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Title: Letter from Roger B. Taney to George Newbold

Date: April 19, 1836

Location: I-SpahrB-1954-6

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Baltimore April 19. 1836

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Private

My dear Sir

Have you preserved my letter to you recommending the Deposit Banks to employ an agent to reside at Washington during the present winter - and suggesting that you should undertake the agency? If you have it be good enough to send me a copy. I may have mentioned the subject to you again in some letter afterwards. I would be glad to have a copy of any of my letters in which allusion is made to it. I kept no copies of my private letters to you.

It is proper that I should explain why I now trouble you with this matter. I find there is still a determination to carry on the war against me - & in the 5th way; - that is - by manufacturing a falsehood, & then constantly repeating it with an air of confidence. As a part of this plan it is now asserted that Mr Whitney was the agent of the Deposit Banks while I was Secretary of the Treasury & that I knew it. - I was never called on ~~to~~ to report whether the Banks or any of them had or had not an agent at Washington, & it is therefore perhaps of no consequence whether these statements be true or not. - But as they are often made, & always coupled with some coarse abuse of me, I mean to consult some friends

as to the propriety of contradicting them publicly. I do not
design to publish my letter to you - & wish a copy of it to show
to the friends whom I propose to consult, in order that they
may have a view of the whole ground - The fact is that the
only effort I ever made to procure the establishment of such
an agency was my letter to you - & my verbal communications to
Mr. Beashaw which he mentioned to you at my request - I never
understood or supposed that Mr. Whitney was the agent for
any Deposite Bank while I was in the Department, and
during the whole time that I continued in the Treasury, I was
under the impression that no Deposite Bank had an agent
at Washington - Nor have I now any reason to believe that
this impression was a mistaken one - for I have made no
enquiry on the subject - If however I should decide to make a
statement to the public, it will be done in a manner perfectly
respectful to Mr. Whitney, who I believe to be an honest and
talented man - & one well qualified to possess the information requisite
for such an appointment - From your reply to my letter I find
it was of the 18th of December 1833.

Accept my dear Sir, my best wishes - & present them to our
valued friend Mr. Lawrence when you see him - & congratulate
him in my name on his recent reelection -

I am with great respect & regard

Your friend & obed. St.

George Newbold Esquire
New York

R. B. Taney

Acknowledged
Apr. 21. 1856

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Private

George Newbold Esquire

New York

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April 19. 1836
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TANEY-NEWBOLD CORRESPONDENCE

Taney was a primary target for Webster, Clay, and the political opposition for his actions against the Bank of the United States. One favorite charge was that Taney had hired Reuben Whitney as an agent for the selected banks, and had been paying him illegally with Treasury Department funds.

In his original plan, Taney hoped to make Amos Kendall the key man as president of the Bank of Metropolis in Washington. Kendall, however, refused the position. Reuben Whitney, a strong Jacksonian Democrat, desired the job and even wrote the Banks privately. But he was unacceptable to the Bank of Maryland, thus eliminating his usefulness. Furthermore, Taney disapproved of his methods in trying to get the post and realized that the payment of such an official would require an act of Congress. The opposition, however, was not interested in his defence as long as they could surround the Jackson administration with an air of corruption.*

ROGER B. TANEY TO GEORGE NEWBOLD, ESQUIRE

Baltimore April 19. 1836

Private

My Dear Sir

Have you preserved my letter to you recommending the Deposit Banks to employ an agent to reside at Washington during the panic winter-and suggesting that you should undertake the agency? If you have it, be good enough to send me a copy. I may have mentioned the subject to you again in some letter afterwards. I would be glad to have a copy of any of my letters in which allusion is made to it. I kept no copies of my private letters to you.

It is proper that I should explain why I now trouble you with this matter. I find there is still a determination to carry on war against me,-and in the old way-that is-by manufacturing a falsehood, and then constantly repeating it with an air of confidence. As a part of this plan it is now asserted that Mr. Whitney was the agent of the Treasury and that I knew it. I was never called on to report whether the Banks or any of them had or had not an agent

*Swisher, pp. 243-5, 283-5.

at Washington, and it is therefore perhaps of no consequence whether these statements be true or not.¹ But as they are often made, and always coupled with some coarse abuse of me, I mean to consult some friends (2) as to the propriety of contradicting them publically. I do not design to publish my letter to you-I wish a copy of it to show to the friends whom I propose to consult in order that they may have a view of the whole ground. The fact is that the ⁿonly effort I ever made to procure the establishment of such an agency was my letter to you and my verbal communications to Mr. Henshaw² which he mentioned to you at my request. I never understood or supposed that Mr. Whitney³ was the agent for any Deposit Bank while I was in the Department, and during the whole time that I continued in the Treasury. I was under the impression that no Deposit Bank had an agent in Washington. Nor have I now any reason to believe that this impression was a mistaken one-for I have made no inquiry on the subject. If however I should decide to make a statement to the public, it will be done in a manner perfectly respectful to Mr. Whitney, who I believe to be an honest and talented man-and one who possesses the information requisite for such an appointment. From your reply to my letter I find it was of the 18th of December 1833.

Accept my Dear Sir, my best wishes-and present them to our valued friend Mr. Lawrence when you see him-and congratulate him in my name on his recent election.⁴

and I am with great respect and regard
Your friend and obedient Servant

George Newbold Esquire
New York

R. B. Taney

¹In 1834, Taney had been questioned in a senatorial investigation. Swisher, pp.283-5.
²See Dec. 18, 1833 letter.
³For further references to Whitney, see Catterall, pp. 275-7,292-5. and Bowers, The Party Battles of the Jackson Period, pp. 458-61.

4 Cornelius Van Wyck Lawrence (1791-1861) was elected to Congress as a Jackson Democrat in 1833. Taney is here congratulating him for his re-election for 1836 as Mayor of New York city, the first so elected by popular vote. His victory was one of very few for the Democrats in New York at this election.

Appleton's Cyclopedia of American Biography, vol. III, pp. 639-40., Nevins ed., Diary of Philip Hone, pp. 120, 124, 153.

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