

## Andrew Jackson to William Harris Crawford, June 16, 1816, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

**TO SECRETARY CRAWFORD.**

June 16, 1816.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 24th ult, have duly noted that part, that relates to the settlers south of the Tennessee river which will be duly attended to. The ballance of your letter contains a system of Ethics, at open war with those practised by Mr Madison president of the u states, through a long and well spent life, therefore I cannot believe the doctrine advanced by you have been sanctioned by him, but is the offspring of your own mind, and shall thus v[i]ew them so far as I conceive it necessary to reply.

I must in the first place premise, that I never did expect to hear it announced through the organ of our Government, whose main pillars are virtue, that to be charged with Robbery was no disgrace to an officer and soldier, and that it was inconsistant with the dignity of our Government, to investigate fraud, where it had been practised against the u. s.

I made the request in my letter of the 8th of april that Justice might be done the W. Tennesseens,<sup>1</sup> and that a discrimination might be made between the guilty and innocent—and if charges had been made against them, believing they were unjust that the[y] might be investigated. This Justice being withheld, and a determination displayed, to mingle us with the guilty, measures will be taken at a proper time to procure that Justice to them that I know there good conduct entitle them.

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1 The West Tennessee troops were charged with destroying the cattle of the friendly Cherokees during Jackson's Creek campaign, 1813–1814. Return J. Meigs, Cherokee-agent, said that most of the damage was done by the East Tennessee troops. The claims amounted to \$25,214.85½. (See Jackson MSS., Military Papers, IV., folios 37–40, 68–78.) Jackson collected certificates from Howell Tatum, Col. William Martin, Reuben McCay, and others, to support his position. See Jackson MSS., vol. 41, nos. 5624–5627, also Col. Wyane's certificate, July 31, 1816, and Jackson to Thomas, July 24, 1816.

your observation “that it is well known that the march of the best disciplined troops, thro their own country is always attended with loss”, must have proceeded from inexperien[c]e, for where it ever happens the officer ought to be cashiered for neglect of duty, and it is the well known fact, that the west. T. troops in the year 1812–13 and 14 and 15 to the lower country and back through the cherokee and creek country and entered pensacola under circumstances that might have induced disorder from thence to Neworleans and back and the Tongue of truth cannot point to a single act of private property being infringed without Just compensation. The concurrent Testimony referred to, to produce a correction of my mistake, in asserting that no losses were sustained by depredation committed by the west Tennesseens, are too absurd to obtain credit by a reflecting mind, unless indeed those Gentlemen by some kind of instinct or intuitive knowledge after a lapse of two years could tell, by the track, how many cattle, hogs and horses, the cherokees two years before possessed, that they had been stolen, not made use of or sold by themselves, and if stolen, that they were carried away by the west Tennesseens, I am sorry the names of these inspired gentlemen were not given, that the publick might admire them for there wisdom and divinity. However I shall inclose an extract from Colo. Popes letter, who was some times present, which I hope will obtain as much credit as those Gentlemen who passed through the nation two years after the depredations are alledged to be committed, and will also refer you to the accounts on file in the quartermasters department—filed by Colo. S. D. Hays and Major Wm. B. Lewis.<sup>2</sup>

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2 To this letter Crawford replied on July 5, 1816, in the following brief note: "Sir, My letter of the 24th of May last, was written with a view to satisfy you, that the information requested in your letter of the 8th of that month, was unnecessary for the purpose for which it was intended. Altho' the views taken in that letter, are believed to be correct, yet as a different view is still maintained by you, the information requested, has been directed to be furnished."

I inclose for your information a copy of a letter from Colo. Barnett to Genl Coffee from which you will discover, more particularly how the cherokees has been tampering with the creeks to filch the U States out of the land which they well knew had been ceded by the creek treaty. I should have noticed your concluding sentence, but I cannot believe you to be serious, no man who possesses honourable feelings and brought up in a country, where the laws punish vice, and applaud virtue, can believe that the charectors of the west Tennesseens are not implicated, when they are recorded as the worst kind of robbers, Taking from the poor Indian. I shall here close the subject, resting an appeal for Justice, to a source, who may appreciate, virtuous conduct of the american officers and soldiers, more than you appear to do and who I hope will think it Justice, that the innocent should not suffer for the crimes of the guilty.