madison to James Monroe, Philadelphia, 27 March 1795

You will see from the proceedings in Georgia what a scene is opened there by a landjobbing Legislature. Wilson & Pendleton the fedl. Judges, tho' not named in the law are known adventurers. The former is reprobated here by all parties.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 5 March 1796

Mr. Wilson's ardent Speculations had given offense to some, and his too frequent affectation of Popularity to others.

Benjamin Rush: Commonplace Book, December 1796

[After suffering bankruptcy] Judge Wilson deeply distressed; his resource was reading novels constantly.

James Iredell to Hannah Iredell, Philadelphia, 11 August 1797

All the Judges here but Wilson who unfortunately is in a manner absconding from his creditors—his Wife with him—the rest of the Family here! What a situation! It is supposed his object is to wait until he can make a more favorable adjustment of his affairs than he could in a state of arrest.

Jacob Rush to Benjamin Rush, Reading, Pa., 8 September 1798

The Death of Judge Wilson was to me an unwelcome & unexpected Event—I fear he hastened it by some unjustifiable Means. His Constitution was too good to have sunk in so short a Time, under the Weight of mere Intemperance. What a miserable Termination to such distinguished Abilities, and what a dark Cloud overcast the last Days of a Life that had once been marked with uncommon Lustre—

Robert Troup to Rufus King, New York, 2 October 1798

Poor [Robert] Morris remains in gaol. Judge Wilson lately died in North Carolina in the hands of the Sheriff—a victim to misfortune and liquor!

Benjamin Rush: Sketches, c. 1800

An eminent lawyer and a great and enlightened statesman. He had been educated for a clergyman in Scotland, and was a profound and accurate scholar. He spoke often in Congress, and his eloquence was of the most commanding kind. He reasoned, declaimed, and persuaded according to circumstances with equal effect. His mind, while he spoke, was one blaze of light. Not a word ever fell from his lips out of time, or out of place, nor could a word be taken from or added to his

speeches without injuring them. He rendered great and essential services to his country in every stage of the Revolution.

Timothy Pickering to John Marshall, Salem, Mass., 10 March 1828

Judge Wilson of Pennsylvania, a member of the National Convention, once told me, that after the Constitution had been finally settled, it was committed to him to be critically examined respecting its style; in order that the instrument might appear with the most perfect precision & accuracy of language.

Paine Wingate

John Sullivan to Henry Knox, 4 January 1787

You will find him the Scholar, the Gentleman, and the man of sense.

William Gardner to John Langdon, New York, 9 April 1788

Last Eveng. . . . saw Mr. Wingate who now appears to be quite a smart looking Gentleman.

Paine Wingate to Mary Wingate Wiggin, New York, 2 April 1789

We are not to expect uninterrupted enjoyments in this world. Disappointments and troubles will sometimes be our portions, and we must not depend upon too much in this imperfect state. But we have abundant reason to be contented and thankful when we recollect how many desirable things we have, and how much better our lot is than that of many others. I think I have generally been happier than most people because I have endeavored to be contented. I never expected a great deal, and have had more than I expected.

Another thing conducive to our contentment in life is to have something to busy our minds and our hands about. Idleness, and to have nothing to do, is the source of discontent and uneasiness. And there is much greater pleasure in being engaged in some useful employment and having our attention taken up in our family affairs than in making a business of our diversion. It is with this pleasure as it is with the appetite of eating. If we wish to have a high relish for our food we must not always be eating; so the highest relish for company and amusements will succeed an application to the proper callings of life. Not that I think I have occasion to remind you of this as tho you had erred on that score; for I believe that you will make a prudent and industrious housewife and careful mother. I have suggested this to show my opinion what is the rational and only successful pursuit of pleasure.

There is an opposite extreme which we are also to guard against, that is to be so immersed and swallowed up with our secular pursuits as not to allow ourselves the innocent and seasonable amusements which life presents. In this view relaxations and amusements are in their reason proper and useful. They animate our spirits and sweeten life. It is difficult to preserve the happy medium, and wisdom must be profitable to direct us.

There is another thing very friendly to, and even requisite for, the true enjoyment of life, and that is a virtuous and religious mind. By this I do not mean gloom and melancholy and superstitious

fear and dread of our Maker. It is my opinion that neither reason nor religion forbids us any pleasure that is worth our pursuit. Our wise and good Creator designed us for happiness and everything he has enjoined upon us as our duty has a tendency thereto. Hence, religion, when properly understood and observed, will make us cheerful and contented. I know that some paint religion in those dark and gloomy colors as may rob them of all their comfort, but I am far from thinking that they do any honor to God or good to themselves by it. Whatever we may suppose would render any being amiable and excellent and worthy of our esteem and imitation, that are we to follow. Therefore the great design of religion is to make us like to God, to resemble him in his moral excellencies.

Paine Wingate to Mary Wingate Wiggin, New York, 12 July 1789

Your future happiness in life depends much on your own choice. A virtuous, innocent mind conduces to peace & serenity within. Not to expect too much from this world, & thankfully to enjoy the good things which you have, will naturally lead you to contentment. Add to this a moderate attention to the affairs of your family, benevolence & friendship to your fellow creatures, charity to the distressed; and conversation & intimacy with your friends & relations—these attendants will sweeten the path of life, and with the blessing of health and domestic enjoyments render you as happy as is consistent with this unstable state we live in.

I have thought that I have enjoyed more contentment in life, & been more happy than most people, because I never had high expectations & generally found my situation better than I expected. Pomp & show & fashionable amusements & pleasures I believe seldom make people happier. I have had opportunity of seeing considerable of it among the first characters in America, who live in the highest taste & in the most expensive pleasures; and I would not exchange the innocent & simple enjoyments of a rural life, in the small circle of my few intimate friends with your mother and my children, for all their greedy & empty pleasures.

Benjamin Goodhue to Samuel Phillips, Jr., New York, 17 April 1790

By intreaty we have got [Jonathan] Grout to vote for the assumption [of state debts by the federal government] but your friend Windgate *inter nos* is the most perverse and opposed to those great measures calculated to advance our National Govt. of any man I believe in Congress and by his conduct does great mischief, and is what we should term in Massachusetts a finish'd insurgent, pray don't speak of it as coming from me for we live together and agree in every thing but politicks.

Benjamin Rush to Jeremy Belknap, Philadelphia, 5 January 1791

Your friend Mr. Wingate answers the character you gave him. There is a plainness, a simplicity, a morality, and an intelligence in the New-England character which I have always admired and which I have often defended in the beginning of the late war.

James Winthrop

John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Cambridge, Mass., 21 May 1786

There is among the governors of the college one, who for genius and learning, would make a figure in any part of Europe. I mean the Librarian, Mr. Winthrop. He has lately discovered a method of trajecting an angle, which has so long been attempted in vain.

John Winthrop

Mercy Otis Warren, History of the American Revolution, 1805

John Winthrop, Hollisian professor of mathematics and natural philosophy at Cambridge; his public conduct was but the emanation of superior genius, united with an excellent heart, as much distinguished for every private virtue as for his attachment to the liberties of a country.

John Witherspoon

Described by Jonathan Dickinson Sergeant in John Adams: Diary, 28 August 1774

Heard Dr. Witherspoon all Day. A clear, sensible, Preacher.

John Adams: Diary, Philadelphia, 3 September 1774

Dr. Witherspoon enters with great Spirit into the American Cause. He seems as hearty a Friend as any of the Natives—an animated Son of Liberty.

John Adams: Diary, 17 February 1777

Yesterday, heard Dr. Witherspoon upon redeeming Time. An excellent Sermon. I find that I understand the Dr. better, since I have heard him so much in Conversation, and in the Senate. But I perceive that his Attention to civil Affairs has slackened his Memory. It cost him more Pains than heretofore to recollect his Discourse.

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

Doctor Weather Spoon of New Jersey is a man in years perhaps 70 of the New light Presbyterian Order—Is possessed of a good Share of knowledge in books and the Languages; Speaks With a low and broken Voice in the Scotch Accent; and has all the design and arch Cunning that is necessary or practiced in an assembly of the Kirk of Scotland—but does not seem to possess much of that Candid integrity, Honesty & Wisdom Which is necessary in the Governing an Honest Confederacy.

Benjamin Rush: Autobiography

The Doctor with his family soon afterwards embarked for America. He gave a new turn to education, and spread taste and correctness in literature throughout the United States. It was easy to distinguish his pupils every where when ever they spoke or wrote for the public. He was a man of a great and luminous mind. He seemed to arrive at truth intuitively. He made use of his reasoning powers only to communicate it to others. His works will probably preserve his name to the end of time.

Benjamin Rush: Sketches

A well informed statesman and remarkably luminous and correct in all his speeches. His influence was less than might have been expected from his abilities and knowledge, owing in part to his ecclesiastical character. He was a zealous Whig, but free from the illiberality which sometimes accompanies zeal.

Benjamin Rush to John Adams, Philadelphia 5 May 1812

“Scandal (Dr Witherspoon used to say) will die sooner than you can kill it.” I can subscribe to the truth of this assertion of our Old Scotch Sachem from my own experience.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 13 May 1812

Witherspoon had *Witt* and sense and taste, but his maxim is not universally infallible. Scandal may be sometimes killed much Sooner than it would die a natural death.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 14 May 1812

Witherspoon has *Wutt* [i.e., wit] and sense and taste, but his maxim is not universally infallible. Scandal may be sometimes killed much sooner than it would die a natural death.* You may be as wise as the old Scot, with his mitten-muffled tongue, by saying that scandal is the Devil, the author of all the evil in the universe, the cause of all the wars, dissensions and revolutions, duels, suicides, murders, massacres on this earth.

*Rush had written Adams on May 5, 1812 that Witherspoon used to say that “Scandal will die sooner than you can kill it.”

Oliver Wolcott, Jr.

John Trumbull to John Adams, Hartford, Conn., 5 February 1791

The Secretary of the Treasury rises in my estimation on every Report he makes—though I do not pretend to be an accurate Judge on some of the subjects, for instance on the National Bank—I am sorry that he is deprived of any of his supports—but I believe he has yet a very able one in my Friend *Wolcott*. I cannot doubt You are before this time acquainted with his merit—his honesty, independence of sentiment, indefatigable attention to business, regard for the public interest, &

contempt of all praise or popularity, that might be gained by servility or adulation, or the desertion of a single principle of Rectitude.

Alexander Hamilton to George Washington, Philadelphia, 17 April 1791

You will probably recollect that previous to your departure from this place, anticipating the event which has taken place with regard to the death of Mr. Eveleigh, I took the liberty to mention to you that Mr. Wolcott the present Auditor would be in every respect worthy of your consideration as his successor in office.

Now that the event has happened, a concern as anxious as it is natural for the success of the department united with a sentiment of Justice towards Mr. Wolcott leads me to a repetition of that Idea. This Gentleman's conduct in the station he now fills has been that of an excellent officer. It has not only been good but distinguished. It has combined all the requisites which could be desired; moderation with firmness, liberality with exactness, indefatigable industry with an accurate & sound discernment a thorough knowledge of business & a remarkable spirit of order & arrangement. Indeed I ought to say that I owe very much of whatever success may have attended the merely executive operation of the department to Mr. Wolcott. And I do not fear to commit myself, when I add, that he possesses in an eminent degree all the qualifications desirable in a Comptroller of the Treasury—that it is scarcely possible to find a man in the United States more competent to the duties of that station than himself, *few* who would be equally so. It may truly be said of him that he is a man of *rare* merit. And I have good evidence that he has been viewed in this light by the members of Congress extensively from different quarters of the Union, and is so considered by all that part of the public, who have had opportunities of witnessing his conduct.

The immediate relation too, which his present situation bears to that of Comptroller is a strong argument in his favor. Though a regular gradation of office is not admissible in a strict sense in regard to offices of a civil nature and is wholly inapplicable to those of the first rank (such as the heads of the great executive departments) yet a certain regard to the relation, which one situation bears to another is consonant with natural ideas of Justice and is recommended by powerful considerations of policy. The expectation of promotion in civil as in military life is a great stimulus to virtuous exertion: While examples of unrewarded exertion, supported by talent & qualification, are proportionable discouragements. Where they do not produce resignations, they leave men dissatisfied & a dissatisfied man seldom does his duty well.

In a government like ours, where pecuniary compensations are moderate, the principle of gradual advancement, as a reward for good conduct, is perhaps more necessary to be attended to than in others where offices are more lucrative. By due attention to it, it will operate as a means to secure respectable men for offices of inferior emolument and consequence.

In addition to the rest, Mr. Wolcott's experience, in this particular line, pleads powerfully in his favor. This experience may be dated back to his office of Comptroller of the State of Connecticut and has been perfected by practice in his present place.

A question may perhaps Sir arise in your mind whether some inconvenience may not attend his removal from his present office. I am of opinion that no sensible inconvenience will be felt on this score; since it will be easy for him as Comptroller, who is the immediate superior of the auditor to form any man of business for the office he will leave in a short period time. More inconvenience would be felt by the introduction of a Comptroller, not in the immediate train of the business. Besides this it may be observed that a degree of inconvenience on this score cannot be deemed an obstacle, but upon a principle which would bar the progress of merit from one station to another. On this point of inconvenience a reflection occurs which I do not think I ought to suppress. Mr.

Wolcott is a man of nice sensibility, not unconscious of his own value; and he doubtless must believe that he has pretensions from situation to the Office. Should another appointment take place & he resign, the derangement of the department would truly be distressing to the public service.

In suggesting thus particularly the reasons which in my mind operate in favor of Mr. Wolcott, I am influenced by information that other characters will be brought to your view by weighty advocates, and as I think it more than possible that Mr. Wolcott may not be mentioned to you by any other person than myself, I feel it a duty arising out of my situation in the department to bear my full & explicit testimony to his worth; confident that he will justify by every kind of *substantial* merit any mark of your approbation, which he may receive.

Oliver Wolcott, Jr., to Frederick Wolcott, Philadelphia, 6 April 1792

Colonel Tallmadge is here, and will tell you when he returns how I live. I am more plain and certainly work harder than most Quakers. I shall not without some misfortune befalls me, be in debt, but I shall never be rich. I hope to do some good, and to steer through the maze without injuring others, and with sufficient philosophy to be inattentive to small disappointments.

Oliver Wolcott, Jr., to Frederick Wolcott, Philadelphia, 15 December 1792

I am well and in good spirits, though I work hard and hope I perform my duty, I am *not* ambitious. The office I hold is as good as an office can be. It is suited to my talents, and I wish for nothing more. This you do not believe, but it is because you are plagued with a passion which has become extinct in my bosom.

Joseph Hopkinson to Unknown, undated

Mr. Wolcott was a man of cheerful and even playful disposition. His conversation was interesting and earnest, but gay, unless the occasion was unfit for gaiety. He enjoyed a good joke from himself or another, and his laugh was hearty and frequent. He delighted in the discussion of literary subjects and the works of distinguished authors, and was particularly fond of poetry. Indeed, I understood that in his younger days he was a poet. He had a good taste in literature with one exception, about which we often disputed, and in which his New England attachments or prejudices controlled his judgment. He had an excessive admiration of Dr. Dwight's "Conquest of Canaan." His domestic life was most exemplary; his greatest happiness was in his family, with the friends who congregated there. His devotion to the business and duties of his office was severe and unremitting. He possessed, in a high degree, a very rare qualification—the capacity for continued hard work, and was in everything systematic and orderly. His attachments to his friends were strong and lasting, never taxing them with unreasonable caprices. He was open and direct in all his dealings, without duplicity or intrigue in anything; his sincerity was sure, he deceived nobody.

Alexander Hamilton to Dutch Bankers, Treasury Department, Philadelphia, 31 January 1795

The Gentleman whom The President has determined to nominate as my Successor and who will be no doubt appointed is Oliver Wolcott Esquire the present Comptroller of the Treasury. I do him no more than Justice, by assuring you, that he is a Gentleman of undoubted intelligence, probity and good principles with regard to Public Credit. The confidence of yourselves and your Countrymen may be safely reposed in him.

Rufus King to Christopher Gore, Philadelphia, 14 February 1795

We lose a Great and Virtuous Minister in the retirement of this Gentleman [i.e., Alexander Hamilton]; his successor is a good man—possesses firmness, industry, integrity, and sound Talents with a disposition to emulate his Predecessor's Example.

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

I hope nothing in my last was misunderstood. Could it be necessary, I would assure you that no one has a stronger conviction than myself, of the purity of the motives which direct your public conduct, or of the good sense and judgment by which it is guided. If I have a fear (you will excuse my frankness) it is, lest the strength of your feelings, the companion of energy of character, should prevent that pliancy to circumstances which is sometimes indispensable. I beg you only to watch yourself on this score, and the public will always find in you an able, as well as faithful servant.

James McHenry to George Washington, Philadelphia, 10 November 1799

. . . the Secretary of the treasury, a very able, prudent discerning and honest man, whose place could not be better filled.

Chauncey Goodrich to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., Washington, 24 February 1801

Your appointment to the office of Judge, passed the Senate *unanimously*. You may be assured your friends here manifested peculiar felicitations in a circumstance which they believed would be both grateful and advantageous to you. They have not been inattentive to the embarrassments you may at first experience, for want of technical knowledge of practice. All, however, are of opinion, that these embarrassments will soon be overcome; and then, they expect to see in you the *American Mansfield*; a kind of character, it exists at all in our country, we certainly are not overstocked with. I think you ought not to hesitate as to an acceptance.

John Adams to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., Quincy, Mass., 6 April 1801

I have received your favor of the 28th of March, and I read it with much pleasure. The information you have received from your friends concerning the circumstances of your nomination to be a Judge of the Second Circuit of the United States is very correct. I have never allowed myself to speak much of the gratitude due from the public to individuals for past services, but I have always wished that more should be said of justice. Justice is due from the public to itself, and justice is also due to individuals. When the public discards or neglects talents and integrity, united with meritorious past services, it commits iniquity against itself of the benefit of future services, and it does wrong to the individual by depriving him of the reward which long and faithful services have merited. Twenty years of able and faithful service on the part of Mr. Wolcott, remunerated only by a simple subsistence, it appeared to me, constituted a claim upon the public which ought to be attended to. As it was of importance that no appointment should be made that would be refused, I took measures to ascertain from your friends the probability of your acceptance, and then made the nomination, happy to have so fair an opportunity to place you beyond the reach of will and pleasure. I wish you much pleasure, and more honor, in your law studies and pursuits, and I doubt not you will contribute your full share to make justice run down our streets as a stream.

Oliver Wolcott, Sr.

Oliver Wolcott to Laura Wolcott, Philadelphia, 19 March 1776

I have found it necessary as I can have but little Exercise to Observe some Discipline in living, especially to avoid Supper, which you may easily conceive is Very unnecessary, as We generally dine about five. A pretty light Breakfast of Sweetened Water and Milk with some Toast with A Pretty hearty dinner I find Suits Me and without losing Flesh.

Benjamin Rush: Sketches

A worthy man of great modesty, and sincerely attached to the interests of his country.

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

Mr. ——— of Connecticut appears to be a man of Integrity, is very candid in debate & open to Conviction and does not want abilities; but does not appear to be possessed of Much political knowledge.

Oliver Wolcott, Sr., to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., Philadelphia, 15 March 1783

I am sorry to hear that any Divisions and Anomosities exist in the State. But you do well not to concern yourself with the publick Strife, Neither will I, it will be Very sufficient for me if I can discharge the Very difficult Service which I am called upon to Perform. In doing this I will enjoy an approbation of my own Mind. The Man who can wish to possess himself of an office of high Importance and Responsability at this Period has a Very Wayward Ambition as it is ten to one that the Gratification of his Wishes would prove his Ruin. I hear of the Strife of Ambition, and sincerely contemn the Conduct. It is unnecessary to look farr into the Affairs of the State. Every one capable of forming any tolerable Judgment upon them, must have expectd that Contests of this Nature would take Place—and they will continue from year to year, at least till Matters are reduced to more Regularity. Be Assured that I have no Ambition to be put into the publick View as a Candidate. I beleive and hope that I Am not so.

Joseph Wood

Joseph Delaplaine to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 10 February 1816

I am desirous to place your portrait & a biographical sketch of your life in the second half volume of my work, & shall do so if it is possible to get an *approved* portrait of you. Mr. Wood one of the most extraordinary portrait painters of the present day has been sent by me to Washington to paint the portraits of President Madison, Mr. Munroe, Mr. Clay &c. He is now busily engaged in painting those characters.

I regret exceedingly that I cannot afford to send Mr. Wood to your house for the purpose of painting your portrait. If sir, any means for effecting this very desirable object, should present to

you, do have the goodness to inform me & Mr. Wood shall proceed accordingly thither.—I will venture to affirm that for *truth of likeness*, Mr. Wood has no rival in this, or any other country.

Benjamin Workman

William White to John Adams, Philadelphia, 1 August 1787

Relying on your Excellency's Regard to literary Merit & Yr Readiness to encourage the Cultivation of the Sciences in this Country, I take the Liberty of recommending to your Patronage the Business which carries the Bearer Mr Joseph Workman to England.

His Brother Mr Benjamin Workman has invented an Instrument for taking the Variation of the Needle, which the Bearer is to submit to the Examination of the Royal Society; & if it should meet the expected Approbation, they intend to apply for a Patent. The Brothers are of unquestionable Character & have served with Reputation as Tutors in the University in this City: & I thought that your Excellency's being made acquainted with this might both dispose & enable you to support their Claim for such Rewards as the Work may be found to merit.

John Adams to Benjamin Waterhouse, Quincy, Mass., 10 September 1800

I have received and will communicate to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, your Prospect of exterminating the Small Pox.

I have read this History of the Kine Pox with pleasure. Your Zeal and Industry to give these Experiments fair play in America deserve the thanks of all the Friends of science and Humanity.

To disarm the Small Pox of its contagion is an enterprize worthy of a Hercules in medicine.

Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, Plymouth, Mass., 9 January 1810

Dr Waterhouse is *generally* incorrect—generally officious—and if he said what is detailed in your letter, it is full proof of my assertion.—

George Wythe

John Adams: Diary, 15 September 1775

Wythe is a Lawyer, it is said of the first Eminence.

John Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 23 October 1775

Mr. Wythe . . . is a Virginian, a Lawyer of high Rank at the Bar, a great Scholar, a most indefatigable Man and a staunch Virginian, to all appearances.

Unknown Source

Wythe is a new Member from Virginia, a Lawyer of the highest Eminence in that Province, a learned and very laborious Man.

Walker Maury to Thomas Jefferson, Williamsburg, Va., c. 20 April 1784

Mr. Wythe indeed seems to enjoy himself no where, so much as with his pupils.

Thomas Jefferson to Peter Carr, Paris, 10 August 1787

I have received your two letters . . . and am happy to find by them, as well as by letters from Mr. Wythe, that you have been so fortunate as to attract his notice and good will: I am sure you will find this to have been one of the most fortunate events of your life, as I have ever been sensible it was of mine.

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

Mr. Wythe is the famous Professor of Law at the University of William and Mary. He is confessedly one of the most learned legal Characters of the present age. From his close attention to the study of general learning he has acquired a compleat knowledge of the dead languages and all the sciences. He is remarked for his exemplary life, and universally esteemed for his good principles. No Man it is said understands the fluctuating condition to which all societies are liable better than he does, yet from his too favorable opinion of Men, he is no great politician. He is a neat and pleasing Speaker, and a most correct and able Writer. Mr. Wythe is about 55 years of age.

Thomas Jefferson to Ralph Izard, Paris, 17 July 1788

I cannot but approve your idea of sending your eldest son, destined for the law, to Williamsburg [to the College of William and Mary]. But the pride of the Institution is Mr. Wythe, one of the Chancellors of the state, and professor of law in the college. He is one of the greatest men of the age, having held without competition the first place at the bar of our general court for 25 years, and always distinguished by the most spotless virtue. He gives lectures regularly, and holds moot courts and parliaments wherein he presides and the young men debate regularly in law, and legislation, learn the rules of parliamentary proceeding, and acquire the habit of public speaking. Williamsburg is a remarkably healthy situation, reasonably cheap, and affords very genteel society. I know no place in the world, while the present professors remain, where I would so soon place a son.

Benjamin Rush: Sketches

A profound lawyer and able politician. He seldom spoke in Congress, but when he did his speeches were sensible, correct, and pertinent. I have seldom known a man possess more modesty, or a more dove-like simplicity and gentleness of manner. He lived many years after he left Congress, the pride and ornament of his native State.

John Quincy Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, Cambridge, Mass., 22 June 1806

I have seen in the Newspapers an account of the Death of Mr: George Wythe, a Judge of the Court of Chancery in Virginia, and a man much distinguished during an important period of the American Revolution—He was at one time an intimate friend of my father, who once address'd to him a letter on the subject of Government, which has often been published—Of late years he like so many other persons of the revolutionary times had forgotten antient friendships, and had fallen into another political scale; yet he had not left his place in my father's regard, and I am sure he has been much affected at this incident—particularly as by a paragraph in the Richmond Enquirer, it appears there were suspicions that Mr: Wythe's Death was not in the ordinary course of Nature—On whom the suspicions have fallen the papers do not say; but probably as it is in your neighbourhood, and as he was a man of so distinguished a character you may have heard—If you have, let me know how the circumstances are told.

Louisa Catherine Adams to John Quincy Adams, Washington, 30 June 1806

The Death of Col. Wythe was attended with the most horrid circumstances it is said that he made his will a Short time since and left all his property to a Nephew who he had adopted of which he informed him the young man not contented with the certainty of possessing the property after the old gentleman's death forged a bill of two hundred dollars which he carried to the Bank himself while he was sitting talking it occurred to one of the Clerks that Col. Wythe never drew for a larger sum than twenty dollars at a time and under some pretence he got the money back and sent the bill to the Col. to know if it was his on which he told them it was a forgery the young man in the mean time learnt what was going forward went and purchased two ounces of arsenic and returned home and mixt it in the Coffee it proved fatal to the old gentleman and four or five of the slaves—this is the story told here generally and believed—

Edmund Randolph: History of Virginia

George Wythe is said to have been indebted to his mother for the literary distinction which he attained. But is more probable that she was by chance capable of assisting him in the rudiments of the Latin tongue, and that he became a scholar by the indispensable progress of his own industry in his closet. Preceptors lay the cornerstone; but the edifice can be finished only by the pupil himself, under the auspices of good taste. Mr. Wythe not only labored through an apprenticeship but almost through a life in the dead languages. In his pleadings as the bar, it was a foible to intersperse such frequent citations from the classics. But he argued ably and profoundly. The temptations of the law never raised a doubt on his purity, and though long habituated to the patronage and friendship of royal governors, in every conflict with them he adhered to his country. He acted upon the maxim that genuine riches consisted in having few wants. A natural instability he held with a tight rein. On an alarm of hostility from the last British governor, he sallied forth with his hunting shirt and musket, at an age when his patriotism would have sustained no shock had he remained at home. But his character, rather than his actions, rendered him a valuable resource to the infant Revolution. Upon the death of Peyton Randolph he was called, as the most beloved citizen, to represent the city of Williamsburg.

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

George Wythe, also a member of the House, was confessedly among the first in point of abilities. There is a story circulated, as upon his own authority, that he was initiated by his mother in the Latin classics. Be this as it may, it is certain that he had raised upon the original foundation, whencesoever acquired, a superstructure of ancient literature which has been rarely equalled in this country. He was perfectly familiar with the authors of Greece and Rome; read them with the same ease, and quoted them with the same promptitude that he could the authors in his native tongue. He carried his love of antiquity rather too far; for he frequently subjected himself to the charge of pedantry; and his admiration of the gigantic writers of Queen Elizabeth's reign, had unfortunately betrayed him into an imitation of their quaintness. Yet, with all this singularity of taste, he was a man of great capacity; powerful in argument; frequently pathetic [i.e., emotional]; and elegantly keen and sarcastic in repartee. He was long the rival of Mr. Pendleton at the bar, whom he equalled as a common lawyer, and greatly surpassed as a civilian: but he was too open and direct in his conduct, and possessed too little management, either with regard to his own temper or those of other men, to cope with so cool and skillful as adversary. Though a full match for Mr. Pendleton in the powers of fair and solid reasoning, Mr. Pendleton could, whenever he pleased, and would, whenever it was necessary, tease him with quibbles, and vex him with sophistries, until he destroyed the composure of his mind, and robbed him of his strength. No man was ever more entirely destitute of art than Mr. Wythe. He knew nothing, even in his profession, and never would know anything of "crooked and indirect by-ways." Whatever he had to do, was to be done openly, avowedly, and above-board. He would not, even at the bar, have accepted of success on any other terms. This simplicity and integrity of character, although it sometimes exposed him to the arts and sneers of the less scrupulous, placed him before his countrymen on the ground which Caesar wished his wife to occupy; he was not only pure, but above all suspicion. The unaffected sanctity of his principles, united with his modesty and simple elegance of manners, his attic wit, his stores of rare knowledge, his capacity for business, and the real power of his intellect, not only raised him to great eminence in public, but rendered him a delightful companion, and a most valuable friend.

Thomas Jefferson to John Saunderson, 31 August 1820

George Wythe was born about the year 1727 or 1728, of a respectable family in the County of Elizabeth City, on the shores of the Chesapeake. He inherited, from his father, a fortune sufficient for independence and ease. He had not the benefit of a regular education in the schools, but acquired a good one of himself, and without assistance; insomuch, as to become the best Latin and Greek scholar in the State. It is said, that while reading the Greek Testament, his mother held an English one, to aid him in rendering the Greek text conformably with that. He also acquired, by his own reading, a good knowledge of Mathematics, and of Natural and Moral Philosophy. He engaged in the study of the law under the direction of a Mr. Lewis, of that profession, and went early to the bar of the General Court, then occupied by men of great ability, learning, and dignity in their profession. He soon became eminent among them, and, in the process of time, the first at the bar, taking into consideration his superior learning, correct education, and logical style of reasoning; for in pleading he never indulged himself with an useless or declamatory thought or word; and became as distinguished by correctness and purity of conduct in his profession, as he was by his industry and fidelity to those who employed him. He was early elected to the House of Representatives, then called the House of Burgesses, and continued in it until the Revolution. On the

first dawn of that, instead of higgling on half-way principles, as others did who feared to follow their reason, he took his stand on the solid ground that the only link of political union between us and Great Britain, was the identity of our Executive; that that nation and its Parliament had no more authority over us, than we had over them, and that we were co-ordinate nations with Great Britain and Hanover.

In 1774, he was a member of a Committee of the House of Burgesses, appointed to prepare a Petition to the King, a Memorial to the House of Lords, and a Remonstrance to the House of Commons, on the subject of the proposed Stamp Act. He was made draftsman of the last, and, following his own principles, he so far overwent the timid hesitations of his colleagues, that his draft was subjected by them to material modifications; and, when the famous Resolutions of Mr. Henry, in 1775, were proposed, it was not on any difference of principle that they were opposed by Wythe, Randolph, Pendleton, Nicholas, Bland, and other worthies, who had long been the habitual leaders of the House; but because those papers of the preceding session had already expressed the same sentiments and assertions of right, and that an answer to them was yet to be expected.

In August, 1775, he was appointed a member of Congress, and in 1776, signed the Declaration of Independence, of which he had, in debate, been an eminent supporter. And subsequently, in the same year, he was appointed, by the Legislature of Virginia, one of a Committee to revise the laws of the State, as well of British as of Colonial enactment, and to prepare bills for re-enacting them, with such alterations as the change in the form and principles of the government, and other circumstances, required; and of this work, he executed the period commencing with the revolution in England, and ending with the establishment of the new government here; excepting the Acts for regulating descents, for religious freedom, and for proportioning crimes and punishments. In 1777, he was chosen Speaker of the House of Delegates, being of distinguished learning in Parliamentary law and proceedings; and towards the end of the same year, he was appointed one of the three Chancellors, to whom that department of the Judiciary was confided, on the first organization of the new government. On a subsequent change of the form of that court, he was appointed sole Chancellor, in which office he continued to act until his death, which happened in June, 1806, about the seventy-eighth or seventy-ninth year of his age.

Mr. Wythe had been twice married; first, I believe, to a daughter of Mr. Lewis, with whom he had studied law, and afterwards to a Miss Taliaferro, of a wealthy and respectable family in the neighborhood of Williamsburg; by neither of whom did he leave issue.

The exalted virtue of the man will also be a polar star to guide you in all matters which may touch that element of his character. But on that you will receive imputation from no man; for, as far as I knew, he never had an enemy. . . .

No man ever left behind him a character more venerated than George Wythe. His virtue was of the purest tint; his integrity inflexible, and his justice exact; of warm patriotism, and, devoted as he was to liberty, and the natural and equal rights of man, he might truly be called the Cato of his country, without the avarice of the Roman; for a more disinterested person never lived. Temperance and regularity in all his habits, gave him general good health, and his unaffected modesty and suavity of manners endeared him to every one. He was of easy elocution, his language chaste, methodical in the arrangement of his matter, learned and logical in the use of it, and of great urbanity in debate; not quick of apprehension, but, with a little time, profound in penetration, and sound in conclusion. In his philosophy he was firm, and neither troubling, nor perhaps trusting, any one with his religious creed, he left the world to the conclusion, that that religion must be good which could produce a life of such exemplary virtue.

His stature was of the middle size, well formed and proportioned, and the features of his face were manly, comely, and engaging. Such was George Wythe, the honor of his own, and the model of future times.

Thomas Jefferson: Autobiography, 17 January 1821

Mr. Wythe, while speaker in the two sessions of 1777, between his return from Congress and his appointment to the Chancery, was an able and constant associate in whatever was before the committee of the whole. His pure integrity, judgment and reasoning powers gave him great weight.

Abraham Yates, Jr.

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

[Mr. Yates] is a man whose ignorance and perverseness are only surpassed by his pertinacity and conceit. He hates all high-flyers, which is the appellation he gives to men of genius. He has the merit of being always the first man at the [state] Legislature. The people have been a long time in the *habit* of choosing him in different offices; and to the title of prescription, he adds that of being a preacher to their taste. He *assures* them, they are too poor to pay taxes. He is a staunch whig, that deserves to be pensioned by the British Ministry. He is commissioner of the loan office in this state.

Thomas Tillotson to Robert R. Livingston, May 1784

. . . an old booby . . .

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

All agreed finally to the enclosed [i.e., the Northwest Ordinance] except A. Yates—he appeared in this Case, as in most other not to understand the subject at all.

Otto's Biographies, Fall 1788

Protege of Governor Clinton; redoubtable enemy of the new plan of Government, always against the views of Congress. Delegate of this state to the great Philadelphia Convention; he left with his colleague Lansing, when he saw the shape affairs were taking.* To woo the people, he maintained that the profit from customs must suffice for the maintenance of government in New York and that it would be very wrong to sacrifice this profit to Congress and to substitute taxes for it, which would become quite onerous for the former.

As the Port of New York furnishes much of the merchandise of Connecticut and New Jersey, these two states would contribute to the maintenance of the government [of New York]. The enemies of Mr. Yates claim that this argument is only ostensible and that his true reason is to maintain

the importance of the Governor in order to fill the lucrative places under him, or to speculate with public funds. Besides, Mr. Yates is a man of the people and he is never in the company of Society.

*Here Otto confused Abraham Yates with Robert Yates, one of the three New York delegate to the Constitutional Convention.

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

[Alexander Hamilton allegedly said that] Yates was an old Dotard.

Robert Yates

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

Judge Yates is upright and respectable in his profession.

James Madison to George Washington, New York, 18 March 1787

The deputation [to the Constitutional Convention] of N. York consists of Col. [Alexander] Hamilton, Judge Yates and a Mr. [John] Lansing. The last two are said to be pretty much linked to the antifederal party here, and are likely of course to be a clog on their colleague.

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

Mr. Yates is said to be an able Judge. He is a Man of great legal abilities, but not distinguished as an Orator. Some of his Enemies say he is an anti-federal Man, but I discover no such disposition in him. He is about 45 years old, and enjoys a great share of health.

New York City Federalists (Alexander Hamilton) to the Supervisors of the City of Albany, New York, 18 February 1789

[In deciding to choose a non-partisan candidate to run for governor.] It appeared therefore most advisable to select some man of the opposite party, in whose integrity, patriotism and temper, confidence might justly be placed; however little his political opinions on the question lately agitated [i.e., the ratification of the Constitution], might be approved by those who were assembled upon the occasion.

Among the persons of this description, there were circumstances which led to a decision in favor of Judge Yates. And we flatter ourselves that this decision, to those who are acquainted with the situation of the state, will be most likely to appear well founded. It is certain, that as a man and a judge, he is generally esteemed. And though his opposition to the new Constitution was such as its friends cannot but disapprove; yet since the period of its adoption, his conduct has been tempered with a degree of moderation and regard to peace and decorum which entitle him to credit; and seem to point him out as a man likely to compose the differences of the state, and to unite its citizens in the harmonious pursuit of their common and genuine interest.

Of this at least we feel confident, that he has no personal revenge to gratify, no opponents to oppress, no partisans to provide for, nor any promises for personal purposes to be performed at the

public expense. On the contrary we trust he will be found to be a man, who looks with an equal eye on his fellow citizens, and who will be more ambitious of leaving a good name, than a good estate, to his posterity.

Massachusetts Magazine, March 1789

Exertions are now making in almost every part of it [New York], to prevent the re-election of Governor Clinton, and to place in the chair of government the Hon. Judge Yates—a gentleman, who, though formerly opposed to the constitution, is generally esteemed for his candour and moderation.

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

We are very much agitated in this Country with our approaching triennial Election for Governor—A new Candidate is proposed in opposition to Clinton—It is Judge Yates one of the Judges of our Supreme Court & altho he has been decidedly opposed to the new Constitution yet he is considered upon the whole as a much more virtuous, more independent & more advisable Man for our Chief Magistrate than the other. I am one of that part of the Community who are in favor of the Change & I have some Hopes of Success.

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

[In the election of the governor of New York between Robert Yates and John Jay.] Mr. Yates though Chief Justice of this State is a man of no respectability of character. He will sit tipling from morning to night in the dirtiest bar room of a tavern playing backgammon or checkers with the lowest of its inhabitants yet he is a great favorite with many people and will have more votes perhaps than [George] Clinton had at the last election [in 1792].

John Joachim Zubly

John Adams: Diary, 15 September 1775

Dr. Zubly is a Native of Switzerland, and a Clergyman of the Independent Persuasion, settled in a Parish in Georgia. He speaks, as it is reported, Several Languages, English, Dutch, French, Latin &c.—is reported to be a learned Man. He is a Man of a warm and zealous Spirit. It is said that he possesses considerable Property.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 17 September 1775

Georgia is now fully represented, and united to the other Twelve.

Their Delegates are Dr. Zubly, a Clergyman of the independent Persuasion who as a Parish in that Colony and a good deal of Property. He is a Native of Switzerland, is a Man of Learning and Ingenuity. It is said he is Master of several Languages, Greek, Latin, French, Dutch and English. In the latter it is said, he writes tolerably. He is a Man of Zeal and Spirit, as We have already seen upon several occasions.

However, as he is the first Gentleman of the Cloth who has appeared in Congress, I can not but wish he may be the last. Mixing the sacred Character, with that of the Statesman, as it is quite unnecessary at this Time of day, in these Colonies, is not attended with any good Effects. The Clergy are universally too little acquainted with the World, and the Modes of Business, to engage in civil affairs with any Advantage. Besides those of them, who are really Men of Learning, have conversed with Books so much more than Men, as to be too much loaded with Vanity, to be good Politicians.