

William Charles Cole Claiborne to Andrew Jackson, August 12, 1814, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

New Orleans, August 12, 1814.

Sir, Since my letter of the 8th I have had an Interview, with the officers of the Several Militia Corps of this city, and am assured of their Zealous aid, in carrying into effect my General orders of the 6th Instant. How far their efforts may be Seconded by the body of the People, will, in a Short time be shewn. On the native Americans and a vast majority of the Creoles of the Country, I place much confidence, nor do I doubt the fidelity of *many Europeans* , who have long resided in the country.

But there are others much devoted to the Interest of Spain, and whose partiality for the English, is not less observable than their dislike to the American Government. Among the Militia of New Orleans, there is a Battalion composed of chosen men of Colour, organized under a Special *Act* of the Legislature and of which, I enclose a copy for your Perusal. Under the Spanish Government, the men of Colour of New Orleans, were allways relied on in times of difficulties, and on Several occasions, evinced in the field the greatest firmness of courage. Under the late Territorial Government as well as under that of the State of Louisiana, much unwillingness was manifested in organizing and placing arms in the hands of the free men of Colour; By the *first* , it was wholly refused; but the State has thought it advisable to recognize a Battalion with limited numbers and under certain restrictions. the command of the Battalion is committed to Colo. Fortier a respectable and rich merchant of New Orleans, and the Second in Command is Major Lacoste, a rich and Respectable Planter; with these Gentlemen, and the officers attached to Companies, (These last being men of Colour) I had an enterview on Yesterday, and assured them, that in the hour of Peril, I should rely on their valour and fidelity to the United States. In

Library of Congress

return they expressed their devotion to their Country and their readiness to defend it; They added their desire that all free men of Colour in New Orleans, and its vicinity, being natives of Louisiana, which they represented to be about Six hundred might be organized, and received as a part of the Militia, giving me to understand that such a measure would give great Satisfaction, and excite their greatest zeal in the cause of the United States. To this request, I have for the present given orders *only* for a census of the free men of Colour to be taken, and to be returned to me without delay. These men Sir, for the most part sustain good characters; many of them have extensive connections and much property to defend, and all seem attached to arms. The mode of acting towards them at the Present Crisis is an Enquiry of Importance; If we give them not our confidence, the Enemy will be encouraged to intrigue and to corrupt them. Innured to the *climate* of Louisiana, and with constitutions and habits adapted to *its changes* , the men of Colour are well calculated to render service in this quarter, and in the event of Invasion might be made particularly useful. I think a corps of three or four hundred might be easily raised, who would willingly enter into the service of the United States for six months, provided they be employed in Louisiana. I wish to know, how far you might feel authorised to receive such Troops, and also your opinion as to the expediency of employing them. ¹ We have news here of a reinforcement of Spanish troops having arrived at Pensacola, and that the Indians who had fled there, were in English uniform and doing duty in Garrison. Would to God, you had orders to take Pensacola! Had this

¹ See Jackson's proclamation to the free colored inhabitants of Louisiana, vol. II., p. 58.

point of rendezvous for our red and white Enemies, been taken possession of 18 months ago, the creek War would never have taken place; Was it now done, great additional security would be given to New Orleans against all attacks from without.

I am, Sir, With great Respect, and Esteem, Your obt. Servt.