

**Thomas Jefferson to Albert Gallatin, August 31,
1806, from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve
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Leicester Ford.**

TO THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY J. MSS. (ALBERT GALLATIN.)

Monticello, August 31, 1806.

Dear Sir, —I now return you the papers respecting the Louisiana Board of Commissioners, with only the alteration of omitting the words in the Xth instruction, about which you had doubted yourself. At the same time it is without confidence I give any opinion on this subject, having always considered your knowledge on it so exact as to supersede the necessity of my studying it minutely. If any opinion in aid of yours be necessary, I am sorry we could not call in that of the Attorney General, who is acquainted with the subject.

I return also the papers on the Western roads. I have not here a complete copy of the laws of the last session, and particularly no copy of that respecting the road from the Mississippi to the Ohio. If I recollect it rightly, it authorized us to open but one road. If so, the branchings proposed by Mr. Badollet may be beyond our powers. At any rate, they should be secondary, and not attempted till we know there will be money left after accomplishing the principal one. I submit to you, therefore, whether we should not suspend all measures respecting the branching roads. With respect to the great and important road which is the principal object:

1. Why should not the guide-line from St. Louis to Vincennes be direct, instead of bending to B?

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2. I like your idea of straightening the guide-line from Vincennes, although it may pass through a corner of the Indian lands. But if necessary to cross the river at A on account of the ford, should not the guide-line go thence direct to Cincinnati, as I have pencilled it, or to Dayton, if that be the shortest way to Chillicothe? and even in that case the fork to Cincinnati might be transferred to C.

3. But the post-office map (the only one I have here) must be egregiously wrong if Dayton is not much out of the direct road from Vincennes to Chillicothe. According to that Cincinnati is in the direct line. But perhaps the deviation by Dayton is from economy, and to spare our fund the

expense of opening the road from Cincinnati to Chillicothe and Marietta. But I doubt whether for a temporary reason we ought to do a permanent injury, especially as we may with certainty expect that Congress will enlarge the appropriation.

As to the branches of the roads, if it be lawful and advisable to extend our operations to them, I presume that to Louisville C. H. will be the most important. But should the fund hold out, that to Kaskaskia may be taken in ultimately. I think Mr. Badollet is right in proposing that the road shall not be opened more than a rod wide. Accept affectionate salutations, and assurances of constant esteem and respect.