

George Washington to John F. Mercer

Mount Vernon, Virginia, September 9, 1786.

Autograph letter signed, 3 pages + docket.

Mount Vernon 9th. Sep 1786

Dear Sir;

Your favor of the 20th. ult^o. did not reach me till about the first ins^t. – It found me in a fever, from which I am now but sufficiently recovered to attend to business. – I mention this to shew that I had it not in my power to give an answer to your propositions sooner. –

With respect to the first. I never mean (unless some particular circumstances should compel me to it) to possess another slave by purchase; it being among my first wishes to see some plan adopted by [*inserted*: The Legislature by] which slavery in this Country may be abolished by slow, sure, & imperceptable degrees. – With respect to the 2^d. I never did, nor never intend to purchase a military certificate; – I see no difference it makes with you (if it is one of the funds allotted for the discharge of my claim) who the the purchaser [2] is. – If the depreciation is 3 for 1 only, you will have it in your power whilst you are at the receipt of Custom – Richmond – where it is said the great regulator of this business (Greaves) resides, to convert them into specie at that rate. – If the difference is more, there would be no propriety, if I inclined to deal in them at all, in my taking them at that exchange.

I shall rely on your promise of Two hundred pounds in five Weeks from the date of your letter. – It will enable me to pay the work men which have been employed ab^t this house all the Spring & Summer, (some of whom are here still). – But there are two debts which press hard upon me. One of which, if there is no other resource, I must sell land or negroes to discharge. – It is owing to Gov^r. Clinton of New York, who was so obliging as to borrow, & become my security for £2500 to answer some calls of mine. – This sum was to be returned in [3] twelve months from the conclusion of the Peace. – For the remains of it [*struck*: this sum], about Eight hundred pounds york C^y. I am now paying an interest of Seven p^rC^t.; but the high interest (tho' more than any estate can bear) I should not regard, if my credit was not at stake to comply with the conditions of the loan. – The other debt tho' I know the person to whom it is due wants it, and

I am equally anxious to pay it, might be put of[f] a while longer. – This sum is larger than the other

I am. D^r Sir

Y^r. Most Obed^t. H^{ble} Ser^t

G^o: Washington

Jn^o. Franc^s. Mercer Esq^r.

[*docket*:]

Washington George.

Sep. 9. 1786