

Paris July 25th. 1785

My dear [Sir](#)

Your letter of May 20th. was brought here a few Days ago by [m^r Mazzei](#), who took it under his Care at N-York— It would have been always agreeable to have seen him but never more so than at present— first because he was the Bearer of Letters from several of my Friends. & secondly because he gave me a particular Account of all of them— It was as if one had returned from the other World & told us what was passing amongst those whom we love most there.— You fear the Events which you relate will appear trivial to me on this great Theatre.— you know me not my dear Sir if you suppose any Thing from you can appear to me trivial— I take a particular Interest which I have not Words to describe to you, in every Thing which is related of my [Friends](#) & especially when related by a Friend.— I was quite mortified when I came to that Part of your Letter which told me your Stock of private History was quite ran out.— I never was in a Place I appreciated private History so fully as in Paris. Your Friend [m^r Jefferson](#) & myself never complain any Thing more than the absolute Want of this Kind of Information— It seems of no Importance in Richmond ~~but~~perhaps, but I assure it attains a great Value when it has crossed the Atlantic In short I am sure there is nothing that improves so much by travelling as private History. I beg you to send us a great Quantity of it.

You will expect undoubtedly something of European Politics from Paris as it is the common Center of them.— ~~It never~~ They never ~~were~~ more confused I believe than at this Moment. [There is](#) no body who seems able to form any reasonable conjecture on them. It is as difficult to say whether there will be War or Peace as [to](#) determine, in Case of War, between what Powers it will be Yet the Cards seem so mixed at present that if a War should commence in any little Corner of the German Empire it will spread through the ~~whole~~ greater Part of Europe. It will depend altogether on America herself whether such a War would advantageous [or](#) prejudicial to her— As a Citizen of the World & as a Friend to Humanity I could never wish for War— & even as a Citizen of America I am not certain that I ought to wish for it at present in Europe.

I am happy to see that a Sprit of Exertion seems to be gaining Ground in Virginia— the opening the Navigation of its fine & extensive Rivers— taking Measures for a gradual Abolition of Slavery— eradicating absolutely that Constitution which you call a feeble Barrier against excessive Power, & rearing a new one on the broad Basis of the [Authority of the People](#) & universal Consent, would render our Country the most desirable Spot on Earth— The Scope of Imagination cannot carry my Idea of Human Happiness beyond that of a free Citizen living in such a Country \leftrightarrow upon his own Farm & with his own Wife & Family independent
[document ends here]

On reverse of last page, written vertically on the right:

[Bowdoin](#)

Ed. note: Preeson Bowdoin was not the intended recipient of this letter, because he was in France at the time, and this is in response to a letter that came from New York via Philip Mazzei.

Document Information

Date:

25 July 1785

Object Type:

[Letter](#)

Author:

[Short, William](#)

Recipient:

[Unknown Person](#)

All People:

[Mazzei, Philip](#)

Keywords:

[Friendships](#)

[Letters](#)

[Slavery](#)

[Politics](#)

[National Identity](#)

[War](#)

[Constitution, Various States](#)

[Ships and Shipping](#)