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**Correspondence of the War
Department Relating to Indian
Affairs, Military Pensions,
and Fortifications
1791-1797**



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Record Group 107

CORRESPONDENCE OF THE WAR DEPARTMENT
RELATING TO INDIAN AFFAIRS,
MILITARY PENSIONS, AND FORTIFICATIONS
1791-1797

On the one roll of this microfilm publication is reproduced a volume that contains copies of War Department correspondence concerning Indian affairs, Revolutionary War invalid pensions, and military fortifications, 1791-97. Two of the documents do not appear to be copies made at a later date: a 1791 draft of a letter of Secretary of War Henry Knox relating to the pay of officers and enlisted men and a 1797 printed copy of "Regulations for the Dragoons." Other documents are annotated to be true copies made from War Department files in 1792 and 1794 by Chief Clerk John Stagg. The volume is part of Records of the Office of the Secretary of War, Record Group 107.

An act of August 7, 1789 (1 Stat. 49), established the Department of War in the executive branch of the Federal Government, with a Secretary of War at its head. The Secretary was assigned "such duties as shall from time to time be enjoined on . . . him by the President of the United States . . . relative to . . . the land or naval forces . . . of the United States . . . or relative to Indian affairs . . ."

The act contained no specific provision for Federal military pensions. It remained for an act of September 29, 1789 (1 Stat. 95), to provide for the continuance of invalid pension payments to Revolutionary War veterans, which until then had been paid by the States, "under such regulations as the President of the United States may direct." An Executive order implementing this act was issued over the signature of the Secretary of War on October 13, 1789. Acts of March 23, 1792 (1 Stat. 243), and February 28, 1793 (1 Stat. 324), set forth detailed procedures for claiming and granting Revolutionary War invalid pensions and remained the principal legislation on the subject through the remainder of the 1790's. The general procedure under the latter enactment was for applicants to submit their claims and evidence to U.S. district judges or their agents for preliminary examination. The judges transmitted lists of claimants and the evidence to the Secretary of War for his examination. The Secretary then reported the claims to the Congress, which reserved to itself the power of final approval or disapproval of claims.

The Secretaries of War and their terms of office during the period covered by the volume reproduced in this publication were Henry Knox, September 12, 1789-December 31, 1794; Timothy Pickering, January 2-December 10, 1795; and James McHenry, January 27, 1796-May 13, 1800.

GENERAL CONTENTS, ARRANGEMENT, AND ORIGIN
OF THE "WAR OFFICE LETTER BOOK"

The contents of this volume consist, in general, of the following three classes of records: (1) correspondence of the Secretary of War submitted to the Congress in 1792 and 1794 to inform that body concerning relations between the United States and various Indian tribes in different parts of the country; (2) reports made by the Secretary of War to the Congress, 1794-96, concerning claims he received for invalid pensions; and (3) miscellaneous documents pertaining to military fortifications, pay, and regulations. These classes are further broken down and described more fully in the specific contents section.

The overall arrangement of the volume is roughly chronological. Pagination (the numbers usually found at the top center of pages) is somewhat irregular, with some gaps and duplication in the numbering sequence. In some cases the pages have no numbers. Numbered blank pages have not been reproduced.

On November 8, 1800, a fire swept through a house occupied by the Department of War in Washington, D.C., and destroyed almost all of the records kept in the office of the Secretary of War. According to a report made by Acting Secretary of War Samuel Dexter to the Congress on February 12, 1801, "immediately after the fire, measures were taken to secure a renewal of the most necessary and important documents in all possible cases The list of invalid pensioners have already been renewed, and sundry communications of importance from the Department returned and copied." Some of the War Department correspondence and reports in the volume may be copies made after the fire in accordance with the procedure mentioned in Dexter's report. The documents on pages C and 613 are originals, however. Internal evidence suggests that these and other documents bound in the volume may have escaped destruction, some perhaps by having been on file in the office of the Accountant of the War Department rather than in the office of the Secretary.

SPECIFIC CONTENTS OF THE "WAR
OFFICE LETTER BOOK"

Page A

Table of Contents

The table of contents in the volume contains brief and not always accurate descriptions of most sections comprising the volume. The contents of pages C, 485, 486, and 613 are not listed

Page B

"Statement of the Troops in the Service of the United States,"
November 6, 1792

Signed by the Secretary of War, this document contains such information as (1) the total number of troops in service on November 6, 1792; (2) the number recruited since March 5, 1792, and the States in which recruited; and (3) the geographical distribution of the forces listed. The statement was one of the papers submitted to the Congress by the Secretary of War on November 7 and 21, 1792, a transaction described more fully in connection with the contents of pages D and 1-109. It has been published in U.S. Congress, *American State Papers*, Class II, *Indian Affairs*, Vol. I (Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1832), p. 318.

Page C

Draft of a Circular Letter From the Secretary of War to Certain Army Officers, December 7, 1791

Addressed to Captains Henry Burbeck, Richard Brooke Roberts, and Michael Rudolph, Lt. Moses Porter, and Dr. John M. Scott, this letter contains instructions on procedures to be followed by the addressees in paying officers and enlisted men under their command with money to be received from a Captain Mills.

Pages D and 1-109

Letters and Messages Sent by the Secretary of War Concerning the Southern Indians, January 31-October 27, 1792

Page D consists of a list of the correspondence copied on pages 1-109 arranged by name or office of the addressee. The correspondence, which is arranged chronologically, is addressed to William Blount, Governor of the Territory South of the River Ohio (more familiarly known as the Southwest Territory) and Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Southern District; James Seagrove, U.S. agent to the Creeks; the Governors of Georgia, South Carolina, and Virginia; Brig. Gen. Andrew Pickens; Creek leader Alexander McGillivray; Leonard Shaw, "Temporary Agent to the Cherokees"; Surveyor Joseph Ellicot; Maj. Henry Gaither; and the Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Creek Tribes.

Subjects of the letters and messages include efforts by the Federal Government to keep the southern Indians from joining forces with the Indians northwest of the Ohio River in a war against the United States; the running of a boundary line between the United States and the Creeks in accordance with the Treaty of New York, August 7, 1790; the anti-U.S. activities of the self-proclaimed British agent William Bowles among the Creeks; Governor

Blount's calling out of the militia for defense against the Indians and his plans for holding a meeting with the Chickasaws and Choctaws at Nashville; presents and goods to be distributed to various Indian groups; plans for several southern tribes to send warriors to join American forces at Fort Washington; President George Washington's ideas concerning policy toward the Indians; the defeat of Generals Josiah Harmar and Arthur St. Clair at the hands of the Indians in 1790 and 1791, respectively; attacks and threatened attacks by the Indians on the "Cumberland settlements," the southwestern frontier of Virginia, and elsewhere; the killing of Indians by whites; relations between the United States and Spain; and movements of U.S. troops.

Copies of this correspondence were submitted to the Congress by the Secretary of War on November 7 and 21, 1792, as part of a larger group of "papers, on the subject of Indian Affairs"; this particular segment is referred to in the Secretary's transmittal letter as "A statement of the measures which have been taken to conciliate and quiet the Southern Indians." The correspondence is printed in *American State Papers: Indian Affairs*, I, 245-263. Other documents submitted to the Congress by the Secretary of War in November 1792 are copied on pages B and 113-388 of the "War Office Letter Book."

Pages 113-117

Statement of William May Concerning the Murder of Maj. Alexander Trueman and Related Matters, October 11, 1792

May was a private in Capt. John Armstrong's Company "of the late first regiment." In this statement, sworn before Maj. Gen. Anthony Wayne at Pittsburgh, Pa., May reports on such matters as the murder of Major Trueman by an Indian as Trueman was carrying a speech to the Indians from the Secretary of War, his (May's) capture by the Indians, Indian preparations for a great meeting at "Au Glaize," British involvement with the Indians, and the activities of Simon Girty.

May's statement was transmitted to the Congress in November 1792 and has been printed in *American State Papers: Indian Affairs*, I, 243. Pages 229-230 of the latter publication contain the text of the Secretary of War's instructions to Trueman and the speech that Trueman was to deliver to the Indians.

Pages 117-120

Statement of Reuben Reynolds Concerning Indians and Related Subjects, October 19, 1792

Reynolds, a sergeant in Capt. John Buell's Company of the "Second Regiment," was sent among Indians hostile to the United States by Brig. Gen. James Wilkinson to gather intelligence while

posing as a deserter. This statement describes his stay among the Indians, their numbers, and their joining together to fight the Americans; the navigability of certain rivers; and Fort Michilimackinac [Mackinac]. This document was transmitted to the Congress in November 1792 and has been printed in *American State Papers: Indian Affairs*, I, 244.

Pages 121-124

Letters Received by the Secretary of War From Joseph Brant, March 27 and July 26, 1792

In his March letter, the Mohawk Indian chief, Joseph Brant, declines an invitation of the Secretary of War to visit President Washington until he receives approval from the "Western Nations" of Indians. In the second letter, Brant writes concerning the murder of Major Trueman and the likelihood that the Indians would not be peaceful until a new boundary line was established. These letters were transmitted to the Congress in November 1792 and have been printed in *American State Papers: Indian Affairs*, I, 244-245.

Pages 125-245

Letters Received by the Secretary of War From U.S. Agent to the Creeks James Seagrove and Related Records, April 21-October 17, 1792

Most of Seagrove's letters, extracts of his letters, and enclosures copied on these pages were written from Rock Landing and St. Mary's, Ga. Arranged generally in chronological order, with a summary list on page 125, they concern such subjects as the anti-U.S. activities of William Bowles and his associates among the Creeks; Bowles' capture by the Spanish; a Spanish officer referred to as Captain Olivar; the Florida-based British firm of Panton, Leslie, & Co.; Seagrove's past meetings and plans for future meetings with the Creeks to preserve peace between that tribe and the United States; Seagrove's belief that McGillivray was an enemy to American interests in the region; murders of and stealing from white settlers by Creeks; murders of Indians by whites; application of the Treaty of New York between the United States and the Creeks; trade with the Indians; an unsuccessful Spanish attempt to hold a meeting with the Creeks at Pensacola; attempts by the Spanish and leaders of the "Western tribes" to turn the Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, and Creeks against the United States; the attempt by Col. Samuel Alexander of Georgia to prevent the running of a boundary line between Georgia and the Creeks; the shipment of corn by the U.S. Government to the Creeks, whose crop had failed; the building of block-houses for Indian defense on the South Carolina frontier; and recommendations of General Pickens and Col. Robert Anderson to send a military expedition against the Cherokees and Creeks.

The enclosures to Seagrove's letters include copies and extracts of his correspondence with McGillivray, the Governors of Georgia and East Florida, various Indian chiefs, and other persons; "informations" delivered to him by various persons concerning Indian affairs; and texts of addresses he delivered to the leaders of the Creek Nation. The other documents copied on these pages are letters and enclosures received by President Washington from Seagrove and the Governor of South Carolina and a letter from McGillivray to the Secretary of War.

The documents on pages 127-245 of this volume have been printed in *American State Papers: Indian Affairs*, I, 295-318, where they are identified as another part ("Appendix to No. IV,") of the large group of papers on Indian affairs submitted to the Congress by the Secretary of War in November 1792.

Pages 246-420

Letters and Enclosures Received by the Secretary of War From Gov. William Blount, March 20-November 8, 1792

Blount's letters, written mainly from the Territorial capital at Knoxville, concern the murders of and stealing from whites by Indians; the calling out of the militia and other military actions taken by Blount to defend against the Indians; Blount's presents to the Indians; the "five lower towns" of the Cherokees' declarations of war against the United States; allegations that the Spanish Government was working to turn the southern Indians against the United States; the anti-U.S. activities among the Indians of such persons as Bowles, William Panton, and a "Captain Oliver" (Pedro Olivier?); the extension of the boundary line between the United States and the Cherokees according to the Treaty of Holston, July 2, 1791; Spanish plans to hold a meeting with the Cherokees and Creeks at Pensacola; the giving of arms and ammunitions to the Indians by the Spanish Government; the baleful influence of the Creeks on certain Cherokees; Indian attacks on Buchanan's Station and on persons traveling along the "Kentucky road"; Indian plans to attack settlers at Cumberland and Holston; and the activities of Cherokee Chief John Watts.

The enclosures include copies of Blount's correspondence with Generals Pickens and John Sevier; McGillivray; various Cherokee, Chickasaw, and Choctaw Indian chiefs; Shaw, and other persons. Specific documents enclosed in Blount's correspondence include minutes of his conferences with the Cherokees at "Coyatee," May 1792, and with the Chickasaws and Choctaws at Nashville, August 1792; the "Journal of the Grand Cherokee National Council," June 1792; and a list of persons killed, wounded, or captured by Cherokees and Creeks in the Southwest Territory from January 1, 1791, giving dates, places, and tribes involved.

These records are arranged chronologically. Those copied on pages 247-388 have been printed in *American State Papers: Indian Affairs*, I, 263-295, where they are identified as another part ("Appendix to No. IV, Information Received relatively [sic] to the dispositions of the Southern Indians, and the causes of the hostilities of part of the Cherokees and Creeks") of the large group of papers on Indian affairs submitted to the Congress by the Secretary of War in November 1792. The documents on pages 389-420 have been printed in *American State Papers: Indian Affairs*, I, 325-332, forming the major part of a group of papers on the "Southwestern Tribes," submitted to the Congress by President Washington on December 7, 1792.

Pages 421-431

Letter Sent by Secretary of War Knox to Gov. William Blount, November 26, 1792

In this press copy, Knox informed Blount of the reluctance of the Washington administration to begin offensive military operations against the "Chickamaggas," its opposition to white encroachment on Indian lands, and its desire for peace with the Indians in the South. Knox urged Blount not to retain in service any longer than was necessary the militia units the Governor had mobilized during the preceding summer. Knox then stated his preference for patrols of scouts rather than for garrisoned blockhouses as a defense against Indians.

Pages 432-463

Letters and Enclosures Received by the Secretary of War From Maj. Gen. Anthony Wayne, July 7-August 28, 1794

The author of these letters was both the commanding general of the U.S. Army and the commander of an expedition against the hostile northwestern Indians. Written at field headquarters in Greenville and Grand Glaize, Wayne's letters, arranged chronologically, and their enclosures discuss the Indian attack on Fort Recovery, June 30-July 1, 1794; British involvement in preparing the Indians to make war against the United States; the identity and strength of the tribes gathered to fight and actually involved in hostilities against the United States; the desertion of a Mr. Newman of the Quartermaster General's Department; the "brilliant success of the Federal Army" against the Indians at the Battle of Fallen Timbers, August 20, 1794; the participation of particular officers and units in these engagements; the building of Forts Defiance and Adams; the burning of Indian villages and cornfields by Wayne's troops; the role of Col. Alexander McKee in stirring up the Indians against the United States; and the strength of the British garrison at the fort near Fallen Timbers.

The enclosures consist of returns of the Americans killed, wounded, or missing as a result of the attack on Fort Recovery and the Battle of Fallen Timbers; transcripts of "examinations" of various Indians and other persons concerning British and Indian activities; an address by Wayne to the hostile Indians; and copies of Wayne's correspondence with Maj. William Campbell, commandant of the British post in the vicinity of the battleground of Fallen Timbers, with notes by Wayne. Some enclosures mentioned in Wayne's letter to the Secretary of War are missing.

These letters and enclosures have been printed in *American State Papers: Indian Affairs*, I, 487-495, where they form the first part of a larger group of papers submitted to the Congress by the President on November 20, 1794, to give a "General View" of Indians affairs.

Pages 464-465

Statement of James Neill to the Secretary of War, October 21, 1794

Neill was a packhorseman captured by Indians in the action at Fort Recovery, June 30, 1794. His statement discusses Indian losses in that engagement and at the Battle of Fallen Timbers and the activities of the Detroit Militia. This document has been printed in *American State Papers: Indian Affairs*, I, 495.

Pages 465-504

Correspondence of the Secretary of War With the Governor of Georgia and Constant Freeman, July 28-October 12, 1794

Documents copied in rough chronological order on these pages consist of letters and enclosures received by the Secretary of War from Georgia Governor George Mathews; letters sent to the Governor by or on behalf of the Secretary; and letters and enclosures received by the Secretary from Constant Freeman, "Agent for the Department of War in Georgia." Subjects include the unauthorized settlement of whites under the leadership of Elijah Clarke, former militia general, on Indian land southwest of the Oconee River in Georgia, judicial proceedings against Clarke, the failure of the Creeks to implement provisions of the Treaty of New York, Indian depredations, white provocations as a cause of hostile acts by Indians, and the destruction by the Georgia Militia of Fort Advance and other posts settled by Clarke's followers.

Enclosures to the letters received by the Secretary of War consist of a "Discharge" of Clarke from the custody of justices of the peace of Wilkes County, Ga.; Judge George Walton's charge to the grand jury of Richmond County concerning the Clarke enterprise; instructions from the Georgia Governor to a Captain Fauche concerning steps to be taken against white adherents of Clarke

and against Indian murderers and robbers; a copy of a "talk" by the Governor to the Creeks; depositions of various persons concerning Indian affairs; a petition circulated in Georgia calling for the opening of a land office south of the Qcone; and a letter written by Clarke to a committee of safety of his followers.

All of these documents have been printed in *American State Papers: Indian Affairs*, I, 495-503, as part of a larger group of papers submitted to the Congress on November 20, 1794.

Pages 505-525

Report of the Secretary of War to the House of Representatives on the "Fortifications of the United States," November 28, 1794

Included with the report (pages 506-516) are a letter of transmittal (page 505) and two appendixes, A (pages 517-518) and B (pages 519-525). In the report, the Secretary of War discusses generally the employment of engineers and the expenditure of money according to the provisions of an act for fortifying certain harbors and ports. This is followed by a place-by-place list containing descriptions of the fortifications erected or to be erected at each site, detailing the types and locations of structures and the number and types of cannon to be built or put in position, and indicating the amount of money spent and still needed for each site. The sites are listed in geographical order from north to south as follows: Portland, Portsmouth, Gloucester, Salem, Marblehead, Boston, Newport, New London, New York, West Point, Philadelphia, Wilmington, Baltimore, Annapolis, Alexandria, Norfolk, "Cape Fear River and Oracock North Carolina," Georgetown, Charleston, Savannah, and St. Mary's. Following this list are additional comments concerning such matters as the cost of materials and contracting for casting heavy cannon.

Appendix A consists of two lists, one showing the estimated additional sums of money necessary to complete the fortifications at all but a few of the places listed in the report and the other, entitled "Apportionment of the Monies appropriated by law for the fortifications," showing those places. Appendix B consists of copies of the Secretary's instructions of March 29, 1794, to Engineer Bechet Rochefontaine, who was to fortify various sites in Connecticut; Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island; a circular letter of the same date from the Secretary of War to the Governors or Lieutenant Governors of those States, announcing Rochefontaine's appointment and the procedures to be followed in erecting the fortifications; and the Secretary's circular letter to "the persons to be employed to obtain labour, implements & materials, for the fortifications," also of March 29, 1794. The purpose of Appendix B was to "exhibit the principles by which they [i.e., the addressees] were regulated and which were varied only by local circumstances."

Reports of the Secretary of War to the Congress on Claims for Invalid Pensions, December 30, 1794-February 5, 1796

Each report consists of a letter of transmittal and lists ("statements") of pension claimants, dated at the War Department Accountant's Office, that show new claims received during the period since the previous report. A separate list was submitted in north-to-south geographical order by State for each State from which there was one or more claimants. Also part of some reports are lists of previous claimants for whom additional evidence had been received to support their claims and a few miscellaneous documents. The first report covers claims received by the Secretary of War since May 29, 1794.

All of the claimants named in these lists appear to have been Revolutionary War veterans: officers and enlisted men of the Continental Army, the Continental Navy, and the militia. In addition to name, the following information is usually given for each individual listed: rank, military organization or vessel with which service was performed, the nature of the disability claimed (e.g., wounds and illnesses), the date and place disabled, the claimant's current residence, the percentage of a full pension to which he would be entitled if the claim was approved, the completeness of the evidence, and, if not complete, an explanation of the nature of the deficiency. Dates of service, notations stating that rolls documenting the service were unavailable, and other remarks are also given for many claimants.

Documents comprising these reports, except the documents, on pages 546 and 590-612, have been printed in *American State Papers: Claims*, 134-145 and 149-172.

Page 613

"Regulations for the Dragoons," July 1, 1797

This printed War Department issuance bears the manuscript signature of Secretary of War James McHenry as well as the handwritten note "For The Accountant of the War Department." The regulations were published for officers' use and pertained to such matters as the instruction and inspection of troops, care and use of horses and equipment, resignation of officers, and reports to be made by company commanders.

RELATED RECORDS AND PUBLICATIONS

Other copies of the correspondence and reports of the Secretary of War concerning Indian affairs and pensions in this volume--the copies sent to and received by the Congress--are in

Records of the U.S. Senate, Record Group 46, and Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, Record Group 233. Additional records of the same origin and subject matter are also in those record groups.

Muster rolls, payrolls, and related records showing the service of Regular Army and Volunteer military organizations against the northwestern Indians in the early 1790's are part of Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780's-1917, Record Group 94. In the same record group are records that summarize the service of individual Volunteer soldiers of that period; these have been reproduced as National Archives and Record Service Microfilm Publication M905, *Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served From 1784 to 1811*. A name index is available as Microfilm Publication M694, *Index to Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served From 1784 to 1811*. Pay and other records pertaining to Regular Army and militia operations against both the southern and northwestern Indians in the 1790's are part of an Adjutant General's Office record series that has been microfilmed as M904, *War Department Collection of Post-Revolutionary War Manuscripts*.

The editorial material for this microfilm publication was prepared by Howard H. Wehmann and edited by Thomas Whitfield.



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