

**THOMAS JEFFERSON
CORRESPONDENCE**

**PRINTED FROM THE ORIGINALS
IN THE COLLECTIONS OF
WILLIAM K. BIXBY**

**WITH NOTES BY
WORTHINGTON CHAUNCEY FORD**

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

BOSTON

1916

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ALWAYS!

**THE PLIMPTON PRESS
NORWOOD MASS U.S.A**

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every part of the Union, yet as (from the infant state of taste and literature in America) no worthy Edition has yet paid the Author or Compiler, I am obliged to take security in a subscription against too inconvenient a loss.

You see, Sir, I take the liberty to address you as a philosopher and literary man, not as Vice President of the United States, fully perswaded that were you in the highest trust which those states can give, and which has been the ardent wish of the virtuous and undeluded, these qualities would still maintain their undiminished estimation in your mind. On them I rely for pardon for this confident intrusion, and beg leave further to subscribe it with the utmost respect and esteem, Sir, your obed't and very humble Serv't,

ISAAC LEDYARD

FROM SAMUEL MILLER ¹

New-York, March 4, 1800.

SIR,

I HAD the honor to receive your polite favour of the 25 Feby. a few days ago. Your kind reception of my Sermon,² and the respectful opinion of it which you are so good as to express, give me great pleasure, and demand my thanks. Had I been so forgetful of my principles and duty as a minister of the Gospel, as to imitate the impious extravagance of many other eulogists, my political creed would have prevented me from falling into such an error.

The application which I once made to you, and which you are so good as to recollect, and to request me to renew, was on the following subject — Having been, for some time past, engaged in collecting materials with a view to writing the history of New-York, I wished to obtain and incorporate in the work, as much information respecting the *Indians* who have, at different periods, inhabited the district of country once called *New Netherlands* (which you recollect included New-York New Jersey, part of Pennsylvania, and the State of Delaware) as I could possibly procure. Knowing your

¹ Rev. Samuel Miller (1769-1850), at this time pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, New York city, and after 1813 professor of church history and government in Princeton College. The material, of which he was in quest, probably went into his *Brief Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century*, published in 1803, and in London, in 1805.

² Sermon, December 29, 1799, on Washington. Jefferson's letter upon it is in the Jefferson Papers at Washington.

extensive and accurate acquaintance with most of the usual topics of enquiry, respecting the Aborigines of America, I took the liberty, about 18 months ago, to request from you such information as you might possess on this subject, in addition to that which you have presented to the public in your "Notes on Virginia."¹ In answer to this application you expressed some doubt whether your papers would furnish much more information, to my purpose, than you had already published; but were so polite, at the same time, as to promise to inspect them, on your return home, and to communicate the result of your examination. Not having since heard from you on the subject I concluded, either that, on examining your papers, there was nothing which you thought proper to communicate; or that your numerous, and more important avocations had put the whole business out of your mind.

As I am still engaged in perusing the same object, and still wish for the same information, your remembrance does not come too late. Any thing, Sir, relating to the Indians before mentioned, even a single fact, however apparently trivial, which tends either directly or indirectly to throw light on their character, history, or language, will be to me a most acceptable communication, and will be acknowledged with gratitude.

I hope you will excuse the liberty I take in asking your opinion of Dr. Bartons "New Views," etc.² You have doubtless observed, that his information does not, in all respects, agree with that delivered by Mr. Thomson,³ in his remarks subjoined to your "Notes."

There is one small event in the history of New-York, connected with Virginia. *Stith*, your historian, if I mistake not, informs us, that early in the last century, Sir Sam'l Argall was sent on an expedition to the northward, by the Governor of Virginia, in the course of which he entered the mouth of the Hudson, found a small Dutch colony on Manhattan Island, subdued them, took a formal acknowledgment, in writing, of their submission to his government, and caused the said acknowledgment to be recorded in Virginia.⁴ As

¹ In August, 1811, Miller acknowledges a copy of the *Notes on Virginia* sent to him by Jefferson.

² Benjamin Smith Barton, *New Views on the Origin of the Tribes and Nations of America*, printed at Philadelphia, 1797.

³ Charles Thomson.

⁴ Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation* (M. H. S. ed.), 1. 86n.

this fact has in my view, some extensive relations, I wish to ascertain it fully and accurately. If the record above referred to were really made, and if it be still preserved, would it not be possible to obtain a copy of all that appears in the archives of the State, of that transaction? If convenient, I should consider your agency in favoring the attainment of this object, as conferring on me a very great obligation.

I take the liberty of inclosing for your perusal a copy of a circular letter, which I have sent to Gentlemen in different parts of our State. Since the date of this, I have had another struck off, containing more queries; but of the latter I have no copy left. If on any of the topics referred to in the letter, and the subjoined queries, you can give me any hints to direct or answer my enquiries, you will do me a very great favour. I have the honor to be, Sir, with the highest respect, your obliged and obedient servant,

SAML. MILLER

Recd. Mar. 7

FROM JOSEPH YOUNG

HONORED SIR,

WHEN I sat down to address you, my first intention was to apologize for the liberty I have taken in troubling you with my speculations on Astronomy, Physiology, and Mechanics, at this critical period, when the most important national concerns demand your attention, and doubtless occupies all the faculties of your mind; But when I considered that the great Doctor Franklin, and the celebrated Ritenhouse, had both gone to study Astronomy in the upper regions, and that you, their worthy successor delighted to patronize and encourage American improvements in arts and science, I conceived a laboured apology to be unnecessary, because I was convinced, that if the work contained any useful discovery or improvement, you would freely afford a leisure hour to peruse it.¹ But if it contains nothing valuable, all that could be said concerning it, cannot give it any intrinsic worth, or save it from merited oblivion: But if happily it should gain your approbation, either in the whole, or in part, I will thank you for your candid opinion, whenever you can

¹ Probably a MS. No mention of Joseph Young occurs in Huntington's *History of Stamford*.