

Written six months before Jefferson's death in July of 1826, this missive shows his interest and pride in the University of Virginia, located nearby in Charlottesville. Chartered in 1819, Jefferson closely supervised its organization, architecture and even curriculum.¹ He wrote to J. Corres in 1820, and stated to him that, "Our University is the last of my mortal cares, and the last service I can render to my country."²

Discerning the identity of Edward A. presented some problems. His letter is too late to be included in Dr. Boyd's editorial project on Jefferson's papers, which is barely up to 1800. Neither was it included in the Randolph project on his papers done in the 1800s. Fortunately, in the earlier volumes of Dr. Boyd's books, in some correspondence it becomes clear that Thomas Jefferson's aunt, Mary Jefferson, married a Thomas Turpin.³ Mr. Turpin wrote to Jefferson requesting his assistance in educating his son, Philip, to study law.⁴ Eventually, Philip went to Edinburgh to study medicine. He returned to America on a British ship which was captured at Yorktown, Virginia. At this time correspondence indicates that Thomas Jefferson had to use his influence to extricate his cousin from a very suspicious situation.⁵

The next communication with Philip was when Jefferson wrote to him from Annapolis describing hot air balloons.⁶ Later, while Jefferson was in Paris, he wrote to Doctor Turpin with a copy of his **Notes on Virginia**.⁷

In this letter from the Kremer collection, Jefferson sends the "affectionate recollections of the family" to Edward Turpin, so perhaps Edward is a son of Philip, but for the moment that cannot be resolved. However, there is no doubt that Edward is a relative of Jefferson's, from his references to the family.

¹Charles Van Doren and Robert McHenry, eds., **Webster's Guide to American History** (Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Company, 1971), P. 1049.

²John P. Foley, ed., **The Jefferson Cyclopaedia: A Comprehensive Collection of the Views of Thomas Jefferson**, with a Foreword by Julian P. Boyd, 2 vols. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1967), 2:900.

³Julian P. Boyd, ed., **The Papers of Thomas Jefferson**, 19 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951-74) 1:23-25.

⁴Ibid., 1:24.

⁵Ibid., 6:324-333.

⁶Ibid., 7:134.

⁷Ibid., 12:132.

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EARLY MANOR AND PLANTATION HOUSES OF MARYLAND

A second edition of this classic by H. Chandlee Forman, first published in 1934 will be available in May, 1982 from Bodine & Associates of Baltimore. The enclosed flyer describes the elegant, enlarged edition and also includes an order blank. When placing your order please include the coded order blank, since your Society will be credited with a portion of the proceeds from each copy so ordered.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Articles of historic interest on Southern Maryland are requested for possible publication in future issues of **The Record**. Please send your typewritten manuscripts and other communications to: Editor, **The Record**, P.O. Box 261, Port Tobacco, Maryland 20677.

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The Historical Society of Charles County
P. O. Box 261
Port Tobacco, Maryland 20677



George C. Dyson, *President*

The RECORD

Publication of the Historical Society of Charles County, Inc.

No. 25

May 1982

Charles G. LaHood, Jr., *Editor*

A CHARLES COUNTIAN'S LETTERS FROM YALE - 1859-1860

by Sarah L. Barley

John Hanson Mitchell was born in Charles County on June 25, 1842. He was the second son of Walter Hanson Jenifer Mitchell and Mary Fergusson Mitchell. General Mitchell, a prominent land-owner and attorney, was the son of Captain John Mitchell who served with General William Smallwood during the Revolution.

John Hanson Mitchell attended Charlotte Hall School in St. Mary's County. He entered Yale College, his father's alma mater, in 1857, and received his degree in 1861. He was also awarded a Master's Degree from Yale in 1864. During the Civil War years he continued his studies in Europe, attending lectures on law in Heidelberg and medicine in Paris. Upon returning to this country, he lived in Baltimore where he completed his preparations for the Bar and was admitted in April of 1866.

In 1870, shortly after the death of his father, Mr. Mitchell moved back to Charles County where he established his law practice in Port Tobacco and remained active until his death on November 12, 1906. He served Charles County as a school commissioner for three years and was an unsuccessful Democratic candidate for the House of Delegates in 1875, and for Associate Judge in 1897. He was also editor of **The Port Tobacco Times** for several years and a long-time vestryman of Christ Protestant Episcopal Church in Port Tobacco.

John Hanson Mitchell had married Eliza (Lillie) Trippe Campell Jenifer on October 11, 1870. They had ten children, eight of whom survived their father, and lived at Hanson Hill in the Port Tobacco valley.

The following letters from John Hanson Mitchell to his father and sister, Mary Matilda, are part of a private manuscript collection of Mitchell family papers. His letters reveal a sensitive, devoted son and brother, whose thoughts of family, philosophy, and the customs of the day are both refreshing and pertinent to our own time. For these reasons they make for interesting reading.

Miss M. Matilda Mitchell, Care of W. Mitchell, Esq., Port Tobacco, M. d.

Yale March 5th 1859.

My Dear Sister,

I have taken my seat to answer your long and interesting letter which I received about a week ago, but I really don't know what to say: for there is no news in New Haven worth telling, and besides I have not heard of any Tutor's windows having been smashed this term, or even of a single freshmen being 'smoked out.' We have had the greatest abundance of rain and snow this winter, and as a writer in the "Yale Lit" says "there has been either good skating or fine boating in the streets all the time". The damp weather however does not seem to keep the Yankee ladies in the house, and if you should happen to walk to the post office on any Wednesday or Saturday afternoon, you would in all probability find any number of them promenading on Chapel Street. The new government building on Church Street (which is the one at the bottom of the Green,) is now nearly completed, and I suppose the post office will be removed to it very soon. Since writing the above, I have received a letter from Father, in which he says that both he and sister Bettie were unwell, which I was very sorry to hear. Give my love to them, and tell Father that I have always made it a rule not only to study those things which were interesting, but every thing which may be given me, and that I have studied Spherical Trigonometry harder than anything that I have had during my college course. Give my love to all the Family, and remember me always as your devoted Brother,

Johnnie

Gen. Walter Mitchell, Port Tobacco, M. d.

Yale May 3d 1859.

My Dear Father,

Your letter was received about a week ago, and I have now seated myself to answer it. I have no desire to be numbered among those who are continually mourning over the degeneracy of the present age and eagerly longing for the good old times of a hundred years ago, nor can I conceive how any one can think that the energetic and enlightened pilgrims and crusaders of the nineteenth century are, taking all things into consideration, in the smallest degree inferior to the witch-killing punch-drinking pilgrims of our colonial history or the rash infatuated crusaders of the middle ages. But I must confess that there are some virtues which flour-

ished far more luxuriantly among our forefathers than with us, and the decay of **these** I most sincerely lament. There is hospitality for instance, (a duty which Cicero says is incumbent on every man) which if aunt Lizzie's stories are true, and I believe they are, was practiced to a much greater extent in our own County fifty years ago, then at present. I returned from my trip up the country several days ago, having visited Hartford, Springfield and some of the villages of Connecticut where I had an opportunity of seeing the Yankees "at home." Although alone I had a very pleasant time, and I will endeavor when I get home to give you a full account of my journey. Professor Olmsted has been very ill for the last day or two, and the Doctors think that he can not recover. College comes together again tomorrow, of which I am very glad, for I wish this term to pass away as quickly as possible so that I may get home again. I spent (and I think not unprofitably) a good-deal of this vacation in studying and reading, and I am ready now to go hard to work on my lessons for the term. Give my love to brother Hugh and tell him that I have just received his letter and will reply to it soon. Give my love to all the Family reserving a large portion for yourself. I remain your ever devoted Son,

John

To Gen Walter Mitchell, Port Tobacco, M. d.

Yale Oct. 15th 1859.

My Dear Father,

Nearly five years of school and college life has not served to diminish in the least my ardent attachment for home and all who dwell there, but day by day it has grown stronger and deeper. My sojourn too in New England, (though even **you** sometimes said in those little discussions which we had during vacation, that it had tainted me with Yankeeism*) has I am convinced made me a better and more decided southerner (if that were possible) than I ever was before. I can now fully appreciate the generosity, nobility and true manliness, of the southern character; and though the Yankees are not so utterly wicked and unprincipled as some think, yet I must confess they cut but a poor figure when compared with a true Marylander. One of the most pleasant parts of the week to me now, is Sunday night, at which time Bob Chapman* always comes to my room to pay me a visit, and here we sit for two or three hours together, conversing about home and friends, and the conclusion we invariably arrive at is that there is no place like the south in general, and Charles County in particular. As you remarked in your letter, the studies of Junior year are very interesting, and I am especially pleased with Cicero's work on the immortality of the soul which we are at present reading. None of Cicero's writings (though they are all very fine,) prove to my mind so conclusively the genius and ability of the man, and his superiority over all his contemporaries, as this book of "Tusculan disquisitions": there are ideas and sentiments expressed therein, which would have stamped their author as a great philosopher even had he lived in the nineteenth century. It sometimes makes me sad to think that such men as Socrates and Cicero, should have been compelled to spend so many years, groping through the

darkness of heathenism in search of truths which Christianity has now made clear to every child. Professor Thacher is now one of our instructors, and by his great familiarity with the Latin Language and the masterly manner in which he explains all difficult passages, he makes our recitations to him more entertaining than any we have had since entering college. Prof Dana sailed for Europe about a week ago. It is reported that he lost a brother during vacation, by whose death he has been so much affected, that fears are entertained that he will become deranged. The State Agricultural Fair commenced at "Brewster's Park" on Tuesday, and ended yesterday, and New Haven has been crowded during the past week with visitors from all parts of the state. The display of animals was pretty good, except the horses, which were decidedly poor. The cattle were very fine, especially the work oxen. There appeared to be more Ayrshires and Durhams than anything else, and I saw a beautiful herd of the former from "Edgewood Farm" (Donald G. Mitchell's place). The exhibition of agricultural implements was very large, and there were a great many Yankee contrivances, invented, I am sure, for no other purpose but to make money. But I will give you, (if you desire it) when we meet, a full account of every thing I saw. We have had delightful weather here lately, and it has rained only once during the past week which is quite a wonder in New Haven. Give my love to every member of the family, and tell little Cassie that I would be much pleased to receive a letter from her. I could write much more dear Father, but time forbids so I must now bid you adieu. Hoping that this may find you in good health, I remain your devoted Son,

John Mitchell

Gen Walter Mitchell, Port Tobacco, M d.

My Dear Father,

I was very sorry to hear by sister Tillie's letter that you were so unwell, but cherish the hope that by the time you receive this you will have entirely recovered. There is nothing which gives me so much concern, as the announcement that any one is sick at home, more especially, when that one is you dear Father, you whom each day I am learning to respect more highly and love more dearly; and in saying this I doubt not, but that I express, what each one of your children feels. I would like to talk to you freely to night, for I feel assured that you will not be offended at my so doing. You will remember that on Christmas eve, we sat in the dining room, (where you are probably now reading this letter) and conversed about the cares and troubles of old age. As I said then, it seems to me that the old age of a well spent life should be the happiest period of a man's existence; it is the lull that follows the storm; it is the twilight of a summer's day, and as such should be calm and peaceful. Nor can I agree with Burns when he tells us in that beautiful poem, that "man was made to mourn". It is true that we have a great many sorrows, but our joys are much more numerous, and besides I do not think that God ever intended, that this bright world should be inhabited by those who should see more in it to grieve, than rejoice over. I would like to say much more to you on this subject, but must put it off until another time, as I have but a few minutes more to devote to this letter. The most interesting study we have this term is Philosophy, in which, besides the regular recitations,

we have two lectures a week. Though I can not say a great deal for the rhetorical display of our lecturer, (tutor Chaplin) yet the experiments he performs are very interesting and instructive. Give my love to all the Family. Hoping to hear from you soon I remain your sincerely devoted son,

John

To Genl Walter Mitchell,

Care of Penn and Mitchell, Baltimore, M d.

Yale Dec 10th 1860.

My Dear Father

In a letter which I wrote to sister Bettie last Wednesday, I stated, that I did not intend to go home at Christmas inasmuch as I shall have finished my college course in about six months more, and therefore might as well stay at the north until I am through. It is unnecessary for me to repeat here, the causes, which have prevented me from being as regular in my correspondence this term as heretofore; but you may be assured Father, that this irregularity has not arisen from any decrease of my regard and love for you, or any other one of my home friends. Indeed the older I get the better I am able to appreciate your kindness, and to understand the value of a good parent. You requested me in your letter to state how much money I should want. As near as I can calculate, my expenses for board, tuition, room rent, cloths, washing, and blacking boots, will amount to \$210.00. This included my board room rent etc. during vacation. I shall also need some pocket money for the coming term. If you have no objection I should like to spend two or three days of the vacation in Boston or New York, as it may be the last chance I shall have of seeing those cities; for I am getting to be quite a "fire eater" and if there is "secession" I shall cast my lot with the South, and stand by her to the end. Almost all the manufactories in this city have suspended operations, and consequently a large number of men and women have been thrown out of employment. I will write you a long letter as soon as I have finished my examination. Hoping that this will find you in health and happiness, I remain your truly devoted son,

John Mitchell

STATUS REPORT ON ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

By Susan Shaffer

The Community College's grant from the Maryland Committee for the Humanities is producing some fascinating interviews about Charles County during its slot machine era. Not only are we discovering what effect slot machines had upon our lives, but we are also acquiring descriptions of Bryans Road, Marshall Hall, Nanjemoy, Waldorf, and La Plata of years ago. The individuals who have been interviewed as of the first week of May 1982 are:

Reverend Harold A. Milstead	Mrs. Mary Johnson
Captain Francis A. Busey	Mr. Walter Hendrix
Mr. James R. Couchenour	Mrs. Eva Toye
Mr. Edward Berry	Mr. John T. Parran
Mr. Carl Hampton	Mr. J. Frank Raley, Jr.
Mrs. Emma Hill Wallace	Mr. Roscoe Odle
Mr. John L. Sprague	Mr. Harry Lehman
Mr. E. Elwood Jones	Reverend Andrew L. Gunn

There are additional interviews scheduled for the month of May. In March the Board of Directors of the Historical Society evaluated one of the interviews for historical content, and throughout the project additional evaluations are planned.

In addition to oral history interviews, the project needs photographs of slot machines, and exterior views of locations in Charles County where the machines were located. If you have any such pictures, please contact the Southern Maryland Room, so they can be copied.

On 24 September 1982, at 7:30 in the evening at Charles County Community College, there will be an Open Forum to discuss the results of our study and evaluate the effects of the machines upon the County. The panelists will be: Mr. John T. Parran, The Reverend Andrew L. Gunn, Mr. Ronald G. Brown, Mrs. Marian Myles, Mr. Frederick Tilp, Mr. George Dyson, Mr. Roscoe Odle, and a Mystery Guest. All members of the Historical Society are cordially invited to attend and will be receiving tickets in the mail.

THOMAS JEFFERSON TO EDWIN TURPIN

A DOCUMENT WITH COMMENTARY FROM THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S COLLECTION

by Susan Shaffer

Charles County Community College, LaPlata, Maryland
Learning Resources Center, Southern Maryland Room
J. Bruce Kremer Collection, 850028, Number 6
Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Edward A. Turpin

Monticello Jan. 10. 26

Dear Sir

Your favor of Dec. 16. came to hand yesterday, and [i] now inclose [sic] you a copy of the laws and construction of our [University] with a notice of the terms of board, tuition etc. The gen [eral] plan of the buildings is too large] and [heavy] for the M[ail] and no special drawings [exist .] Our family recollects [your] visit with great pleasure, [and] were disappointed in not seeing you on your return in the spring as expected. Could you now visit our neighborhood you would see our University on a very different state from what it was when you were here. We have been very fortunate in the selection of the Professors which we received [sic] from abroad. They are men of the highest qualifications in point of science, and in character correct and amiable. Before the vacation we had 120 students, at first a little unruly, but soon set to rights and latterly perfect examples of good order and application.

I tender you the affectionate recollections of the family with all our wishes for your success in life and assurances of great esteem and respect.

Th. Jefferson

verso Envelope:

free

Th. Jefferson

Mr. Ed. A. Turpin
Atty at Law
St Francisville

[_____]

*words missing due to tears in the letter.

*A resident of Southern Maryland also attending Yale