

D. T. Jr.

Lancaster of 13th June 1781

Colonel Wood just now honoured me with the perusal of your Letter to him of the 9th instant, wherein I observe the Council have had information that the Prisoners of the Convention Troops lately arrived from Virginia, may be accommodated within the Piquets at this place, & direct their continuing here.

I beg leave to represent to Council that before the arrival of the convention Troops, there were near eight hundred Prisoners of War at this Port stationed at the Barracks within the Piquets, under my direction, and among them a great number sick of a putrid fever which gave great uneasiness to the Inhabitants, as there was the greatest probability of its being communicated to the Town —

Upon the arrival of the British of the convention Prisoners, it was expected that the Guard who came with them would have proceeded on with them to the Eastward, but as they were hastily assembled at York Town & were determined to return, I advised Major Bailey (who had charge of them before Col. Wood's arrival) to secure them under the guard then on duty here — we accordingly turned a number of them into the Barracks, but as they would not contain the whole (there being near five hundred Women & Children among them) the married People were permitted to encamp on the common outside of the Stockade — where they still remain (except a few who have taken shelter in an old continental Stable) but badly sheltered from the Weather —

As we expected their stay would be short we apprehended no inconvenience from their being crowded in the Barracks for a few days; but I can assure Council that notwithstanding all the care and attention of several of the Physicians and Surgeons of the convention Army, who continued here till within these few days & were so kind as to advise with and assist Doctor Houston who attends the Prisoners here under my direction, this fatal disorder has gained ground & there are now at least a hundred & fifty sick

sick in these greatly crowded Barracks, without a prospect of its abating, —
the Rooms which we had before set apart for Hospital Rooms cannot
contain them, — They are scattered throughout the Barracks — & I know not
a House in or near the Town which could be had for a hospital —

I cannot think the Gentleman who gave the information to Council
could have had an Idea that there were near two thousand Men, Women
& Children among the Prisoners of War & Convention at this place, when he
gave his opinion to Council that they might be accommodated in the Barracks
here, — nor could he have known of their unhealthy situation — I should
think half that number of healthy Persons would fill them sufficiently
at any time; but in their present sickly state I could wish even that
number reduced —

My duty as Commissary of Prisoners obliges me to trouble
Council on this occasion — it is necessary, as well for the safety of
the Inhabitants as the security of the Prisoners, that they should be
kept compact and as free from disorders as possible — the
Barracks here cannot contain the whole of the convention Troops
with their Family's, & the Prisoners of War before stationed here,
the Gaol is filled with Sailors & others, & it is very difficult
to prevent those from straggling who are encamped outside the
Stockades —

Permit me also to mention, Sir, that in expectation of the Convention
Troops being removed from hence, I yesterday received from Reading
from Col. Woods' Party between fifty & sixty Prisoners of War (not of
the convention Troops, tho' bro't. with him from Virginia) in exchange
for which I was to have given him about the like number of
convention Troops who had straggled from their quarters in Virginia
& been confined here before his arrival — and I have this
minute Letters by an Officer mentioning the approach of another
Party from Fishkill, lately taken, & who at the particular request
of his Excellency Genl. Washington are ordered to be kept closely
confined, & I hardly know where to place them — Tho' the Gaol
must be their station —

I am Sir with the highest respect
Your most obedt^t Serv^r
Will^l Atlee

His Excellency Joseph Reed Esquire

His Excellency Jos.
President

Reed Esquire
the State

Pennsylvania

John H. Reed
1861