

THIS LETTER IS FICTIONAL BUT AUTHENTICALLY REPRESENTS THE IDEAS OF THE HISTORICAL FIGURE. QUOTATIONS INDICATE STATEMENTS ACTUALLY MADE BY THE HISTORICAL PERSON.

Dear President Washington,

As the state excise officer for Pennsylvania, I must report to you the atrocities that are occurring against government officials in the western counties of Pennsylvania. Acts of violence and humiliation have made it impossible for tax agents and other authorities to enforce the federal excise tax. Last month I rented space for an excise office from Mr. John Lynn. Because he dared rent space to me, Mr. Lynn was taken from his home by a group of men with painted faces who stripped off his clothes, cut his hair, and tarred and feathered him. He was left tied to a tree in the forest until he was found by a passerby the next morning. Mr. Lynn has since been forced out of his rented home and has become an outsider in his own community. He is in such fear for his safety that he has refused to cooperate with me in identifying his attackers. The attack on Mr. Lynn is just one example of a series of threats and acts against those who would comply with the law.

Now these scoundrels have resorted to armed insurrection against the government. On July 15, U.S. Marshal David Lennox traveled to Allegheny County to serve court summons on those who had not registered their stills as required by law. I volunteered to guide him to the various stills. After serving four summons to hostile farmers, we attempted to serve William Miller. Miller refused to accept the summons. While we talked, a group of 30 to 40 armed men came up behind us. The group allowed us to leave, but fired a shot once we turned our backs. Marshall Lennox rode back to warn them against such actions. When we left the farmers, Mr. Lennox set out for Pittsburgh.

The next morning I awoke to find the Mingo Creek Militia surrounding my home. They claimed to be looking for Lennox, but their threat on my household was quite clear. As I tried to drive them away, I shot and killed Oliver Miller, the son of William Miller. At my signal, my slaves then opened fire from the slave quarters. The rebels fled, but returned on July 17. I had expected their return and requested help from all law-abiding citizens. No one came to my aid except eleven members of the state militia from Fort Pitt, the fort I commanded during the Revolution. I was able to escape before a mob of more than 500 men arrived. From reports I have received, fighting ensued after the house was emptied of women and children. James McFarlane, commander of the attacking locals, ordered a ceasefire after someone reported a call from the house for negotiations. As McFarlane stood, he was killed by a shot fired from the house. My home and properties were then burned. The soldiers who came to my assistance were taken prisoner, but

later released. Casualties are reported on both sides, but I have been unable to confirm these.

My life is in Pennsylvania, and I am ashamed and astonished by the actions of these rebels. Strong measures must be taken to stop this blatant disrespect for the laws of our nation. If we are to have a true government, men may not choose to obey only those laws that please them. Please send troops to regain peace and enforce law and order. These ruffians are making a mockery of our new nation as well as your presidency.

Sincerely,
John Neville