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**DEFENSE OF BALTIMORE CORRESPONDENCE, 1814**

Purchase Offer from Charles Apfelbaum  
Six letters between Robert Spence, Samuel Smith and John Rodgers

Major General Samuel Smith

(1752-1839)

wealthy Baltimore merchant  
participated in Revolutionary War  
U.S. Congressman, 1792-1803  
U.S. Senator, 1803-1815  
U.S. Military Commander of Baltimore during War of 1812

Commodore John Rodgers

(1773-1838)

ship master in the merchant service  
U.S. naval officer beginning in 1798  
participated in the Barbary Wars, 1802-1806  
commanded the northern coastal protection fleet  
ranking officer in active service during War of 1812  
commanded a fleet in the Patapsco River during the  
defense of Baltimore, 1814

Robert T. Spence

(1785-1826)

as a midshipman, distinguished himself in Barbary Wars  
appointed Commandant of the Baltimore Naval Station, 1813  
instrumental in placing obstructions in the way of the  
British fleet during the defense of Baltimore, 1814  
later served in West Indies and Africa

These six letters constitute an important part of the documentation of British and U. S. activities during the days surrounding the bombardment of Ft. McHenry. The Maryland Historical Society has a fine body of material for this period; these letters would be an excellent addition.

R[obert] T. Spence to John Rogers  
1814 August 31

Content:

they were not able to procure oars in Baltimore, but all available carpenters were put to work to execute order; Rodgers' absence is deplored as he was felt to be the Bulwark of the city; 25 men will leave for Washington immediately (the word "tomorrow" being crossed out)

Comment:

Commodore John Rodgers arrived in Baltimore on August 25 in command of the U.S. Naval forces. After taking Bladensburg and Washington, the British invaded Alexandria. It was felt they would stay there a few days to replenish their supplies. Rodgers was ordered south to harass the British as they retreated down the Potomac. The citizens of Baltimore felt vulnerable to attack without Rodgers' protection.

S[amuel] Smith to [John] Ro[d]gers  
1814 September 1

Content:

Wishes Rodgers to return to Baltimore or injury done may not be repaired; their 8/12 and 15/18 pounders left for Washington; requests their return

Comment:

Commodore Rodgers' departure on 30 August initiated a conflict over the command at Baltimore; the officers of the Chesapeake Flotilla refused to accept the authority of Capt. John Spence, whom Rodgers had appointed to be in charge. Smith was successful in preventing the War Department from removing the 18 pound field guns essential for the defense of Baltimore (the guns belonged to the War Department, but their mounting carriages belonged to Baltimore). Smith's copy of this letter is contained in his papers at the Library of Congress

**S[amuel] Smith to John Rodgers**  
**1814 September 2**

**Contents:**

Idea of setting fire to 2 frigates won't induce the government to detain Rodgers' force from aiding Baltimore; sloops in the Western Branch are unprepared and therefore constitute a weak point in an attack; Rodgers can do no good in his present location--may cause burning of Alexandria; wishes to know whereabouts of ammunition stored in chapel

**Comments:**

Baltimoreans were still worried about their vulnerability while Rodgers fleet was in the Potomac harassing the British. On the evening of 5 September Rodgers was ordered back to Baltimore as the British position became more threatening to the city.

**John Kiddall to John Rodgers**  
**1814 September 15**

**Contents:**

Enemy remains in place except for a cutter which was sent to take up their buoys and a brig which retrieved an anchor from a grounded frigate; our gun has been repaired and is fit for service

**Comments:**

The British attack on Ft. McHenry ended on the morning of 14 September. The British ships withdrew down the Potomac and the army withdrew to an encampment 6 miles from Baltimore. On the 15th and 16th the British engaged in ship repairs and boarding their troops before setting sail on the 17th

R[obert] T. Spence to J[ohn] Rodgers  
1814 Sept 21

Contents:

Deeply regrets departure of Rodgers; troops leaving for Pennsylvania and Virginia will leave them "poor indeed"; complains of being left out of General Smith's report on the defense of Baltimore after all his "labour, nay slavery"; wishes Rodgers to hint as much to Smith; respects to Mrs. Rodgers

R[obert] T. Spence to John Rodgers  
1814 Sept 29

Contents:

Commends Rodgers on his efforts to obtain financial aid for Mrs. Hall; praises Rodgers' fine writing style and expresses surprise at his literary accomplishments knowing how difficult it is for one who had been at sea all his life to get an education; thanks Rodgers for mentioning his services during defense of Baltimore; comments on the qualities necessary in a commander; illness among Navy officers; hopes Rodgers will soon be promoted to admiral.

Comments:

Robert T. Spence, Commandant of the Baltimore Naval Station, had been one of the four military leaders of Baltimore who had recommended Samuel Smith as chief commander of the Baltimore forces to the Committee of Vigilance and Safety. Mrs. Hall may have been the widow of sailing master Leonard Hall who served with Spence on the Ontario.

Baltimore August 31. 1814

Sir,

The Vessels were not to be procured in Baltimore, on the arrival of your order. all the Carpenters which could be collected, have been at work, and the order has been executed as expeditiously, as under existing circumstances, was possible.

We deplore your absence, as you were looked upon the Bulwark of the City.

By a return made to me from the Lazaretto, I find there are but 25 men able to leave here for Washington: they will set out <sup>immediately</sup> tomorrow.

I have the honor  
to remain

So

John Rodgers

Commander

in Chief of the

U. S. Forces

Yours truly  
R. T. Archer

Capt R. H. Spencer

Battle Aug 31. 1814

403

To

John Rodgers

Commander in Chief

of the Naval Forces

Capt R. H. Spencer  
Battle Aug 31. 1814

Sir,

Head Quarters, Baltimore  
2<sup>d</sup> Sept 1814

I have rec<sup>d</sup> your request that the  
Idea of getting five ~~to~~ two frigates should induce  
the Government to detain so large & so efficient a force  
as yours from our aid, because altho you come at  
the time the British are before us, your Station is not  
designated in the Maritime the Plans of War intended  
to defend the Western Branch are not proposed - if we  
are attacked on that side we are not defended, it is  
our Weak point, I am persuaded you can do no good  
when you are - you may cause the Burning of Abaco.  
- What has become of the Ammunition stored in the  
Cahel - in haste, yours

V. Smith  
Major General

To  
Commodore John Rodgers

Washington City

Please push on  
Rice Stationery  
White Retreat

1/2

Commodore John Rodgers

Wm Phelps

Washington City

Aug

1814

Genl J. Smith  
St. Charles Sept 20<sup>th</sup>

Genl J. Smith  
Wash DC. Sept 20. 1814

Head Quarters

1 Sept: 1814

Sir

I have received your letter  
of yesterday - your retrograde to Snowden  
<sup>is something</sup>  
but unless you return to Baltimore im-  
-mediately the injury done cannot be  
retrieved, indeed I cannot doubt wheth-  
-er it can be repaired - the preparation  
you had intended can I presume not  
be perfected, and this day all our <sup>3</sup> 12  
and <sup>13</sup> 18 pounders depart for Washington  
as I informed you yesterday - I hope  
you will have had sufficient influ-  
-ence to cause them also to retrograde  
and have the honor to be - your obt.

Commodore Rogers

A. Smith  
Major General

Chas. J. Smith  
Date Sept 1 1814

Chas  
Smith  
Sept 1 1814

Commodore Rogers  
at Annapolis  
Washington

Gen. Chas. Smith  
St. Charles Sept 1  
1814  
Date

Cornetron John Rogers

Sir

By Order of Lieutenant Rutter,  
I called to inform you, that this  
morning the Enemy sent a letter  
and took up their Buoys and at  
11 AM ~~the~~ Brig took up the anchor  
that was left by the Foregate that  
grounded yesterday; in every  
other respect the Enemy remains  
as last evening. The muzzles of  
our guns has been replaced and  
the gun is now fit for service

Sir I remain with respect

Yours Obedt Servt

John Kidelall

M.B.S.

1844.  
Sept 15<sup>th</sup> 2 PM.

John Keddall

Porto Sept 15. 1814

no 8



to interminate a Bill of eulogy - do not  
my rank require some mention of my name -  
However, to you my exertions are known &  
I do not say that a word of commendation from  
some is worth volumes of praise from others -  
I could with my dear Sir should you have occa-  
sion to write General Smith that you should  
hint this omission as a defect in his

I hope you found Mrs Rogers well  
I can readily conceive her feelings at meeting  
you after an absence filled by her imagination  
with a thousand dangers - but I am glad to  
present my respects to her & also my sincere  
congratulations upon your restoration and to  
rejoice in the increase of your number of admirers  
and friends - I shall be glad to hear  
from you about a future visit  
Commodore J. Rogers  
"The Porpoise"

I have the honor to receive  
with pleasure your letter - it seems to have been  
written on all and forgotten in one but  
see the you are my remembrance for the  
unwearied labour, my thank you  
performing during the late affair - this  
I have the honor to be  
Dear Sir

R. J. Spence  
Bath Sept 21. 1814

J.

To

Commodore J. Rodgers

Laurens de Grace.



The Commodore  
has left N.C. for Bath  
the postmaster is requested to forward this letter

No 2

R. J. Spence  
Bath Sept 21. 1814

Baltimore Sept 29<sup>th</sup> 1845

I have been hindered after some delay in the office,  
with your kind letter of the 20<sup>th</sup> as also with a copy of your  
and dispatched to the Secretary. The offer you make to interest  
yourself for Washburn, with a view to obtain from Govern-  
ment some small provision for her maintenance, coincides a  
greatly with the desire of others which does you honor  
I avail myself of your proffer, and doubt not, but  
a representation from your committee here the several  
effects your communication to the Dept. on the subject  
the service rendered by the Army at this place, is the  
only one I have seen free of the bombast which character-  
izes the elaborate effusions of our Militia Officers.  
I have often mentally asked, how you came with the good  
style which so marked your productions? My surprise  
arose from your having been all your life on the  
Coast, which you know is not the best school in the  
World for talent - I know of no two officers who have  
had a more circumstanced opportunity of making literar-  
y acquisitions than ourselves - having been both of us, at  
sea from the earliest boyhood. This deprivation of  
academic instruction is not discoverable in your  
writing, for I have ever admired the pithy simplicity  
of your letters. I feel myself greatly indebted for the  
eloquent manner you have been pleased to speak  
of my slender services. It is gratified to receive

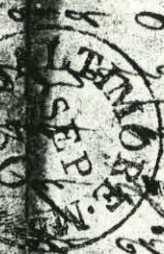
Commendation from one who is so much the object  
of praise as yourself - whose labors for his country  
have been so multiplied and important. I have  
never viewed you as one of the patriarchs of a Navy  
which under your care and example has flourished and  
traced glory on the stars. Much, and has this been  
traced establishment we owe from you. How many  
Officers of merit have been schooled in your  
tutorship. - Yes I am informed that General Scott is to  
take command of this district, such a change perhaps  
is necessary - it appears to be the opinion of many  
that men of a different stamp from those at present  
in command are necessary for the safety of the  
City. We require a Commander of martial genius, of spirit  
and of solid judgment, and man who on critical occasions  
can inspire those who are under him with confidence  
in his abilities, & integrity. In fact we want a  
soldier with capacity to create an army out of  
material goods but uncombined, who has penetration  
to see the want of, and the necessity of discipline, with  
firmness and resolution to introduce and establish it. Such  
is the General we stand in need of. Whether Smith has  
these requisite qualifications, you can better judge  
than myself. - Come who may, I hope you will be  
with us in the hour of trial. Your name is worth  
a thousand men to us, and the animating influence  
of your presence a thousand more.

Capt R. G. Spruce  
Batts Sept 29. 1814

405

*[Faint, mostly illegible handwritten text covering the majority of the page, appearing to be bleed-through from the reverse side.]*

*[Large, stylized handwritten signature or name, possibly 'John B. ...']*



*[Handwritten text at the top right of the page, possibly a recipient's name or address.]*

LETTERS- SEPT. 1814-1815

WILLIAM C. COLES, JR.  
36 Medford Leas  
Medford, New Jersey 08055

April 25, 1979

Mr. S. Vannort Chapman,  
605 Maryland Trust Building,  
Baltimore, Maryland 21202.

Dear Mr. Chapman,

I apologize for not answering your letter before now but it was necessary to get my old letters from the vault which I have succeeded in doing.

Many years ago I purchased some old correspondence for its philatelic value. Among the many papers were a few which I wrote Mr. Rucket about, knowing of his interest in things pertaining to Baltimore.

At the present time I do not have any particular thought on what I shall do with these papers except to file them away, perhaps for my children to have.

I will brief the letters for your interest as follows:

The correspondence starts with a letter to James Monroe, Sec. of State dated 18th. Aug. 1814 from Alex. Cochrane, Commander in Chief and Vice Admiral of His Majesty's ships and vessels upon the North American station. (The original of this is not in the Navy files as I have had this researched).

In general he requests that Monroe authorize our government to make reparations to Upper Canada so that Cochrane will not have to carry out his orders to lay waste Washington and other cities. Also we must agree not to cause wanton destruction further in Upper Canada. This is a legal page and a half.

A letter from O.H. Perry on Aug. 24, 1814 states he has just arrived at Baltimore and finds by news of express that our troops are retired to Washington and have engaged the enemy; a force of about 6000. To Commander Rogers

✓ A letter from R.T. Spence from Baltimore August 31, 1814 to Rogers. The orders by Rogers were not available but have been made at once. "We deplore your absence, as you were looked upon the Bulwark of the City". Twenty-five men only from "Lazaretto" will leave at once for Washington.

✓ A letter of 2nd. Sept 1814 by Major Gen. Smith to Rogers. Smith does not want Rogers to burn two frigates, nor to detain a force as large as his (Rogers) from coming to their aid. The British are before us. Sloops intended to defend Western Branch are not prepared. If attacked on that side we can not defend it. You can do no good where you are - you may cause the burning of Alexandria. On the reverse side - "Blue-push on, red stationary, white retreat"

✓ A letter of 5 Sept. 1814 Smith to Rogers- He must return to Baltimore at once or damages can not be repaired. Smith is sending 8 twelve pounders and 15 eighteen pounders to Washington. Hopes Rogers will have enough influence to retrograde previous orders (sending guns ?).

✓ A letter Sept. 15, 1814 John Riddall to Rodgers - The enemy sent a cutter and took up their buoys. "The axeltree of our gun has been replaced and is now fit for service". The enemy remain as last evening.

✓ A letter Capt. R.T. Spence to Rodgers Balto. Sept 21. 1814- Gen. Windsor took command of Fort McHenry, Spence is relieved. Apparantly Rogers left the Fort and Spence is distraught and conditions are bad. Troops from Penna. and Virginia are going home leaving them (the Fort) poor indeed. Spence peeved that in a general order Smith did mention his name as deserving credit. Wants Rodgers to have Smith include Spence's name along with others.

✓ A letter Gen. Smith to Rodgers 30 Sept. 1814 - "Adm. Cochran went to sea on the 21st or 22nd with 2 or 3 frigates, a brig & a schooner" He left the mouth of the Patuxent on the 19th. Adm. Malcom remained with the main body of the fleet at the mouth of the Patuxent watering. Lt. Howard reports the fleet going down past Drum Point and standing out to sea, to Halifax or Bermuda. "The force they have now will never attempt Phila."

✓ A letter R.T. Spence to Rodgers Sept 29, 1814(15) tells of Gen. Scott being appointed. Questions Smith's ability. Praises Rodgers. Thinks he will not get to sea this winter. Hopes he will be appointed Admiral. Three full pages.

Intercepted letter, no date, Edward Codrington to Adm. Cochran. Have sent ammunition & scaling ladders to Bear Point. Same boats can bring back wounded and prisoners. They find forts on each side and the town is in the rear of the impediments. Lack proper charts for Gopeths Point. Must mark it for them. Disposable force will land when orders are received. On reverse " If the flag(?) is coming up hoist a ball half mast on the Brig Staff- if the fleet go down hoist a ball half mast".

To me these are very interesting letters and I am glad to thus share parts of them with you. If I can be of further help I hope that you will contact me.

Cordially,

1420 N. Charles Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201-5779  
(301) 625-3000

May 30, 1990

Dear Mr. Blizzard:

Yesterday I received a rather strange phone call from a Ms. Peggy Catzen, the acting library director of the Maryland Historical Society. It seems that Ms. Catzen was under the impression that I was an officer of the Society of the War of 1812. The purpose of the phone call was to inquire whether or not your Society would consider spending about \$3,400.00 for the purchase of six letters relating to Baltimore and the War of 1812. If I understood correctly, the Society of the War of 1812 was then to give these letters to the Maryland Historical Society.

When I informed Ms. Catzen that I was not a member of your Society, she asked if I knew anyone in your organization and would I consider facilitating matters by passing on this request. She sent me a description of the six letters in today's mail to forward to you. Since you are the only member of the Society I have dealt with, I am taking the liberty of passing this request to you. Ms. Catzen further indicated that she would greatly appreciate it if someone from the Society of the War of 1812 would contact her at 685-3750(ext. 349) to discuss this proposal.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

  
Fred Hopkins

