ANDREW JOHNSON

ALS 1842 declining an invitation to be present at the anniversary of the Battle of the Thames.

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Platt Co. Missouri
June 1st, 1842

Gentlemen

It is with pleasure I acknowledge the receipt (sic) of your invitation in behalf of the citizens of Columbia County, to be present at the anniversary celebration of the Battle of the Thames on the 5th of Oct. next at Danville Pa. at which place it is expected that Col. Johnson, the Hero of the Thames, will honor of occasion with his presence. I also have the honor of receiving(sic) a special letter of invitation as one of the surviveing (sic) officers of the Kentucky Mounted Regiment.

Nothing could have afforded me greater gratification than to be able to meet my Old Commander on the anniversary of the day, on which he gave peace and safety to the suffering inhabitants of an extended frontier, and especially, surrounded as he will be on that occasion by a numerous band [of] patriotic friends who properly estimate the services of our Country's benefactors, whether in the Counsels of the Nation or on the battle field.

But living, as I do, near the western border of Missourie (sic), the great distance & the important duties encumbent (sic) upon me, precludes the possibility of my being present. Yet if I am living on that day, my heart will be with you. That day & battle, the anniversary (sic) of which you are about to celebrate, has a hold upon my memory which time cannot efface. I have served under Col. Johnson two campaigns during the first, I was convinced of his efficiency as an officer in fact it was generally conceded (sic) before the end of the Campaign, that he had no superior for judgment, activity on --------.
Such was the confidence which his fellow citizens reposed in him, that when he called upon them to volunteer for his Mounted Regiment, that the ranks were filled and the corps organized in a very few weeks. You might see as private soldiers, the Doctor the Lawyer, the Farmer, the Merchant, the Mechanic and the Devine, side by side in its ranks, in fact I never knew a more respectable body than the 1000 men who composed this corps.

Having been an eye witness to the scene which transpired on the Glorious 5th of October 1813, I have no hesitation in saying it is deserving a place on the same page of the calendar of great events, which marks, the Victory of New Orleans, on the 8th of January 1815. The first turned back the torrent which was sweeping desolation along the whole Northwestern frontier, vindicated the honor of the country; recovered the tarnished luster of our army and gave confidence and energy throughout the Union. Whilst the latter ended the war in a blaze of glory.

I rejoice to find that all true hearted Americans are disposed to commemorate that day. I rejoice to know that our highly distinguished citizen of the Great West, the patriotic Col. Richard M. Johnson, who led us to the change & to victory, will be made your happy and wellcome (sic) guest.

When I recall to my mind the bravery of my Colonel, no moment of his eventfull (sic) life has made so deep an impression upon me as when I saw him at the head the forlorn hope pressing in upon ranks of our deadly foes. I never could give to others a description (sic) equal to the scene in which he was the principle (sic) actor, so high souled the action, so sublime the scene. Never did man lead his fellow citizens into close and deadly battle against superior numbers, where each individual strived more to compete with his commander in acts of heroism on acted from motives more pure & patriotic. His manly bearing and the fire that lighted his countenance (sic), inspired all with a sure presage of history. Amidst the din & strife of battle his voice was heard cheering us onward to the charge!-Onward! Onward my brave men! Onward! our lives belong to our country! Onward then to death or victory!! Soon his voice was silent, he was approaching the brave cheif (sic) Tecumseh who was supported by a formidable (sic) host of savage warriors. They met face to face & hand to hand and he laid the great Tecumseh low, but not until he had inflicted upon Col. one of the severest wounds of the five he recieved (Sic) in the deadly contest. Upon the fall [of] their leader the Indians immediately gave way & they were driven from
the field. But how shall I describe the feelings which oppressed me in common with others when I saw my Commander literally (sic) embedded in his own blood which could not drip from the blanket (sic) in which he was carried as fast as it flowed from his wounds. We had witnessed his devotion to his country, his kindness to his men, and his valor in the field, but the bloody spectacle before us and the thought of losing (sic) our heroic commander, was overpowering to the feelings to a degree that produced a sickening & half suffocating sensation to which a burst of emotion & tears only could afford relief.

But thank heaven he still lives - his life has been spared by providence for the benefit of his country -- which has been a life of toil & devotion to its great interests. The Revolutionary soldier as he descends to the grave bless him. The widow & orphan of the soldier of the late war invoke upon him the favor of heaven, & the oppressed everywhere claim him as a benefactor of mankind. It is no wonder then that Col. Johnson is the favorite of the Great West and is more or less popular in every state in the union (sic). Here in the West his popularity is not bounded by party, and I believe in some of the states he would scarcely meet with opposition if his name was placed before the people for the next Presidency.

It is gratifying to my feelings to find that the people have determined to prove that Republics are not ungrateful!, by rewarding Col. Johnson with the most honorable station in the world; a place he richly deserves, if services both civil and military, of toil & suffering, can earn it.

Then not being able to be present with you I send you as a sentiment.

Pennsylvania - enabled by the patriotism of her sons. When they saw the unholy attempt to tear the laurels from the brow of the heroist Jackson she supplanted the Noble hearted Johnson when he hurled away the ruthless hand, and rewarded the Hero of New Orleans by causing (sic) him to be elected President: Again will she be honored by being the first to present the name of the Hero of the Thames for the presidency in 1844.

With sentiment of respects to you individually & to those whom you represent, I am Truly yours etc

[signed] Andrew Johnson

To: E Best M W Jackson Seth Sallisbury
D. Bullock Wm Elwell Wm Overfield
J.H. Broadhead Samuel Myers Samuel A. Smith
Abel M. Griffiths M.B. Lowry J. Johnston
John w. Ryon Geo F Lehman James Patton
John Galbraith J P Steele Samuel P. Callings
Samuel L. Sherwood

Committee of invitation