

**John Rhea to Andrew Jackson, November 27, 1817,
from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by
John Spencer Bassett.**

JOHN RHEA1 TO JACKSON.

1 M. C. from Tennessee 1803–1815, 1817–1823.

Washington, November 27, 1817.

Dear General, On last Saturday I came here, and since then have seen a copy of the instructions to Major Stephen H Long, the officer sent to Praire du Chien to execute the duties of Engineer. The letter of instructions, dated, War Department 18th June [*blank*] signed, Wm. H. Crawford and addressed to Major Stephen H Long. Top Engineer N York Major Long, by said instructions, is required, immediately after being supplied with the necessary instruments and books, to proceed to Praire du Chiene on the Mississippi and report himself to General Smith and under his directions to execute the duties of Engineer in the planing and constructing of such fortifications on that frontier as the public service shall require. He is instructed to report himself, when that service is completed to the War Department for orders. He is instructed, on his tour to Praire du Chien and especially on his return, to examine or rather view, with a view to topographical purposes, the country thro' which he may pass, and is informed that as dispatch on his outward journey is indispensable but few observations of this nature will be expected, but that on his return every thing that rilates to this branch of Science must be carefully attended to and reported to the War Department. He is also instructed to make a detailed report of his proceedings, exhibiting the number extent and plans of the different fortifications by him constructed, the situation and face of the country on which they are erected together with every circumstance, which can be interesting in a military point of view, of the surrounding

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country. The letter of instructions contains some more particulars relating to the purchase of instruments and books and to extra pay of the soldiers employed for constructing said Works. The above written contains the substance of the instructions to major Long so far as they relate to his going and returning from Prairie du chien.

The Object inducing me to inquire and write to you respecting this business is, that a difference of opinion, if there be any, may be done away and your mind be at rest on this subject. And in order thereto, I beg leave to observe, that the letter of instructions that directs major Long to proceed to Prairie du chien to execute certain duties there, also requires him, when that service is performed, to report himself to the War Department for orders. His return is particularly adverted to; He is required carefully to view the country and report to the War Department every circumstance with a view to topographical purposes. The Mission of Major Long to Prairie du Chien appears, not only to have been, to perform and execute duties of an engineer there, but particularly to examine and view the country, when going and returning. The Major must, by his instructions, have considered himself under orders to return as soon as his duties of Engineering at Praire du chien were completed without waiting further orders for his return. Whether you were informed immediately of the movements of Major Long or recieved a copy of his instructions from the War Office, I know not, but be that as it may, Major Long was ordered to report himself to General Smith of your division and under his directions to execute certain duties.

The Mission of Major Long was for purposes not requiring his long continuance at Prairie du Chien. Without any command at Prairie du Chien except for merely purposes requiring a temporary continuance, his return from thence in consequence of his instructions was an act of duty. this case is not similar to the withdrawing from within your command and without your knowledge, the commanding officer of a post. Being but little acquaint[ed] with Military rules I will forbear to observe further in this case, only noticing that, so far as I can learn, and my knowledge is from the highest and best authority, I do believe, that, by the

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Mission of Major Long no disrespect was intended towards you; I therefore hope and trust that your mind will be at rest and ease respecting that business.

I am now to inform you that with the President himself, I had the honor of having the conversation respecting you. He did me the honor of putting into my hands a copy of the instructions to Major Long above alluded to, and said I might send a copy to you. that I have not done but a copy is in my possession of that which the President put in my hands. I firmly believe the President entertains and has for you undiminished every degree of friendship he ever had. His confidence in you remains unimpaired, of this, in my humble opinion, you may rest assured; If I thought otherwise I would write so to you. Cease, I beg you, to trouble yourself respecting the Mission or rather return of Major Long. The President is your friend and I think the full knowledge of that will content you. He has lately wrote to you. And now as heretofore I request and entreat you to abandon every idea of resigning or retiring—this is no time for you to retire from the service of our country. You have done greatly—more may yet remain for you to do. I well know that if you did retire, and afterwards any thing requiring your exertion did arise, you would regret that you have retired—the President is opposed to your retiring from the service of our Country, and I can inform you that Mr. W—H. C—is also opposed to your retiring.

I have wrote to you a long letter—if any thing expressed in it be otherwise than agreeable to you, excuse me for it, for this letter is dictated by friendship towards you, of which I trust you have no doubt. to have a letter from you will give me great pleasure. Accept my sincere wishes for your health and happiness. I am Dear General

Please to acknowledge receipt of this letter