

Extract of a letter from Baltimore to a Gentleman in Philadelphia, November  
13, 1789.

Image

Extract of a Letter from Baltimore to a Gentleman in Philad<sup>a</sup>. dated  
Nov<sup>r</sup>. 13. 1789. X FIRING MARY KATHERINE GEDDAYS

The change made in the Post Office department of this place, has excited  
the Surprise & Indignation of the whole Community. This Office was  
kept by a Lady upwards of 14 years, whose conduct, during that  
period, gave uncommon Satisfaction; And all the Postmasters General  
have been heard to declare, that the regularity of her Accounts &  
payments were equalled by few, & exceeded by none, upon the  
Continent. The Subject of her removal being mentioned, one of these Gent<sup>l</sup>  
Observed, that he regretted it much, on her own account, as well as that  
of the public, who could not possibly be benefitted by a change.

As this Lady conducted the business during the arduous difficulties  
attending the depreciation of the Continental currency, when its value was  
not adequate to her trouble, she could not conceive it possible, that  
any person would cast a wishful eye upon it, at least whilst she  
wished to enjoy it, and discharged its duties with so much punctuality  
and Satisfaction. And although there are many worthy Officers and  
Citizens of State, to whom the emoluments, trifling as they are, might  
prove a reasonable relief, yet their sense of honor & delicacy has  
been such, as to disdain every idea of that kind, upon any other  
terms than that of her own free & voluntary resignation. These  
Gent<sup>l</sup> of course have declined the attempt, and it was reserved  
for Colonel John White, late Commissary of Accounts, & scarcely  
known in Baltimore, insidiously to step in & take this Lady's living  
from her - An Act which no Gentleman in this State, be his  
necessities ever so pressing, would be mean enough to stoop to  
for Relief. When the Scheme of getting this Office was known here, all  
the Merchants & respectable Inhabitants joined in an address to be  
presented to the Postmaster Gen<sup>l</sup> & his Assistant, that this Lady should  
not be disturbed in her Office. On White's discovering that the people  
were unanimously against him, he posted away to meet Mr. Burrell,  
the Assistant, & informed him thereof. Upon this emergency they  
concluded to represent the affair as irrecoverably lost; for that  
Mr White had actually received his Commission, which he would  
not part with; and by this expedient, it was expected the people of  
Baltimore would be reconciled to their fate as a thing irrevoc-  
-able.

This faulty conduct brings to my remembrance a similar stroke  
of Fate, respecting a Gentleman of great Family Interest & Connections, who had  
the misfortune of being put upon his Trial for his life, before a Judge,  
will

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(The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC09756.01)

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well known to have been long at Enmity with his Predecessors; and  
this was the first opportunity the conscientious dispenser of Justice had  
of doing any of them an injury. The Gent<sup>l</sup>, the innocent of the  
charge, was, through the address of the Judge, found guilty; and  
whilst he was upon his trial, an apparatus was ordered to  
be got ready for an immediate Execution, from the Court House  
Windows; which was accordingly done as soon as the Jury  
returned their Verdict. This summary way of doing business  
prevented any application, either for mercy, or a reconsideration  
of the Evidence upon which he was found guilty.

Mr. Burrell on his arrival at Baltimore, was waited  
upon by a Committee of Merchants, who <sup>expressed the</sup> wish of the Town, that the  
Lady should not be removed from Office; to whom he was graciously  
pleased to promise an answer; but on the day appointed  
for that purpose, Mr. Burrell like an experienced general  
treating with an Enemy, thought proper to disappear, leaving for  
answer, that he could not comply with their request. He was  
really cautious in avoiding an interview with the poor Lady, thus  
become a sacrifice to Mr. White's influence. It was not safe to  
let her know in person any of the incapacities under which she  
laboured, lest she should either compute or obviate them; and Mr.  
Burrell, tho' three days in Town, never came near either her or  
the office. This is what the vulgar part of the world call travelling  
to settle & regulate the business of Post Offices, but which, in this  
instance, the office scorned even to look at — for it can not be  
supposed that he was ashamed to do his duty. Thus much  
however, is certain, that Mr. Burrell was extremely sorry to  
hear, that the Lady was so strongly recommended on all sides,  
except his own.

The most disagreeable part of the narrative is, that notwithstanding  
the number of years she has been indefatigably employed, a variety of  
heavy Cops has swallowed up the fruits of her Industry, which  
renders her totally incapable of sustaining this additional one.  
Mr. White, her own Countryman, has for a long while past often  
visited her, as an acquaintance, to whom her situation was well  
known, and her house was the first he came to on his return lately  
from N. York, when he engaged her office. Little could she suppose  
that he was employed in supplanting her in a secret underhand manner  
and at the same time visiting her under the garb of friendship; but so it  
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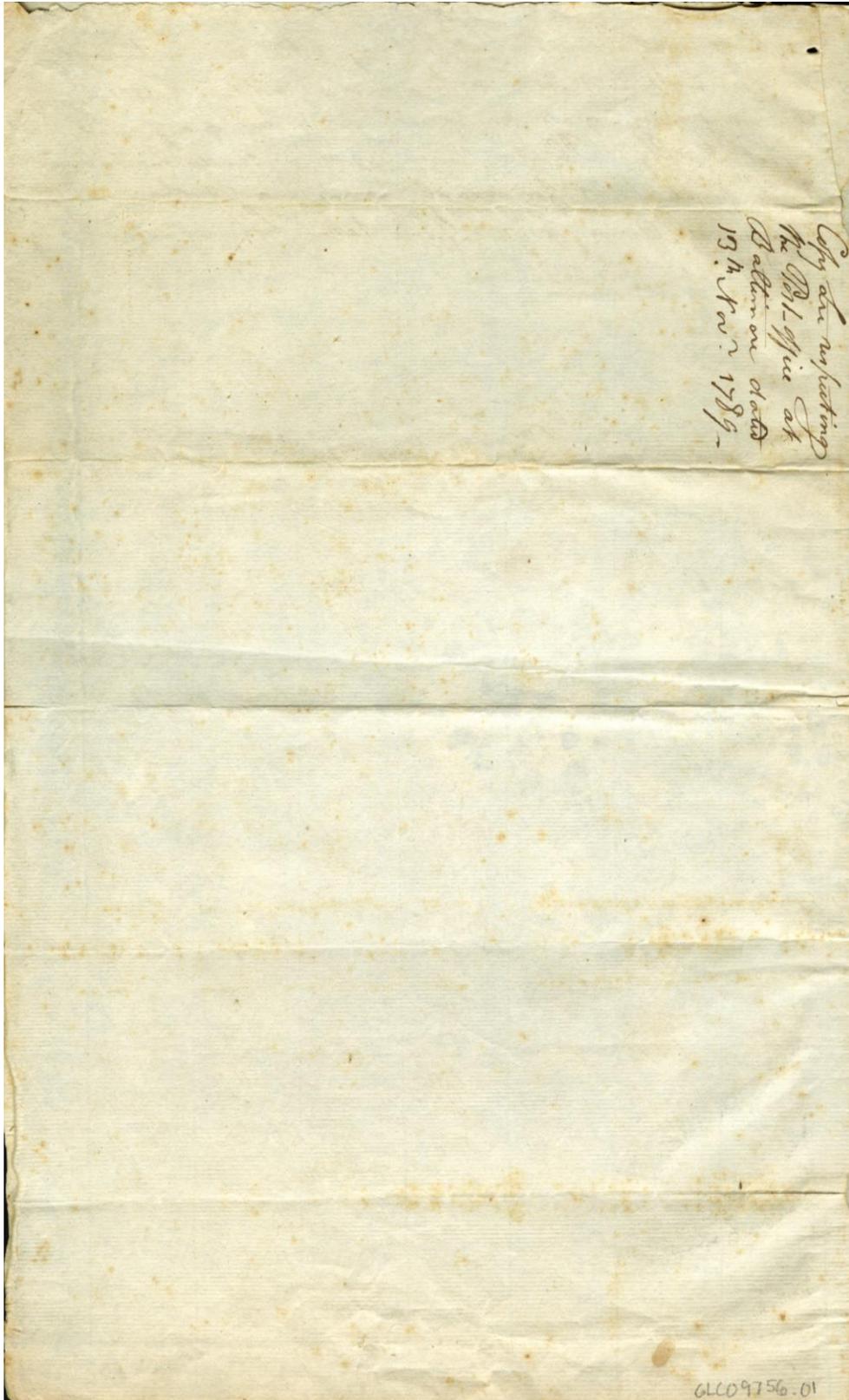
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...es, be the consequences what they may, either now or hereafter.  
This is the first instance known of a military Genl<sup>l</sup> seizing  
and making prize of all the worldly dependence of a female  
subject & ally. Plunder thus acquired, should make an  
African pirate blush for meanly tarnishing the honorable  
Profession of Arms, with spoils taken from even an enemy  
in Betty coats."

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## Transcript

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Extract of a letter from Baltimore to agent in Philada. dated Nov. 13, 1789

[written in pencil: Mary Katherine Goddard]

The change made in the Post Office department of this place, has excited the surprise and indignation of the whole community. This office was kept by a lady upwards of 14 years, whose conduct during that period, gave uncommon satisfaction; and all the Postmasters General have been heard to declare, that the regularity of her accounts and payments were equaled by few, succeeded by none, upon the Continent. The subject of her removal being mentioned, one of these Gents. obscured, that he regretted it much, on her own account, as well as that of the public, who could not possibly be benefitted by a change.

As this Lady conducts the business during the arduous difficulties attending the depreciation of the Continental currency, when its value was not adequate to her trouble, she could not conceive it possible that any person would cast a wishful eye upon it, at least whilst she wished to enjoy it, and discharged its duties with so much punctuality and satisfaction. And although there are many worthy offices and Citizens of State, to whom the [illegible] [illegible] as they are, might prove a reasonable wish, yet their sense of humor and delicacy has been such, as to disdain every idea of that kind, upon any other [illegible] than make of her own free and voluntary resignation. These Gents. of course have declined this attempt, and it was reserved for Colonel John White, late Commissary of Accounts, and scarcely known in Baltimore, insidiously to step in and take this Lady's living from her. An act which no Gentleman in this State, be his necessities ever so [illegible] would be mean enough to stoop to for relief.

When the scheme of getting this office was known here, all the merchants and respectable inhabitants joined in an address to be presented to the Post master Genl. and his assistant, that this Lady should not be disturbed in her office. On White's discovering that the people were unanimous by against him, he posted away to meet Mr. Burrell, the Assistant and informed him thereof. Upon this emergency they concluded to represent the affair as irrecoverably lost, for that

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Mr White had actually received his Commission, which he would not part with; and by this [illegible], it was expected the people of Baltimore would be reconciled to this fate as a thing irretrievable.

This pathy conduct brings to my remembrance a similar stroke of Art, respecting agent of great family interest and connections, who had the misfortune of being put upon trial for his life, before a judge, well [2] well known to have been long at enmity with his [illegible] and this was the first opportunity the conscientious dispenser of Justice had of doing any of them an injury. The Gents. [illegible] innocent of the charge, was, through the address of the Judge found guilty; and whilst he was upon his trial, an apparatus was order to [illegible] got ready for an immediate execution from the court house windows; which was accordingly done as soon as the Jury returned their verdict. This summary way of doing business prevented any application, wither for mercy, or a reconsideration of the evidence upon which he was found guilty.

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This is the first instance known of a military Gent. seizing and making prize of all the worldly dependence of a [illegible] subject and ally. Plunder thus acquired, should make an [illegible] private blush for [illegible] tarnishing the honorable profession of Arms, with [illegible] taken from even an enemy in petty cash.

[docket] Copy [illegible] respecting the Post Office at Baltimore dated 13th Nov. 1789-