

**Andrew Jackson to John McNairy, September 6, 1823,  
from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by  
John Spencer Bassett.**

**TO JOHN McNAIRY.1**

1 Handwriting of Maj. W. B. Lewis.

Hermitage, September 6, 1823.

*Dear Sir,* By the hand of Governor Edwards this morning I received your kind and friendly letter of the 3d inst, and regret that I have not more leisure to reply to it. Blessed is the peacemaker, *saith the Holy scriptures* , and I feel grateful to the memory of our deceased friend for his and your attempt on a former occasion to produce harmony and peace to society in a certain quarter; and altho from my acquaintance with men and human nature I was aware that it would prove abortive as it did, still I have the same feelings of gratitude for the actors as tho their efforts had proved effectual.

Unanimity I grant is all important to the well being of all societies, and particularly to the perpetuation of our Republican govt; but I fear there is too little virtue and morality in ours to maintain this blessing. Demagogues pursue a course of self aggrandizement regardless of public good, without cause have in many cases attempted to prostrate the character of those, who, by pursuing an independent course with an eye single to their country's interest, have obtained the approbation of their fellow citizens; lest they might obstruct or retard their own progress to preferment. This is the fact as I suppose in the case alluded to. I parted with Col Williams in perfect friendship at Fort Jackson, (since then have not seen him) and my last friendly act was at his request, the obtaining of an order from Genl Pinckney for him to repair to Knoxville where his family was, to

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superintend the recruiting service of his Regt. The next information I received was through the Knoxville Gazette after I had reached Mobile in 1814 stating that I was to be arrested upon charges emanating as private advice detailed from Col Williams and the officers of his Regt. Feeling myself free from any charges that truth would support, I felt no alarm at what falsehood or calumny could raise.<sup>2</sup> Afterwards, in the early part of 1815 at Orleans, I was advised by a friend that charges had been sent on signed by all the officers of the 39th Regt. This only revived in my breast contempt for the movers and a withdrawal of friendship from those capable of such assasinlike cowardly conduct, unworthy of a man who had ever worn a epulet and who could under the appearance of friendship [take part] in the work.

<sup>2</sup> It is not possible to say what was the nature of these charges. It was at this time that Jackson wrote his severe letter to Williams because Williams refused to give up arms to the East Tennessee militia, ordered to Jackson's aid at Mobile. See Col. John Williams to Jackson, Nov. 1, 1814, in vol. II., p. 88.

Upon my return to Nashville I met with my friend H L White,<sup>3</sup> to whom and the whole of his family I have been warmly attached in friendship. We had a long conversation on this subject. The Judge assured me that Col W could not be as he believed guilty of the acts alleged against him, to which I replied, if he were not I had no wish to criminate him, and would with pleasure have an interview with him on my way to the city of Washington in 1815 when I passed Knoxville at which place I remained two or three days. as I have been advised Col Williams had left Knoxville the morning of the day of my arrival for a part of the country that he was not in the habit of visiting, Suffice it to say that I did not see him. The Col arrived at the city, as I was informed after my arrival there. I was confined by sickness, he did not call to see me. His conduct and expressions on the Seminole question, His false assertion to the members of Congress that I had no standing in my own state, His charges of speculation in Florida land, and salt works; have convinced me that he is amongst the most unprincipled men I ever knew. Therefore believing this, and being advised of his mean, hidden, and ungentlemanly conduct behind my back, *I have forgive, I cannot forget.*

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But ought confidence to be reposed in any man who has without any cause become my enemy, his endeavour to secretly stab me on the Seminole question by falsehood and insinuations of speculation in Florida lands etc. etc., has applied to me motives as base as they were unfounded—and all this after he had as I believed, intentionally evaded an interview with me for explanation, and never has made a personal advance to make an atonement for repeated injuries which it is alleged that he both originated and propagated? His Enmity I was regardless of, In his friendship now I could not confide.

3 Hugh L. White, at this time president of the state bank, U. S. senator 1825–1833, 1836–1840, and in 1836 anti-Jackson candidate for the presidency.

I never have interfered in any election, as yet; I do not know that I will; but until he makes personal advances for the purpose of reconciliation, we cannot be further reconciled than we are. The conduct of the Col has not nor never shall lessen my friendship and esteem for Judge White and his family, and that of his deceased father.

On the other subject you know my detestation for law suits. Col. Erwin knows whenever he makes propositions I will hear them, but situated as I am now and my express declarations to him in your presence and in the other gentlemen if propositions are made, the propositions must come from him, and if they are such as in justice to others I can accede to, I assure you it will give me great pleasure to accept of them, and get clear of Law. It is the only suit but one I have ever had in my own name and I hope it will be the last. I have lost all views of accumulating wealth, and I wish peace and tranquillity if I can fairly obtain them. I have but one grand view, and that is to promote as far as I have influence a proper respect for character, religion and morality, and thereby lay a solid foundation for the perpetuity of our happy form of Govt. Whenever these are lost sight of, party views substituted in their stead, our Government will be changed—it cannot stand, virtue being the only prop which sustains it.