

**LETTER OF COL.
JOHN SPENCER**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649295876

Letter of Col. John Spencer by John Spencer

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

JOHN SPENCER

**LETTER OF COL.
JOHN SPENCER**

LETTER
OF
COL. JOHN SPENCER,

LATE RECEIVER OF THE LAND OFFICE

AT

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA,

TOGETHER WITH

PAPERS AND DOCUMENTS

CONNECTED WITH THE SETTLEMENT OF HIS ACCOUNTS WITH THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

NEW YORK:
BAKER, GODWIN & CO., PRINTERS,
CORNER NASSAU AND SPRUCE STREETS.
1852.

INTRODUCTION.

THE publication of the statement herein contained, after the lapse of years from the time the transactions occurred, may appear strange and uncalled for. My reasons, however, for adopting this course are, that I am not unfrequently questioned by friends, touching this matter, in order to be furnished with facts to contradict injurious rumors which are still secretly floating among the credulous and ignorant on this subject, in the community around—rumors, put in circulation by those whose instinct is mischief, and whose vocation it is to destroy the good name of the innocent and virtuous. And more than this, insinuations and statements have lately been made by a venal press in this city, whose meaning cannot be misunderstood, and whose intention it is to awaken a public feeling against me, which has long ago been put to rest by the force of truth and conviction—by evidence and facts, which if not forgotten, will be satisfactory and convincing to every unprejudiced and honest mind.

To present this evidence and the facts in the case; to furnish a full statement to all who may desire information on this subject, is the object of this publication.

I desire no concealment. It is my wish that all may be known. If my statement is not full and truthful, let the contrary be shown.

*“Who steals my purse, steals trash, 'tis something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
But he that filches from me my good name,
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed.”*

I desire my good name to be vindicated, and my grave to be honored by the friends who live after me, because it will contain all that is left of an honest man.

I am aware that I may subject myself to the charge of unwonted sensitiveness and an overweening desire for the esteem and good opinion of others. I aim at nothing and hope to achieve nothing, but the protection of my good name. And I ask the right-minded among my friends and fellow-citizens, to credit nor charge me with no other feelings or motives, than a just and proper self-estimate of personal honor and personal integrity, and an earnest desire to vindicate the one and protect the other.

Owing to a train of circumstances which at one time were not well understood, but afterwards were easily and fully explained, my character suffered in the hands of some who are ever too willing on any pretext to embrace injurious impressions of their fellow men. Suspicions of my public integrity, and even my private honesty, were scattered among the credulous, and produced impressions on the minds of many, which the force of testimony given under sanctions the most formal and solemn has as yet hardly effaced. After a laborious and most searching inquiry into this matter, with no ordinary means of information, the processes and results of which I shall lay before you, I feel authorized to state—and to the proofs and facts of the case I commend your attention—that my conduct as an officer of the government admits of unqualified vindication; that, so far from open censure or the whispers of suspicion, I deserve the commendation which is due to undeviating, honorable, and efficient services, rendered in the face of numerous obstacles and embarrassments existing, and sometimes with almost irresistible force, through the whole term of my office.

To *Hon.*

A. Felch

DEAR SIR:

Circumstances connected with my public and official conduct, as Receiver of the Land Office at Fort Wayne, Indiana, between the years 1831 and 1840, constituting two successive terms of official service, gave rise to the charge against me of defalcation and mal-administration; with the consequent implication of my honor and fortunes for life, threatening ruin to both.

These charges were made at a time of high political excitement, when every expedient was resorted to by the party in opposition, to inflame the public mind against the party in power, the then existing administration, and all those who held office under it, from the highest to the lowest. The press and the forum, recreant to the obligations of truth and justice, reckless of consequences to private integrity and public honor, teemed with falsehood, abuse, and calumny—breaking down the sacred inclosures of private life, and treading in the dust the sanctity and respect due to public station. None were so high as to be exempt from the shaft aimed for their destruction, none too low to escape the venom of a party spirit, maddened by its passion, and lust for power and rule.

The circumstances to which I have alluded, were certain errors and omissions in my accounts rendered to the proper department of the government, in my final settlement and departure from the office of Receiver of the Land Office at Fort Wayne.

But, in order to a full and proper understanding of the

whole subject, it will be necessary that I should give a brief history and statement of my transactions and conduct in office; the peculiar circumstances connected with the service during my continuance in office; the manner of the final settlement of my accounts with the government; and the adjustment of the difficulties growing out of the charge against me of defalcation.

Before, however, entering upon the subject more immediately concerned, I trust it will not be considered improper or out of place to trace very briefly those preliminary steps, which led me from boyhood to the public station, the difficulties connected with which I am about to explain,—in order that my whole life may appear as one connected chain, of honest and honorable endeavor to discharge faithfully the various duties of private and public life to which I have severally been called; the record of which I am prepared to meet at the tribunal of human judgment; and, I trust, in that last day when the actions of men will be judged by the all-seeing and just One, that my conduct will be approved, on that rule which enforces the obligation, to “do unto others as you would have others to do unto you.”

I was born in Kentucky, and emigrated with my parents to Dearborn County, Indiana, in the year 1797. They were the third family which settled in that county, then a wilderness. I remained with them, and labored on a farm, till the age of seventeen, at which time I left my paternal home, to seek for an education by my own unaided efforts, wherever the means of instruction might be found. These means were furnished in the western country to a very limited extent at that time, and were of a very imperfect character. But, by alternate labor and study, I was enabled to obtain the rudiments of an English education, and such preparation in mental culture as fitted me for the ordinary business of life. At this early period of my life, I was thrown entirely upon my own resources and unaided efforts. At the age of twenty, being then a resident of Dearborn county, I was elected, and, at the organization of the State, was commissioned an Ensign in the Indiana militia; a year and a half afterwards was elected captain and com-

mandant of the company. This military service brought me in contact and into acquaintance with the large body of the citizens of the county. In 1822, at the age of twenty-five, I was elected Sheriff of the County of Dearborn, in opposition to two persons of high standing and long public service in the county. At the expiration of my two years term of office, I was reelected without opposition. By constitutional limitation, I vacated the office of Sheriff at the expiration of my second term. At the expiration of the first term of my successor, I was again reelected by a majority of four hundred and seven votes. At the expiration of this term of office, I was re-nominated, and succeeded over the opposing candidate by a majority of eight hundred and ninety-one votes. My opponent at this time was one of the most popular men in the county; in proof of which, he was elected, on my resignation, by a majority of several hundred votes. I was also, through my whole term of service as sheriff, by virtue of that office, collector of the revenues of the county. I was also appointed United States Deputy Marshal of Dearborn County, to take the census of 1830. In the year 1822, after my election to the office of Sheriff of Dearborn County, I received the appointment of Adjutant of the 15th Regiment of Indiana Militia, and after serving in that capacity for nearly two years, was elected Major of the Regiment. In 1825, I organized the 55th Regiment, and was elected Colonel, and served as Colonel commandant for the period of six years, and up to the time of my appointment as Receiver of the Land office, at Fort Wayne.

In the year 1832, I received from the Government of the United States, the appointment of Receiver of the public moneys of the Land Office at Fort Wayne, whereupon I resigned the office of Sheriff, and entered at once upon the discharge of the duties of my new appointment. Such is a brief outline of my history, up to the period when the events occurred which will form the subject of this narrative.

The Fort Wayne Land District was established, and the offices located at Fort Wayne, in the year 1824, under the administration of John Quincy Adams. The first appointments to office were Captain Samuel C. Vance, Register, and the Hon.