

## TRANSCRIPTION

### George Washington Letter to Thomas Jefferson Concerning the Constitutional Convention, May 30, 1787

Philadelphia 30<sup>th</sup> May 1787

Dear Sir,

It has so happened, that the letter which you did me the honor of writing to me the 14<sup>th</sup> of November last, did not come to my hands till the first of the present month; and at a time when I was about to set off for the Convention of the States appointed to be holden in this City the 14<sup>th</sup> Inst<sup>t</sup> Consequently, it has not been in my power, at an earlier period, to reply to the important matters which are the subjects thereof. This, possibly, may be to be regretted if the house of de Coulteaux should, in the meantime, have directed its enquiries to Philadelphia, Baltimore, or New York without having had the advantages which are to be derived from the extension of the inland navigations of the Rivers Potomack and James, delineated to them. Silence on this head may be construed into inferiority, when the fact (in my judgment) is, that Alexandria or Richmond, provided the communication with the latter can be conducted by the Greenbrier and Great Kanhawa (as some aver and others doubt), has infinite advantages over either of the Towns just mentioned. With respect to James River, I am not able to speak with so much precision as of the former, with which (having had opportunities to be so) I am much better acquainted.—To this therefore I shall chiefly confine my observations.

*[Here continues eleven pages of the letter concerning the appropriateness of Alexandria for the fur trade and Washington's opinion on a French encyclopedia entry on the Society of the Cincinnati]*

For the reason I have mentioned, I cannot think it expedient for me to go into an investigation of the writers deductions. I shall accordingly content myself with giving you some idea of the part I have acted, posterior to the first formation of the Association.

When I found that you and many of the most respectable characters in the Country would entirely acquiesce with the Institution as altered and amended in the first General Meeting of 1784, and that the objections against the obnoxious parts were wholly done away, I was prevailed upon to accept the Presidency. Happy in finding (so far as I could learn by assiduous enquiries) that all the clamours and jealousies which had been excited against the original association, had ceased; I judged it a proper time in the last Autumn, to withdraw myself from any farther Agency in the business, and to make my retirement compleat agreably to my original plan. I wrote circular letters to all the State Societies, announcing my wishes, informing that I did not propose to be at the triennial meeting, and requesting not to be re-elected President.—This was the last step of a public nature I expected ever to have taken. But having since been appointed by my Native State to attend the National Convention, and having been pressed to a compliance in a manner which it hardly becomes me to describe; I have in a measure, been obliged to sacrifice my own Sentiments, and to be present in Philadela. at the very time of the General Meeting of the Cincinnati, after which I was not at liberty to decline the Presidency without placing myself in an extremely disagreeable situation with relation to that brave and faithful class of men, whose persevering friendship I had experienced on so many trying occasions.

The business of this Convention is as yet too much in embryo to form any opinion of the result. Much is expected from it by some, but little by others, and nothing by a few.—That something is necessary, all will agree; for the situation of the General Government (if it can be

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called a government) is shaken to its foundation and liable to be overset by every blast.—In a word, it is at an end, and unless a remedy is soon applied, anarchy and confusion will inevitably ensue. But having greatly exceeded the bounds of a letter already I will only add assurances of that esteem, regard, and respect with which

I have the honor to be

Dear Sir

Y<sup>r</sup> most obed. &

Very H<sup>ble</sup> Serv.,

G: WASHINGTON

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