

Letters of John Fenno and John Ward Fenno, 1779–1800

Part 2: 1792–1800

Edited by JOHN B. HENCH

PART 1 of this edition of the letters and other manuscripts of prominent Federalist newspaper editors John Fenno and John Ward Fenno in the Chicago Historical Society's Joseph Ward Papers appeared in the preceding number of the *Proceedings* (89[1979]:299–368). This concluding installment resumes in December 1792, following an eighteen-month gap in the extant correspondence between John Fenno (now in Philadelphia) and his friend in Boston, Joseph Ward. The extant papers continue intermittently until Fenno's death, on September 14, 1798, in the yellow fever epidemic in the capital city. Three letters of his son and business heir, John Ward Fenno, to Ward, dated from August 5, 1799, to March 19, 1800, conclude the series.

For brief sketches of the lives of the two Fennos and Ward and for a summary overview of the Fenno-Ward papers, the reader is referred to the editor's introduction to Part 1 in the previous issue of this journal. Highlights of the correspondence in this installment include discussion of the foreign policy issues of the French Revolution and American neutrality; a detailed and moving depiction of the horror and heroism of the 1793 yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia; cryptic references to the financial and political support behind John Fenno's newspaper, the *Gazette of the United States*; and hints at Ward's efforts to seek remuneration for himself and others

for loans made to the Massachusetts and continental governments during the Revolutionary War.

The editorial method and the editor's acknowledgements remain as noted in the introduction to Part 1. Except where otherwise indicated in the footnotes, the source of the editor's identification of individuals named in the documents derives from one of the following works: *The Boston Directory* (Boston: John Norman, 1789); *The Boston Directory* (Boston: Manning & Loring for John West, 1796); *The Boston Directory* (Boston: Rhoades and Laughton for John West, 1798); James Hardie, *The Philadelphia Directory and Register* (Philadelphia: T. Dobson, 1793); Hardie, *The Philadelphia Directory and Register. The Second Edition* (Philadelphia: Jacob Johnson, 1794); *Stephens's Philadelphia Directory, for 1796* (Philadelphia: W. Woodward for Thomas Stephens, [1796]); *Dictionary of American Biography; Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1961* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1961); and the Thwing Catalogue of Boston Inhabitants 1630-1800, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston. J. H. Powell, *Bring out Your Dead: The Great Plague of Yellow Fever in Philadelphia in 1793* (Philadelphia, 1949) was especially helpful in identifying persons mentioned in the letters Fenno wrote during the epidemic. The identification of persons in Part 1 are repeated the first time their names appear in Part 2 but are not repeated thereafter.

Letters of John Fenno, 1792-1798

Phila. Dec. 16. 1792

Dear Sir,

Your last fav: was of Oct. 13 which contained a confirmation of an agreeable report, that you were recruiting and progressing towards confirmed health. This I trust continued to be the case so that when

you were called to sustain the late severe shock, you were more prepared for it than you would otherwise ha[ve] been. Mr. Harbach¹ bro't us the truly distressing news of the *death* of your dear son²—tho' our fears were greatly alarmed by an account recd. a few days before of his being dangerously sick. On this occasion, it is hardly possible for me to say anything, that your philosophy, & what is unspeakably more powerful, your Piety, will not have suggested. I pray that you may receive divine support—that neither you, nor your truly distressed Partner, may sink under this heavy, heavy, stroke. *Faith* resolves all into the divine sovereignty & wisdom. What a short period ere *all* will be over with us *all*! Time closes the tracks we make in our course—new ones are opened by our successors—for us, it is alone important, that the present point of existence shall open a scene that, unlike the present, shall continually augment, instead of diminishing the sources of our happiness. I noticed the Account of this heart rending event in Adams's Paper³—the lines were Pathetic & much to the point. Mrs. Fenno unites with me in condoling with you and your dear wife on this occasion. All we can do is to condole—it is utterly impossible for us to conceive of or to enter into your anguish of soul. All we can say is, that no event within compass of our imagination, can on many accounts, be attended with so many peculiarly distressing circumstances.

This affliction I have no doubt will add to the splendor of your future crown. Meantime, may the cherub which has gone before you, attend your steps, & tho' invisible be an active agent to contribute to your support during the suspension of a corporeal interview.

Thro' the favor of a gracious providence my Family is in tolerable health. We have shifted our situation & have assumed a position that I think must be healthy—and in which we shall be able to accommodate a friend or two—but alas this is an expedient to eke out the means of support by no means so compatible with my business, or so congenial to my wishes, as I could wish.⁴ Necessity, however, has no law. You will please remember us to your good neighbors & friends. I know that they have recently testified their benevolence, goodness, & sensibility towards you. May their Piety be rewarded.

¹ John Harbach (also spelled Harback), a Boston broker and trader. His obituary is in the *Columbian Centinel*, Oct. 5, 1793.

² The Wards' oldest son, the first of two named Joseph, born Aug. 21, 1787, died Nov. 30, 1792. Typescript annotation.

³ The *Independent Chronicle* of Boston, printed by Thomas Adams (1757?-99).

⁴ The circumstances of this 'position' are unknown.

Please to remember us to Mr. Durant⁵ when you see him. I owe him a Letter, but cannot write by this conveyance. We have no news here either foreign or domestic of a more recent date than your accounts. Congress is moving on slowly—they have many articles in preparation—and I expect much business will be done this session.

That we may estimate life on its true value, and learn the best lessons from all its *variety* is the only wisdom of our present existence—all else is delusory and this solves the Problems of Providence—for when the brevity & inquietude—the Pangs & Sorrows that follow in succession thro, the series of three score & ten are taken into the account we must look beyond, for *substance*.

O that you may yet be comforted. I say no more than
Ever Yours John Fenno

[*Addressed:*] Joseph Ward Esq.
Newton near

Favd. by Mr. Boston
Perkins⁶

Phila. Apl. 6. 1793

Dear Sir,

Your favor by Mr. Harbach, with the enclosures, were duly recd. The discourse is affectionate & speaks to the Heart. The Portrait is striking & I doubt not very just. My anticipations respecting your dear boy were always of the most pleasing & animating nature—alas that they should be blasted as soon as they began to be realized!

My Mother arrived here the 28 Ulto. She met with an unlucky accident in New York by spraining her foot in getting out of the Stage—this has confined her to the House ever since—it is getting better. She is otherwise well & desires an affectionate Remembrance to You, Mrs. Ward, Mrs. Curtis¹ & Family, Mr. & Mrs. Homer² &c. The Visit from her was unexpected, tho' much desired—and is a great gratification & comfort to us.

⁵ Cornelius Durand (d. 1812), husband of Fenno's sister Mary.

⁶ Possibly James Perkins, merchant, Market-Square, Boston.

¹ Possibly a Susan Curtis. See list of correspondents, Collection Description, Joseph Ward Papers, Chicago Historical Society. Fenno's wife was a Curtis.

² Possibly Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Parrott Homer, Leverett Street, Boston. He was a merchant.

Mrs. Fenno got to bed with a daughter³ the 26 Ulto—the day before my Mother arrived—the babe has left us—she lived but three days—& was unwell the whole time. We suppose it was born with some fatal complaint. Mrs. F. has recruited beyond expectation & has rode out twice.

The world appears full of commotion. The news you will have heard before this reaches you. As to the War, I think the U.S. has nothing to do with it—and, I assure you with confidence that a System of Neutrality is an object very much at heart with the executive—indeed our Interest as a people is so obvious, that it is impossible it should be mistaken. Great Britain, will I am persuaded observe the most liberal conduct toward us—nor do I conceive that France can think her Advantage can be promoted by involving us. With respect to french affairs, I have long since lost all hope of them—and the late transactions have lost them many friends in the U.S. It is astonishing that mankind can act so unwise & infatuated a part—the finger of Providence was never more conspicuously displayed, than it is in the series of transactions of that devoted country—that very being, whose government is neglected and despised, whose existence is called in question, is punishing in the most signal manner, a people, who by their acts & proceedings evince a total disregard to the principles of truth justice & humanity.

Monday Apl. 8—Mr. Harbach this day recd. a Letter from Mr. Prime⁴ informg. him of the Death of your only Brother.⁵ We most sincerely condole with you on this repeated stroke—but my good friend, let us hold on in our faith in that Providence which numbers the hairs of our heads. In the course of human events it almost necessarily follows that one or another of a family must be left alone in the world—this is a wise distribution of circumstances—those who are left for the last have the fewest regrets when their own time arrives. I wish you a continuance of the divine support. When all shall fail us, he whose existence is one eternal day, hath promised us that he will take us up.

With respect to my immediate situation, I wish it was in my power to say any thing that would do your soul good. I am promised some effectual aid by those who have it in their Power to place me in

³ The infant was named Mary.

⁴ Nathaniel Prime, a broker in Boston. Thwing Catalogue of Boston Inhabitants 1630-1800, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

⁵ Nathaniel Ward (1734 - Mar. 27, 1793).

a line of business in my present profession, that I think would preclude all further need of assistance—but what will be *done*, it is impossible to say.⁶ You shall hear of it as soon as any thing comes to pass. Interim—I remain

With affectionate attachment
Your ever obliged
friend & Servant
John Fenno

[*Addressed:*] Joseph Ward Esq—
Newtown
Mr. Russell⁷ near Boston

Phila. May 26. 1793

Dear Sir,

Your last was dated in March and has not yet been duly acknowledged. I pass over certain personal reflections—with just observing that I rejoice in your faith & confidence in that goodness, which in its own time, will smooth & polish every rough & unpleasant scene of our present existence. All things shall most assuredly work together for your good—has he not said it, whose counsels are unerring & whose benevolence is coextensive with his eternal existence?

I have the great pleasure to inform you of the Health of my Family. My Mother continues well. She unites with Polly¹ in love to Yourself, Mrs. Ward & your amiable neighbors Mrs. Curtis & Mr. Homer & their Families.

We expect Mr. Harbach to morrow or next day—by him hope for the pleasure of a line from you.

With respect to Public matters the most essential are detailed in the Papers—there are some things which have lately transpired that I think will not entirely meet with approbation. I refer to the congratulations of the newly arrived French Minister²—but it appears

⁶ Probably a reference to the raising of a subscription on Fenno's behalf by Alexander Hamilton and others. Fenno submitted a 'schedule of my Debts & Credits' to Hamilton in the spring of 1793—perhaps about the time of this letter to Ward. No money was raised, however, until late fall. See John B. Hench, 'Letters of John Fenno and John Ward Fenno, 1779–1800; Part 1: 1779–1790,' *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 89:306 and n. 19.

⁷ Possibly John Russell (1764?–1831), printer of Boston.

¹ Fenno's wife, Mary Curtis Fenno, was called Polly.

² Citizen Genêt (Edmond Charles Genêt, 1763–1834).

to me that the most intelligent & the best of our citizens if not the majority likewise really disapprove of these things, which cannot be considered as deviations from that strictly neutral line of conduct which policy, interest & duty point out as essential for this country to adhere to.

With respect to French affairs our ideas I know meet in a parallel—alas that the best cause that can engage the attention of mankind should be so shockingly marred in the making up. A gentleman once observed to me that it was his opinion the writings of Mr. Adams³ would in Time become the political bible of the U.S. I think his remark is in a fair way of being verified, not only here, but throughout the world. My most earnest wish is that France may eventually establish a free & just Government—but I fear the Period is remote when this will be realized. I tho't the constituent assembly did many things amiss—and many that were excellent—but the Convention have run retrograde to the goal of real freedom & peace from the first moment they met.

Our Government is critically situated—but I rest firmly persuaded that the result of the deliberations of the executive, which are frequent, will be founded in wisdom, & receive general approbation. A strict & decided Neutrality will be preserved—not withstanding all the arts used by the sons of mischief to stir up dissention.

I am exceedingly happy in your approbation of the essays, extracts & paragraphs which the Gaz. contains. Truth righteousness & common sense have but a scurvy time of it in these days, but they must prevail—how long the cause of reason & right will be suffered to have any advocates I know not—but this you may depend upon, that the *whole* truth cannot be spoken with safety at the present day. I skim about the edges—and sometimes dip a little—but many ideas & remarks are suppressed.

I am not entirely pleased with your representation in Congress. What is the political Character of our old friend P. Wadsworth?⁴ There are some amphibious animals among them—but all for the best. The next Session will be highly Interesting.

As to Stocks I hardly know what to say to you—but as long as there are so many objects of Speculation to call for Money—they will be low.

³ John Adams (1735-1826), vice-president of the United States.

⁴ Peleg Wadsworth (1748-1829), Revolutionary War general, land agent in Maine, and U.S. congressman (Federalist) from Massachusetts 1793-1807.

We are tolerably peaceable here—some fracas take place now & then between french & english sailors—both are to blame—but the french frigate & privateer are preparing to sail in a few days.

It is a long time since I had the pleasure of hearing from you—hope Mr. Harbach has a packet. Interim—with every wish for your health happiness & prosperity I am dear Sir

With affectionate regards
Your friend & humble
Servant
John Fenno

P.S. I shall send you a compleat copy of the Secretary's Reports⁵ to Congress the last Session by the first water Conveyance.

[*Addressed:*] Joseph Ward Esq.
Newtown

Phila. August 24. 1793

Dear Sir,

Your favor of the 13th Ulto came to hand three weeks since but in consequence of my Son Ward's¹ indisposition, my time has been so taken up, that it was not in my power to acknowledge it before. Ward, has had a severe attack of the Dysentery which confined him more than a fortnight—but he is now recovered; & is as well as usual.

The five dollar bill which you enclosed was received & passed to your credit—it was much more than was due—it pays for the Gazette to the first of February 1794.

For this fresh instance of your goodness please to accept my thanks. I have the pleasure to inform you of the health of my Family in general. Mrs. Fenno is the greatest Invalid—and at times is extremely weak & feeble. The summer has been hot almost without intermission. I have felt its effects—my nerves have been affected—taking the bark & other tonics have in a great measure removed my complaints—which I do not expect to get rid of entirely till the cold weather sets in. I was greatly gratified with the

⁵ *Communications from the Secretary of the Treasury, to the House of Representatives of the United States* (Philadelphia: John Fenno, [1793]). Evans 26343. The secretary was Alexander Hamilton (1757–1804).

¹ John Ward Fenno.

sentiments of your Letter. I have at times been so much solus in my opinions, that a reinforcement seems indispensable to animate my exertions. Such was your Letter, and I made use of it accordingly. It was a word in season—there is no thing that disheartens & confounds the antifederal Party so much as the firmness which the northern states discover in their attachment to the general Government. The late proceedings of the people in respect to Peace and Neutrality are a tuck under the fifth rib—the Death wound of the Hydra of Faction. This work must be compleated and therefore I conceive that the agricultural Interest would do well to express their sentiments on the occasion—this will stop the mouths of gainsayers.

You will doubtless be surprized & astonished at all you read, respecting the proceedings of the Minister of the executive Council of France.² We were to be sure in a hopeful way—but the workers in mischief have entangled themselves in a net of their own weaving—by what I can learn, the true & genuine Spirit of Patriotism is fast spreading to the Southward. The Resolutions of the City of Richmond Virga. you will see; they contain the essence of right Principles. I am told, & I believe it a fact, that the machinations of the french faction are held in as great, if not greater abhorrence at the Southward than at the Northward. While I most sincerely wish the happiness & freedom of all mankind—and consequently a free Government to the People of France—I cannot but most heartily disapprove of the measures the Leader[s] in that Country have for a long time adopted, because I think them hostile not only to the best Interests of the human race, but calculated to defeat the hopes & wishes of every friend of the Liberties of France. There is a striking example of their situation at home & abroad in the late Representation at New York from the Crew of the Jupiter.³ I have been told that the Crews of French Men of War now in America have repeatedly suspended & restored their Officers, since they left France. Bompard⁴ adopted a singular mode. His Custom was to have the Crew dine in the Cabbin with him by squads dur-

² Citizen Genêt.

³ The *Jupiter* was a French warship in New York harbor in the summer of 1793 whose crew defied Genêt's authority. For details of the episode, see Harry Ammon, *The Genet Mission* (New York, 1973), pp. 122-25.

⁴ Captain Bompard, a French naval officer, commanded the frigate *L'Embuscade* in a naval duel with the British frigate *Boston* off the New Jersey coast on Aug. 1, 1793. See Alexander DeConde, *Entangling Alliance: Politics & Diplomacy under George Washington* (Durham, N.C., 1958), pp. 269-71.

ing their passage—& I believe continues the Practice—as it was currently said here, that his first Lieut. quarrelled with him, & left the Ship at this Port on the same account. You may perceive by various transactions that what is meant by equality, is levellism. The late division of Prize Money, which has been puffed by the Boston Papers, is a case in point—this is levellism—but is gross *inequality*—for I conceive equality to consist in giving every one their due. To Pay a Captain at the same rate as a Sailor would surely not be equal—let us trace the proceedings of the Convention of France ever since the 10 Aug. '92—and we shall find that the same thread of absurdity is conspicuous throu the whole web—and so long as Philosophy without virtue—theory without experience & Speculation without Principle predominate & govern their leaders, they will never put their feet on solid ground. I consider the Principal Agents, at present at the head of Affairs in France, as a knot of Speculators, of such unbounded views of avarice & ambition, that if possible they would capsiz the globe, & Speculate in the Universe. We must leave these movements to the direction of that Providence, which is no doubt punishing the impiety of a most impious Age with severe Judgments. I trust the U.S. will learn a useful Lesson by the miseries of the european world—that we shall suitably prize the blessings we enjoy—be grateful for them—and by our wise and prudent Conduct evince that peace liberty & safety can be enjoyed under a Republican form of Government.

You may not possibly have heard any Particulars respecting the trial & acquittal of Henfield⁵—know then that he is a rascal of the first quality—that the Jury that acquitted him was packed and that by the Marshall your old friend C.B⁶—that this Jury consisted of a Shabby Set principally—that several of them were drunkards—and one of them it is said has not been sober for Fifteen Years—that the whole business was reprobated by every honest man. C.B.—who did almost all the business here as a Notary, has been since deserted by the Mercantile Interest & will probably have cause to rue his Conduct as long as he lives. B—— I have learnt has always

⁵ Gideon Henfield, along with another American citizen, John Singletary, enlisted aboard a French privateer, the *Citizen Genet*, in Charleston. They were arrested by Philadelphia authorities in May 1793 for violating the neutrality proclamation. Their trial proved to be a test of public opinion and of Genet's influence versus the executive authority. Their acquittal delighted Republicans and angered Federalists. See DeConde, *Entangling Alliance*, pp. 214–17

⁶ Clement Biddle, marshall of the U.S. court for the district of Pennsylvania.

been an Anti—— & 'tis remarkable this class are clamorers in favor of the U.S. interfering in the War—they *have* made a great deal of noise—and B. supposed he was acting with the Majority in attempting by every means to clear Privateersmen. There is a goodly Spirit now appears—and the President will feel himself strong by that support the People will give to his measures. It is evident that should the U.S. enter into the war, they have everything to lose, & nothing to gain.

[*The remainder of this letter is missing*]

Phila. Sept. 9. 1793

Dear Sir,

I steal a moment to inform you of the dreadful Situation of this City—visited by a disorder very little differing from the Plague. Soon after it made its appearance here, there was a consultation among the faculty when a Doct. Ross¹ who had lived in Constantinople at a time when that disorder swept off more than an hundred thousand persons, gave it as his opinion, that it would be proper to adopt measures similar to those adopted in european Countries on such occasions—Viz: That every body who could, should quit the City—that the houses where the infection was, should be marked—that all business should be suspended—that as little connection as possible should be had with the sick—that the dead should be buried at night or as privately as possible &c.

You may perhaps have seen how far this opinion was adopted—the marking of the houses has been omitted—but necessity has compelled to bury the dead in carriages, and I assure you they bury from morning till night, and frequently in the night. The disorder was at first confined to a particular part of the City, but now, there is no part free from [it]—it has extended itself from North to South—from East to West. According to the best account I could collect *this day*, yesterday there were near fifty buried. Buchan² in his description of the worst kind of Putrid Fevers gives a pretty accurate account of the disorder now here—tho in most cases it is attended with additional circumstances of horror. I have made diligent enquiry & find in almost every case the persons who have

¹ Dr. Andrew Ross, physician, 6 Pruan Street, Philadelphia.

² Dr. William Buchan (1729-1805), British physician and author of popular medical works.

died, have caught the disorder from others who have died with it. Originally, I am fully persuaded it was imported from the West Indies. Some facts have come to my knowledge which leave no doubt of this on my mind.

The City is now in a manner depopulated—almost every person who can quit it, is gone. I should judge by appearances that full one half of the People are gone—business is in a great degree stagnated—and I suppose from this day the public offices will not be opened. I went to the Treasury Offices this day, & found all deserted, except by one or two of the Clerks, who informed me that they were on the wing. But ah—how shall I relate to you a most distressing circumstance[?] Mr. Hamilton³ was taken with this terrible disorder last Thursday night—his attack was extremely violent—a vomiting which continued so long & so forcible as almost to deprive him of life before it could be stopped. He is about 5 Miles out of Town; but I have heard from him once or twice every day. This afternoon at about three O’Clock I heard that his Symptoms were highly alarming—and I shall not be surprized to hear of his Death by Tomorrow. He caught the disorder by going into a [House] on business, where there was a person sick with it, which circumstance he was ignorant of. My most ardent prayers have been offered for his life—that he may be [spared] to his Country. I know of but one life more important—ah, may a merciful God have mercy on our Country. I shall keep this Letter open till to-morrow; and may the event be more propitious than my fears.

You see by the foregoing, that tho’ Dr. Ross’s opinion was not explicitly adopted, it has been really practiced upon in part—and if it had been in respect to designating infected houses, it is possible the Secretary might have escaped. You will doubtless conclude that the people here are thrown into a great consternation—this is the fact—and the consequences are, & have been shocking. Numbers have been left to perish in a most wretched manner—for fear, has taken possession of almost every mind. Several of the Physicians have been seized and two of them are dead—viz. Doct. James Hutchinson,⁴ & Doctor Morris.⁵ The Victims are commonly car-

³ Alexander Hamilton, the secretary of the treasury. Hamilton’s illness is noted in the standard account of the epidemic, J. H. Powell, *Bring out Your Dead: The Great Plague of Yellow Fever in Philadelphia in 1793* (Philadelphia, 1949) esp. pp. 107–8.

⁴ Dr. James Hutchinson, professor of chemistry at the University of Pennsylvania, and physician of the Port of Philadelphia, 155 S. Second Street. See, *ibid.*, pp. 21, 85.

⁵ Dr. John Morris. *Ibid.*, pp. 84–85.

ried off in four or five days. I have seen & conversed with persons, who were buried before the week came round. It has been remarked that intemperate persons stand very little chance of their lives when attacked. Amidst this Scene of Death—and while the arrows of the king of Terrors fly so thick around—thro' the infinite mercy of God, I & my family have hitherto been preserved. We are as usual, well—and hope in the protecting arm of Providence—for it seems impossible for us to quit our station. Our Situation is open & airy—and the disorder has not appeared in the neighborhood. One person who is supposed to have had it, is recovered—and I now suspect his complaint was merely an inflammatory fever.

⟨Tuesday Morning—I have heard that the Secretary was much better last evening—expect to hear shortly how he was this morning.⟩

⟨10 oClock—I have just heard that the Secretary continues better⟩—but that Mrs. Hamilton is taken ill—⟨I hope therefore that he will be spared.⟩ With respect to myself & Family we make use of such precautions as are recommended—and except the disorder is wafted from place to place in the air I hope that we shall be preserved. Our only dependence is on that Providence which spares one, while another is taken. With love to your wife & compliments to all friends I remain your

affectionate friend
John Fenno

[*Addressed:*] Joseph Ward Esq
Newton
near Boston

Phila. Sept. 12. 1793

Dear Sir

I wrote you on Tuesday—but as I can now inform you that Mr. Hamilton is so far recovered as to be thot out of danger, it appeared to me important to send you the agreeable intelligence. In last evenings Paper, a Letter from him, addressed to the College of Physicians was published, giving some short account of his Case—and recommending to their attention the mode of treatment adopted by his Physician, who is a person by the name of Stevens¹ from St. Croix, an old schoolfellow of the Secretary's. The Cold Bath, & the

¹ Dr. Edward Stevens. *Ibid.*, *passim*.

Bark are the grand exhibitions (to use a medical Phrase) which Dr. Stevens recommends in putrid Fevers. I know this Intelligence will give you great pleasure, as it will also to every friend to his Country. With respect to the general state of the Disorder, I wish it was in my power to give you any satisfactory accounts of its really abating. I rather think it does—on Monday the number buried was short of fifty. Tuesday I cannot ascertain. Yesterday, Wednesday, about Thirty—but the number which died yesterday I fear was great*—business is in a great measure at a stand—the Public Offices are deserted. The weather this morning is very cold, and great hopes are entertained of a check from that circumstance. Thro the favor of Providence my Family continues well. We have no late News—Adieu

ever yours
JF

* A physician who has been much employed in the Sickness told me this morning that yesterday was one of the worst days we had had. P.S. One physician informed me today that he thought the Disorder began to assume a less threatening aspect—and that many who were now seized would have what is here called the Fall Fever—which seldom proves mortal.

[*Addressed:*] Joseph Ward Esq
Newton near Boston

Phila. Oct. 8. 1793

Dear Sir,

I wrote you on Saturday—but as it will be interesting to you to hear frequently from us, and I am favored this day with yours of 27th Ult. I shall prepare a Letter for Thursday's Post. I thank you most sincerely for your consolatory reflections—and kind admonitions to put our trust in that being "who is omnipotent to save." We have no other refuge—and if as you hope, we should escape the dreadful visitation, our salvation will be of God alone. We cannot flee, and the attacks of the Disorder are so insidious, so various & so general that there appears to be no retreat or security from its effects. I am so happy as to be able to inform you that we are as when I last wrote, except my youngest daughter but one, who is pretty severely attacked with a flux & a slight fever—but I think

she is better today. Doct. Rush¹ published a long Account of the Epidemic in Brown's Paper² of last Evening—it is interesting & will I suppose be republished with you. As to the state of the Disorder in the City at the present time, I cannot give you so satisfactory an Account as I could wish. The number of Interments are much diminished—this arises however principally from the number of the sick being lessened—for it appears that the malignity of the disorder continues in the very sudden exit of a great number, I fear as great a proportion as at any period. The number at the Hospital has encreased very much—it amounts to about 230—36 of which were carried out yesterday. From last Tuesday to Sunday, six days, 75 were buried out of the Hospital—exclusive of these the number buried in the city averages from 20 to 30 a day for the last five days. Yesterday morning Major Franks,³ assistant Cashier of the Bank of the U.S. died—he was sick one week—and this day Mr. Serjeant⁴ the Lawyer died. He was taken only last Friday Evening—a Capt. Jas Craig⁵ and a Mr. J. R. Howell⁶ died yesterday—and numbers of others of less note. I mentioned in my last that the Rev. Mr. Fleming,⁷ a Roman Catholic Clergyman was dead—there is another Clergyman of the same denomination was said to be dying this day—the Roman Catholic Congregations have suffered most severely by this visitation—their burying grounds are like ploughed fields. Their good Pastors have been incessant in their visits & labors among their flocks.

I forgot to inform you that your old Friend Mr. Azariah Horton fell a victim to the epidemic about 3 weeks since. His Landlady a Mrs. Budd,⁸ with whom he had lived for many years and the nurse who attended her & him, also died. There are a great many instances of whole Families being swept off. There are at this time 70 Children who have been made orphans by this Epidemic. I be-

¹ Dr. Benjamin Rush (1745-1813), physician and patriot.

² Andrew Brown's *Federal Gazette*.

³ David Salisbury Franks, a paymaster of the Revolutionary army and a leading member of the Philadelphia Jewish community.

⁴ Jonathan Dickinson Sergeant, attorney at law, 113 Mulberry Street, Philadelphia, an organizer of the Democratic Society of Philadelphia. Eugene Perry Link, *Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800* (New York, 1942), pp. 80, 85n, 170.

⁵ James Craig, sea captain, 152 N. Front Street, Philadelphia.

⁶ Jacob R. Howell, attorney at law, 60 N. Third Street, Philadelphia.

⁷ The Rev. Francis A. Fleming, 17 Willing's Alley, Philadelphia.

⁸ Possibly the wife of James Budd, grocer, 409 N. Front Street, Philadelphia.

lieve I may extend the number to upwards of an hundred. It is utterly impossible for any one to give a detail of the Scenes of distress which have taken place in this City in particular situations—especially among the poor.

9th—I find on enquiry that the mortality was yesterday very great—13 at the Hospital & 14 Coffins furnished by the Committee for poor persons who died in the City—and when it is considered that there are between twenty & thirty burying grounds in the City I fear the number of Deaths yesterday exceeded fifty.

10th—Yesterday 12 died at the Hospital—& 29 new patients were carried out. The weather continues dry & warm.

Mrs. Rogers, wife of Rev. Dr. Rogers⁹ whom you know—has been sick about a week; & this morning is supposed to be dying. She is of a bilious habit, & much of an Invalid—and persons thus predisposed, have seldom survived an attack of the epidemic. We yet continue well—our little girl is much better. I desire to put my trust in the protecting arm of a merciful God & hope your friendly anticipations will be realized in our preservation. Give our love to Mother & thank her for her kind solicitude for us. I rejoice to hear of Mrs. W[ard] being under way again & most sincerely wish a happy issue to the days of expectation, that your heavy & severe loss may be in a good measure supplied. As to News we have none. Our election was held on Tuesday. Gov. Mifflin¹⁰ was reelected by the Citizens of this place. I hope my next Letter will convey you more agreeable intelligence. May you & yours continually enjoy the smiles of a benignant Providence. Please to remember us to all enquiring friends.

ever yours JF

P.S. Mrs. Fenno desires an affectionate remembrance to Mrs. Ward rejoices in her prospect—hopes it will be realized in a son, and that the future will serve to abate the grief of past reflections. Please also to remember her to Mrs. Curtis, Mrs. Homer & her good Husband.

[*Addressed:*] Joseph Ward Esq.
Newton
near Boston—

⁹ William Rogers, D.D., professor of rhetoric and belles lettres at the University of Pennsylvania, 40 N. Fourth Street, Philadelphia.

¹⁰ Thomas Mifflin (1744–1800), merchant, member of Continental Congress, Revolutionary soldier, and governor of Pennsylvania 1790–99.

FROM PHILA. OCT. 17. 1793

Dear Sir,

I have now the great pleasure to inform you that the Situation of this place in respect to the epidemic is wonderfully changed for the better since Tuesday. That day it rained the principal part of the time & till late in the evening—in the Night it cleared off & the wind blew almost a hurricane. Yesterday it was very cold, with a brisk wind all the time from North West. Last Friday the number of Dead I have reason to suppose was upwards of 100—fifty of which were buried in the Potter's field. Saturday & Monday 29 were buried there—but yesterday the number was greatly diminished thro' the City—only 4 were buried from the Hospital & 3 carried thither whereas the number of Dead there has been from 12 to 20 per day for more than 5 Weeks past and the number carried thither the last week amounted to 30 a day for several days. We consider the State of Matters at the Hospital, as a criterion to judge of the State of the Disorder in the City generally. You see that the change is wonderful. God grant that it may be permanent—the weather is now fine.

A return has been made to the Committee¹ of the number which has died since the 1st Aug. to 14 Oct.—it amounts to 2590. This return was recd. from the grave-diggers & Sextons—but I am informed that an account taken by a person appointed for the purpose, of the number of citizens who have left the City, of those who remain, & of those who have died makes the latter to exceed 3000. Perhaps the first account refers to the number which are supposed to have died of the epidemic & the latter, to those who have died of every species of disease.

Thro' the protecting favor of Heaven, we continue in Health. Eliza² is quite well.

I observe Mr. Harbach's Death is announced in the Boston Papers.³ A Trunk of Cloaths arrived here from Boston after he sailed. Another old trunk with some articles he left behind—among the Articles is a quarto Book, with a direction written by him on the wrapper—To be delivered to his Father at Sutton in case he did

¹ 'The Committee' was a task force organized under the direction of the mayor of Philadelphia, Matthew Clarkson, to organize the city's response to the epidemic. It became in effect the governing body of the city. See Powell, *Bring out Your Dead*, pp. 143-46 and passim.

² The Fenno's daughter Elizabeth (1786-1817).

³ See (Boston) *Columbian Centinel*, Oct. 5, 1793.

not return. He also left with me two Hotel Lottery Tickets Viz: No. 5007 & 43,854. In my next I will send you a compleat Inventory of all the Articles in the Trunks—and shall wait your directions concerning them. Mr. Harbach's death we consider as a great loss—he had been a friend indeed to me. He possessed a great many estimable qualities & I anticipated with pleasure the time when he would have seen an end of all the unsatisfying enjoyments of a merely sublunary nature & become a serious, solid & highly useful member of Society—but alas all is over. We join with you in condolence on this afflictive event—the Streams of earthly comforts are daily diminishing—the only exhaustless fountain is beyond the force or attraction of Time & Sense.

Our Love to your good wife & most ardently wish her an happy issue to every impending event—and that you may rejoice together for many years, in the signal smiles of a gracious Providence. From your affectionate

Friend.
JF

P.S. Mrs. Rogers died after one week's sickness.

[*Addressed:*] Joseph Ward Esq.
Newton
near Boston

Phila. Oct. 24. 1793

Dear Sir,

At length the clouds begin to dissipate, & the prospect brightens. Since Monday last, the deaths have greatly diminished—the number of new Patients is very small—and the convalescents are greatly multiplied—the Disorder is now principally confined to the Southern extremity of the City—from whence almost every one is taken, which has been carried to the hospital for several days past. The State of the Hospital on Monday evening was 120 Sick & near 100 in the convalescent hospital—not more than 10 or 12 died there Tuesday & Yesterday—and about the same number carried out.

The physicians are dismissing from 10 to 12 families a day from their lists of patients. I doubt not that in 10 days or a fortnight we shall be entirely clear of the Epidemic. This has been a grievous visitation. I pray God that no future State of prosperity & health

may efface those serious impressions which appear to have been made on the public mind—if they should be obliterated, we may find in the issue that this has been but the beginning of sorrows.

The benevolent contributions recd. by the Mayor & Committees have served greatly to animate them in their exertions, & I firmly believe have contributed to check the Disorder among the poor, by raising their drooping dispairing Spirits—for you must know that the Disorder has, for the last three weeks, made the greatest havoc among the most destitute class of people. Some noble donations have been made by individuals unknown—Five hundred dollars from one—& two hundred from another.

I have the great pleasure to inform you that my Family is now well. Caty had a pretty severe attack, but is recovering fast since Monday.

Among the Articles in Mr. Harbach's Trunk recd. from Boston, after he sailed are several made for Mr. Garcia—but for these I believe Mr. Harbach advanced the cash. The contents of the Trunk are as follows:

2 Pr. black sattin Breeches	}	all
2 Pr. Nankeen do		
1 blk Sattin vest	}	new
2 do Striped silk do		
4 white Muslinet do		
1 Striped Nankeen Coat		
1 Superfine blue Cloath do		

The above I suppose were made for Mr. Garcia

1 London brown sup: fine broad Cloth Coat
 1 Crow col'd. ditto
 1 do. do. Cloak fac'd with Velvet
 1 brown Coat superfine—has been worn
 1 Callico Gown. 4 Muslinet Vests
 1 Work'd Cassimer ditto

One white Sattin Vest, work'd, 1 blk ditto
 One Pr. Drawers 1 Flannel waistcoat
 One Pr. blk Sattin Breeches (Two pair)
 One Pr. olive col'd. Cassimer do
 One Pr. Cotton Hose, One Pr. black silk do.
 Two Pr. plain Silk do. 3 Pr. ditto (worn)
 Pr. Black chinese Taste

¼ yd. Cambric. 2 Pr. white Kid gloves
 One Pr. Nankeen Breeches
 One Pr. Striped elastic do. (worn)
 One Pea Green cassimer Vest (worn)

In an Old Trunk (left by Mr. Harbach)

A striped elastic Surtout
 One Pr. Old Cassimer Breeches
 One old Silk Vest—a few Books
 One red Morocco pocket Book
 Only the black Silk Hose, are new.

I have nothing interesting of a foreign nature to communicate. The president of the U.S. I am informed intends to set off for this City in a few days. His presence, will greatly conduce to restoring general Confidence. Our love to your good wife—hope all has been favorable. Remember us to all enquiring friends. Adieu—

ever yours JF

[*Addressed:*] Joseph Ward Esq.
 Newton
 near Boston

Phila. Nov. 14. 1793

Dear Sir,

Your favor of several dates, to the 31st Oct. I recd. this day. As it was long since any direct intelligence from you had reached me, I was relieved from very great anxiety by its contents. I rejoice greatly that yourself & Family continue in health—may the blessing be continued with every desired addition. Thro' divine goodness we are all well, except our youngest child, who is troubled with an internal complaint, that excites some degree of anxiety in our minds. Our Katy had a pretty severe time of it with the epidemic—her symptoms tho' tedious & lingering were not violent. She has however reduced very low by a fortnight's confinement. She is now about again. Mrs. Fenno had a most fatiguing time of it in nursing Katy & myself—but under providence I impute our recovery more to her assiduity, than to medical applications.

During the late dreadful visitation, hundreds died for want of

good attendance—indeed many, very many, were deserted by their nearest connections. I believe however, from the accounts I have received of the terror & apprehensions of persons at a distance, that a tolerably competent idea may be formed of the distress & apprehensions that prevailed here. These were so powerful, that Husbands deserted their Wives; Wives their husbands; children their parents, & *vice versa* in respect to all the relations of life. And this unnatural conduct became too general, & was awfully sanctioned by the fatal consequences that ensued where affection, principle & duty impelled to a contrary conduct—for it was common in such cases for whole families to be swept away. Husbands & wives who mutually nursed each other both died in numerous Instances—the orphan children amount I think to 200.

The disorder first appeared in August—and from a great variety of concurring evidence, I am perfectly satisfied was an imported disease—indeed I think we had two imported disorders—the Yellow Fever from *Hispaniola*, bro't in the vessels which contained the Fugitives from Cape François; these were crowded in small vessels—destitute of almost every convenience—made their passage in the heat of summer and did not arrive *here*, (tho' they sailed at the same time with those who arrived in a short passage at *Baltimore*) until after a long passage. This may, by the way account for the disorder's not breaking out at *Baltimore*. The other disorder, and that which has been the predominant one, was in my opinion imported in a privateer from *Marseilles*. This vessel was long out, was a miserable crib of a thing with no accommodations fit for even brutes, & yet had 130 men on board. I have been repeatedly informed that many dead bodies, & many sick were removed from this Ship—the Sick were sent to lodging houses in *Water Street* where the disorder first appeared and where it swept all before it. Above forty persons died—and more than 100 were sick in *Water Street* before any alarm took place. The men of War which arrived here from the West Indies in the course of the Summer, had a great many sick among their crews, at least several of them. One of the earliest victims to the disorder was a young man who dined on board one of the Frigates, at a feast made to celebrate the anniversary of the 10th August, this man died in 3 or 4 days—and in a short space ten others died in the same house of the same disorder—and from this house the contagion spread in *Chestnut Street* in such manner that above fifty persons died within a stone's throw of it. Scarcely one of which lay more than five days.

You may judge from this Instance of the general State of the City in respect to the thick settled parts. The mortality was dreadful in all the alleys—not a house escaped in those situations except those which were deserted. From the beginning of September to the 17th of Oct:—the distress of the City increased—about twenty thousand persons went out—the moving was continual—and the houses daily shutting up—meantime every person was seen with a sponge or a bottle at their Nose—no shaking of hands, but every one stood aloof—business of every kind became suspended, and universal stillness prevailed night & day. I have repeatedly been in the Street when scarcely an individual was to be seen as far as the eye could extend, except a Negro leading a Herse, or a Chair Carriage, or a Horse Cart with a Corpse—sometimes two in a Cart. Coffin-making & Grave digging were the only businesses of an active kind that was carried on. Many of the Joiners fell victims—but I believe the Grave diggers generally escaped. The Hospital at Bush-hill was opened in *August*—but such was the confusion & terror which prevailed that suitable & competent provision was not made there till the 23 *Sept.* The consequence was, that *almost every* one carried out till that time died. On the 23 *Sept.* Mr. Stephen Gerard,¹ a French Merchant of Fortune, long resident here & a Mr. Peter Helm² a respectable mechanic & a man of property, voluntarily offered to superintend personally the Hospital—they immediately entered on this service—and a very great alteration for the better took place directly. A French Physician³ & another a native of the City⁴ attended—from this time, nearly one half of the Patients were saved. These Gentlemen merit more than mortals can bestow, for their humanity & heroism. And I trust a grateful sense of the obligations they have laid their fellow citizens under, will long be retained. The number sent to the Hospital amounts to about 1000—in all—of which about 600 died—but many were taken dead out of the Carts which conveyed them thither, & many more died the day after they were admitted. There are now about 90 in the hospital, but it is not expected more than three or four will die.

¹ Stephen Girard, merchant, 43 N. Front Street, Philadelphia.

² Peter Helm, cooper, 30 N. Front Street. The heroic roles that Girard and Helm played are noted in Powell, *Bring out Your Dead*.

³ Dr. Jean Devèze, who had come to Philadelphia as a refugee from Santo Domingo. *Ibid.*, pp. 159–60 and *passim*.

⁴ Dr. Benjamin Duffield, 303 S. Front Street, Philadelphia.

In addition to the numerous carriages employed to carry the dead, there were 8 or 9 Carts constantly employed in carrying out the sick. (During this sad state of affairs—I was obliged to go into the center of the Town to market, & to the post-office every day—but such was the dismal scene, & so shocking the details from every quarter, that I found a sensible, tho gradual alteration in my feelings & the state of my health:—besides, it was not possible during part of the time to go the distance of a square without meeting a Corpse, & often 3 or 4. I therefore left off going into town—but it was too late entirely to escape. Katy went to market & got sick in her turn. You may judge of the shocks we were exposed to from circumstances like these.) I was conversing one Saturday with Mr. Anthony⁵ & a Mr. Hays⁶—the Saturday followg. Mr. Hays was buried, & the succeeding Saturday, Mr. Anthony. Three other different Instances occurred of my conversing with persons on a Friday, who died the wednesday after. One of these was a Mr. O'Hara⁷—a Clerk in the Treasury, who one Friday evening stumbled over a Coffin in the Foot Path. It seems that in Carrying this Corpse to the Grave, being a very heavy one, it burst the Coffin—the Negroes had taken it off to secure it. Mr. O'Hara took the scent & died the Wednesday following. Mr. O'Hara's brother passed by my door that day, apparently in good health, but was buried the next week. I might fill a Sheet with similar details—but your imagination can from the above, form some idea of that anxiety & distress, which perpetually harrowed up our feelings. I oft[en tho't] that the situation of People in a bombarded City was not much worse, [upon] some accounts not so bad. We had no respite night nor day. Such a scene was never before realized in this country—and may God of his infinite mercy preserve us from experiencing any thing similar. During our afflictions there were not wanting those heroic, humane & pious minds who think it their duty to brave every danger in the discharge of the offices of Humanity. It would be impossible for me to particularize. The Mayor⁸ is entitled to great honor, & gratitude for his steadiness, & attention to the common duties of his Station, & to those extra calls which the

⁵ Possibly either Joseph Anthony, merchant, 225 High Street, or Thomas P. Anthony, merchant, 73 Walnut Street, Philadelphia.

⁶ Possibly Michael Hay. See Powell, *Bring out Your Dead*, p. 92.

⁷ Thomas O'Hara. See James Hardie, *The Philadelphia Directory and Register* (Philadelphia: T. Dobson, 1793), p. 167.

⁸ Matthew Clarkson.

extremity of our situation presented. The Committees of the City also were firm & steady at their posts. The Physicians also, & the Clergymen who remained in the City behaved in general with great magnanimity—and many of both fell victims to their exertions. Among the Clergy—the Roman Catholics encountered every danger. The Rev. Mr. Helmuth⁹ Pastor of the German Lutherans was incessant in his visitations & labors. He is well, & his escape is almost miraculous. Of this Gentleman's Congregation he informed me, that above Six hundred died. Mr. Carey¹⁰ who was one of the Committee, has this day published a pamphlet containing a History of the epidemic.¹¹ The returns he has collected from the Sextons of the Several burying grounds, make the whole number which has died to amount to Four Thousand & Thirty One from first Augt. to 9th Nov.—doubtless before this you have seen the publications relative to the Donations recd. for the relief of the poor of the City. There has been more than sufficient collected to indemnify the corporation for the actual expenses they have been obliged to incur, & a surplus for the Poor—but I fear, that without much greater assistance than will be received by way of contribution, the Poor will be great sufferers the ensuing winter. The Donation of the Town of Boston has been received in specific articles—these have been disposed of, but what the proceeds are, I have not heard. Mr. Lucas¹² sent me a bl. Vinegar and Dr. Townsend¹³ a Bl Cyder & 2 lbs. of Apples—besides which the Dr. had before sent me a Ten Dollar bank bill. These marks of Friendship & Commiseration were unexpected but I trust, not ungratefully recd. Mr. Lucas also with a generosity which, tho I cannot say it is unparalleled, is very rarely exhibited, returned me my note in his Favor for Fifty Pounds. Whatever may be the issue of my career in life, whether my sun may set in splendor, or in clouds—my experience testifies that some of the brightest beams of divinity irradiate the human heart. Your very very generous tender of Fifty Dollars permit me to decline receiving. I have already made too large drafts on your bounty. Still let me acknowledge with grateful emotions your goodness.

⁹ J. Henry Helmuth, D.D., 144 High Street, Philadelphia.

¹⁰ Mathew Carey (1760–1839), a leading Philadelphia printer, publisher, and writer.

¹¹ Carey, *A Short Account of the Malignant Fever, Lately Prevalent in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Mathew Carey, 1793), went through numerous editions.

¹² John Lucas, Esq., of Orange Street, Boston.

¹³ David Townsend, physician, Southack's Court, Boston.

Mrs. Fenno says I speak her Sentiments in this. Her heart [is] filled with a sense of your abounding benevolence. She also desires a tender remem[brance to your] good wife & I trust we pray with sincerity, that every blessing of time & ete[rnity may be] yours. The Death of Mr. Harbach has afflicted us most sensibly—your reflections on this sorrowful event anticipate any I can make. May his relatives receive divine consolation. Should you hear any thing of the fate of Don Garcia, please to inform me—& any further particulars of Mr. Harbach. I have been told that the Vessel was carried into New Providence. Health now has returned, & with it our citizens—tho many yet continue absent. I do not suppose that there is the least contagion left—none that have returned to the City have caught the disorder—tho' reports to ye contrary have returned. The Shops & Stores are opening, & business reviving. The Gov.¹⁴ has published a Proclamation for a day of humiliation, thanksgiving & praise. May our late visitation prove the means of a radical & lasting reformation. If not, how many ways may we yet be visited? Please to remember us all with affection to our Mother & other enquiring friends. We are all in health, except as before excepted. I discontinued my Paper the 18 Sept.—since which time my receipts from my Subscribers in arrears, have been paltry indeed—so much so that without receiving some assistance long since promised, and recently solicited with all the pathos I am capable of giving to an application, my career as a Printer will be long suspended, if not closed forever. I am waiting in hope. Thro yours', Mr. Harbach's & Mr. Lucas's generous remissions of your demands my Debts are reduced to about Two Thousand Dollars. I have now due for the Gazette Four Thousand, but scattered in small sums from Savannah to Portland in the district of Maine. And yet from experience I have reason to fear that I shall never realize more than one quarter of the Sum. My future plan is to publish a daily paper and to furnish myself with an office sufficient to carry on the printing business extensively—for this purpose I requested a Stationer here to import for me the requisite Types—they are now arrived & if I can but get under way again I hope, by remembering that Charity begins at home, to do better for myself & family in future. I have sacrificed my proportion. The printing business carried on upon an extensive scale may be made productive—and I wish not to change again.

¹⁴ Thomas Mifflin.

16th Nov. Since writing the foregoing particulars, I have seen Mr. Carey's Pamphlet—his account is so similar to mine that there is no necessity for any alteration. I shall send you one of the pamphlets by the first water conveyance. Meantime I am Dear Sir

With every sentiment of affection, your
ever devoted friend & servant

JF

[*Addressed:*] Joseph Ward Esq.
Newton
near Boston

Phila. Dec. 18. 1793

Dear Sir,

I was made extremely happy in receiving yours of the 22d Nov. this day—the recent event in your family is a Subject of the sincerest joy both to Mrs. Fenno & myself. May a merciful God spare to your future embraces the babe¹ he has given you. We rejoice that your good wife was so comfortable, & fondly hope that ere this, she is recovered to wonted health. We ardently desired that your next might be a Son—and our wishes were completely gratified. Since my last long letter, which I find by the papers you have recd. we have shifted our quarters. We now live No. 3 South 4th Street—where I have recommenced business with a daily paper and in addition to this Mrs. Fenno has taken three members of Congress into the House as boarders Viz. Your old Friend Wadsworth, Mr. P. Coffin² and a Mr. Tracy³ of Connecticut. So that you'll perceive we have our hands full of business. I snatch a moment to write you for my Paper leaves no waking interval of labor or tho't.

I have about 200 Subscribers—but this number is not half sufficient to support the publication—they are however encreasing. To get a going again I have made another loan—but have not yet recd. one half that is necessary & which was promised me. The loan turned on the idea of my printing a newspaper—and the time was precious, otherwise I should have suspended it till some future time. There

¹ Joseph Ward (1793–1833).

² Peleg Coffin, Jr. (1756–1805), U.S. congressman from Massachusetts 1793–95.

³ Uriah Tracy (1755–1800), U.S. congressman (Federalist) from Connecticut 1793–96.

are some circumstances attending the business which time will not admit of detailing at present.⁴ I hope for an opportunity of doing it should we ever meet again.

I mentioned in my last that your generous offer could not be accepted by me on any decent principles. I trust it has made a due impression on my own mind & that of Mrs. Fenno—but were hundreds, who most undoubtedly are under much greater obligations to me than you are, (tho by the way I pretend not to any claims) to dilate their purse strings one half or one tenth part so much as you have done, my situation would be comfortable. May you forever possess the power to encrease your pleasurable sensations, by acts of beneficence & charity.

My Love to Mother. Please to inform her, that I recd. a Letter from Mr Chapman⁵ in Augt. or July—in which he writes that he had desired a Mr. Carthy the bearer of the Letter to pay her I think it was Twenty Dollars. The Letter was left at my house in my absence. I saw Mr. Carthy several times after—but he never said anything to me about paying the money—nor did I ever receive any of him. When the epidemic came on, he went out of the City & I have heard nothing from him since. Whether the circumstance of Mother's being gone from Philadelphia was the reason of his not saying anything about the business I cannot say. I had a small account to settle with him, and intended when I settled to mention the business, but he went away & matters remain as above. As to news I refer you to the papers. The House of Reps. has been shut up a good deal since Congress assembled. Many interesting events are impending. I expect a long Session. As to Genet, you will see how he has conducted by two Letters in my paper of yesterday, which will doubtless be republished with you. We are all well. Our Love to Mr. & Mrs. Homer—thank them for their affectionate Letter—don't know when I shall be able to answer it. May you & yours be blessed forevermore.

JF

[*Addressed:*] Joseph Ward Esq.
Newtown
near Boston
Massts.

⁴ See Hench, 'Letters of Fenno, Part 1,' p. 306 and n. 19.

⁵ Samuel Chapman (1749?-1807) was John Fenno's half brother—his mother's son by her first marriage.

Phila. Feb. 23. 1794

Dear Sir,

I mentioned in a P.S. to Mrs. Fenno's Letter that one of yours of an old date had come to hand—since then I am without any of your favors. Yesterday the birthday of the President was celebrated here—and with uncommon testimonies of pleasure—the new french minister¹ happening to arrive was presented to him. M. Genet, is, it is said invisible. This remarkable incident should teach the people of the U.S. to look at home—it is probable that many months will not elapse before another change will ensue. The firmness, prudence & wisdom of our executive now blazes forth with additional splendor. We may safely aver that the U.S. have again been saved, by the Instrumentality of those men, whom providence made the agents of our Salvation in “the times that tried men's souls.” Faction must I think mourn & howl in shame & contempt. The blow bladder men may now reserve their wind for some other opportunity of mischief. I have reason to suppose the executive has received very interesting dispatches from Europe—and I expect those from London will turn out favorable. Nothing has as yet transpired. It is with infinite regret I have heard of the projects of some of your anarchists in calling a Town meeting. May wisdom open their eyes and patriotism warm their hearts. What a miserable way your self-plumed reformers have of shewing their love to their country!—they bawl for freedom—for a representative government and in the same breath vent the gall of their souls against the freely elected servants of the people. Can there be a grosser insult on the majesty of those they assume to be the friends of? I hope that Boston in Town Meeting did the only thing that ought to have been done & that is, vote that they had no right to interfere in the business. But whether they did or not, it will amount to the same in the issue—for those who are supposed to be the objects of censure, are as firm as they are wise & independent. And all the Thunders of the Vatican will not make them shrink from what *they* consider their Duty. Should the dispatches from England prove favorable Madisons Resolutions² will sleep—and if not, I feel confident they never will pass. I think you must have been entertained by the discussion of the Subject—some of the Speeches do honor to our Country. Do

¹ Jean Antoine Joseph Fauchet (1761–1834), Genêt's successor.

² On Jan. 3, 1794, James Madison introduced in Congress a series of resolves aimed at raising duties on British goods and vessels. See Ralph Ketcham, *James Madison: A Biography* (New York and London, 1971), pp. 350–52.

not say they are too long—the importance of the business, & the almost equal division of the House rendered it necessary to exhaust the Subject—besides it will perhaps be much safer to legislate too little, than too much, the present Session.

You will observe by the papers that the Subject of the New Emission is now referred to the Secy. of the Treasury³ & I hope something will be done. There are some important Subjects before Congress—the Armament business progresses but whether it will succeed eventually is uncertain—if it does not—it will be owing to party local considerations and in my opinion will involve an abandonment of the essential Interests of the U.S. But the demon of Jealousy in respect to ye growing strength of the northern States will exert all its faculties on this occasion.

The public & private loss which would ensue should this measure fail, would be equal to the expense of four times the force proposed.

You will see by the last accounts from europe how astonishingly the principles of our American Lycurgus⁴ are verified in the proceedings of the french. Should Providence permit their example to extend its influence, the whole globe must become an Aceldama. Somethings of late appear very unaccountable to me in the conduct of their leaders. I hope the best—that they begin to see that they are not in the road to freedom & good Government—but whether any of the present influential characters are competent to the work of peace & freedom I doubt. I am much puzzled to determine whether Brissot⁵ & his colleagues have, or have not been cut off thro' the agency of the Royalists. A short time will explain the matter—certain it is, that Democracy has not received so great a blow by all the Victories of the Allies, as by their death. I have been told that the clergy of N[ew] E[ngland] have been in the habit of praying for success to the french—so far as this has had reference to the Interest of humanity & general freedom it was right—but I have long been of opinion that the general and indiscriminate approbation of the conduct of the leaders in the revolution have done great injury to the cause of Liberty by puffing up the worst characters in the universe, & confirming them in their errors—while

³ Hamilton.

⁴ Possibly a reference to Thomas Paine (1737-1809).

⁵ Jacques Pierre Brissot de Warville (1754-93), French Girondist leader; executed, along with twenty other Girondins, by the Jacobins, Oct. 31, 1793. See Ammon, *Genet Mission*, pp. 15-17, 157.

at the same time it was undermining the principles which form the basis of our civil & religious establishments—for clear I am that the establishment of rational civil Liberty has never been so much an object in France, as the destruction & annihilation of the Christian Religion. I anticipate the most gloomy & deplorable tidings from that country on account of a scarcity. A Ship arrived here a few days since from Bourdeaux—the Capt. of which says he gave four pounds Sterling an hundred for Ship bread. The only method he had to get away was by bribing—which he did to the tune of Twelve hundred pounds Sterling. One hundred & fifty sail of American Vessels are embargoed in the ports of France—so much for treaties of commerce. Let me hear from you as often as convenient. Our love to your good wife and our Mother, when you see her. Thro' the favor of Providence, we are all well. With every wish for heavens choicest blessings on you & yours—

I am, dear Sir

Your ever affectionate

JF

[*Addressed:*] Joseph Ward Esq.

Newton

Favd. by near Boston

Mr. Breed⁶

Care Mr. E. Sigourney⁷

Phila. Apl. 26. 1794

Dear Sir,

Previous to receiving your last enclosing several articles for publication relative to the N[ew] E[mission] I had enquired of Mr. Wolcot¹ the Comptroller, what his opinion was as to Congress's doing anything in the business—he was decidedly of opinion that nothing would ever be done, excepting that the bills might be admitted as evidences of an unliquidated claim against the U.S. pursuant to the Act which I think limits the presentation of such claims to the first of May. But very great doubts exist as to their

⁶ Probably William Breed, baker, Temple Street, Boston.

⁷ Elisha Sigourney, merchant, 1 Spears Wharf, house Southack's Court, Boston.

¹ Oliver Wolcott (1760–1833), comptroller of the U.S. treasury 1791–95, later secretary of the treasury.

being taken up on this plan, since Massachusetts has provided for funding the bills & other States have sunk their proportions in such manner that the whole amount floating is considered as trifling.

This being the state of the case, led me to determine that it could answer no possible end to publish the speculations. More especially at this moment when Congress are plunged in a labyrinth of embarrassments and perplexities from which I see no way for them to extricate themselves, without extraordinary wisdom & firmness in the executive. So great, pressing, & various, are the new objects which call for supplies—so inevitable is a defalcation in the present revenue, owing to the derangement of our Commerce, & more so to the measures proposed in the house of Representatives, that I do conceive no idea would be sooner scouted than that on which you so justly found your claim, *Public Faith*. The majority of the House of Representatives are most unequivocally opposed to any further provision for the public debt by way of funding—and indeed I am clearly of opinion that if we now had but *one* branch in the legislature the Funding system would this Session receive its quietus—from these remarks you will infer that my opinion is, that our public debt is, & will continue to be a subject of speculation—that there is not at present any permanent basis for confidence nor will there be till the present fermentation in the public mind shall work off principles, too generally prevalent, & which are subversive of every idea of public faith, or public credit. The Committee of 15 of the House have bro't in a report on the ways & means—this report contains a land Tax, an excise on Sugar & Tobacco—a Stamp tax—a tax on Carriages and an enhancement of the Impost—every moment of the residue of the Session will be required to compromise opinions on this report—for a greater division never existed. The land Tax originates from the South & is warmly opposed from the North. Money must be had—and true it is that those who are for plunging the Country in War, are the most opposed to providing the means—and I shall not be surprized if, before the close of the Session, it should be proposed to stop paying the Interest of the public debt, & to apply the revenue from Impost & Excise to the *new objects* for which money is wanted. With respect to your N[ew] E[mission] I am clearly of opinion that you must wait a long time before you will be able to do better with it, than funding it on the plan of your State funding law—if ever the general Govt. should recognize it, it will be by the way of a farther assumption. I have the pleasure to inform you that we are all as

usual well. Congress talk of adjourning about the middle of May. I never anticipated much benefit from their assembling at this critical juncture—some things have been done that I feel persuaded we shall find had better have been left undone—and that some have been left undone that ought to have been done, you will join with me in saying. I feel extremely sorry & mortified that you shd. be so great a sufferer from the public delinquency—but you will learn from the members on their return, that it would have [*torn*] easy to *create*, as to have done any th [*torn*] business, this Session. Adieu ev[er your]

JF

[*Addressed:*] Joseph Ward Esq.
Newton near
Boston

Phila. July 21. 1794

Dear Sir,

It is long since I had a line from you—tho' perhaps I am in your debt a Letter. Mr. Wheeler¹ who passed thro this City several weeks since gave us the last intelligence—by him we had the high satisfaction to learn that yourself & Family were well—& that you enjoyed better health than usual. Nothing very interesting has transpired since my last of a domestic nature—thro the favor of Providence we are all in usual health—and tho' the weather is now severely hot the City is remarkably healthy. We have an abundance of rain. This I hope will be handed you by my son. There are various inducements which concur to solicit a consent on my part to the tour to Boston. He has been incessant in his Studies, & labors the last six months. Some relaxation appeared necessary. The hurry in my business has slackened—the sickly season approaches—and there is a vacation in the college—at the expiration of which, the beginning of Sept. he will have his degree. But the principal object with him is, to ascertain whether he cannot make an arrangement to pursue the Study of the Law in Boston—he supposes that he can obtain more professional eminence there, than in any other place. His present design is to adopt that business for life—provided it is practicable. My mind has been a good deal exercised about it and I

¹ Possibly Solomon Wheeler of Sutton, Massachusetts, who married Ward's sister Eleanor, according to the typescript annotation.

am still at a loss what to say. *Advice*, is all that can be done. He is now almost complete master of the printing business—and has for a year past been able to do as much as any hand I employ. I tell him he will probably much sooner acquire property in this line, than by the law—but in answer he says the business is limited—and once a printer always a printer—that there is no chance of eminence, or extensive usefulness—that Franklin owed his fortune & fame to his philosophy, & striking into politics—not to printing—and that D² tho' worth 100,000£ will never be anything more than D the printer. In addition to all the rest he finds the business affects his health—he is too tall for it.³ His wish at present is to pursue his Studies with some lawyer in Boston—there are great difficulties to encounter in pursuing this plan, and I know not how they can be surmounted—and this I tell him—but he must take his chance—the Jaunt may be advantageous to him, let the result as this object be what it may. Your Counsel & advice I need not solicit as the welfare of me & mine has always been near your heart.

My Son has hitherto conducted perfectly to my satisfaction and I fondly persuade myself that his conduct will continue to make him friends in every situation.

Remember us with affection to all our friends—to your dear wife—Mr. & Mrs. Curtis—our good Mother—to Mrs. & Mrs. Homer &c &c. Would the time admit I would write more particularly and especially some remarks on the present posture of affairs—but I am if possible more a slave than ever. Son must inform you of all particulars of a domestic nature.

In hopes of soon hearing from you by a line—I remain as ever,
Yours in love & respect
J Fenno

[*Addressed:*] Joseph Ward Esq.
Boston

² Probably François Ambroise Didot (1730-1804), a great French printer, called by Benjamin Franklin Bache the best printer of his time. See *The New Columbia Encyclopedia*, ed. William H. Harris and Judith S. Levey (New York and London, 1975), s.v. 'Didot.'

³ A tall pressman would have difficulty applying the proper leverage to the bar of a press.

Phila. Sept. 14. 1794

Dear Sir,

I have now before me two Letters from you, which tho' not of very recent dates, are replete with valuable matter, & merit my grateful acknowledgements. It is long since I had the pleasure of writing you, but it is not because you are less the subject of my tho'ts than when I used to correspond more frequently and I have repeatedly had the pleasure of hearing of your health, & of that of your family, a blessing comprizing almost all others pertaining to life, & which I pray may be long continued. Your Letter by Mr. Piber(?) tho' first dated, was last recd.—he has not come on to this City, but continues in N York. I observe the various articles you touch upon in which you have my acquiescence—particularly in respect to Printers—with a few exceptions, if the enemies of this Country had chosen their agents of mischief they could not have employed better, than the Printers of News Papers in the U.S. The press was generally engaged on the right side, I mean that of order & just government, during the time the Constitution was on its passage—but ever since it has been in operation, our News papers have constantly teemed with publications hostile to the government they before advocated, subversive of the principles on which civil liberty is founded, degrading to our character as freemen, and as an independant nation. So far as this has been done by exiles from Europe, & thro' the agency of other foreigners it may be attributed to two causes, the first is that these exiles suppose they should get rid of all restraints in this free & happy Country—the majority of this class are persons that cannot be quiet under any government whatever & we shall find, that they will oppose the just & wholesome laws of this Country as long as they can do it with impunity. The other cause originates in a vile spirit of envy & malignity—there are wretches among us who will never forgive or forget our successful efforts to throw off foreign Domination—but that we should become a nation, a great, a flourishing & important component part of the great whole is what they cannot tolerate. But Sir, the times are changing. Printers I trust will in future see that it is not for their Interest to be the tools of men who seek their own advantage at the expense of the peace & honor of their Country. It must appear evident to every man that the infamous tenets which are advanced, & the vile slanders against public characters which have been so long continued, have at length tintured the public mind, and the consequences are beginning to be felt. Our

demo[cratic] societies have excited an Insurrection in this State, which will cost agreeable to my calculation, at least one million of Dollars. Your account of the Chronicle¹ finishes its character with me. I could not have conceived that they would have refused to publish anything from *your* pen—but it is characteristic of all such servile presses. May the people appreciate them according to their merit. Your Gov: A² has all his life long been the bubble of credulity and I wish he may not turn out something worse. To countenance, in his situation, & at his time of life, the principles & conduct of those wretched Politicians who have never done any *good*, & who, the good sense of the People alone prevents from doing unspeakable mischief is worse than dotage, it is abominable impotence to use the mildest term. The appointment of Monroe³ was I believe one of those compromises which must take place in all governments. I abhor the policy, but wish it may turn out well in the end. I know little of him, and as you do know something I wish you would give me some ideas of the man. Your approbation of Mr. Adams's appointment⁴ is a thing of course. I know he feels himself an American & will do honor to his Country & himself.

You express your approbation of my mode of conducting my paper. When it was published twice a week I was obliged to select with more attention, consequently excluded a great deal of trash, that I now find it convenient to take it in—independent of the advantage you suggest, it furnishes a good pretext for introducing speculations in which the truth is more freely told, than has hitherto been the case and I am determined to give currency in future to lucubrations which shall take many rampant public errors by the Horns.

Your remarks on the demo. clubs coincide with mine—you will have seen that the public has been favored with your observations. These institutions are on the wane—their censures of government were arrogant, their approbation is contemptible—the characters that compose them in general, possess neither public nor private confidence.

¹ The *Independent Chronicle* of Boston by this time had become nearly exclusively Jeffersonian Republican and pro-French.

² Samuel Adams (1722-1803), governor of Massachusetts 1794-97.

³ James Monroe (1758-1831), appointed U.S. minister to France in the spring of 1794, served until 1796.

⁴ John Quincy Adams (1767-1848), appointed U.S. minister to the Netherlands, served 1794-96.

There is one point in which you & I do not so perfectly coincide as we do in all others and that is the affairs of France. The origin of the revolutions in that Country (for there has been many) I care little about—it will not bear investigation—there was no virtue & consequently no merit in it. The Court began it, thro necessity—in its progress, it produced principles honorary to human nature—but those principles & the men who bro't them forward are no more—and it has appeared to me for a long time that the principal agents there, have been much more solicitous to exterminate the christian religion, than to establish a free government. I consider the present state of things in France, & in europe generally, as indicative of the divine vengeance upon the people there—and in a degree exceeding almost any former example as to severity & extent. With respect to France it is long since they have lost the track to freedom. I see no approaches towards it, but directly the reverse. A member of Congress used to say last winter, “that he tho't it would take about forty years for them to clear the Country of the present generation, & he conceived that by internal & external wars they would continue the present butchery till that was done—that none of the present race above a certain age would ever see Peace & as to the succeeding age it was a very uncertain point whether they would establish a republican Government.” But, adverting to the present principles of the predominating faction in france—I do not see how any man can say they wish them to prevail—there is but one thing they merit eulogium for, and that is for fighting well—but as to their principles, examine them, try them on the touch stone of human nature—there is not a civilized country under heaven where they can be introduced, which would not immediately be turned into just such an Acedama as France is—and for the life of me, I cannot conceive that any other government can be established on those principles than that of a revolutionary government, which, as exemplified in France, means nothing else but submission absolute & unconditional to a succession of triumphing factions. Robespierre⁵ appears now to be the soul of the present revolution—examine well his speeches & reports—blood is the predominant idea—conformable to which in April May and June, the executions in Paris were almost innumerable. I do not depend on english papers. I had a great number of paris papers for

⁵ Maximilien Marie Isidore Robespierre (1758–94), a leader of the French Committee of Safety and an architect of the Reign of Terror. He was himself guillotined on July 28, 1794, but the news had obviously not yet reached Fenno.

April & May their principal contents were the names of the victims executed daily. Every species of merit was swept away by the guillotine. It appeared that numbers were executed for words & actions uttered & done long before the year 1789.

What would be the consequence to the world should they take & sack Amsterdam? it appears to me it would be a whirlwind that would in a manner annihilate Great Britain, shake every other Commercial Country to the Center of this Shock, we should have such a share as we should not get over in half a Century. I do not mean by the foregoing to be understood as favoring the views of the combined powers against France—the subversion of the old despotism I tho't a good work, but if no better government is introduced than the present, it will prove to be the worst thing that could have been done. The neighbors of the French had infinitely better have left them to themselves—and I hope they will be so successful, as to be able, if they are so disposed, to establish a free government—a free government I most heartily wish them—but I deprecate their external successes while the same lust of power & universal dominion, appears predominant, which actuated that execrable Tyrant Louis the fourteenth.

To advert a little to American politics. French successes appear to be the thermometer by which many calculate the success of Mr. Jay's Mission.⁶ Suppose Mr. Jay should graduate his conduct upon that scale while in England—would it be considered in any degree wise & politic? If not, is it prudent in the people here to fill our gazettes with the Idea. Suppose the U.S. Great Britain, and we engage in a Cause that they reprobated as unjust but in prosecuting which, we supposed our best Interests involved—say would not a suggestion that misfortunes in such a case would lead us to do what we otherwise shou'd not, excite our national pride & resentment? The people of England appear to me, to be more united at the present time than in any former war, and that it is the height of ill policy to suppose that their ill success, will facilitate Mr. Jay's negotiation. No, we have a better hold on them than the contingencies of war—and that is their Interest. If they are blind to that they are infatuated to their own destruction indeed—and in fact, I am not clear that we shall not find that to be the case, for as I at first observed, the time seems to be arrived when the destroying

⁶ John Jay (1745-1829), chief justice of the U.S., was sent by President Washington to Great Britain in June 1794 to negotiate outstanding disagreements. Jay's Treaty was signed on Nov. 19, 1794.

angel will be commissioned to make a general sweep of all the Kingdoms & States of Europe as to all existing principles & establishments good & bad.

As you may be anxious to hear something respecting the Insurgents I should be happy to send something in addition to what the papers contain—but there is little or nothing further. You will have seen a Mr. White's⁷ Speech—that contains a list of the Grievances complained of—take it for data—and a most wretched hash it is—White told me, that if the Government would but wait, all would come right—that the best people there were for submitting—but this is perfectly inconsistent with his Harangue. The troops will march, but I am sorry to say that such is the condition of the militia law and so great an apathy exists either naturally, or has been artfully excited in regard to the service that I do not think this State's quota of Troops will be mustered. Mean time a goodly spirit of Volunteering prevails—about 150 Horse, & several uniform Companies will march this week. This business appears to me to have been badly managed—the Governor⁸ on the President's requisition, issued his orders in due form & I believe that is all that was one—much industry was used to circulate an opinion that the militia would not go. Some great folks were in a quondary, they waited to see how the Cat would jump—but now they find how it is, that the Insurgents are reprobated by great majority, all the world is set in motion. The thing is working right on the whole, and as you observe, I think good will come out of evil—the democrats are almost as scarce as musketoes in December. There was a great schism in the Demo club a night or two since—some member bro't forward resolutions approbating the president's conduct—some of the devil's brands took fire—the President of the Club as I am informed, (who is Blair McClenachan)⁹ left the chair—he was forced in again—he objected to the votes—Uproar ensued—some say bloody noses & broken shins—the Votes were carried, 30 to 18—poor creatures. You have seen Judge Addison's¹⁰ speech—it is re-

⁷ Possibly James White (1749–1809), a delegate to Congress from the Territory South of the River Ohio (now Tennessee).

⁸ Thomas Mifflin.

⁹ Blair McClenachan, president of the Philadelphia Democratic Society. See Link, *Democratic-Republican Societies*, passim.

¹⁰ Alexander Addison (1759–1807), Pennsylvania jurist. For an account of the speech, see Leland D. Baldwin, *Whiskey Rebels: The Story of a Frontier Uprising* (Pittsburgh, 1939), pp. 201–4.

ported he is since proscribed—but I doubt it. The troops must now march at all events—for if they do not, the world itself would not contain the lies that will be told.

I thank you Sir, for your kind reception to my son—he was greatly pleased with his Journey & I hope improved. His health is at least, much better. On the 26 Ult. Mrs. Fenno bro't me another son. She is finely & so is the boy. She desires an affectionate remembrance to Mrs. Ward & yourself. Please to remember us with duty & affection to our good Mother. Brother Sam. had a letter lately from Mr Chapman—he & his wife were well. Bro. Sam has had a very severe fever. I tho't he would have left us but he has recovered & is about again. My Family is in usual health—except my poor Caroline who, I fear will never be better. In addition to her other complaint, she now has the whooping Cough—but is getting better of that. Remember us affectionately to Mr. & Mrs. Homer. I thank him for his Letter—and had Mr & Mrs Pibai come on should have been happy to have rendered them any service in my power. Since the enlargement of my Paper my Advertisements & Subscriptions have encreased. I am now better fixed in point of situation than I have ever been & hope to remain here—it is cucumber time for news & business—but hope it will be better soon.

There is a wretched scribler in Edes's Paper¹¹ who bores the public with some of the vilest trash that ever was fished up in the kennel of filth & sedition, respecting the funding System. I wish to know who is the reputed author—he has vomited so long the same foul ideas; that I confess it has made Edes if possible, appear a more miserable tool than I once supposed him to be. As to the vile provi-dores of the Chronicle, they will stink so abominably ere long, that I expect they will not be able to endure themselves.

ever Yours, JF

Phila. Sept. 15. 1794

Dear Sir,

Since the enclosed was wrote, we have received accounts from the Westward, which I believe are authentic—that the friends of Government at Pittsburgh, had associated to the number of 1000—had turned all of an Insurgent complexion out of the place—and

¹¹ The *Boston Gazette*, a Jeffersonian Republican paper edited by Benjamin Edes (1732-1803).

are fortifying themselves—at Carlisle—the place where the Troops are to rendezvous, a mob assembled in the night, with arms, & erected a liberty pole—the next day it was cut down by a Mr. Watt¹ a spirited friend to peace & order. A Letter was recd. this morning, informg. that a Mob had since entered Carlisle, with a determination to Tar & Feather Mr. Watt, and the venerable Dr. Nesbit,² the President of Carlisle College—the Letter adds, that there is no doubt it was done. Volunteers encrease, and it is expected the requisite Troops will be ready. The Horse of this City paraded yesterday & made a fine appearance—they march tomorrow. Many persons persuade themselves to believe, there will be no fighting. I fear they deceive themselves. I could add more—but time will not permit.

Adieu—
ever Yours,
JF

[*Addressed:*] Joseph Ward Esq.
Newton
near Boston

Phila. August 5. 1795

Dear Sir,

I acknowledge myself indebted to you for two or three excellent Letters, which ought to have been answered long since. I have no other excuses, than being very much occupied and having nothing interesting to communicate, more than is contained in my Paper. Your Letters contain many just political Sentiments—to notice them particularly would be meerly to encore them. Since the date of your Letters, we have recd. the Treaty. You must feel ashamed of many proceedings which have taken place in consequence—but all will be well at last I trust. May heaven preserve us from mixing confounding & blending all authorities. The destruction of all our prospects as a nation is involved in such transactions.

We are quiet here at present, and I do not know that any mischief is fermenting, but our Demo Club continues its nocturnal meetings and I do not expect any mischief but from that quarter. The

¹ The incident is described in Baldwin, *Whiskey Rebels*, p. 209.

² Dr. Charles Nisbet (d. 1804), Scottish-born educator, first president of Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania. See Charles Coleman Sellers, *Dickinson College: A History* (Middletown, Conn., 1973), *passim*.

meeting for non-ratifying the treaty originated with an Individual of that Club. I have the pleasure to inform you of the general health of my family. It has been sickly among children, but is as healthy, if not more so than is generally the Case here at this Season. We have had the most extraordinary rains ever known. The floods have done immense damage thro' the Country, & every thing on the ground has suffered extremely. I suppose you are made acquainted with the state of matters respecting the funds. Swan¹ you know is commercial agent for the French Government. He is supreme; every thing is done thro him. The balance of our Debt due to france (more than two millions of Dollars) has been paid to him—he has received the Amount in Notes bearing Int: at different rates. These I suspect will all come into circulation for tho' S[wan] has tons of gold & silver bullion in our Banks, yet the Supply from our mint is so small, that it is but a drop in the Bucket, compared to his exigencies & demands. Stocks you see have fallen, & are falling—and I suppose this is the principal Cause—and they must be still lower. These particulars I state to you in confidence, but they are founded, you may rely on it. What reverses of Fortune attend some persons! Swan's have been most extraordinary.

My avocations will not admit of my writing one half so often as I wish to, & think of you & your family. My love to Mrs. Ward—also Mrs. Fenno's & respects compliments & love to enquiring friends as due. Our daughter Caroline we think continues to mend. I do not expect that her form will be restored to perfect Symmetry—but I firmly believe she will live to grow up & be useful. Remember us all to our Mother with affection. May Heaven continue its benignancy to you and yours—this is the fervent wish of your ever affectionate

J Fenno

P.S. I enclose my last two Gazettes. This packet goes by Mrs. Proctor.²

[*Addressed:*] Joseph Ward Esq.
 Newton
 Near Boston—

Favd. by
 Mrs. Proctor.

¹ James Swan, Esq., Common Street, Boston.

² Possibly either Abigail Proctor, boarding house proprietor, 14 Marlborough Street, Boston, or Sarah Proctor, milliner, 50 S. Second Street, Philadelphia.

Phila. Oct. 26. 1795

Dear Sir,

My last was by Mr. Josha. Blanchard,¹ in which I gave you some account of the Randolph explosion²—containing the best information that I had been able to pick up—that Letter I hope you received—please to inform me if you have.³ Since then you have doubtless seen a fragment of such a Letter from the ex-Secretary—from which I do not suppose you derived much edification. I will try to throw some light on it. It appears that after Mr. R's return from Rhode Island, he applied for certain documents in the Office of State, now in charge of Col. Pickering.⁴

Every paper was sent him as I understand, that was supposed to contain the slightest reference to the explosion, or french affairs—but a Note written to R— by the President respecting some points relative to the Treaty, or the Ratification, he did not find—it was retained, because it had not the least reference to Fauchet, being written before the least knowledge of his (Fauchets) Letter respectg. R— was obtained—and besides, contained some allusion to some delicate points relative to the business of the Treaty. This is the paper that R refers to in his last published Letter. One advantage resulted from this incident. It led to a full discovery of the ground which R meant to take in his controversy with the President. Viz. That of the Treaty, if not a full disclosure of all transactions in the Department of State since he had been in Office. This being the Case, a great Smoke was to be raised, to hide the main & only point of immediate public anxiety that, relative to Fauchet's Letter. However—all for the best—the President returned to town last week—since which he has wrote R— in answer to his published letter, in which he has as I have been repeatedly informed, given him full liberty to publish whatever he may think proper relative to written transactions between the President and himself—or even private & confidential interviews cautioning him however, to be just & accurate in his Statements, & to be careful of the *People's* Secrets, whatever he may see proper to

¹ Joshua Blanchard, merchant of Boston. See Thwing Catalogue, Massachusetts Historical Society.

² Edmund Randolph (1753–1813), U.S. secretary of state 1794–95. His resignation, on Aug. 19, 1795, was brought about by charges that he intrigued with Fauchet, the French minister, to block ratification of Jay's Treaty. In reply, Randolph wrote *A Vindication of Mr. Randolph's Resignation* (Philadelphia: Samuel H. Smith, 1795).

³ The letter is not among the Ward Papers.

⁴ Timothy Pickering (1745–1829), U.S. secretary of war in 1795.

disclose of the President's. At the same time the paper he applied for, was sent to him, & full permission given for access to all papers in the Office. Some people say that this Letter has lain R on his back. Time will explain all. For several days we have been expecting a pamphlet from R—but, whether this Letter of the President will not prevent its immediate appearance is a question. I think it will. Some reflections of a consolatory nature will be excited in your mind on this occasion. The enemies of the President and of our Government have had a great deal to say about mysticism & dark proceedings, conclave jugglings & what not. This business will give them their quietus on this head. No Government that ever existed was ever conducted on more open & notorious principles. I rejoice at the confounding of the defamers—but nothing will bring them to reason or modesty—they are a thorn in the flesh which must be endured. You see by republications in your infamous chronicle, how they proceed here.

At our late election in the city the federal Interest triumphed—and so it does generally as far as we have heard throughout the State—a great majority of feds will be returned for the next house of Representatives, & as to the Senate that is secure.

I have the great pleasure to inform you of the health of myself & Family. You will no doubt have heard of my rencontre. Israel Israel⁵ was a Candidate for a Representative in the No Treaty Ticket—he was consequently pretty freely handled in my paper. Some of the publications were contrary to my judgement, particularly one which gave him most offense—but a number of persons being consulted I was urged to publish it pro bono publico. Israel was outvoted and lost his election—the Day after, he met me in the market, and without ceremony told me that if I ever published anything about him, he would flog me, (his exact words) I answered that I should continue to publish as I had heretofore done a free & impartial paper—he repeated his threat, & walked off. I was buying some apples—he returned & attacked me very unexpectedly by giving me a violent blow on the mouth. It rained. I had an Umbrella, with which I struck him twice—it was then taken from me—and we exchanged five or six blows with our fists. The by-standers then rushed in & parted us. The first blow which cut my lip thro' was the only one that I felt at the time, tho' I re-

⁵ Israel Israel (d. 1821), innkeeper and livery stabler, 89 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia. Israel was a member of the Philadelphia Democratic Society. Link, *Democratic-Republican Societies*, pp. 57, 121.

ceived several others—but suffered no pain, nor confinement. Israel is a raw boned man six feet high at least. I suppose the Spectators tho't he was an overmatch for me. The whole affair happened [*letter torn*].

Israel I think did not conduct right—as a friend to a free press, or as a good citizen, & proved that he was not qualified for the office to which he aspired. He ought to have demanded the author in the first place (by the way I never wrote a syllable respecting him). If I had refused to give him up—he then would have had a right to consider me the author. If the attack on him was actionable, as a good citizen he ought to have had recourse to the law. If it was not actionable, he ought to have reflected before he had recourse to a personal assault, & at least to have given a fair chance. All the circumstances concur to shew that he is a very improper person to make a representative of. He is a true blooded Jacobin, & I do not regret the attack since he & his coadjutors were defeated.

We expect a warm session. I rejoice that it does not commence before Decr. Many things may turn up before that time to cool the inflammatory. I do not feel very apprehensive—the friends of peace & the government stand on firm ground. They have the weight of Character & Abilities on their side—and the firmness & calmness which I know they will exercise, will triumph—besides the late outrageous attacks on the President, on our Constitution & the Administration, will knit the President to *his* Friends & the friends of the Government more firmly than ever—besides I think the people are now pretty well convinced that the revilers of our patriots, are warhawks, hollow hearted, bad hearted pretenders to republicanism. Men who have no feeling for their Country—no principles of honor or honesty—who wish to fish in troubled waters—whose happiness would be their Country's misery. This being the Case, the constituted Authorities who receive the firmest support of the people.

Wednesday Morning Oct. 28. We have been expecting Randolph's pamphlet for several days—but it does not appear. You will see an attack on Mr. Wolcot & the president, the former for paying & the latter for receiving more money than his salary amounted to. The indelicacy & indecency of this is a piece with all their other virulence. Time & Truth will confound them. I believe R—— is the author of this last business—he signed yesterday "A Calm Observer" & this morning "One of the People"—so we go. You

will be convinced when Fauchet's Letter shall be published, that its falling into the Hands of our Executives is a circumstance that forms one of the brightest links in that chain of providential Interferences to which the people of the U.S. are indebted for their existence as a free, sovereign, independent Republic. We have a number of Arrivals but no late european news. All well at this time. I shall put you to the expense of Postage for this. Your discretion will point out such parts as you may think worth publishing, but none of it was wrote with that view. Our Love to Mrs. W—— hope to congratulate you on her being happily abed.⁶

JF

[*Addressed:*] Joseph Ward Esq.
Newton
near Boston

Philadelphia Dec. 25. 1795

Dear Sir —

"I wish you a merry christmas—& a happy new year," an old but benevolent salutation. Tho thus far advanced into the Winter Season, we have as yet seen but little winter weather. We have seen Snow only once & then it scarcely covered the ground. This is very favorable to the poor & the public in general, especially in our Cities, where the prospect in case of a hard winter, was gloomy. I received a Letter from you a few days since per post, informing that you had committed a pamphlet & sundry Letters to Mr. Siggourney, to come by water. That Vessel has not yet arrived. Yesterday I recd. yours of the 14 Inst. inclosing another Copy of the pamphlet—which shall be printed in the course of two or three days. It is in season. I have read it, & approve the contents, except one Sentence which I think it would be better to omit. The Sentence begins "We never learned that there ever was a member of congress or any influential man in the States, interested in them. The experience of all times hath evinced that the political wheels move slow when there is no oil in them." This appears to me exceptionable in the present stage of the business. I wish you may not have occasion to apply it—but in a personal application to each individual I cannot but suppose it will be considered as a personal Impeach-

⁶ Mrs. Ward gave birth to a daughter, Prudence, on Oct. 6, 1795.

ment, & would be retrograde to your object. It may be omitted without being missed, and I think at present, that I shall do it; for tho I believe in my conscience that if a number of them were interested, the business would not have lingered as it has, yet this is not the moment to say so. Yesterday a petition relative to the business signed by Mr. Bond, Coates, &c was presented, (I think,) by Mr. Goodhue.¹ Mr. W. Lyman² moved that it should be referred to a select Committee that a speedy report should be made, & the house troubled no more on the subject, as they had been from session to session for two or three years past. Mr. Goodhue objected to a Committee for this special purpose. He moved that the petition should be referred to the Committee appointed to report on the expediency of extending the Term for receiving on loan the domestic debt of the U.S.—this motion was agreed to. I think this is the best train; for the Committee must report to extend the Term, and a section to take up the new-emission would be in course. The Committee must report in two or three days as the Law expires 31 Dec. Inst. So that you will soon know *their* opinion. But as to the decision of the house, I would not ensure it in your favor for fifty per Cent. It is rather unfortunate that the business should be bro't forward so soon, as I think the number of members prejudiced against the funding system, & particularly against what is represented as encreasing the debt, will diminish as every species of prejudice & misconception in candid minds, is dissipated by reasoning & a further acquaintance with the actual State of affairs.

I shall follow your directions in distributing the Address—which shall be done on Monday or Tuesday next at farthest.

Congress has now been in session more than two weeks—the principal part of the time has been taken up in reading & referring petitions—the number of which is great—in arranging, sorting & committing the business of the Session—there is scarcely a member of the house who is not on a Committee—and I expect another week will elapse before much business will be prepared by the Committees. The Session has hitherto been tranquil—but the embers of debate exist. The Treaty will be dragged neck & heels into the house—and every demagogue take a stroke at it—if it was not for this circumstance they would be extremely puzzled to find oc-

¹ Benjamin Goodhue (1748–1814), U.S. congressman (Federalist) from Massachusetts 1789–96.

² William Lyman (1755–1811), U.S. congressman (Democratic Republican) from Massachusetts 1793–97.

casation to exhibit their egregious patriotism. Some lunges will be made at the funding System I expect. A great deal of *talk* will be heard about a militia & bankrupt law. As to the former, there never will be a good one made by Congress—and as to the last, it is an impossible atchievement. Parties are at present nearly balanced in the house. The Senate is as you know. Let the Chronicle folks know, that the *northern* Interest turned the Scale in favor of Mr. Dayton³ as Speaker. The circumstance will doubtless be mortifying to the politicians of that paper, as like their brother demos at the Southward, nothing is more ungrateful to their feelings than the respectability of their own country.

I have the great pleasure to inform you of the general health of my family. Wife desires her love to you & Mrs. W—— and her other friends. To whom please to remember me with affection. I am happy to hear from Mother—give our's and the children's Love to her. I am glad she was pleased with Eliza's writing. In your two letters, you say nothing of an encrease in your family. We hope all is well. Indeed in yours of 11th you say "We are all well." I do not know when I shall write you so much again. You may thank Christmas day for this. I am more involved in business at present than I can inform you. May success attend your effort for Justice—and all your enterprizes in life—this is the sincere wish of

Your affectionate friend

JF

[*Addressed:*] Joseph Ward Esq.
Newton
near Boston

The Porga is arrived from Boston this day.

Phila. April 24. 1796

Dear Sir,

I have yours of 22 March now before me—and while I feel under obligations for the Bill of Twenty Dollars enclosed, cannot but regret that you thought it necessary to send it. The Article enclosed for publication I inserted as soon as possible; as perhaps you may have seen ere this. You write feelingly & to the point and I wish a disposition to do you justice was as evident as the righteousness of

³ Jonathan Dayton (1760-1824), U.S. congressman (Federalist) from New Jersey 1791-99, speaker of the House 1795-99.

your demand. You have, I observe published several short pieces in Brown,¹ & one or two in Bache²—they are all written with great energy. I think the vigor of your pen is not diminished, after twenty or thirty years use. Alas that it should be in vain, as I very much fear will be the case. The present posture of affairs is unfavorable to your demand in a high degree, and as to the assaults, the present majority is as callous as hides that have been tanning for forty years. *You* will have observed that they have been handled with the greatest freedom on account of their late treaty conduct. It will be all to no purpose unless the terrors of the *people* should fall on them—and thank heaven, this is likely to take place. The minority I expect will become the majority *this week*. There is a great ferment even in Virginia—the people of that State say the Treaty must be carried into effect. As I feel extremely desirous of your obtaining justice, I cannot help suggesting for consideration, whether it would not be better to suspend your application till the next session, or till a new election. On the Treaty I think there will be a majority—but, with respect to touching the funding system by way of the most trifling addition, there is, & will be as decided a majority as it is possible to conceive of.

Gallatin³ is undeniably the most influential man in that majority. He is one of the Committee of Ways & Means. He appears to have an extensive plan in contemplation and nothing but the shortness of the time that remains of the Session will prevent its being matured & carried thro' the house, tho' I think it would be arrested in the Senate. His plan is to sink the public debt in about 18 Years—this will induce the necessity of direct Taxes, Stamps &c. The term proposed by the late Secretary⁴ was about 30 years. Should G— succeed, I think the consequences would be odium on the Government, complaints, disgust & confusion, and all, without the least necessity. However, a kind providence will I firmly believe shield us from all the machinations of infidel theorists.

As to remonstrances in the public prints relative to your claim—I am firmly persuaded they will answer no purpose. Independent of the various objects which now absorb public attention, you may

¹ Andrew Brown (1744?–97), printer of the *Philadelphia Gazette*.

² Benjamin Franklin Bache (1769–98), grandson of Benjamin Franklin, and printer of the *Aurora* in Philadelphia.

³ Albert Gallatin (1761–1849), U.S. congressman (Democratic Republican) from Pennsylvania 1795–1801.

⁴ Hamilton.

rely on it that you never can get any thing like a majority of the present house to pay sufficient attention to it, to comprehend it. If you wish to risque a decision pro, or con—I think an effectual way to obtain it would be to write to the Committee of Claims to whom it is referred. Mr. Tracy is chairman of that Committee. Perhaps it would be best to write to Mr. D. Foster⁵ who is on the Committee. As I anticipate a very considerable change at the next election, your chance may be better; clear I am it cannot be worse than at present. You can form no idea of the sensibility of the Majority on money matters. Many of the public officers, clerks &c are in a wretched situation on account of the Depreciation of Money—the applications for relief are numerous, but I think their prospect of relief is a forlorn hope. I have said the minority will become the majority—Smith⁶ of Maryland has declared he shall vote for the appropriations. I have a letter from Alexandria, Virga. they have had a meeting there, & have instructed their member (Mr. Brent⁷) to vote for them. Some of the majority are gone, others are going—and conversions will take place in those who remain. We shall be again saved. The anticipated evils of the Treaty are remote & uncertain—those consequent on its rejection immediate & positive. Can real patriots hesitate? The enemies of the Government are at their wits end—may their perplexities & confusion encrease. Lies & Abuse abound, but they will rebound.

We have no late news—tho many arrivals. My Family is in usual Health. Mrs. Fenno desires her love to you & Mrs. Ward—to whom please also to present mine. And remember us to all enquiring friends. At the present interesting crisis I have thought it my duty to take a decided part, and am happy to find it has not been without effect. Convert the friends of the Government into the enemies of a mad majority, & they will make them smoke. You may be assured that some of the most inveterate of the Junto begin to realize they are in the sinking bucket, they acknowledge the people are against them. It is a glorious circumstance in favor of a free government, that the people of the U.S. have not been seduced by the infernal lies & slanders of the antifederal horde. Of the business now pending before Congress the principal articles that will be

⁵ Dwight Foster (1757-1823), U.S. congressman (Federalist) from Massachusetts 1793-1800.

⁶ Samuel Smith (1752-1839), U.S. congressman (Democratic Republican) from Maryland 1793-1803.

⁷ Richard Brent (1757-1814), U.S. congressman from Virginia 1795-99, 1801-3.

completed are the Treaties. The Washington City Loan—an adjustment of the Debt due to the Bank U.S. Protection of American Seamen. Post Office Law & some less important matters with respect to Gallatin's grand plan I suspect it will lie over to the next Session.

With respect to the Treaty Question, the Appeal is now made to the people. Whether a majority of Names will appear against it, or if that should be the case, whether the house will decide against the weight of Character, Abilities & Property, all of which are undoubtedly in favor of Peace & the Treaty, time will shew. I however do not expect even a majority of Names will appear against the Treaty, if time is allowed. Some expect that the enemies of the Treaty anticipating a majority in its favor will this day push the question.

I am Sir, affectionately Yours
J Fenno

April 30.

The within was delivered to Capt. Jackson,⁸ who was to have left this last Monday. He is still here. Since, yours of 25 Inst. has come to hand. We are in suspense relative to ye final question on the Treaty, which is to be determined to day. The anti treaty party it is supposed have recd. an accession this day, by the return of Mr. Van Courtlandt⁹ who was absent yesterday—but I expect he will vote for the appropriations. Sad Times.

Adieu

[*Addressed:*] Joseph Ward Esq.
Newton
near
Boston

Phila. June 5. 1796

Dear Sir,

The Congressional Campaign is now closed and I wish it closed the political existence of the antifederal Phalanx—but—we have one session more to witness their *patriotic* exertions to subvert all that has been done for seven years past to build up this Country. I

⁸ Henry Jackson, captain, Prince Street, Boston.

⁹ Philip Van Cortlandt (1749–1831), U.S. congressman (Democratic Republican) from New York.

believe you are fully sensible that all my anticipations were well founded. I consider the leaders of this Phalanx as principled against our System of Government—they consider the President & Senate as nuisances, and to this may be traced their opposition to the Treaty, Appointments &c—but this is not all, they are opposed to all the capital measures which have been adopted since the government came into being. The friends of our Country have had a difficult part to perform—and if they have not done so much good as they wished, they have prevented much evil. As the people have seen how near the Ship has been to the rocks, it is to be expected that they will in future put none but good seamen on board. Ames's speech¹ broke the antifederal Phalanx. I think you must have been delighted in the perusal—no language can do justice to its effect on the most numerous audience ever collected in Congress Hall. I regret exceedingly that his health did not permit of his making any exertions before. On the motion, calling for Papers, he would have been an Hercules indeed. He mended very slowly from the time of his first appearing on the floor, and I greatly feared he would not have been able to come forward at all. He was greatly exhausted for several days after his speech, but is recovered beyond what I ever expected and will doubtless regain his former health. He is now on a Tour to the Federal City. May he be long spared to his Country and mankind. Your last favor is now before me—it is dated May 7. I notice your extreme anxiety on the Treaty question. It was a snare breaking business as you justly observe. I had the honor to sound the first serious alarm in a short paragraph which I believe ran thro almost all the papers in the Union. The day after, the meeting was called here, & the flame caught from one extreme of the Union to the other.

As to news, tho we have some that is interesting & recent, yet I suppose it will get to your hand before this Letter. Alas that the Sky seems still to be overcast, & peace recedes from view. We have some reports of a disagreeable complexion in circulation. Such as this—that the french government have demanded of us Men & Money for the West India Service pursuant to the Treaty of 1778

¹ Fisher Ames (1758-1808), U.S. congressman (Federalist) from Massachusetts 1789-97. On Apr. 28, 1796, a very ill Ames made a dramatic speech in the House of Representatives that was instrumental in securing the ratification of Jay's Treaty. *The Speech of Mr. Ames . . . April 28, 1796* was published by Fenno in 1796 (Evans 29985) and in several other editions.

in which the U.S. guarantee their french American Possessions. I do not credit the rumor—but a day or two will determine.

There is one thing of which you may be certain, and that is the president is determined not to serve after the expiration of the present term. This is a current report, & I have had it from such a quarter as leaves no doubt on my mind.²

I rejoice in the federal complexion of your legislature—and that the Town of Newton have honored themselves by their choice.³ It is a sacrifice on the part of their member to serve, but it never could be made more seasonably. I hope & trust that some thing may be done by your Government that shall flash conviction to the soul of Anarchy that it has nothing to hope from Massachusetts, in its opposition to the general Government.

Monday June 6—I have just received the Boston papers of last Wednesday—& perceive that you have transferred your legislative printing business from the Chronicle Office.⁴ I cannot but consider this as right. It does appear absurd that a man should sharpen the knife that is designed to cut his own throat.

The federal Interest is triumphant in New York; more so than ever; and I anticipate the same thing here at our next election.

So much for Politics. As to my family—we are all in health & most cordially reciprocate all your kind wishes.

It is a time of general health—the season is flourishing—and our prospects abundant. Surely as a people we are favored of Heaven beyond all that ever went before us. Remember me, wife & children to Mrs. Ward, our Mother & all our other good friends, with affectionate Regards. I have lately Printed sundry documents relative to Georgia Lands—a copy of which shall be sent you by the first conveyance. I have been informed that you are interested in the Yazous Speculations; from some hints dropped by persons of the best information, it is my decided opinion that the sooner you get rid of the connection, the better. Mr. Dexter⁵ however can in-

² Washington's Farewell Address was dated Sept. 17, 1796, and first published Sept. 19 in the (Philadelphia) *Daily American Advertiser*.

³ Ward was elected from Newton to the Massachusetts General Court for the 1796 term.

⁴ The General Court transferred the legislative printing from the *Republican Chronicle* to the printing firm of Young and Minns, who had Federalist connections in 1796. See Rollo G. Silver, 'Government Printing in Massachusetts, 1751-1800,' *Studies in Bibliography* 16(1963):171.

⁵ Samuel Dexter (1761-1816), a speculator in Yazoo lands, U.S. congressman

form you more particularly. Ask him what Mr. King's⁶ opinion is?
With every wish for your health & happiness

I am

Your affectionate friend
JF

Phila. July 9. 1796

Dear Sir

I send you a Copy of the Attorney General's Report relative to the Georgia Lands.¹ It is a collection of musty Papers which perhaps after you have read, you will say, you are as wise as you were before. I wrote you a few weeks since by a Mr. Williamson, & have not had any of your favors since. Thro the favor of Providence we are all well. It is as healthy here as generally is the Case at this warm season. We have had the usual weather of June & July till yesterday & to-day—a fine rain is succeeded by as pleasant a day as a clear sky & a western breeze can make. Heaven smiles upon us—the Earth is cloathed with abundance—the harvest of Wheat is getting in, and the crop is greater than ever was known. We have a calm time—peace pervades all quarters. Surely as a People we have cause of gratitude beyond all others. Our news from Europe comes from your quarter. I cannot but anticipate peace. The emperor² must knock under, & England has nothing to fight for. France has no other resources for continuing the war but the plunder derived from her conquests. The people there are desirous of peace—and I think it must take place. If France is left to herself, she will have so much to do internally that if the other powers of Europe will let her alone, she will not trouble them for half a century at least. There

(Federalist) from Massachusetts 1793-95, and U.S. senator 1799-1800. He later served as secretary of war and of the treasury in John Adams's cabinet. See C. Peter Magrath, *Yazoo: Law and Politics in the New Republic* (Providence, R.I., 1966), pp. 15, 38, 100.

⁶ Probably Rufus King (1755-1827), U.S. senator (Federalist) from New York 1789-96. See Magrath, *Yazoo*, p. 31.

¹ *Report of the Attorney General to to [sic] Congress; Containing a Collection of Charters, Treaties, and Other Documents, Relative to and Explanatory of the Title to the Land Situate in the South Western Parts of the United States; and Claimed by Certain Companies under a Law of the State of Georgia, Passed January 7, 1795* (Philadelphia: John Fenno, 1796). Evans 31431.

² Emperor Francis II of Germany. Typescript annotation.

are many however who say France will not make Peace—that she has not yet conquered enough to indemnify her Army, should she retain all her acquisitions—that having adopted the old Roman System she will not make peace till she has not only put it out of the power of her enemies to annoy her, but has also transferred to her Treasury so much of their Treasures as will enable her to liquidate her accounts, arrange her government & satisfy her veterans. Others, of the same opinion in respect to the continuance of the war, say, that Great Britain will not make Peace, on any terms that France will probably accede to. That the Treasure she has wasted on the continent, if turned to reinforcing her naval power will enable her to combat with advantage all the powers of Europe if combined against her. The european powers are like bullies—nothing but blows will make an impression on their understandings. I have long considered the war as a signal Instance of divine vengeance on nations ripe for destruction—and do not think the annals of mankind can afford examples of greater infatuation than has been exhibited by them all. I wish ardently for peace, for if the War continues, many intelligent persons think we shall get involved. I know our demos ardently wish it, & are laboring to bring it about. I believe I mentioned in my last that the president would decline standg another election—this is still my opinion. How far it ought to be calculated upon, or whether it ought in point of policy to affect the votes for president & V. President, I have my Doubts. I think, at present, that the safest way would be to Vote for the present occupants of those offices—and if the President should not serve I suppose the V.P. would come in of course—but of these matters we shall soon know more. That the next elections for the federal Government should be federal is of more importance than at any preceding period. The factions will never be effectually silenced any other way. The PEOPLE must *continue* to declare against them.

Please to write me soon—our affectionate regards to Mrs. Ward, & all enquiring friends. With unabated attachment I am dear Sir,
 ever Yours,
 John Fenno

[*Addressed:*] Joseph Ward Esq
 Newton,
 near Boston

Phila. April 17. 1797

Dear Sir,

It is some time since I had the pleasure of a line from you—but you are seldom absent from my mind & I frequently hear of your welfare & health: Having made a new arrangement in my business lately, I hope to be able to write you more frequently in future. There is nothing new in my domestic circle. Mrs. Fenno & the children are in usual Health. She has had no return of bleeding since I last wrote. Business is dull—and candidates for public favors in my line, have encreased here of late. I hope however to scramble along—the past year has been more favorable than any preceding since I have been a printer. I hope that a stop is put to getting any further *in* debt, and that I shall now begin to get *out*. Our public affairs are at present involved in difficulties and principally owing to a belief on the part of France that we are a divided people—a belief infused by traytors within & without—but She will ere long be convinced that She has been imposed on. So far as respects our government matters I expect will be adjusted. I say the difficulties are *principally* owing to misrepresentation as to the real sentiments of the American people—but this must be taken in a limited sense—for it is evident to my mind, that the depredations on our Commerce by france, are designed to wound Britain. It is undoubtedly the design of France to trace & cut up that commerce in all its ramifications; but in doing this She is sensible that our Independence & Neutral Rights are invaded, & therefore a quarrel on a different score is conjured up to justify it. There are certain points relative to our foreign relations which are so perfectly understood, that you may rely on it the Government of this country and the Interest of our Merchants have suffered by the Jacobinical lies & misrepresentations of Americans in Paris, and their correspondents here. This is no supposition; it is reduced to a certainty. The approaching Session of Congress will be interesting. The Virginia antifederal Phalanx is said to be broken, several of the new members are independent enlightened federal Characters. This being the Case a majority follows of course. I do not anticipate war. Peace is all to us. To reconcile all parties a new embassy to France will probably be agreed upon. Not that I expect any redress, or satisfaction from it. The measure will however stop the clamors of the Jacobins, till a new subject is created. The Country must be put in a state of preparation for the worst. The land tax & other ways & means must be organized—these three objects will comprize the business

of the Session. I expect harmony vigor & dispatch. Meantime, we shall hear what is the effect of Mr. Pickering's Letter. It will produce peace or war, perhaps immediately—in either case, the business of the Session will be reduced to narrow compass.

I would ask your opinion, will it do to trust the Interests of this Country in the Hands of a person, as an Ambassador to France, who has been opposed to the administration of our Government & is a stickler for french philosophy & french politics? Will the french Directory treat with any but a person of this character? Will it comport with the Dignity of this country to supercede Mr. Pinckney?¹ This Gentleman has always been a warm friend to the french revolution. He loves the french Nation and there is no objection against him, but that his own country has no rival in his attachment. How will it answer to send a solemn Embassy of three persons—Mr. Pinckney to be one as from the Southern extreme of the Union—One from Massachusetts, & a third from Virginia—say Mr. Madison or Mr. Jefferson. The determination of 2 out of the three to be binding on the U.S. I submit these Ideas in confidence and wish your sentiments—something of the kind has been hinted as likely to take place.

I have had the honor of visiting the President several times. He mentioned receiving a friendly congratulation from you. Since his election he has if possible been more easy of access & conversable than before—and this remark has been made by others. If it is possible to give satisfaction, by a faithful & upright discharge of the duties of his office, he will do it. Affairs in europe wear a gloomy aspect. We see nothing but misery in the Train of french Victories, what would follow their defeats is hard to say, certainly nothing worse.

The impoverishment of all Europe must be the consequence of their carrying on the war on their present plan; for the circulating wealth of the world cannot defray their expenses.

Great Britain is in a ticklish situation. She has launched on the Sea of Paper Money. I consider the late measures respecting their bank, as justifying this idea. Pitt² appears determined on two

¹ Charles Cotesworth Pinckney of South Carolina (1746–1825), appointed U.S. minister to France, whom the French refused to receive in December 1796. Pinckney was later appointed, along with John Marshall (1755–1835) of Virginia and Elbridge Gerry (1744–1814) of Massachusetts, by President Adams to secure a treaty with France. Their mission culminated in the XYZ Affair.

² William Pitt (1759–1806), British prime minister.

Things. To reduce or annihilate the National Debt, and to make the next campaign the greatest possib[le exertion.] I look to the Interior of France for peace. If [the people] will permit the directory to go on, they will never make peace till Britain becomes, as Holland is, a province of France. Should the Emperor make a separate Peace, the Sun of Britain would in 20 years set forever. I do not think such an event would contribute to the Freedom & Hap[pi]-ness of the human race. I congratulate you on the result of your late Election. Mr. Sumner³ is the man of my choice—& you have nobly reinforced your Senate by electing Mr. Mason⁴ & Mr. Jones.⁵ The Chronicle Scribbler⁶ honors me by blacking my shoes sometimes I perceive. I rejoice most sincerely in every symptom of agony which such wretches discover while kicked so far into the dark regions of the minority—but as Paddy said of the carp they will live a great while after they are dead. They will continue to hiss—for tho you bray a fool in a mortar, his folly will not depart from him. Our Love to your dear Wife & children & all enquiring friends. Write me soon. Adieu—

ever yours affectionately
JF

Mrs. F requests you would write particularly respecting the children.

[Addressed:] Joseph Ward Esq.
Newton
near Boston

Phila. June 17. 1797

Dear Sir –

Your favor dated at Worcester duly received—and noticed the contents. Notwithstanding what you advise respecting the publication of the Essays & the presenting of the petition I have presumed to think differently from you, & things remain in statu quo. Early in the Session you may have observed that something took place like shutting the Door against every kind of Business not coming within purview of the imediate subject which occasioned the convening of Congress at the present time. In this situation, if a

³ Increase Sumner (1746-99), governor of Massachusetts 1794-99.

⁴ Jonathan Mason (1756-1831).

⁵ John Coffin Jones (1749-1825).

⁶ Probably Benjamin Austin, Jr. (1752-1820), a frequent contributor to the *Chronicle*.

member could have been found who would have introduced the petition, which I very much doubt, the business would have been strangled at the threshold. You will have observed that there is but a bare Majority of Federalists in the House—in that majority I know there are many who will never consent to doing anything in the business. I believe the whole of the Connecticut Delegation both in the House & Senate, will be a dead Vote against complying with the petition. With respect to the general temper of the House, no occasion can ever possibly present a more inauspicious appearance for such an application. You must have seen or heard that greater animosities, or more ill-blood were scarcely ever discovered—nothing, like the bickerings, snarlings & quarrellings which have taken place, ever disgraced an American Legislature before. On the Subject of Revenue particularly, there is a peculiar soreness. No idea of providing for any object not immediately connected with the public defence, would be tolerated for one moment—and as to that object, every exertion will be used to strangle every bill or motion to provide for it. The french say we are a divided people, and their friends are determined to sanction the assertion. On the whole I feel perfectly confident that were the Petition presented, it would be received very ungraciously—and were it to be acted upon, it would only be to give it the Coup de Grace.

With respect to publishing the essays I have many doubts of the eligibility of the measure, at this moment. Tho written with energy & pathos, and founded on principles which cannot be shaken; yet such is the variety of interesting topics of a different complexion, which now engage the attention of all persons in public & private life, that they would be like water spilled on the ground—pass away, without leaving the smallest impression. The publication could be made with ease & without [ex]pense, and did there appear to be the smallest shade of a prospect of promoting your interest by doing it, I should not hesitate one moment. With respect to the property in New Emission I gave my opinion on the subject several years since. It has not changed—but every year's experience has re-inforced it; and I now most candidly & seriously advise you to make the most of it without delay. Take a survey of our public affairs—see the state of the public funds, and I can assure you they will not soon assume a better face. At this time I believe more than a million of dollars remain unpaid due on bond the past year. Since the present year commenced, things have not mended; there will

consequently be a great deficiency. Our only resource for present emergencies is loans—for these Revenues must be created—so that should impending clouds dissipate, it will be long before our affairs will be replaced in a situation to bring public securities to par. The Depredations on, & Derangement of our Commerce, have produced mischievous effects in the position of our Finances. Add to these, the almost boundless speculations of individuals, & the general prostration of faith & honor in *private* transactions, then say whether those of the *public*, can possibly escape contamination. For my part, *retreat*, would be the word at the present time from all dependence involving serious consequences, in case of disappointment.

Monday June 19. I do not know whether the foregoing remarks wi[ll] be satisfactory. This much is certain that nothing will be lost by waiting for the ordinary session. To broach a Subject at the present moment which would irritate an old sore would be considered as the most wretched policy on the part of those who wish for something like unanimity at this important crisis.

These sentiments are more than confirmed, by the conversations I have had with persons the best qualified to Judge.

I this day received your favor dated from May 22 to 29th. Congress have answered its contents, & in many respects not agreeable to your Wishes & Expectations. At the present moment the most shilly shally conduct prevails—but I can say no more. My Love to Mother tell her we are in usual Health. Mrs. Fenno, and our youngest child are at Burlington for a few days.

Remember me to your wife & all enquiring Friends.

Adieu, ever yours,
JF

[*Addressed:*] Joseph Ward Esq.
Newton
near Boston

Phila. July 22. 1797

Dear Sir,

I duly recd. yours of 27 June. Having been very anxious on Account of the contents of my last, lest my opinion should not have coincided with yours; the first sentence of your letter took a great "stone" off my mind: I am fully persuaded that a view of the whole

Session on your part, has not served to lessen the force of my observations & anticipations. You must long ere this, have made up your judgment of the character & conduct of the present Congress. As to character, the majority of the House, tho they call themselves Federalists, yet, you & I can hardly call them Americans. They have shrunk from the ground on several occasions, which they ought to have taken, to justify the appellations, and how they are to reconcile subsequent transactions, with the principles assumed in the answer to the President's Speech,¹ I cannot conceive. The President certainly spoke the language of Independence—the language of our Country in times, to say the least, as trying as the present, and tho' I know he is as great a friend to peace with all the world, as lives, yet the circumstances of the situation in which he found himself, & his Country, called for such a declaration. It was right I know it was, because it has set the dogs of anarchy howling. Some things were done during the Session which may result in good. But every thing almost relative to France had better have been omitted, because they are half way measures, which the Executive cannot feel the advantage of in case of emergency. The power of making a loan equal to contingencies, & of raising a provisional Army, would have done more to convince foreign nations that we justly prize our independence, & will defend it, than all the declarations that could be made. This would have been essential, all the rest is vapor. Your motto & mine in regard to the great Transactions of the Universe, in which the little affairs of this little world are included, is, *all for the best*. We must look from the beginning to the end. Not by our own wisdom & might have we been saved in Times past. And from the recent specimens, we must transfer our hopes to that power which always hath done wonders for us. Your general observations on the Subject of public Faith are founded in principles never to be removed. But the mind of man is a movable machine. The principles of honesty & honour have not received reinforcement by modern systems. Modern principles are a fire, in which the gold of Truth is now trying—these principles will shake all the Systems extant, and tho Truth must survive, yet the fair fabric of common sense in which she resides, will be in imminent hazard, I fear will be destroyed, & the ruins spread far & wide, till

¹ President Adams's speech to Congress on May 15, 1797, in which he urged measures be taken to ensure American independence in the face of hostile French actions. For a description of the speech and congressional reaction to it, see Smith, *John Adams*, pp. 929–32.

bitter experience shall bring mankind back again to Truth, Honor & Virtue. I congratulate you on the favorable appearances in France—hope the gleam of light will expand to full day light. I expect a general peace in Europe—tho I fear it will not be durable. Their exhausted state is the only security, for modern principles, are the prolific germ of wars, murders & robbery.

The late affair of Blount² must have hurt your feelings for the Honor of America. The Jacobins have kicked, but they cannot kick it off. He is just wicked enough to be bone of their bone & flesh of their flesh. I believe the plan had principally in view the extrication of a band of rogues from pecuniary embarrassments & the aggrandisement, at all events, of a few individuals. It was a most enormous piece of Villainy. Where Blount is, we cannot tell. The President sets off for Massachusetts To-morrow. My Family is in usual Health. It has been frying hot here for a fortnight past. My Love to your Wife & my Mother. Remember me with respect to enquiring friends. Mrs. Fenno joins me in these salutations.

From your ever affectionate Friend
JF

[*Addressed:*] Joseph Ward Esq.
Newton
near Boston

Fav'd by
Mr. J. Russell³

[*Superscribed by Ward:*] These are solid truths which must penetrate the soul of every man who thinks.

Phila. May 22. 1798

Dear Sir –

Your favor of 11 & 14 Inst. I recd. this day, enclosing one from Mrs. Flinn.¹ I recd. a Letter from you some days since enclosing a long speculation. The Contents of both I have conned over with attention—and have not a word to say in opposition to your Senti-

² William Blount (1749-1800), territorial governor of Tennessee and one of the first U.S. senators from the state 1796-97. His involvement in a plan to mount an attack by Indians and frontiersmen, supported by a British fleet, against Spanish Florida led to his expulsion from the Senate.

³ Probably John Russell (1764?-1831), publisher of the *Boston Price Current*.

¹ Perhaps Mrs. Flinn, schoolmistress, Rawson's Lane, Boston.

ments & opinions—they are unquestionably just & incontrovertible, and I shall endeavor to turn them to your advantage, especially as in so doing the public Interest would be essentially promoted. Since I last wrote I have had frequent conferences with Taylor,² who has had several Interviews with Mr. Tracy & others of the Committee. He says Tracy is perfectly right & clear on the Subject—but tells him, that it is his opinion, the Committee are afraid to look into the Subject. In the crowd of objects that are now presented to the public through the Newspapers, lengthy essays on subjects that require much attention are passed over. You will see by my Gazette, that I am involved in a labyrinth of difficulties—tho I publish so much, I have constantly on hand a Drawer full of manuscripts which must be suspended for some time, & the heap is constantly accumulating. Your last communications contain such weighty truths, & so applicable to the present state of things, that I will hand them to-morrow to Mr. Wolcot, & to Mr. Tracy & request the latter to enforce the reasoning on the minds of the rest of the Committee & on the Senators in general. I think they must have weight. If they do not, they shall, as an appeal be published very shortly. I cannot advert particularly to the other Contents of your Letters. The Continent seems to be awake—and if we are not amused & deluded, but go on strait forward our enemies must change or fall before us.

I refer you to the papers for all news. We are thank providence all well. Mrs. Fenno & Harriet³ have now been 3 weeks, at Eliza. Town—and She has recruited a good deal, but declines going further from me. I wrote her your kind Invitation for which she is very grateful. Poor Wheaton was obliged to go home. He voids blood—and I fear will ere long go to his long home. Mr. Durant will carry this. He can give you much information of matters here. Congress will I think sit a month Longer.

Remember me to all friends. My Love to Mrs. Ward. With every attachment of Friendship & affection I am as ever

Yours

John Fenno

P.S. When you see Mrs. Flinn please to give my love to her—tell her that Marshall left this the week before last for Baltimore—and

² Possibly John M. Taylor, gentleman, 85 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia.

³ A daughter of the Fennos.

as it is uncertain when he will return I shall write him immediately respecting her Note—and will inform her of the result.

[*Addressed:*] Joseph Ward Esq.
Newton
near Boston

Favd. by
Mr. Durant

Phila. July 28. 1798

Dear Sir,

Yours of 12 Inst. was not recd. till 18th, two days after Congress had adjourned, consequently too late for the publication of the Article annexed to your letter. I think it would not have answered any valuable purpose. The two houses were deeply immersed in business for the last two weeks, relative to the State of the Nation, that no private concern would have been attended to. That the national credit is wounded in their conduct relative to the new emission you feel to be a fact, & it is doubtless so but then, it was not considered in that light by any member of either house; at least it was not brought forward in discussion. You say the System they have adopted is not equal to the expense in Contemplation. Grant it but it is as much as could be obtained. You had not however seen all that was done, when you wrote. Considering the temper of the House, the friends of the Government have done wonders—and should France push us to extremities the residue that is necessary must be done. The actual state of Credit you are fully acquainted with. Notwithstanding the public faith has been preserved inviolate in paying punctually the Interest on the funded Debt, yet you see what discount it is sold for. The value of Money keeps up. Your $2\frac{1}{2}$ pCent pmo. Gentry find full employ for their cash hence the depreciation of Stock, notwithstanding there is no diminution of Confidence in the public. How is the public to raise money in such a state of things—this is said to present a greater difficulty than any obstacle arising from their refusal to pay or fund the New Emission. The truth is when the public existence is at stake expedients are generally found to ward off the danger. I do not think it is true that the public Supplies & public Services cannot be procured by Notes or promises—Bank Notes I mean. Our Situation is different entirely from what it was twenty odd years ago. You will

doubtless cast about in your mind what is next to be done respecting your Interest. At the next Session you will doubtless obtain a report from the Committee of the Senate, which I fear will be against you. Whether circumstances may transpire in the Interim on which you may found a new petition time will disclose. I think it probable. I think however you have nothing to expect from the present Set—and if the democrats should be increased by a new election, you may consider the case as hopeless—for tho' I reprobate the conduct of some of the Federalists, yet I know the others are sworn at least mentally, never to consider the merits of the Claim of any man who ever speculated in the public Funds. This being the Case, as I have always thought, so I continue to think, that your best way will be to realize the most you can for your property and never confide in "piddling politicians" more.

You have doubtless ere this, seen Genl. Washington's Letter to the President; it is a charming thing—like himself, & has had a wonderful & astonishing effect. There has not been so much as a yelp from the jacobins, tho' they have doubtless groaned in secret. Mr. Hamilton is now here—I suppose on the business of his appointment.¹ There is a great & glorious Spirit in this quarter. Nothing but military parades from day to day. The expence of equipments & forming new Companies of Horse & Foot exceed any thing you can form an idea of. I hope the Spirit will not evaporate. I expect serious times. We have nothing very recent from Europe and as to Domestic affairs the papers will inform you. Agreeable to your request I have discontinued the Gazette. Mrs. Fenno is now at Bethlehem. She has been there a fortnight—her last letter was dated the 26th and is very encouraging. Her journey to Elizabeth Town was to very little purpose, if any—as, after her return her cough continued with increased violence.

We have the Weather extremely hot now—the mercury has been upwards of 90 for three or four days past. It is notwithstanding very healthy. Indeed it is always healthy here in July. Business is unusually dull but the consequence is a reduction in rents, marketing &c—so there is always something to counterbalance. Those of my Family with me are all in health. Maria² is with her mother. The prospect of continuing health is I think favorable—a most rigid Quarantine is exacted, & great attention is now paid to our

¹ President Adams appointed Hamilton inspector general of the army on July 25, 1798.

² The Fennos' daughter Maria (1785–1808).

Streets. The changes in the weather are frequent & there have been rains every 3 or 4 days. As a people we have great & many Mercies to be grateful for. The present impendg. Clouds may by gracious Providence be dissipated—in which Case, the prospects of our Country would brighten beyond any past experience. Please to present my best respects to Mrs. Ward—& remember me to all enquiring friends, to my Mother particularly. With unabated affection, I am, dear Sir

Your devoted friend & Servt
John Fenno

P.S. I am charmed with young Quincy's Oration³—there is originality Sentiment, & the true American Spirit. It is calculated to do great good.

[Addressed:] John Ward Esq.
Newton
near Boston

Phila. Aug. 30. 1798

Dear Sir,

I write to relieve you in some degree from that anxiety which you may feel on our account. Thro the signal favor of Providence we continue in usual health. Mrs. Fenno is now with me, & for 3 or 4 days past, her cough has greatly abated—and I hope will entirely leave her ere long. Our oldest Son¹ is at Newport, our oldest & two youngest daughters are at Bethlehem. We have five children at home.

The City is now deserted & desolate—there are but 3 or 4 parts of Families left in Chesnut Street; and that seems to be a sample of the rest. The disorder we have is a most terrible one, and makes tremendous ravages—few lay longer than four or five days—many die sooner & you will see by the papers that the proportion of the Dead to the sick is very great. One of the Physicians stop'd at my door this afternoon—and informed me that in several recent Cases he thought the disorder assumed a milder form—he said he had a number of convalescents. I please myself with hoping that we are

³ Josiah Quincy (1772-1864), *An Oration, Pronounced July 4, 1798* (Boston: John Russell, 1798). Evans 34429. Fenno reprinted the oration (Evans 34431).

¹ John Ward Fenno.

now passing the meridian of its rage. Sixty nine new cases of the Disorder were reported this day—the Deaths for 3 or 4 days average about 40 each, considering the thin population, this mortality is considered almost as great as in 1793. This disease is not confined to Phila—it is in Wilmington, Delaware and in New York &c. As it is my duty to continue here so long as other printers remain at their Posts, I shall remain also, trusting in that almighty power which has so graciously protected me & mine heretofore. Our Situation is healthy in itself, & is now insulated from neighbors. We live on light food and endeavor to be calm & unruffled. Should sickness invade, we shall not abandon each other, and as much depends on circumstances of this nature, we have more to hope than fear. Mrs. Fenno desires an affectionate remembrance to Mrs. Ward—and her dear Relatives in Newton—to whom please also to remember me. The late news from Europe you will have heard ere this. I think the general complexion of it augurs well for the U.S. Wishing that we may see universal peace, righteousness justice & truth prevail thro' the Earth.

I remain as ever, heretofore,
Your affectionate Friend
John Fenno

[*Addressed:*] Joseph Ward Esq.
Newton
near Boston

Letters of John Ward Fenno, 1799–1800

Phila. Augt. 5. 1799

My dear Friend,

With pleasure I received yours of the 25th ult.—replete with that parental tenderness & affection, which I have ever been accustomed to receive from you.

I am happy to inform you that my affairs are as prosperous as usual. Business has suffered in Phila. from temporary causes, and I amongst others must bear my part of the evil. But it is not much.

We are at this time free from any alarms respecting Yellow Fever; and I think it will be kept off altogether for this Season, as we have now passed the critical period. Business must of course return into its wonted channels.

We shall be happy to have the opportunity of seeing you amongst us again, however sorry for the continuance of the cause. The misery of this country lies in that it has no Government, or worse than none, in most respects; and so long as idle persons continue to preach up our situation as the model of human perfection, & their tales gain belief, so long shall we remain despicable and wretched. Your claim, I should fear, will gain no new advocates by time. To say that it is *just*, is no letter of recommendation. The question whether it will be politic to pay it, will be the test. Of the *policy* of paying it, there can be no doubt with any man of sense; but the *sacrilege* of removing the bars of the Treasury for services so *old*, will be a bugbear to frighten away the images of truth and justice. An old benefit, like an old garment, is often left to contract the must of neglect.

The Sun of Sansoulottism is I think fast declining beneath the long insulted Horizon, and the present year may yet behold a Christian King on the Throne of France. Regicides brought to a just doom—levellers laid low—and peace restored to the afflicted nations.

With sincerest regards to Mrs. W. and ardent prayers for your mutual prosperity & happiness.

I am, as ever,
Affectionately yours,
John Ward Fenno

P.S. The children are all well—about 13 miles from the City. I saw them yesterday, and am charged to communicate their love to yourself & Mrs. W.

[*Addressed:*] Col. Joseph Ward
Boston

Phila. February 10th, 1800

Mr Dear Friend,

Your communication of the 30th ult. has come to hand, and will be early attended to. The publication of your last produced some

furious attacks upon me, public & private, and the *Aurora*¹ republished the piece, with strong reprobation, contained in some comments of a very curious nature. The malice of the whole miserable crew of time-servers and sectaries of *expediency*, having been long since exhausted on my head, their noxious efforts I despise as much as I do themselves. When you write me again, I wish you to detail to me the general outline of your case, the amount of the whole debt, & other circumstances that may be material for me to know. I will reinforce you with such assistance as my limited powers can supply, and I will pour into the ears of the few Congressmen with whom my admonitions will be likely to have weight, "truths meet to be known." But I repeat to you again, and I repeat it with a seriousness which is intended to repress any sanguine hope, that I have no expectations of success. If we had men of sense to deal with, the case were far otherwise; but when we survey the phalanx of the Federal Faith, undoubtedly the flower of the cause in sense & virtue, it is a melancholy truth that we find them miserably deficient. I am not fond to mention names,—but to confine ourselves to the delegation of our own State, there are Lyman,² Bartlet,³ Wadsworth, Shepard,⁴ Varnum,⁵ Bishop,⁶ Otis,⁷—all men miserably ignorant of what a Legislator ought to know—that the Government of a vast Empire is not to be administered upon miserable, narrow General-Court Politics; by saving "a few thousand dollars," here, & a few thousand there, regardless of the means; not, in short, by lopping off *necessities* to encrease means, instead of supplying encreased means to encreased necessities. Should I say to any of these, "Behold the plighted faith of the Country broken! and behold an opportunity, which may soon be wanting, to repair it! Seize this

¹ After the death of Benjamin Franklin Bache, with John Fenno, in the 1798 yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia, the *Aurora* was continued first by Bache's widow, then (beginning Mar. 8, 1800) by William Duane, the editor since Bache's death.

² Samuel Lyman (1749–1802), U.S. congressman (Federalist) from Massachusetts 1795–1800.

³ Bailey Bartlett (1750–1830), U.S. congressman (Federalist) from Massachusetts 1797–1801.

⁴ William Shepard (1737–1817), U.S. congressman (Federalist) from Massachusetts 1797–1803.

⁵ Joseph Bradley Varnum (1750–1821), U.S. congressman from Massachusetts 1795–1811.

⁶ Phaniel Bishop (1739–1812), U.S. congressman from Massachusetts 1799–1807.

⁷ Harrison Gray Otis (1765–1848), U.S. congressman (Federalist) from Massachusetts 1797–1801.

occasion, both on the ground of principle & of policy! of *Principle*, by doing *Justice* to brave men who, with an honorable credulity, trusted you, nobly trusted in your faith, at a momentous era; of *Policy*, as tending to wipe away stains imputed by many to the Revolution. Has it not been said, that the Revolution had more of violence, fraud & treachery in it, than of honest aim? Has it not been said, that the honest men of the Revolution, were made the scape-goats of the raving Demagogues? And do you not, by withholding justice from these claimants, who are veterans of the revolution, do all in your power, to confirm these stigmas?" Should I address this language to any of these, his answer would be, in plain English, tho' sophisticated under a multiplicity of words, "It is not *expedient* to pay these claims." This we deny; and begin an argument with him on the new & abstract question, which said argument we should better display our sagacity in addressing to your Barn Door. "O! *Judgment!* Thou has fled to Beasts, and *Men* have lost their Reason."

Jno. M. Taylor,⁸ who is interested, (and I am sorry for't) along with you, has gone once more to jail to swindle his Creditors. He is a most profligate, blasphemous, enormous, unprincipled villain, democrat and cheat. I pray you, avoid him in future.

The Commercial World seems agitated as with its last convulsions. The trade & the Merchants of Baltimore groan *wholly* prostrate. Five of the most capital houses here have failed, and further ruin daily threatens. Frequent failures occur at New York—one last week for four hundred thousand dollars, & one a short time before, for nine hundred thousand; and I am told that the great house of F. & L. Geyer⁹ of Boston has failed.

You talked in a former letter of going into Business again. I wish you would communicate to me from time to time such circumstances relating to your prospects, intentions &c as are proper for me to know; for there is no other person left me, in whom I take so deep an interest. If in the execution of any project you may entertain, a few thousand dollars can be of service to you, it will give me sincere pleasure to be called upon by you. There is no other purpose I can apply money to so useful, honorable, pleasurable, or profitable, in the noblest sense, as that of contributing to your convenience. I mention this in sincerity and seriousness; without af-

⁸ Possibly John M. Taylor, gentleman, 85 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia.

⁹ Merchants of 15 Foster's Wharf, Boston.

fectionation,—which I most earnestly desire to avoid; and I do entreat you if there is or should be a time when three or four thousand dollars can serve to promote your convenience, to take it.

Present my most affectionate regards to Mrs. Ward. I have to desire that you will also take occasion to offer my regards to the Curtis family and to Mr. & Mrs. Homer.

Yr affectionate

Jno. Ward Fenno

[*Addressed:*] Col: Joseph Ward
 Newton
 near
 Boston

Phila. March 19. 1800

My Dear Friend —

The pleasure I take in writing to you, would be the cause of your hearing from me much oftener, had I more time & better spirits, and the tax of postage were less exorbitant. Too little attention seems to have been bestowed by Government on the important object, (in this, as well as many other Departments) of preserving its *friends* from oppressive burthens. My postage amounts to more than two hundred dollars a year—no inconsiderable portion of which is encountered in furthering objects immediately connected with the defense of Government. The inconvenience I feel on this score, makes me cautious towards my friends.

Your last Memorial has laid on hand several days owing to a variety of engagements, and in order to avail myself of some open moment, when the house were not occupied in squabbles about Randolph¹ & Robbins;² lest it should be passed by, “unheeded, as the idle wind.” The influence of some evil spirit or other, has paralyzed almost every remaining principle of dignity or virtue; and more money is actually consumed in eulogies on a thief and a pirate and a murderer, than would have retrieved the broken faith of Government. in the very instance of which we complain. Our Legislators

¹ John Randolph (1773–1833), U.S. congressman (Democratic Republican), from Virginia 1799–1813, was involved in an incident that he claimed involved a breach of congressional privilege. See Page Smith, *John Adams*, 2 vols. (Garden City, N.Y., 1962), 2:1023.

² Jonathan Robbins, also known as Thomas Nash. For an account of the case involving him and his disputed citizenship, see Smith, *Adams*, pp. 1024–25.

and Cabinet, are composed of *small* men, narrow-minded men—*Salem men*. Stoddert³ advised the other day, to laying aside the building of the *Seventy-Fours*. On being rallied that he, being the Secy. of the Navy, should advise to the *diminution* of the Navy, he said that it was Mr. Wolcott's fault—that Mr. W. said there was no money. This is the "eternal blazon" they have held up against the payment of your demand. When it is palpable even to a fool that nothing can be more shallow. It is a received opinion, that free Governments cannot subsist without the intervention of some artificial binding power, whereby it must be made the *interest* of the people to protect the system under which they live. To a certain reasonable point, therefore, the greater the National Debt becomes, the stronger the Government grows.

March 30

Since I wrote you, a petition of Govr. Gill⁴ has been rejected by Congress. It was, I believe, for New-Emission Bills, on nearly the same ground with yours. I had some conversation on the subject, with your old acquaintance Sam. Lyman. I believe he is a very honest man; but (if a weak mortal may venture to say so much of another) the veriest child in understanding, that I ever conversed with. To such men does the wisdom, even of the enlightened Massachusetts, entrust her most momentous concerns. L. says that Congress will never do any thing for you. I find myself often times really inclining to misanthropy; so much villainy, treachery, and baseness of every kind, do I every where meet with. Nothing but my firm belief in an Omnipotent & Just God, could have enabled me to preserve the balance of my mind, thro' the trials I have encountered at one time or other.

Reflection and Experience have convinced me that it will be vain to look for moral principle or fidelity to engagements, in the conduct of any Republican govt. whatever. It is all nonsense to talk about what Republics *might be*, or what they *ought* to be; we know what they *have been* and what they *are*.

The Senate have lately been attempting to take hold of Duane; but he has hid himself, and laughs in his sleeve at them.

Congress, it is expected, will not adjourn until June. I have published your last Communication. Your pieces I perceive to be noticed in various Gazettes in all quarters. Preaching to deaf ears.

³ Benjamin Stoddert (1751-1813), U.S. secretary of the navy 1798-1801.

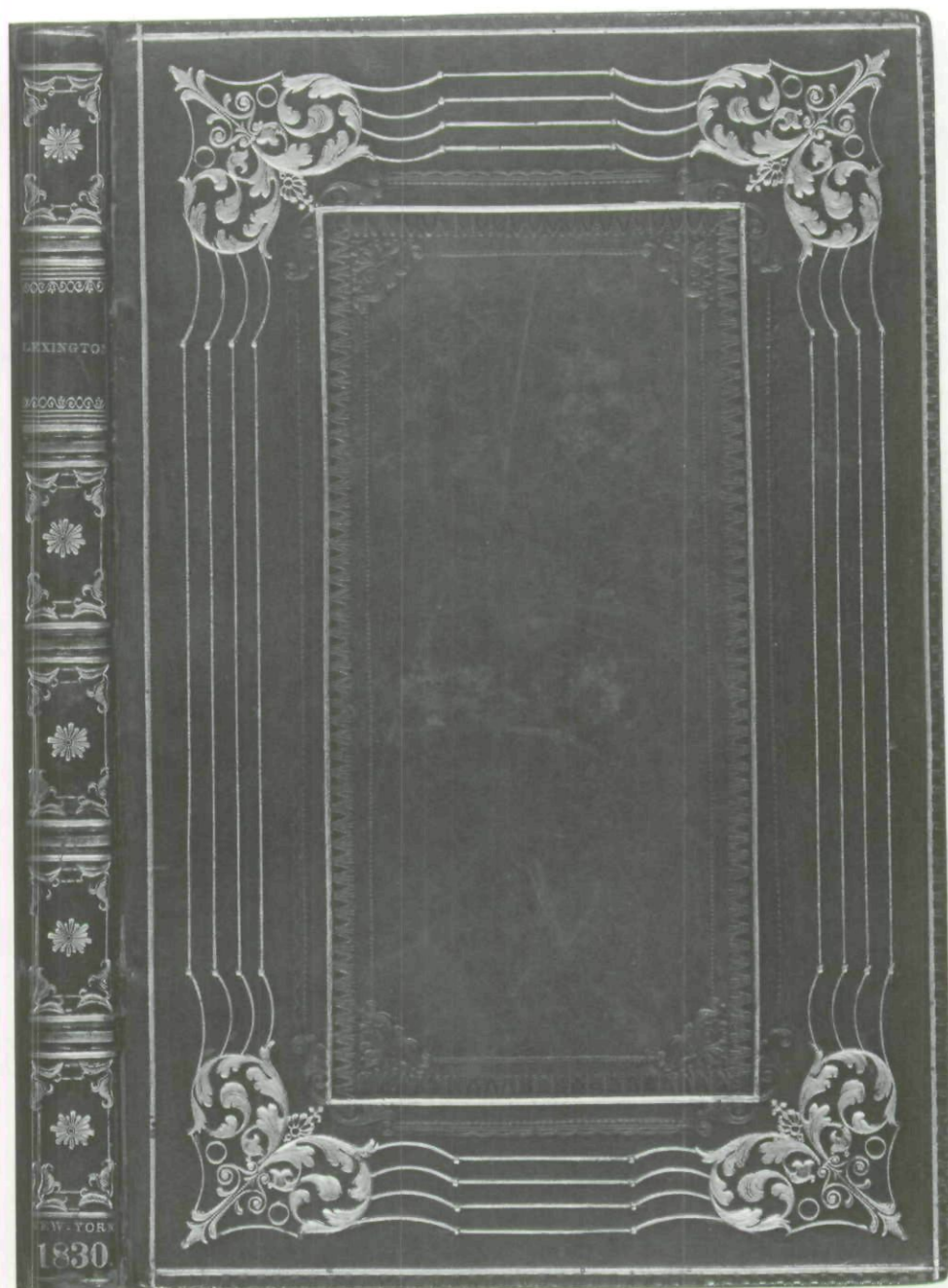
⁴ Moses Gill, lieutenant governor of Massachusetts 1794-1800.

I fear you make yourself enemies in Boston, by the freedom with which you write and speak. At your time of life, this is unpleasant. It is not the strong grounds of your wrong that will free you from the malicious sneers of the most illiberal, narrow-minded, hypocritical, false-hearted set of people, that ever an unfortunate being's lot was cast amongst.

I will give you two opinions—if a green young man may venture to advise his senior. I think it would be your policy, either at once to abandon the claim altogether, and to set about repairing the injury as well as may be, with a mind freed from the agitation excited by the constant presence of a deadly wrong: or, to rest all your hopes & expectations on the issue of another attempt, and to regard the decision as final. In this view, I think your presence here, for two or three weeks, might open the eyes of some of the wretches. In a case where so much is at stake, it will be adviseable to have a personal interview with *every* man, in Congress, until you have [secured] a majority, if that is to be done. Clear I am [that it] ought now to be resolved, either to abandon, or to summon up every exertion for one grand, vigorous & final charge. It is altogether wrong that you should longer continue to have your mind distracted with this wretched affair. If it do not shorten, it embitters your days. My hearty curses rest upon the villains by whom you suffer.

Very truly I am,
Yr affectionate friend
Jno Ward Fenno

[*Addressed:*] Col. Joseph Ward
Newton
near
Boston



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