

Charlton Hunt to Andrew Jackson, August 29, 1827, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

CHARLTON HUNT TO JACKSON.1

1 One of the interesting things about this vivid account of political conditions in Kentucky is that it says nothing of political activity by the Bank of the United States. The election was for members of the Kentucky house of representatives.

Lexington, August 29, 1827.

Dear General, 1 We have closed a very animated election, And although beaten in this County, still when every thing is considered, it should be viewed as a triumph of correct, republican principles over wealth and power. The Candidates were announced on each side late in March. viz. Breckinridge, True and Combs for Adams: McCalla, Payne and myself for his opponent. Breckinridge is a man of fine talents, and had been elected the two previous years. True has been our representative for six or seven years, Combs is a gentleman of some standing at the bar and a most indefatigable electioneerer. All three of them belonged to the Old Court and Antirelief party which has been the prominent and popular party in this County for several years back. Gen. McCalla although a popular man had been twice defeated before as a partizan of the New Court and never elected, Mr. Payne belongs to a respectable and numerous family, but was defeated last year as a New Court candidate. I was an Old Court man but at the commencement of the campaign I did not know 500 voters in the County and had to contend against the idea that I was but a boy: which suggestion I had to laugh away the best way I could and refer them to a fine, promising son of mine as an evidence, that I had advanced a little beyond boyhood.

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Under these circumstances, the canvass opened and the most powerful exertions were made upon both sides from the first. The contest turned on our preference for the Presidential Candidates. Their relative claims, qualifications and merits formed the subject of our numerous stump speeches. The wealth of the County was in the main arrayed against us and Mr. Clay's visit just before the election was as fortunate and well timed as any manœuvre you ever atchieved in the field of battle. In his electioneering dinner speeches you were most bitterly and unsparingly denounced. He stimulated his friends to the highest exertions of which they were capable. It was however a mortifying circumstance that his dinner of 1200. should have been succeeded by a dinner in honor of Jackson and the peoples rights" attended by 4000, this is a fact without the least exaggeration. I would not exaggerate to gratify a friend and my information is of the most authentic kind. If you had visited this section of the Country as Mr. Clay did, the opposition would have vanished, but I was not so selfish as to desire that you should jeopardize your prospects elsewhere, that my election might be secured. I became a candidate that I might contribute my mite to pay a debt of gratitude that so many considered cancelled by the base calumny and slander, which they unceasingly heap upon you. The election commenced and the two first days McCalla and myself ran ahead, which eventuated in our defeat. Our friends were enthusiastic and bouyed up by the idea, that the day was ours ceased their exertions, and remained about the Court House giving full play to their enthusiasm and joy, in the mean time the other party had their emissaries in every point of the County, riding day and night, bringing in sick and maimed, and passed us on Wednesday. The number of illegal votes is inconceivable, I was a novice at the Business and did not find out the game they were playing upon us until it was too late. During the seven years war of the Relief and Judge questions, when the greatest efforts were made there were never more than 2600 votes taken, and McCallas vote and mine never was beaten before. This year they took 2700 and we know of at least one hundred, who were prevented from voting, by sickness and a brick bat fight that occurred Wednesday at Noon,

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arising from an attempt upon the part of the Adams men to plant a flag and Hemp stalk over the Court House door. The votes stood thus at the close of the polls,

Lexington Chiles Athens Total Clark 1095 140 179 1414 Taylor 1081 38 93 1212
Breckinridge 1128 138 169 1435 Combs 1095 131 174 1400 True 1041 138 171 1350
McCalla 1142 44 119 1305 Hunt 1150 43 104 1297 Payne 1021 37 96 1154

You perceive that in Lexington just under Mr. Clays own door McCalla and myself obtained a majority of the 2200 and odd votes that were taken here: at two remote little precincts where they took between 4 and 500 votes our prospects were ruined. In the Chilesburgh precinct Mr. Robert Wickliff owns about \$100,000 in land and negroes. he attended the precinct the first day and used every exertion against us. he is the man, who voted for the resolu[tions] of 1824, requesting our Members of Congress to give the vote of [this] State to you, denouncing Mr. Adams as an Apostate federa[list] and he is the man, who for seven years back, has received my warmest and most active support. He tells my friends that I electioneer with great success, if he ever appears before the people again he will wish that he has formed a false judgment of me. It is a source of the highest triumph to me, that I beat the whole concern of them under the immediate range of Mr. Clay's eye. And if his eye ever glances at the name of as humble an individual as I am, I am proud that he will look upon it with scorn and mortification in the present instance. You can form no conception of the high and devoted enthusiasm that is felt for your success in this quarter.

Your friends in this place state that Mr. Clay wrote you just before the election by Congress, inviting you to pass through Lexington to accompany him to Washington—if it is agreeable to you to inform me I would be glad to know if it is a fact, not with any view of giving up the Author but to prevent our friends from making a statement that may be untrue.