

## Thomas Hart Benton to Andrew Jackson, November 10, 1837, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

### THOMAS H. BENTON TO JACKSON.

Steam Boat Paris, Ohio River, November 10, 1837.

*Dear Sir,* I am on my way to Washington, Mrs. Benton and the children are with me, and quite well, and send their kindest remembrance to you. Among the pieces of work which I have prescribed for myself this winter is one which will be both easy and agreeable, that of defending you, and through you the great cause in which you have been engaged, from the charge now systematically propagated, that you were in favor of the late Bank of the United States until you found that it could not be used for your political purposes, and that you then turned against it from resentment. This imputation upon you was commenced in 1832, but was generally deemed then too ridiculous and contemptible to merit serious refutation. But the case is different now. The charge has become a part of the permanent system of operations of the whole bank party, and with the obvious view of giving it perpetuity, not only to injure you, but also to injure the cause of the constitution and of the people in your person, and to gain an undue sympathy and respect for the bank by representing her as the victim of her integrity, and the object of your revenge on account of her virtuous resistance to your dishonorable propositions.

The system which is now established for the propagation of these falsehoods, and the mischief intended to be accomplished by them, entitle them to our notice; and I think it due to you, and also to the cause which is attacked in your person, to have them refuted, and that in a way to make the refutation as conspicuous, conclusive and lasting, as the charge itself has been impudent, false and public. For this purpose I wish to interweave

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the refutation among our congressional debates, and to take some opportunity of doing so during the ensuing season. I have much material on hand to be used for this purpose, but as I wish to make “a root and branch business of it,” pulling up and tearing down, and carrying all before me, til the whole calumny is swept off, I have thought it best to consult you for the purpose of seeing whether you have not in your possession, or in your power, some evidence of your old and fixed opinions on the subject of a national bank, and especially of your disinclination to recharter the late one. Some of your old and intimate friends may have recollections on this point, and perhaps you may have on hand some evidences, or memoranda, of your own opinions before you became President in 1829. It is to periods anterior to that epoch that I wish your attention to be directed. Did Genl. Cadwallader *sound* you, or *sound* your friends to ascertain your sentiments, when he was at Nashville in 1826 or '27? Was there any attempt to get you to join in the solicitation for a branch at Nashville about that time? It runs in my head that Genl. Cadwallader told me at Washington, about that time, in a confidential interview which he had with me in the Finance committee room of the Senate on the subject of establishing a branch at St. Louis, that you were opposed to the institution, or opposed to the establishment of a branch at Nashville.<sup>1</sup> This is an impression on my mind, and it is also my impression that he was then on his way to St. Louis and Nashville, as the agent of the bank, to report upon the application of these places for branches. Was he at Nashville twice? My memory is very tenacious where I charge it with any thing to be remembered; otherwise it is not, and in this interview with Genl. C. the only thing that occupied me was my own case, and to save myself from being supposed favorable to the establishment of a branch at St. Louis while doing justice to the merchants and others of that place who sent their petition through me to solicit one. I merely mention these points to turn your attention to them, and would suggest that a statement from yourself, of your own long established opinions on the subject, and early determination not to agree to a renewal of the late U.S. Bank charter, would certainly be beneficial both to the cause and to yourself, and could be read by me, with your permission, in the course of the speech which will be made, and thus become a part of the political history of the times.<sup>2</sup>

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1 See Catterall, *Second Bank*, pp. 183–185.

2 No evidence has been found that Jackson complied with Benton's request.

I am, Dr. Sir, Most truly and sincerely yours,