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6-17-1817

## Letter from James G. Mask to George Sibley, June 17, 1817

James G. Mask

*Montgomery County, North Carolina*

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(George C. Sibley)

James G. Mask  
Montgomery County N: C  
17<sup>th</sup> June 1817

Montgomery County N: C the 17<sup>th</sup> June 1817

Friend George

I have now to acknowledge with sincere gratitude the receipt (on the 28<sup>th</sup> Ultmo) of your inestimable favor of the 30<sup>th</sup> March, I say inestimable because I think what I say, & notwithstanding the hurry in which you write, & and the many excuses & apologies you make for the same, yet it contains far more intelligable & satisfactory information than has ever yet reacht here (of that country)- Having received much satisfaction in reading & perusing it over myself- I took the letter with me up to Salisbury (where I had business) last week, & knowing that my friends in that place were wishing for information from your quarter, I showd your letter there, first to M. Archibald (generally called) Bauldy Henderson, a Celebrated lawyer of Salisbury who expresst himself with warmth, extolling both the writer & his country.

Next stept in Doctor Satterwhite (a relation of Mr. Henderson) Mr. H. immediately requested me to show your letter to the Doctor, which I did. The Doctor is one of those zealous kind of men, who carry everything thing (or cause) they like to espouse, to its full length. He confesst indeed that he has had for these six months past, a great notion of the Missouri Country. But after he read your letter, he was fairly carried beyond himself (if possible)- He went off, & soon spread the news thro' town (I mean the contents of the letter) shortly after which Mr. John Fulton (Merchant) came (by the Doctors information) & must needs take a peep at it, But I hardly suppose that Fulton will go, but the Doctor (who is also a Merchant) & James Huie (or Hughie) the head Innkeepr in Salisbury decided that they two will go, & I have very little doubt indeed but that you will see both these Gentlemen in your Territory 'twixt this & Christmas, unless some unlookt for subsequent event turns up to prevent them- The last who read it was a Merchant of eminence by the name of Cowan. when Mr. Cowan saw your Signature he exclaimd "This is the same young Gentleman who dined with me in Salisbury on his way out to St. Louis several years ago, & he had a sister along with him"; I told him that I thought he was mistaken, that I did not recollect of your having any sister, but he insisted that he was right, & is sure it was you or your Brother, & further said, that which ever it might be, he requested the favor of a letter from you after you got to St. Louis, & he says that you did write him a letter abt. a year afterwards- This he thinks was abt 12 to 13 years ago- Cowan is man of wealth & does a good deal of business in Salisbury so that I hardly think he will ever quit that place; not shortly at any rate- Had I children, I would certainly go, either to the Missouri or Bigbee Country, but situated as I am, with no white family but myself & wife, & no likelihood now of any more, I believe I shall content myself where I am, I dont live now where I did as you went out from here, I left Henderson the Spring after you passt us & purchased the land lying around the town to the northward & eastward of the Courthouse, my house stands now in the forks of the two rivers (Yadkin & uhary) abt half a mile above the ferry & overlooks both the Ferry & the Courthouse- We have had a scuffling time of it in this Country for the last 3 or 4 months for provisions, but thanks to the Lord our harvest is now reaping, & I hope that we shall still make out to live, but this has been the most Trying year for something to eat (so far) that ever I saw,- corn at 150 & Bacon at 20 cents pr bu & pound, & these prices are now but nominal there being none of either for sale at this time

I thank God however that I had sufferd but very little myself. I have only had two BuS of corn to Buy for my family, & I had half a barrell of my corn stolen out of the Mill abt 2 months ago, & I lent a half Bu which I never got, so that upon the whole, if others had have dealt as honestly with me as I did with them, I should have made my corn meet my wheat & have had one bu to spare for my friends who like corn bread better than wheat, I am sorry to inform you that our wheat Crops will not be so productive as was thought, much of the wheat is blasted already, & we have an uncommon spell on us at this very time, which has already been of almost 4 weeks continuance, with little intermission, & the whole atmosphere is at this Instant overspread with clouds & threatens rain as much as it did when it first set in, indeed it has rained all the forepart of the day, & sometimes very heavily too, should it continue much longer, the greater part of our wheat crops must inevitably be materially injured if not ruined by the wet yet,- none of our red or late wheat has yet been cut, all that has been saved is of the white or spring wheat. We have large Crops of Corn and Tobacco in the ground this year, & some Cotton- Our neighborhood has been visited this spring by that scourge of our States, the Epedemic or Cold plague, numbers died clost to us, but my family fortunately, & with the blessing of the lord, escapt it, 3 out of 4 who ever took it died, & often within 24 to 48 & 60 hours, few escapt, but many died, I am thankfull however to tell you that it has ceast now for abt 4 weeks back

I imagine that you may have heard ere this, of the Tragical death of two of our old acquaintances in Fayetteville, I mean, old Mr. McRaccan & Robert Halliday, if not, it will grieve your heart to hear it. I think these deaths both happened some time in the month of October last,- old Mr. McRaccan it seems, has lost his old wife & had married a new one, he had made it a custom for some time before his death, to rise from his bed in dead of night & set by the fire & smoke his pipe, & then to bed again. The night of his death, his wife awoke at a late hour, & misst the old man as usual, & looking toward the hearth, she discovered that the fire had gone out, & her husband gone too; with that, she raised the family & went in search of him & (horrid to relate) they found him leaning over the garden, stone dead with his throat cut (by his own hand) from ear to ear, about a week after this, as Mr. Halliday was clearing out one of his store cellars in order to make room to stow away his fall Goods which were then comeing on from Europe, he took a razor out of its handle, & fastened the shank of the razor in the handle of a Reaphook (in order to make a sure stroke & cut his throat in the same manner that McRaccan did. But McRaccans was done in the night, & died before he was discovered. Halliday cut his throat in the day time, in his Store Cellar, & was discovered; & medical aid being had, the blood was stop, & he lived abt 20 days I think) but died. Hallidays complaint or uneasiness, arose (I think) from an inward warfare, wherein, the world, the flesh & the Devil were fighting against conscience, in which conflict, the world, (I suppose) at last gaird the ascendancy by which means, the devil taking advantage thereof, Stept in & persuaded him to kill himself, which, he did do- I have strong reasons for this opinion of mine,- Many years ago Halliday was much taken up with religion, & had serious calls & solemn tho'ts about the salvation of his soul, & seemd to be in a hopefull way for a long time, & at last, fell off again, & what still braces my opinion is, that after having cut his throat, they searcht his pockets, & in one of which, was found a large folded paper, which on being opened was found to contain but one single melancholy word, written in large letters thus DESPAIR- hence you may guess the perturbation of his mind- Hallidays death serves to show us my dear young friend the intire insufficiency of Riches, to constitute happiness, for Halliday was the richest man (Clear of Debt) in this State.- Please write me

again as soon as you receive this, & at all other convenient times, & let us here know, how the Settlement comes on & anything else which you may deem worth notice-

With my best wishes for your present & future welfare I shall conclude & am Dear Sir- Yours most Sincerely

James G Mask

Tobacco 7\$ & Cotton 24 to 27 \$ pr 100<sup>w</sup>

wheat has Just taken a rapid fall all at once, from \$2.25 to \$1.50 pr Bul