

Williamstown, June 18, 1804

Dear Sir (Wm. Cooper),

Pray excuse the apology which I am about to make for answering the many frivolous and groundless charges which you have, I trust, been lead to make against me from the babblings of an old foolish woman, who was never of sound mind and now in the years of dotage. The relation in which I stand to you, will I hope suffice for what I now do, that nothing short of the blood that runs in my veins should induce me to condescend so much to any person on the face of the earth. And by the bye let me remind you here that some of the charges I conceive you nor no other gentleman has anything to do with. And it would be highly absurd, degrading and even preposterous in me as a gentlemen although poor and dependent as you have been pleased to call me,

To Answer:

Your first charge me with taking to drinking and this you say is clear beyond a doubt. This with due deference to your dictum is whole untrue and groundless which I can make appear by all the Gentleman who are acquainted with me. You told me that it was the common conversation among the people of the village. that be it known to you and I wish to be understood that I have been informed by the Restable part of the citizens of this place, that you was the first man that they ever heard anything of the kind from, and were astonished at the report especially when coming from you whose interest they conceive should have dictated a very different line in a patron to his friend.

Your 2nd reason or charge is lamentable indeed. Oh pitiful beyond expression that I should be censured for a calamity which no human foresight, nor prudence could have avoided. This was a fever which the most skilled in Physic, and others that have been afflicted with similar diseases, say is such, in its operation on the human system as to produce a degree of derangement in the mental powers.

Your 3rd reason or charge seems to favor the idea of a strong desire to censure without having the least pretext or grounds. for so doing. It reminds me of the visionary charges brought in the dark ages against persons in order to convict them of witchcraft. You say that I have, as you are pleased to term it squandered away your shingles and boards, and that too against expressed orders. Here you will pardon me when I say this is a very gross mistake, in as much as the shingles never were yours nor did I know that you would pay me for them in as much as I never received any written or verbal orders from you to make them. But being informed by Mr. Cholan the shingle maker that you wanted 1000 made, I ordered him to make them. He did so, and I paid him the money for the same. These shingles I never intended to have used nor did I conceive that they were your property till they were delivered to you. They never were delivered to you; consequently they were not your property. But it is a matter of very little consequence as it regards the charge against me whose shingles they were, when we bring into view the imperious necessity of using them.

Picture to yourself the deplorable and I may say wretched condition we were all placed in on the bank of a River whose waters after the uncommonly hard winter had spread far beyond its usual bed and drove the greater part of the villagers from their habitations. The houses of those who were not suffers being all small and ill suited to admit, one, two or three large families, when scarcely of size adapted to their own convenience.

And to add to all this several families coming in at a late season of the year, who not being provided with any kind of shelter, were obliged to live at the mercy of their neighbors for a covering to keep them from the inclemency of the season, and among these a lady of respectability who was far advanced in a state of pregnancy without a place for herself and a numerous offspring to put their heads. I say what unfeeling mind! What unprincipled wretch could have dared to withhold assistance from objects of this kind! No an enemy would have shuddered at the very idea of not granting relief under circumstances of this sort.

With respect to the boards which you charge me for using, I disavow any knowledge of the thing till they were put into the building as I was very unwell at the time and rarely went out to see what was going forward.

But grant for the moment that I was privy to the whole matter, I must sincerely confess that I cannot see nor can I at this time willingly subscribe to the idea that the want of five boards could so materially injure the growth and progress of this settlement as you are pleased to represent. The exegenius (?) of the case if viewed with an impartial eye would in my humble opinion be sufficient to exculpate (?) any person from blame and especially me under the circumstances in which I stand. But let me stop here, and say that the boards will be replaced and would have been on the ground some time ago could means have been obtained for that purpose.

In your fourth charge you complain of my taking upon myself your business in your absence. This I trust if so, would be doing no more than what I ought to do, as being your agent. And for more correct information on this head I refer you to our articles of agreement.

With respect to the resurvey around the town which in your eye, appears like a very great crime. Stands precisely thus, some doubts having arisen relative to the line being run between this town and Cambray, and some doubts as to the angle of the line between this town and Oswegatchie. Upon which you told me, that you wished me to begin at the corner of Oswegatchie and this town and run along the line between the two towns and measure ten miles, ten chains & thirty-four links and if I found a corner to stop. If not to continue the course of said line till I run the distance above mentioned and then establish a corner, and from thence run according to the line course and variation to the other corner of the patent for the truth of this statement as near as I can recollect I call the Gods to witness.

As to the survey of the other two lines of the town I leave to a reflecting mind how far I acted correct having found no corner in the S W part of the town. But you say that Mr. Saunders is ignorant of the art of surveying. In this business no art nor skill was necessary level that of running an accurate line and measuring correctly which I know him to be capable of, and I have frequently heard Trey (?) and Gilbert both say that he could run as accurate a line and keep as correct a field book as they could and some of his minutes are in my hand and ready to be produced as a sample of his correctness.

All that I can further say on the matter is this, what was done was performed with a virtue intention and that which any man wishing his work to bear inspection ought to have done when called upon to survey a tract in which it was absolutely necessary in order ascertain the outline thereof, to pursue a line of conduct similar to this. But I must say that although conscious of no wrong in doing what I or some other person ought to

have done in a similar situation and nevertheless extremely sorry that it has created so much uneasiness. But I hope that it is more ideal than real.

In your sixth charge you say that I have made the people in your absence pay five dollars for filling up blank deeds and forms, to say that your informant is a liar and I trust a person who wishes to breed a disturbance between you and me. The tales of persons of this description ought to be received with caution or we must expect to have no peace in society.

In your seventh charge you say that I treat the settlers with haughtiness. Here your informant will kick the beam when weighed in the scales of justice and truth. Due respect and attention to all persons I shall ever pay for it is impossible for to do anything knowingly beneath the dignity of a gentleman. There are however certain persons in society that merit neglect and even contempt of this class when they by chance fall in my way. I see no harm in rendering to them the things that are due. Let me close this by saying that your good old man is looked upon as a babbling fool by all those who know her. And that there is not a person in the village but knows what she has communicated to you, and they laugh at one time and at another say that they are astonished to see that a man of your good sense would regard what she or even any of the family should say, respecting any person of reputation. But by the bye let me further state to you that I can prove that some of the family from whom you have gotten the greater part of your information has sworn that they would and will it lays in their power breed a quarrel between you and myself and I trust it ought not to end here unless they make due confession and open recantation of some of the lies they have been cross enough to propagate about me and that to my prejudice.

The debt what I owe you shall be discharged as soon as I can, for I am sure that I never will feel happy till your claim against me is no more. This would have been done long since could I have collected my debts. You well know that I have had many difficulties to encounter and of such a magnitude that would have surmounted with more honor and less expense than I have. I however never imagined that this thing would have been bandied about from one to another.

With regard to your becoming liable for the payment of part of my library is a matter that I at present cannot account for in as much as I left in the hands of Mr. VanSlyck my agent in New York the collection of between fourteen and fifteen hundred dollars, three hundred of which came to his hands the next day after I left new York, seventy five dollars was in his hand being a debt which he owed me, and notes in his hand payable to me amounting to near three hundred dollars for which I have his receipt . 250\$ in taxed bills of costs from John Adams Junior besides the costs on twenty or thirty unsettled suits. These were the sources from which I expected to have drawn the means of paying you and every other person to whom I might be indebted a single cent. This is exclusive of any money or property I have in this county which I cannot estimate at less than five hundred dollars independent of the profits which I may receive on the land which I purchased of you.

Your solicitude for my welfare is received with at least full gratitude. I always looked upon you as my best friend and benefactor. And this idea was never shaken till I landed on this ground when to my great surprise and contrary to the original compact I found myself treated with marked indifference. I bore it with as much fortitude as I was capable of, when ever spoken of by others who saw what I felt, I said that it was nothing

but the habit or natural turn of the man and that he was my friend and meant nothing but my good.

But not withstanding, I must confess, I feel in part like an Englishman danger only calls forth their fortitude, they even exult in calamity, but contempt or disrespect is what they cannot bear. An Englishman fears contempt more than death. He often flies to death as a refuge from its pressure and dies when he thinks the world has ceased to esteem him. But my case is not so lamentable and it is my wish to be mistaken.

I hope you will receive this as coming from me without the least content of calour or disguise a single word or sentence of what I have here said in order to favor myself, or to please or offend you.

Your interest I will attend to in every point and shall be happy in doing any act that shall promote it, not injuring myself and the people who have sworn to injure me in your esteem are worthless and whom you well know to be such as I am informed.

I hope you will let them know your displeasure at their conduct, before you leave this place as I and others who wish me well are much concerned about this thing. If any further explanation is necessary, I stand ready and willing to make it.

With due respect I remain yours,
A. McCollom