

Unpublished Letters Of Jasper Yeates

With Added Notes on Lancaster County's Part in the Whiskey Rebellion

These letters are published through the courtesy of Mrs. Bertha Cochran Landis and the late Edward Shippen Thompson:

Dear Sir

Lancaster October 1st 1794.

I yesterday received as Attorney in Fact for Mr. Meredith £148 13/3 which I am desirous of paying to him & getting him to subscribe the inclosed Receipt.

Mr. Bradford promised me to give you a Check for 336 Dollars my Expences &c. on the Western Mission.¹ Genl. Hand's & my own quarterly Interest on the funded Debt will more than pay the Ballance. Whatever remains, together with my Quarter's Salary, you will please to send up to me in Bank Post Notes at your Leisure.

Our Troop of Cavalry marched yesterday to Carlisle under Captn. Hand: Our Infantry set off this morning.² They are a fine Body of Men, well appointed. I trust the Insurrections of the Western Country will soon be suppressed, and that by a prudent & spirited Administration of the Laws such Violences will not readily be again committed. The great Difficulty will be to prevent the Commission of Injuries by the Army when it arrives among the Insurgents, & directing their Operations among the proper Objects.

The cold weather of these two last days will happily operate against the Spreading of the Yellow Fever. Heaven grant you may soon be rid of it!

We are all well & join in Love to you, Mrs. Burd & the Children.

I am Dear Sir

Your Affectionate Brother

J. Yeates

E Burd Esq.

Dear Sir

Lancaster 4 Oct. 1794.

I have received your Favor of the 2d Instant, & agreeably to your Desire now send you the Packets which were put into your Sister's Hands, together

with two Recognizances on Writs of Inor [?] lately taken before me.

It gives me inexpressible Pleasure to find that the Progress of the Yellow Fever has been checked. It would be a dreadful Circumstance indeed, that so noble a City should be again exposed to its Ravages in so short a Period of Time. The Instances you mention of the Contagion not spreading, are very striking to prove that its malignancy exists no longer amongst us.

We appear like a Town in Flanders during the Heat of War. Armed Bodies of Men are constantly passing through, Expresses going in every Direction & the Streets kept alive by the Rumbling of Waggon's all Sunday. I trust the Insurgents will eventually be humbled & brought to an intire Submission. Every Account from the Westward assures us of the Terror & Dismay which pervades that whole Country. I this afternoon received a very handsome Letter from the Secretary of State, expressive of the Sense of the President & his own respecting the Execution of our late Mission.

We have so many Reports of the Proceedings of the Judiciary at Carlisle, that we know not at length what to credit. There is no Doubt I believe, that Warrants have issued against a Number of Rioters, that some have been committed to Gaol & others dismissed on their Recognizances.³

Your Sister & the Girls join me in Love to you,

Mrs. Burd & the Family. I am Dear Sir

Your Affectionate Brother

J. Yeates

E Burd Esq.

These letters are addressed:

Edward Burd Esquire

Fourth Street near Walnut Street

Philadelphia

Per Favor of Mr. Marshall.

(Jasper Yeates was married to Sarah, sister of Edward Burd.)

The laid paper on which the messages are written have the familiar watermark, C & I B.

¹ President George Washington appointed James Ross, Jasper Yeates and William Bradford as a commission to go into Western Pennsylvania and endeavor to bring to an amicable settlement the trouble commonly called "The Whiskey Rebellion." Harsh judgment will be tempered against these "insurrectionists" when it is known that conditions were brought to pass owing to certain economic factors. Wheat then was so plentiful that it was ground and fed to the cattle, for freight on a barrel of flour from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia would cost nearly as much as the flour would bring in the Philadelphia market. Rye, corn and barley would bring no price as food for man or beast.

Therefore to get money with which to purchase salt, iron and other necessities, the western settlers distilled their grain, thus reducing it to a cheap and profitable portable form as whiskey. This they sent east over the mountains or down the Ohio River to Kentucky, where markets were found. They felt keenly the disadvantage that distance put them to against the eastern farmers whose nearness to markets made their transportation charges negligible. Of course, their violence against the collectors of the excise tax could not be condoned, and the majesty of the law had to be maintained.

² William Michael was a member of this company. After a call for militia by the President, Michael in his diary wrote: "According to a requisition of the President, such numbers of the most respectable characters turned out voluntarily that I, with the additional number of forty-four from this town [Lancaster] turned out volunteers to defend our Republican Constitution, after being handsomely equipped and in uniform. On October the first, our company marched from this town westward. It was truly a melancholy time in town upon the occasion, as at that time we expected to have a dangerous enemy to contend with."

Jeremiah Mosher was captain of this company, but in a short time was promoted to colonel of a regiment of infantry.

³ No heavy penalty was placed on any of the offenders. David Bradford, leader of the Insurrection, was granted a pardon by the President of the United States in 1799 through the interposition of Andrew Ellicott, Esq., commissioner for ascertaining the boundary line between the Spanish Territory and the United States. This was the Andrew Ellicott who resided in Lancaster from 1801 to 1813.

General Henry Miller was Quartermaster in the Whiskey Expedition.

Stephen Stephenson was a captain in the same campaign. He was a store-keeper of Elizabethtown.

Captain Henry Haines raised a company in Donegal for service in the Whiskey Insurrection.

Robert Jenkins, of Windsor Forge, "during the prevalence of the Whiskey Insurrection in Pennsylvania took an active part in the field against the insurrectionists, and gained much credit in the campaign."

Ellis and Evans' *History of Lancaster County*, pp. 226, 616 and 698.

Pennsylvania Archives, second series, vol. 4, pp. 14, 136, 137 and 193.

Rupp's *History of Lancaster County*, p. 298.

Egle's *History of Pennsylvania*, p. 220.

Egle's *Notes and Queries*, fourth series, vol. 1, p. 119.

Papers Lancaster County Historical Society, vol. 25, p. 99.