

William Short to Thomas Jefferson, September 30, 1795 , from Thomas Jefferson and William Short Correspondence, Transcribed and Edited by Gerard W. Gawalt, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

William Short to Thomas Jefferson

Madrid Sept. 30. 1795

Dear Sir

I wrote you two letters from St. Yldefonso under the dates of the 2d & 3d of this month. The first was sent to Mr. Yznardi to be forwarded directly to you-the second was sent by duplicate under cover to the Sec. of State. My stay at St. Yldefonso was prolonged until within these few days contrary to my expectation when I last wrote to you. During this time I have recieved the duplicate & triplicate of your friendly letter of May 25th last-the original of which came to my hands as I informed you, on the 5th inst. I am additionally obliged by the trouble you were so good as to take of sending several copies of this letter. I will for great security send the present also by Lisbon & Cadiz, with directions for it to be put into the post office at the port where it may arrive in the U.S.

I have written to the Sec. of State in several of my late letters & particularly in that of Sep. 8 covering mine of the same date to you, on the subject of my funds in his hands & requesting him to turn them over to you, in order to relieve him from the trouble in the midst of his public occupations & that they might be employed by you under the general power of attorney I had formerly sent you. I hope before this gets to you you will have heard from the Sec. of State on the subject & particularly in forwarding to you the letter I sent under his cover. I am extremely desirous that you should have these funds at your

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disposition. It has been already an extreme inconvenience & loss to me that they should have been kept for me in America instead of being deposited at Amsterdam as were the funds of the other foreign agents. But it would have been still worse if I had been forced to receive them here in depreciated paper money according to the first plan of the Sec. of State with M. de Jaudenes The Sec. of State writes me that his plan was to accommodate Colo. Humphreys & therefore he took the arrangement with Jaudenes. This is not the first instance in which both my interest & my reputation have been sacrificed by the Government in order to accommodate others & I am really every day more & more at a loss to conceive why I should be treated in the unjust & partial manner that I have been by a Government that is supposed to have no affection or favoritism for its guide. At the time that I am treated in this manner the letters which I have received as well from the department of State; as the Treasury inform me of the President's extreme satisfaction with my conduct &c. &c & these compliments have been followed invariably wherever an opportunity has offered by such measures towards me on the part of the Government as tended directly to humiliate & dishonor a public agent in my position. But why do I trouble you on this subject. It is more proper for our personal & unreserved conference, in which I shall surprize you in renumerating some of the acts of the Government towards me. If the object has been to force me out of this place in order to make way for

a favorite, whom they will clothe with a more honorable character & greater emoluments, as I do not doubt, they have perfectly succeeded. Would to Heaven they had been so kind as to have put me into their secret. They would have gained time & have saved me a duration of my anxiety & avoided the odious measure of disgracing an agent, when they have been constantly flattering for the punctuality & ability of his conduct. The measure of sending Mr. Pinckney could not but be disgraceful to me & of this the sec. of state was so much aware that he has practiced with me, to call things by their true names, a degree of duplicity & deception that I am at a loss to account for. Would you suppose it possible that until Mr. Pinckney's arrival here, I never knew or suspected the true cause of his being sent, notwithstanding the letters I had received from the Sec. of State ex

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officio on the subject. I shall keep his correspondence with me as monument of what I will not characterize. His first letter to me on the subject was dated Nov. 9. 94. He pays me a great many compliments & says the President has taken this determination in order to mark in a solemn way the sensations excited in him by the delay of this Court, & to satisfy the People of Kentuckey &c. Under this idea I remained until Mr. Pinckney arrived. He then shewed me the letter of the Sec. of State to him in which he says expressly, the cause of the business being taken out of my hands is the letter which he inclosed him & the conference thereon. This letter was from Jaudenes to the Sec. of State dated Aug. 16. 94 in which he says he is ordered by the King to complain of Mr. Carmichael, & states my conduct also as not muy circonspecta, & desires another person to be sent to terminate the negotiation. On this letter the sec. of State had a conference with Jaudenes who said that he did not know the cause of the dissatisfaction with me, but conjectured I was disagreeable as being the author of a memorial whilst Chargé des affaires at Paris, which had displeased this court. (This memorial was my letter to Montmorin on the navigation of the Missipi written by your order whilst Sec. of State & couched in the terms that Montmorin desired & approved). Thus the Sec. of State gives me one reason for Pinckney's being sent here & to Pinckney a different one. Jaudenes 's letter to him was the 16th of Aug. he wrote to me fully on the 18th of Aug. & did not say a single word of Jaudenes denunciation & was silent respecting it until he wrote to Pinckney in Nov. last. Whilst he thus concealed this denunciation from me instead of communicating it to me that I might clear it up, he sends it to Pinckney to shew to me, & so far from keeping it to himself & Pinckney, he has the letter of Jaudenes copied by one of his clerks & the conference thereon by another-so that he, two of his clerk, Jaudenes & all his confidants knew of this denunciation against me, & another person being sent here by the President to supplant me, that is to say that I am disgraced & dishonored in the knowlege & opinion of these people, without the Sec. of State even communicating to me this false denunciation.

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Whilst my reputation is thus wantonly committed by the Sec. of State to the discretion of his clerks & of Jardenes, he is informing me how tender he is of my feelings & that the Presidents message in nominating Mr. Pinckney shall leave no doubt of the approbation of my conduct. He mentions in a subsequent letter that he will send me that message but this according to custom he forgot & the two Philadelphia newspapers of Nov. & Dec. which have come here share that it was not printed. It remains probably buried & unnoticed in the archives of the Senate, whilst Mr. Pinckney's supermission is public & proclaims my disgrace, as those who do not know of the President's message will probably not suspect that if my conduct was approved of, the President would deprive the U.S. at a critical & distressing moment of the services of their minister at London & subject them to the heavy expense of sending & suporting him & his suite here. But this is not all the inconvenience- the whole of the last winter has been lost by this means to the U.S. Mr. Pinckney arrived here the 28th of June & circumstances are more favorable to the U.S. during the last winter than they are now or ever can be again at the time this Court thought out treaty with England, an advantageous one to the U.S. & a final settlement of all differences with that country. They now know the contrary. They were then at war with France. They are now at peace & at his moment the Env. Exty. is willing & probably will accept such an arrangement with this Country, as it would seem to me the U.S. would certainly not have accepted during the last winter & which I certainly as their agent would not accept even now. So much for the conduct of our wise administration in the arrangement of this business. Advantages have been lost for the U.S. & this Government has trifled & fooled with them as long as they could & will end by settling the business in their own way. They will agree to the limits, promise the navigation which they will keep or not according to circumstances & adjourn any satisfaction for spoliations to the Calendior Grec. I had almost forgotten to mention to you that on seeing the copy of the letter of Jaudenes denouncing my conduct, I had an explanation with the First Minister. He assured me in presence of Mr. Pinckney that he had recieved no such directions as to me, but as to Mr. Carmichael- he said on the contrary that he was ready & willing to continue & complete the negotiation with me &c. &c. I sent him a copy of Jaudenes's letter & to it he has informed

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me in the name of the King by letter, their satisfaction with me & my conduct. Thus you see I have been dishonored. The U.S. put to a considerable expence-the whole of the last winter, & consequently the advantages it presented for this negotiation, lost on the vague, unauthorized, & calumneous denunciation of an unknown, ignorant & impertinent puppy, who has probably been taught by Mr. de Gardoqui, this means of taking revenge for the complaint made against him by your order of June 93 & for this business having been to Mr. de Gardoquis mortification, transfered from his hands to those of the Duke de la Roche.

But to quit this subject & proceed to the subjects of your letter-most of which I touched on in mine of the 2d & 3d inst. As to the laying out more money in the augmentation of the Indian camp tract or in clearing that already purchased, I should according to my judgment prefer a suspension thereof, unless the annual income thereby should become a greater rate pcent on the money laid out. viz. if by clearing, tenants sure & solid could be got to take it. Indeed I did not suppose before recieving your letter that tenants could be got at all-but I see there are four on my land & one of them good. If such as he cd. be got, so as to yield say 5 p.cent p. ann. sure & clear, on the purchase money I shd. like even a larger sum to be placed, but I suppose it difficult if not impossible to find many such tenants in that part of the country.

As to canal shares I concieved them a safe advantageous placement & particularly by having some shares in different well chosen canals. I find from M. Pinckney that he does not concieve there will be a productive revenue to the actionnaires, though he considers it very advantageous to the public & as the James River shares were selling at 18/ in the pound or 10 pcent below par, it would seem that the productiveness were questionable there. Yet I am well pleased with having some of the shares you mention having purchased 20 & an intention to purchase more. I know not the quantum of each share & of course know not how much has been placed in that way, but unless you should be of an opposite opinion, I shall be satisfied not to add to those shares wch. shall have been already purchased. Should more canal purchases be made, I should prefer some on

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the Potowmac & some in the Norfolk Canal. I observe this mentioned in Coxe's review of the US. I suppose it advanced towards it's completion at present. However, under present circumstances I should be as willing to postpone any further vestments until I shall return to America unless in something that produced already an annual rent equal to that of the funds sold. As the interest of the funds is paid quarterly & regularly-if it be immediately vested in more funds also productive, it is a kind of compound interest that must increase the capital rapidly-the only objection is my having too great a proportion of my all in paper.

I am much obliged to Colo. Skipwith for having given you the information respecting Griffin's debt. I know not how I came to have a claim against Griffin-it must have been by some transaction between Colo. Skipwith & him. I must have been extremely & inconcievably negligent in my affairs on leaving America, as I am quite ignorant of many particulars. But I recollect having originally nothing in any way with Griffin. I left my affairs first in B. Harrison's hands & from him Colo. Skipwith recd. them, & managed them until he turned them over to Donald. Colo. Skipwith has written to me at different times that he should send me a statement of his portion-but this he has never done & for some years has not written to me at all. I left with B. Harrison the military certificates I had recd. from Harvie, I think they amount to £5180. There was cash also to be recd. from Harvie for my negroes-a small sum 100£ I think to be recd. from J. Mayo for an horse sold & about 40£ from R. Randolph

of Curles. I have never known what part of these sums B. Harrison had recoverd-nor what sum Colo. Skipwith recieved from him. Browne sent me an account of the certificates he recd. from Colo. Skipwith, but I think he mentioned here were more to be recd. from him, at the time he wrote me. It is probable there will never by any settlement of what passed previously to Browne's or Donald's being employed unless after my return to America. From that time as they are accustomed to account-keeping & as the business became more simple the question will be clear & indeed I suppose Browne's accts. state it fully. I did not understand from your letter of Dec. 23. 93. that this had been done at that time, as you mention there, the doubts as to certain items. I hope you afterwards procured from

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Browne the explanation of these as it was then your intention to ask them. From your same letter I suppose also that Browne had not rendered you an account of the sums he had recieved from Colo. Skipwith for me or of his gestion up to that date-viz. in what manner the sums he turned over to you were produced-but merely turned over the sums. Would it not be well to ask from him an account of his gestion? If so I will thank you to do it & as he will certainly have this account on his books, it will be only giving him the trouble to transcribe it.

You wrote me on your leaving Philadephia the sum in certificates which you then had enregistered in my name, & that you should leave a broker to act as to the interest accruing, which you are so good as to render immediately productive, as your last letter informs me & for which I cannot too warmly & sincerely express to you my thanks. I beg you to continue the same with such funds as remain in that state of producing interest. As I mentioned above I am willing that what I now hold should remain in that state, from this consideration, as it must increase the capital considerably & rapidly & requires less trouble than any other kind of property & I am really ashamed of the trouble I give you at any rate. I hope you will believe me when I assure you that a great source of satisfaction which I derive from it is the proof which it is to me of your friendship.

I regret much having not asked you to send me the address of the broker you employ at Philadelphia, as it would have been very convenient to me to have had some person there to whom I could apply on different occasions, such as sending me newspapers, the reports of the offices of state &c. &c. I should by this means have certainly had the possibility of procuring one way or another the message of the President nominating Mr. Pinckney here & the expressions of wch. the Sec. of State says will be so agreeable to me. I have never yet seen it, though the Sec. thinks he has sent it. It is the same as to newspapers. He sends huge packets of them by fits & starts, to London, where they are deposed & will remain forever, notwithstanding I have written to him that he might as well send them

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to Canton in China. But it would seem as if in his geography London & Madrid were two seaports near to each other.

Although I shall have no occasion now for the broker in this way yet it will be useful to me to have such a person, in other respects as long as I remain in Europe & at this moment I shd. be glad to know him in order to send to him my letters for you, as they would probably go surer in that way. I will thank you therefore to be so good as to send me his address, under cover either to our Minister or Consul at

Paris-or our Minister or Mr. Donald in London.

It will probably be a convenience to me also whilst at Paris to know the amount of funds at my disposition in Philadelphia, & I should be much obliged to you therefore to send me, or direct the broker to send me the statement thereof. I imagine he renders you quarterly accts. as his receipts are quarterly. I will thank you to continue to give him your directions as usual, notwithstanding his sending me this statement, as I shall give him no directions for his acting, but shall take the liberty of troubling you to ask your counsel in the case of wishing them to be disposed of in any other way.

I observe by some late newspapers recd. from the ports that there is a bank at Philadelphia wch. was the first established & that it is more sought after than that of the U.S. -as the shares are more above par then the latter. I regret now having not asked the Sec. of State to place my 900 dollars in this bank, as it has a quality which I like much, being as I suppose not connected with Government as the bank of the U.S. is. When I wrote to ask the Sec. of State to have this sum delivered to you, or placed by himself, one great object with me was that the placement might be made without a moments longer delay so as that by beginning to produce an interest, it might indemnify me for the interest I was obliged to pay or the sums taken up for my purchases & expences here. I fear however that this object was not attained, as the letter of the Sec. of State informed me in Nov. 94 that he had placed 3000 dollars-his letter of Feb. 25. 95. is the first which

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mentions the rest having been placed. He says there he had previously informed me of the completion of this placement, but in this he was mistaken, as his previous letter mentioned only the 3000 dollars-but the sec's correspondence is full of these kind of errors on public affairs as well as private, which have on several occasions given me much perplexity and embarrassment, & I find I am not the only diplomatic correspondent who complains of him on this acct.

I shall be extremely happy to learn that he has turned over to you the funds he holds for me & I regret extremely having not desired him to deliver to you the 9000 dollars-but at that time I was uncertain what would be done on this subject, as the bill had been drawn by Jaudenes payable here I shall at any rate be a considerable loser by the Sec. of State having undertaken to dispose of these funds instead of giving them to you, as in the latter case the interest accruing on the funds you would have had purchased, would have been rendered productive, whereas I cannot expect the Sec. of State will have taken that trouble.

So much for my cash affairs. There is another part of my business in which I have been also negligent. I was to receive from Harvie certain Westrn Lands (viz. # of 15,000 acres, # was to go to Colo. J. Campbell for locating) & 1000 acres of Green Sea land. I remember that Harvie & myself drew articles of agreement in Richmond by which he was to convey to me the patents of these western & Eastern lands. But I am ashamed to own that I know not what became of these articles of agreement. I suppose the copy belonging to me was left with B. Harrison, & was probably taken up from him by Colo. Skipwith-but whether he or my brother, it I know not. I shd. esteem

it a favor if you would be so good as to enquire about them of Colo. Skipwith or Harvie. It might not be proper perhaps to let the latter know my ignorance of what has become of the articles of agreement. I shd. be glad also to know whether these lands have been located or what has been done. As to the western I wrote to my brother a long time ago, but he probably never got my letter as in one he has since written to me he makes no mention of

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the subject. He would be the best hand to manage this business of the western lands, & I shd. write to him if I did not despair of my letter getting to his hands as I find those I have written have miscarried. But if he shd. perchance come into Virginia or chance shd. throw him in your way I will thank you to repeat to him my request already made that he should act & settle matters with Colo. Campbell as to our undivided interests in these lands, as he shall judge proper. It wd. be necessary they should be looked after in some way. As to the Eastern lands I know not how to home at any knowlege respecting them unless it shd. be from Harvie himself from whom I imagine it is proper to know whether he is ready & able to convey the patent (at the time I purchased it was not patented).

I would thank you to inform me, if you know & if not, to enquire whether Harvie is satisfied with the land &c. I sold him & whether he has kept it or sold it again.

Some two or three years after its date a letter from Mazzei found its way to me here. It with several others had been detained for me at the Hague by poor old doting Dumas more than two years before he thought of giving them to Mr. Adams a long time after his arrival at the Hague. Mazzei's was principally to cover one for you-as it was old & bulky I at first hesitated whether I ought to subject you to the postage-but on the whole I have determined to inclose it to the Sec. of State, who will forward it to you from Phila.

You have no doubt heard of Malespina the Spanish circumnavigator. He is now preparing the account of his late voyage. It will be some time I fear before it will be printed & published. He is a great admirer of your principles & writings. Your notes on Virginia are he tells me his vade mecum. As a tribute of his attachment he gave me for you a great variety of highland rice properly & securely done up in different parcels in a tin cannister & with a short memorial on the subject of this grain. I sent it to the sec. of state last winter in the cannister to be forwarded to you. I hope you will have recd. it-but on further enquiry on this business since M. Pinckney's arrival here, I fear this species will not answer in our climate from the want of the constant rains which support it in Asia. I observe however that Coxe

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in his view of the U.S. says the highland rice has been used on the Ohio. It wd. be more precious than gold if it should succeed in the U.S.

Cortez's letters were as I informed you sent by Mr. Carmichael with his books to Cadiz. As you have not recd. them, Blake probably did not carry them from thence. The widow who went to Cadiz to embark promised me, in that case to carry this book & send it to you as she knew her husband destined it for you. If you shd. not have recd. it yet, you would do well to write to Blake who will certainly be acquainted with Mr. Carmichael & exactly procure it for you. I have found it absolutely impossible to procure another edition here & indeed this was obtained as I mentioned to you by the meere accident. There is certainly not another to be had in all Spain.

I mentioned to you in my last having sent my resignation to the President. How happy would it have been for me if I had never accepted this fatal mission. The result of which is that after spending the best years of my life, after having literally grown grey in the service of my country, I return there with the stigma arising from the conduct of the President towards me in this last instance more particularly, though in other instances also & with a sense of injustice on the part of a man I was disposed to admire as being just & free from favoritism & prejudice (for nobody wished to believe this more than I did) & disgusted with the ungenerous uncandid & deceptive double conduct of an administration under which I am to pass the rest of my life-how different would have been my feelings-how different my satisfaction with myself-my country & its Government if meer bar justice & impartiality had been exercised towards me, instead of compliments on one hand followed by injustice & disgrace on the other. Would to Heaven I were the only sufferer. But this double delaying, & I may say inattentive & ignorant conduct of administration in the negotiation with Spain has lost the advantages of a crisis wch. will never recur to so great a degree & wch. if properly employed would have put us in the way of securing an admission to commerce with the Floridas & Spanish islands & would have enabled the U.S. in being the mediator between France & Spain to have operated perhaps a great

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change in the colonial commercial system of both, so far as concerns their respective W. India islands & have given the U.S. a joint admission with them thereon as to commerce.

You state in your letter of May 25 the cause of my not having the mission at Paris. The cause you mention would give rise to a great many reflexions on my part, which I suppress but if that were really the cause I may add it is a strong proof of the avidity with which the President caught at what might exclude me, & if that had not presented itself, he would certainly have found out or made some other. Certainly none could be weaker or less valid than that you mention-viz. a regular complaint against me by LeBrun. Before the late nomination for France, LeBrun had been executed as an enemy to his Country & all his friends executed or driven into exile by those who then held the reins of Government. Can it be reasonably supposed that any complaint made by LeBrun, would have been an objection in the eyes of those to whom the President sent the late minister Plenipo. Can it be supposed for a moment that the President would have considered this circumstance an objection if he had wished to appoint me? On the contrary if Morris had been in my situation the President would have thought LeBrun's complaint a favorable circumstance in the eyes of those who then governed. Besides he had time to communicate to me, & justice required that he shd. have done it Le Brun's complaint that I might have justified myself.

Pardon so long a letter. It is the last I shall write to you from hence. Mr. Pinckney expects to terminate his business in a few days & we shall go to Paris together. I leave Mr. Rutledge, his Secretary, as my locum tenens until my successor shall arrive. I beg you my dear sir to let me hear from you as soon as you recieve this & believe me unalterably, your friend & servant

W: Short

RC (Jefferson Papers, DLC)