American history of the period in which he lived and served, many would say acted, records little that is favorable or complimentary and much that is defamatory and critical of the career and actions of General James Wilkinson. He lived in that time of gestation and chaos in which the British colonies achieved nationhood and began to evolve civic integration and political standards that are the very warp and woof of the nation of today. His period of active service as a soldier in the armies of the United States began in 1775, and ended forty years later with the close of the War of 1812. For eight years, following the close of the Revolution, Wilkinson was a trader, land speculator, and prominent military and political leader in the Kentucky country. For many years thereafter, though living elsewhere, he retained an active and interested contact with her leading men. It was during the period of his residence in Kentucky that he first established his contacts with the Spaniards at New Orleans and on the Mississippi, contacts which generated situations and created associations and interests that conditioned all of his future career and reputation, both contemporary and historical.

Wilkinson, one of the most intriguing, colorful and enigmatic characters in American history—many have called him a scoundrel and a traitor—was the son of an old and honorable Maryland family of English origin. At the age of seventeen he was sent to a medical school in Philadelphia, to continue studies in that
science already begun under the tutelage of a physician relative. Undoubtedly it was while a student in Philadelphia that he met Ann (Nancy) Biddle that "sprightly and agreeable young Quakeress" who had already aroused in others a "courting Distemper." She was the daughter of a prominent Philadelphia merchant, John Biddle, and the sister of Clement Biddle, friend, business and military associate of Washington. She was the "amiable" and "beloved object" of Wilkinson's thoughts and affections through the thirty years of happy married life which they lived together. The personal and social relationships and contacts established as a result of this marriage, which took place on November 12, 1778, at Christ's Church, Philadelphia, were important factors in Wilkinson's subsequent career.

Like most officers of the American Revolution, the close of the war found him without "cash or credit." In order to recoup his fortunes he made arrangements to go into Kentucky, then a county of Virginia, to act as the local agent or representative of a partnership which he had formed with Dr. Hugh Shiell, of Philadelphia. Wilkinson first located at Lexington, Ken-

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1 Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, XI. 206; Solomon Drowne of Philadelphia to Dr. William Brown of Providence, October 19, 1774, quoted in ibid., XLVIII. 234; James Wilkinson, Memoir, I. 8, 12.

2 John Clement, "Sketch of William and Thomas Biddle" (Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, XIV. 364-86).

3 Christ Church Records, Pennsylvania Archives, second series, VIII. 275. When Ann Biddle married Wilkinson she was read out of Friends Meeting of which she had been, until then, a member. The minute reads: "At a Monthly Meeting of Friends of Philadelphia held in fourth Street Meeting House ye 25th of 12 mo 1778—'Our Women Friends acquainted the meeting of the case of Ann Wilkinson, late Biddle, who they have treated with for accomplishing her marriage contrary to the good Order of our Discipline.'"

4 Wilkinson to Henry Lee, quoted in E. M. Davis, "By Invitation of Mrs. Wilkinson" (Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine, XIII. 156).
tucky, apparently as a representative or partner of the firm of Barclay, Moylan & Co., where he seems to have gone in the early winter of 1783; land entries in Jefferson (Louisville) and Fayette (town of Lexington) counties are of record as being made in December of that year. Mrs. Wilkinson, with her two children, left Philadelphia, September 21, 1784, to join him at Lexington, Kentucky, coming by way of Carlisle, Pittsburgh, and the Ohio River. Business relations with Dr. Shiell were terminated in the early part of 1785; after which Wilkinson continued in the Kentucky country in various partnership arrangements, one of them being with Peyton Short, a son-in-law of John Cleves Symmes, who is said to have met his future wife in Wilkinson's home in Lexington.

The first two of the following letters, one dated "Kentucky, Feb. 14th [1788]," and the other "spring [1788]," were probably written from Frankfort, on the Kentucky River, where Wilkinson had settled in 1786 or 1787, after the Virginia Legislature in October, 1786, had authorized the laying out of "a town on the lands of James Wilkinson" and the establishment of "a ferry across the Kentucky River." Here he built a large and substantial house, but soon after-

(See footnote 5 on page 53.)


† Mrs. Wilkinson's two children were John (born about 1780, and died 1796), and James Biddle (born about 1783, and died September 17, 1813). Another child, Joseph Biddle, was born in Kentucky about 1786.

‡ Unpublished letter in the Kentucky State Historical Society: Wilkinson, at Beasam Town (Pennsylvania), October 12, 1784, to Doctor Hugh Shiell "at Limestone or Lexington," in which the statement is made that "Mrs. W. left Philad. the 21st Sept."

§ James Speed, "The Political Club" (Filson Club Publications, no. 9, p. 76).

‖ Hennigs, Statutes at Large of Virginia, XII. 390.
wards sold it to Andrew Holmes, and moved back to Lexington, from which place the last three of the letters are dated. He was away from home much of the time, attending to the harvesting and shipping of his wheat, tobacco, etc., down the Ohio and the Mississippi to New Orleans.\footnote{11}{Mary Verhoeff, “The Kentucky River Navigation” (Filson Club Publications, no. 28, 55 ff).}

Mrs. Wilkinson apparently was not strong and the rigors of frontier life kept her “Confin’d to my room” for varying intervals. In this period, while her husband was absent from home, she lost her fourth child. Finally, after a life of suffering, she died in New Orleans, February 23, 1807, just after the storm arising from the exposure of Burr’s so-called Conspiracy had broken.\footnote{12}{James Wilkinson, “General James Wilkinson” (Louisiana Historical Quarterly, I. 164).} She seems to have been a woman of beauty and great charm. Frequent mention of her is made in letters of the period and Wilkinson’s friends seldom wrote him on other than purely official matters without concluding their letters with a desire to be remembered to her. General Anthony Wayne, shortly after he assumed command at Pittsburgh in 1792, writes General Wilkinson at Fort Washington (Cincinnati) of the particular care which had been taken to make her comfortable and of the courtesies extended her in her journey to Philadelphia to put her children in school. A young Ensign, William Henry Harrison, future President of the United States, was her personal escort on the journey.\footnote{13}{Wayne to Wilkinson, from Pittsburgh, July 7, 1792 (Wayne Papers, XX. 61, in The Historical Society of Pennsylvania).}

The letters which follow are the property of Mr. James G. Biddle of Wallingford, Pennsylvania (a descendant of Owen Biddle, who was a brother of Ann Biddle Wilkinson and of Clement Biddle). They are of interest because of the picture of early life in the Kentucky Wilderness which they give. The loneliness of
the frontier largely induced by the absence of contacts with people "that had been brought up tenderly" induced "torture" of mind, though this was somewhat offset by the necessities arising from the care of three small, but active children, who, like other children "do tread [their shoes] out very fast." Many of the things needed to clothe the children properly and such "delicacies" as sugar, coffee, etc., were hard to obtain. To keep in style Mrs. Wilkinson asks her father for "a few Pair of Short Color'd Gloves for myself . . . [and] a Pattern of a Black Sattin Cloak as I must make me one & wish to have it fashionable." Through the letters there is an expressed love for and admiration of "my Belov'd Wilkinson" that presents an aspect of Wilkinson's character far different from that usually known. Throughout her life this attitude seems to have been equally reciprocated and it is a pleasing reflection to note that at no time throughout his long career is there even a breath of scandal so far as it concerned Wilkinson's personal conduct.

These letters written at the inception of Wilkinson's relations with the Spaniards at New Orleans, when the implications of this relationship were not yet clear, evidence no doubts or misgivings as to the future. Nor is it evident that Mrs. Wilkinson considered it either reprehensible or dangerous. Certainly there was no secret about the matter; it is probable, as had previously been his practice,14 that the arrangement was discussed with her both before Wilkinson's departure for New Orleans and after his return. It is an interesting speculation as to what would have been Wilkinson's course of action had his wife disapproved of the New Orleans venture; at the time and under the circumstances he could hardly afford any rupture of cor-

14 See "Letters of General James Wilkinson" (Kentucky State Historical Register, XXIV. 259-67). These letters are addressed to Dr. Hugh Shiell and in them frequent mention seems to indicate the fact that Mrs. Wilkinson was familiar with his plans.
dial relations with the Biddle family and their business and financial associates in Philadelphia.\textsuperscript{15} It is of course an open question as to how much Wilkinson disclosed to his wife of the details of his engagement with Miro. At the time, he was not an officer in the United States Army and did not again become one until the year 1791. As a Kentucky frontiersman, land speculator and trader, his trip to New Orleans was of a piece with similar undertakings made by others,\textsuperscript{16} with this difference, that Wilkinson was bolder and more unscrupulous in his dealings both with the Spaniards and the Kentuckians. In any case he acted in his capacity of a private citizen and, to this extent, he had plenty of company.

Though the early "secession" conventions were several years in the past, it was still a moot question as to whether the Union could ever be solidified and given power and authority. The men on the western waters considered their future destiny to lie down the Mississippi valley to New Orleans, rather than to the eastward across the mountains. Under the circumstances the essential criticism of Wilkinson, considering the conditions and relationships existing at the time, is in the fact that he surreptitiously continued his Spanish connections after Kentucky had joined the Union and he had again become an officer of the United States army. Perhaps, he did not know how to break them off and save himself and his associates; or he thought he could continue them clandestinely, taking what profit from them that might come his way. In any case Wilkinson and the so-called Spanish Conspiracy seem, in a sense, to have been synonymous. When he was ac-


tive in his dealings with the Spaniards the Conspiracy thrived; when he was interested elsewhere nothing much transpired.

I.
Kentucky, Feb. 14th [1788]\(^{17}\)

My Much lov’d Father\(^{18}\)

I have but a few minutes to write in, owing to my being Mis-inform’d in regard to the time of Mr. Parker’s\(^{19}\) leaving this

\(^{17}\) The year is not given in the original letter, but internal evidence indicates it to have been written in 1788. Wilkinson arrived in New Orleans on his first trip, July 2, 1787 (W. R. Shepherd, “Wilkinson and the Beginnings of the Spanish Conspiracy”, *American Historical Review*, IX. 494). He left New Orleans for Kentucky, September 16, 1787, returning by boat, to Philadelphia and overland to Pittsburgh and down the Ohio River to Limestone (Maysville) and Frankfort. He reached Kentucky late in February, 1788 (James Wilkinson, *Memoirs of My Own Times*, II. 113). A few days after this letter was written. *The Kentucky Gazette* for March 1, 1788, contained an item as follows: “By General Wilkinson who arrived here [in Lexington] on Sunday last [February 24, 1788] we are informed of the breaking up of the Ohio river, we therefore expect boats will immediately be coming down. Also that the winter to the Eastward has been extremely severe” (photostat, of the *Kentucky Gazette* in the Public Library of Lexington, Ky., in the New York Public Library). The “Negro Boy [did] ... not reach Lexington . . .” in time to catch Mr. Parker before he started eastward, or else Mrs. Wilkinson decided it was too late for him to reach Lexington in time as farther down in this letter she writes: “I should have wrote thee . . . by Mr. Robert Parker but I was too ill at the time he left”. This letter reached Philadelphia, by another messenger, in time for the reply and “some Shoes” to be brought back by Mr. Parker on his return trip (see letter no. II., post).


\(^{19}\) Robert Parker was a Lexington merchant. He bought a lot in Lexington in 1783 (Lewis Collins, *Historical Sketches of Kentucky*, II. 173), and was its first Surveyor (G. W. Ranck, *History of Lexington, Kentucky*, 114), and the first Clerk of the Lexington Board of Trustees. He removed from Lexington in 1791, as evidenced by an advertisement for “Books lent . . . During my residence in Lexington” (*Kentucky Gazette*, October 27, 1787, June 6, 1789, and July 23, 1791).
Country. I was told sometime ago that he did not intend setting off till the 20th, this morning am informed he goes early Tomorrow & the roads are so bad that I am obliged to send my Negro Boy of [sic] soon or he will not reach Lexington this Evening, as writing you all is a Pleasing task, 'tis a disappointment to me, however that I am accustomed'd to of late, for I have look'd for my Wilkinson this several Months with the utmost impatience, & now know not where he is, it is impossible for me to describe the torture my mind endures, not been blessed with the Sight of a relation this ten months, & Surrounded by People that has been brought up so differently from myself that when Sick & Low spirited there Company only disgusts—O what would I not give to be blessed with a sensible agreeable woman for a Neighbour that had been brought up tenderly as I have myself, how much it would lighten & enliven the tedious Hours of absence, the last letter I had from my Belov'd Wilkinson was dated at Richmond, in that he assures me he will be Home by the 15 or 20th of Jan., & it now is the middle of Feb. I am sorry to express the feelings of my Heart so much—but indeed I am too wretched at the Long absence off [sic] a dear Husband to feign a Composure I do not feel for at Present I am almost distracted—I should of wrote thee my much lov'd Father & dear Sisters by Mr. Robert Parker but I was too ill at the time he left this I had been Confin'd to my room a long time that my letter would only off distressed you—I thank God I am now better but feel so Stupid I Can scarce hear my Children when they speak to me, my Jimmys Presence would soon make me well—I have many thanks to give thee my dear Father for the things sent by Mr. Parker, the Blankets were most acceptable indeed, but the Sugar much more so, for not an Ounce has there been to sell in Kentucky for a long time & there is few but would do better without than myself, & it was quite as acceptable to thy dear little Grand Sons, they send much love to dear Grand Papa & will thank him to send them a ten Gallon Keg of Molasses & some Shoes by Mr. P. & two or three pr. off stiff ones for Mama & some Sweeping & Scrubbing Brushes, and two Hundred of double Black Pins—immediately as my Jimmy arrives I will write again by the way of Virginia & hope that letter will reach you before Mr. P. leaves Philad.—Please to remember us most affectionately to my dear Becky, Brother & Sweet Children—as my Becky must write me by the return of Mr. Parker, & do my dear Father favor me with a few lines, it is impossible to say how much good Perusing

*as “dear Becky & Brother” referred to Clement Biddle and his wife Rebeckah Cornell Biddle. Mrs. Biddle was the daughter of Gideon Cornell, Lieutenant Governor and Chief Justice of Rhode Island. She and Clement Biddle were married August 18, 1774, and had a large family of children (Henry D. Biddle, op. cit., passim; Jordan, op. cit., 186–87).*
MRS. ANN BIDDLE WILKINSON

Daughter of John Biddle of Philadelphia
From a miniature in the possession of
Mrs. V. G. Crockett, Los Angeles, California
thy dear Letters does me—John\textsuperscript{21} is very anxious to write his Cousins but time will not admit of it, they all thank there dear Cousins for the little Books & is sorry Kentucky is so poor a Place as not to Produce anything worth sending in return—I had Procured some wild Wheat, Rye, & Barley, to send thee, but have misplac’d them therefore must defer it till next opportunity—Adieu my much Lovd Father, Brother & Sister that Health & Happiness may attend you prays your

Affectionate

N. Wilkinson

Please remember me affectionately to Aunt Robb [?], Aunt Biddle, & Cousin Polly, & Aunt Sidney Howell & family,\textsuperscript{22} Brother Owen & family,\textsuperscript{23} & Cousin H. Wood, tell the latter if ever I visit Philad. I shall endeavor to prevail on her to return with me—

I will write you all fully soon as I am blessed with the Sight of my Wilkinson—a daughter of Genl. Scott's\textsuperscript{24} stays with me at Present, she is quite Young but amiable in disposition.

\textsuperscript{21} John Biddle Wilkinson, the oldest child of General and Mrs. Wilkinson, was called "Jackie". He died in the fall of 1796, aged about 15 or 16 (Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Butler, from Fort Fayette, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, October 22, 1796, to General Anthony Wayne, at Detroit, \textit{Wayne Papers}, XLVII. 28).

\textsuperscript{22} Mary Scull Biddle, wife of William Biddle (Jordan, op. cit., 163); "Aunt Sidney Howell" was the mother of the second wife of Dr. James Hutchinson of Philadelphia. On February 18, 1779, he had married, as his first wife, Lydia Biddle, younger sister of Mrs. Wilkinson (\textit{Pennsylvania Archives}, series 2, VIII. 132).

\textsuperscript{23} Owen Biddle, eldest child of John and Lydia Biddle and brother of Mrs. Wilkinson. He was born in Philadelphia in 1737, and died there March 10, 1799 (H. D. Biddle, "Sketch of Owen Biddle", \textit{Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography}, XVI. 299-329).

\textsuperscript{24} General Charles Scott, a Virginia Revolutionary officer and a Kentucky soldier, frontiersman, and political leader. He came to Kentucky, in 1785, with Peyton Short. Wilkinson wrote him: "If you could be transported to this place [The Wilderness] for a moment, you would be all anxiety to be seated on Kentucky . . . your house shall be assuredly ready for Mrs. Scott's reception . . . I announce the quantities of Waggons, Pack Horses, Etc., Etc., which you may need . . . Mrs. Wilkinson is with me" (Wilkinson to Scott, dated "Wilderness", May 11, 1785, quoted in \textit{Army and Navy Life}, September, 1906, IX. 266-67). Wilkinson was second in command to Scott in an expedition of Kentucky volunteers against the Indians in the summer of 1791. Scott later commanded a large contingent of Kentucky troops in Wayne's army and was present at the battle of Fallen Timbers in August, 1794. At the beginning of the War of 1812, Scott was serving a term as Governor of Kentucky (R. M. McElroy, \textit{Kentucky in the Nation's History}, 157, 177, 333-35; D. B. Goebel, \textit{William Henry Harrison, A Political Biography}, 24-5, 32-34, 134-37).
Letters of Mrs. Ann Biddle Wilkinson

II. Spring [1788]²⁵

My Beloved Father

Words will convey but a feint idea of the Pleasure I received from thy dear letter, such an assurance of thy Good Health, & a Continuance of thy affection towards us was a Sweet Balm to my Soul, I cant but flatter myself with the happiness of seeing you all in the Course of two or three years, 'tis a delightfull thought, it does me much good & I encourage it—the things thee was so kind as to send all Came safe to hand & was indeed most acceptable, for our former Store had got exhausted a few Weeks before & I really think I could do better without my dinner than my Tea & Coffee, 'tis quite unnecessary my dear Father for me to make a list, for I could not of a wish been better or more Suitably Supply'd with necessaries than what I have been by thy kindness & attention. John & James returns thee a thousand thanks for there Shoes, & Hatts, but my little Biddle says Grand Papa forget his Hatt, the darling little fellow runs alone & looks like a little Cherub, O how ardently I wish for thee to see him, I am proud of my little Sons, they are allow'd to be very handsome & that I think the Smallest of there Perfections, but I regret much, indeed it grieves me, that they have not an Opportunity of going to a good School, however I pay every attention to there Learning that my Domestic affairs will admit off, John Reads Prettily, James Spells, but he is so heedless that it is with difficulty I can prevail on him to say a lesson, had I another Pen John should write a Copy to send thee, he has an amazing turn to writing. I shall take it as a favor if thee Can make it Convenient my dear Father to send the Boys eight pr. of Shoes as it is impossible to get tolerable ones here & they do tread them out very fast, the last Parcel fitted extremely well all but one Pair which came odd, one was large & the other so small it would not go on there feet; the three Summer Months I intend they shall wear Moccasons which will save there Shoes for the Winter Season, & make them Hearty Boys. I thank thee for my Shoes & Stockings they fitted me delightfully & has prevented my buying since I came

²⁵This letter seems to be fixed in the year 1788 (1) by the fact that Sister S[ally]²⁶, who was Mrs. Rudolph Tillier (see note 15 post) was still in Philadelphia, and (2) by its acknowledgment of shoes for the children brought from Philadelphia by Mr. Robert Parker (Kentucky Gazette, May 17, 1788). The shoes “fitted extremely well all but one pair which came odd.” At the time this letter was written the Wilkinson’s were still living at or near Frankfort. They did not move into Lexington until the next year (see letter no. III, post, dated at Lexington, April 16. 1789).
to the Country indeed they bring none but ordinary Sale Shoes here—I am afraid thee will think me extravagant if I ask for a Dozen Blue & White China Cups & Saucers, if tis possible to pack them up Securely, we have been so very unfortunate as to break every one of ours, & I do not like Queens ware to drink Tea out of, Provided I can get any others, necessity Compels me to use them now & I could sooner drink it out of a Gourd than go without—I am surprised the Store keepers does not bring China, to this Country in Prefference to delph it was very cheap when I left Philad. & Certainly is much Stronger than the other. they ask at Lexington 12/6 the half dozen for Common delph Cups & Saucers—I must request if my dear Father send me Coffee to have it sew’d up in a Bag the other got mixed amongst the Brown Sugar, I had it Pick’d out Carefully but it wasted at least two Pounds of Sugar, the other things came very secure & Clever not the least injured, two Sweeping Brushes & a Scrubbing Brush will be acceptable. Mr. Parker the Bearer of this will Call on thee, he lives at Lexington & I am Confident will be Particular in taking Care of anything thee delivers him for us. the Tea thee sent was delightful what they Generally bring to this Country is very indifferent which makes me relish a good dish of Tea—My Pen is worn to the Stump that Obliges me to bid thee adieu—my dear Wilkinson & Boys join me in fervent prayers for thy Happiness—

& believe me more affectionately than

I can express thy dutiful

Daughter

N

My love to Brother Owen, Sister S. & family.

III.

My dear & Much Lov’d Father

a Mr. Nancarre26 who lives in this Town Sets of Tomorrow for Philad. I Cant bear the Idea of his going without a few lines, tho almost incapable of writing being Indisposed, & the House is full of Company, it is quarterly Court & Election for Choosing Assembly Men. Genl. Scott & a Mr. Hawkins goes from this County. I really think there is near two thousand People in Town—My Jimmy is at Frankford getting of his

26 The reference is probably to John Nancarrow, who “Sets of Tomorrow [April 19, 1789] for Philad.” for brewery equipment and who upon his return advertises the opening of a “Malting Business . . . and Brewery” at “Petersburg [commonly known by the name of General Scott’s landing] on the Kentuckye, Sept. 8, 1789” (Kentucky Gazette, September 12, 1789).
Letters of Mrs. Ann Biddle Wilkinson

Boat which came from New Orleans. I do not expect he will return before Saturday. I expect he had mention'd in a former letter our Misfortune in losing our much lov'd lovely Infant. Pardon my dear Father my not saying more on the Subject, the bare mentioning of it is almost too much for my Spirits. My Wilkinson was from me at the time which made it doubly hard—I am anxious extremely anxious to receive letters from my dear Sally, Brother Tellier and our Clement. Mr. Wilkinson was from New Orleans, after his visit there in the winter of 1787–88. On April 8, 1789, and for several weeks thereafter, Wilkinson advertised for "hands to conduct my boats to the City of New Orleans." On June 27, 1789, Wilkinson advertised that "My Books and papers are left in charge of Major [Isaac B.] Dunn" Kentucky Gazette, April 8, to May 16, and June 27, 1789; Verhoev, op. cit., 57–58).

Sarah Biddle, eldest sister of Mrs. Wilkinson, who married, first, James Penrose of Philadelphia, March 15, 1766. He was born February 23, 1737–38, and died September 7, 1771. She married, second, John Shaw of Philadelphia, and, third, Rudolph Tillier, a native of Berne, Switzerland, of "high social position." Sarah Biddle was born about 1745, and died in Philadelphia, October 24, 1794 (Leach, op. cit., 45, 47).

Third husband of Sarah Biddle. In the winter of 1788–89, he took his wife and stepson, Clement Biddle Penrose, to his native town of Berne, Switzerland, but on account of conditions arising from the French Revolution, they returned to Philadelphia the following winter (Mrs. C. A. Griscom, editor, "Extracts of Letters of Sarah Biddle Tillier", Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, XXXVIII. 105f). For some years Tillier was connected with land speculations in Northern New York. Later he was appointed Factor at the United States trading post at Bellefontaine, on the Missouri River above St. Louis, and served from 1806 to April 20, 1809 (letter, United States War Department, August 19, 1931). General Wilkinson, who was in charge of the upper Louisiana territory, with headquarters at St. Louis, was probably instrumental in securing the position for Mr. Tillier (T. M. Marshall, editor, The Life and Papers of Frederick Bates; Bates to Tillier, October 14, 1807, I. 219).

Letters of Mrs. Ann Biddle Wilkinson

Brown 81 our Delegate for Congress inform’d me yesterday that he had received a letter from a Gentleman who went Passenger in the Same Vessel, after there arrival which mentioned there haveing a most delightful Passage & all well on Board, it was very satisfactory, but yet I am desirous to hear from them.

We shall leave this Place Next Week for the Falls of Ohio, & try what Change of Air will do for my Health, we should have sett of this day but I was taken ill last Saturday Confin’d to my Bed two days but am now thank God better & flatter myself with the thought of being able to bear the Journey in the course of eight or ten days—our dear John, James, 82 & Biddle 83 enjoy good Health & grow finely which is a Blessing to me. Inexpressible Particularly as there dear Papa is so Constantly from Home—I shall write again in a few days. My love to our dear Brother Clement & Sister Becky & all the Sweet Children including my darling James Hutchinson 84 & if an Opportunity to Berne should offer before I write again inclose this to my much loved Sally & remember us in the most affectionate terms to her, our Brother & dear Clement. 85 I am in great hopes the Sea Voyage will contribute to all there Healths—my love to Brother Owen, Sister Sally and the Children, Doctor Hutchinson &

81 John Brown, first Congressional delegate of Kentucky, appointed in September 1787, and later United States Senator from Kentucky. He was a close friend of Wilkinson’s and was accused of being one of the so-called Spanish Conspirators. His daughter, Clarissa, married Pike, the explorer (John Mason Brown, “The Political Beginnings of Kentucky”, Filson Club Publications, no. 6, passim; Temple Bodley, “Littell’s Political Transactions,” ibid., no. 32, passim.

82 James Biddle Wilkinson, second son of General and Mrs. Wilkinson, born about 1783, died at Dauphin Island, Alabama, September 17, 1813. He entered the army, in 1801, and served until his death, much of the time as Aide to his father. He was with Pike on his second trip of exploration and was in independent command of the party that explored the Arkansas River (H. E. Bolton, editor, Papers of Zebulon M. Pike”, American Historical Review, XIII. 800ff).


84 An eminent physician of Philadelphia whose first wife, who died in 1786 leaving a small son, was Lydia Biddle, younger sister of Mrs. Wilkinson. Dr. Hutchinson was born in Philadelphia, January 29, 1752, and died there September 5, 1793, in the midst of his efforts to relieve sufferers in a yellow fever epidemic (Henry Simpson, Eminent Philadelphians, 157).

85 “Sally . . . our Brother, and dear Clement” refers to Mr. and Mrs. Tillier and Clement Biddle Penrose (cf. notes 28, 29, and 30 post).
Cousin Sidney—Adieu my dear dear Father may every Blessing attend thee is the fervent wish of thy
Affectionate Daughter

N. WILKINSON

my dear Sons have just come in from Play & send great love to you all, when they hear I am writing to Philad. they crowd around me so close & have so many Messages to send that I am glad to get from them for they really Confuse me, John declares if he ever gets from Kentucky he never will return if he can Prevent it—

N. W.

our love to Aunt Biddle, Cousin Lydia McFun* & family.

Lexington [?] April 16th [1789]*

IV.

Lexington May 18 [1789]*

My dear & Much lov'd Father
I intended writing thee last Week by Capt. Fowler* but found it impossible the House was so Crowded, as it was quarterly

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*Lydia Biddle, daughter of William Biddle and Mary Scull Biddle, born 1734; married December 3, 1752, to Captain William McFunn of the Royal Navy and later Governor of Antigua, West Indies, where he died in 1767-68 (Jordan, op. cit., 164).

*The date of this letter is probably in the year 1789. This seems to be fixed (1) by mention of Wilkinson being in Frankfort “getting of his Boat which came from New Orleans,” and for which he advertises in the Kentucky Gazette from April 18 to May 16, 1789, for “hands” for a return trip; (2) by the reference to writing to her sister in Berne, Switzerland, where she had arrived in January, 1789 (Leach, op. cit., 47); and (3) by reference to “a Mr. Nancarro” who, on his return to Kentucky in the fall of 1789, advertised the opening of a “Malting Business . . . and Brewery” (Kentucky Gazette, September 12, 1789).

*The date of this letter seems to be fixed in the year 1789 (1) by further reference to General Wilkinson’s having gone “to the falls about two Weeks since to see his Tobacco Start from there”, as cited in note 26 ante; (2) to the delivery of “letters by Mr Parker”, who advertised a new assortment of merchandise for sale after his return from Philadelphia (Kentucky Gazette, June 6, 1789); and (3) because Mrs. Wilkinson was then living in Lexington as evidenced both in her letter and by the fact that an advertisement of Wilkinson’s of April 9, 1789, is dated there with the reference that he would go to Frankfort “to offer a number of Lots” (ibid., April 25, 1789).

*A Revolutionary soldier and a friend and business associate of Wilkinson’s; born in Virginia, 1755; died in Lexington, August 22, 1840. Captain, Virginia Revolutionary troops; came to Kentucky in 1784 or 1785, and settled at Lexington. Member of Danville Convention of 1787; Ensign, Lexington Light Infantry, 1789; first Member of Congress elected from Lexington, 1797-1807; Postmaster, Lexington, 1814-22 (G. W. Ranck, op. cit., 345; Biographical Dictionary of the American Congress, 984). One of the original Trustees of Frankfort (Hennig’s Statutes at Large, XII. 390; William Littell, Kentucky State Statutes, III. 357).
Court—Col. Blaines⁴⁰ who takes this Promises to deliver my letters to a Capt. Armstrong⁴¹ who goes immediately from Miskinggum⁴² to Philad. that I flatter myself you will receive them equally as soon as if they had gone by the other Opportunity—Mr. Gordon⁴³ has left this on his way to Philad. but stays such a length of time in Richmond that I declined writing by him, he had Promised to Call on you all that I must entreat you will not let him return without letters for it is my very Souls delight & Comfort to hear from you. I have been made happy by the receipt of my dear Brother Clemt. & Sister Beckys letters by Mr. Parker, but was disappointed at not getting one from thee my dear Father, however the assurance my Brother & Sister give of thy Health is happiness inexpressible to me—the things thee was so kind as to send me has not yet arriv’d from Limestone,⁴⁴ every Farmer is so Busily employ’d putting in Corn that it is difficult to find waggoners to go for goods just now. I expect they will arrive in the Course of a few days—My Wilkinson went to the falls [Louisville, Kentucky] about two Weeks since to see his Tobacco Start from there,⁴⁵ & has not yet return’d. I shall look for him about Wednesday Night.

⁴⁰ A Kentucky trader, lawyer, and soldier.
⁴¹ The reference is to Captain John Armstrong of Pennsylvania who served under Wilkinson as a Captain of Infantry and who was a Wilkinson partisan (C. K. Gardner, A Dictionary of . . . The Army of the United States, p. 44).
⁴² Refers to the present Marietta, Ohio, situated on the Ohio River at its junction with the Muskingum River.
⁴³ George Gordon, a frontier trader and lawyer.
⁴⁴ Now known as Maysville, Kentucky, the nearest point on the Ohio River to Lexington.
⁴⁵ Wilkinson was preparing a return load to New Orleans (cf. Verhoeef, op. cit., 57–58). At this time the Kentucky Gazette carried an advertisement for “hands to conduct my boats to the City of New Orleans in the course of the next month . . . will pay $10.00 per month or $30.00 for the trip”. Applications were to be made to John Lewis or to James Wilkinson in Lexington (Kentucky Gazette, April 18 and 25 and May 2, 9 and 16, 1789). An advertisement inserted by Judge Harry Innes and Horatio Turpin indicates the character of these shipments to New Orleans. They advertise that they are “authorized by General Wilkinson to purchase tobacco, tallow, butter, well cured bacon ham, lard, and smoked briskets of beef, to be delivered on the Kentuckye at the mouth of Hickmans . . . on or before 20th of January next. . . These articles being intended for a foreign market, it is necessary that they be handled in the neatest manner”, dated Lexington, December 12, 1787 (Kentucky Gazette, December 15, 1787).
Letters of Mrs. Ann Biddle Wilkinson

Mrs. Harris & Betsy\(^{46}\) are here, they desire there compliments to thee & the family. Mrs. Shield & Child\(^{47}\) are well but could not come over with them—

I like living in Lexington much better than in the Country, the Society is far better.\(^{48}\) I cant help wishing more & more

\(^{46}\) "Mrs Harris", born Hannah Stewart, 1741, in Bucks county, Pennsylvania. Died in Kentucky in 1803. Married John Harris in 1760. He was born in 1717, and died August 13, 1773. Her brother, William Stewart, was killed at the battle of Blue Licks, Kentucky, August 19, 1782. Mrs. Harris went to Kentucky in 1785, to look after land and other property belonging to her brother, father, and husband. She made frequent trips back and forth between Philadelphia and the Kentucky Wilderness. Her youngest daughter, Elizabeth (Betsy) Harris married Thomas Todd, afterwards an Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court, on June 22, 1788; cf. note 53 post (Jordan op. cit., 1302). Her oldest daughter married Dr. Hugh Shiel, first, and then Judge Harry Innes. (Cf. note 47 post.) There are many advertisements in the Kentucky Gazette signed by Judge Innes offering William Stewart's various lands for sale (cf. Kentucky Gazette for 1788 and 1789, passim).

\(^{47}\) The reference is to Mrs. Ann Harris Shiell, widow of Dr. Hugh Shiell, and her daughter, Catherine Harris Shiell. Mrs. Shiell was the daughter of John Harris and his wife Hannah Stewart (cf. note 46, ante), and was born in Bucks county, Pennsylvania, in 1760, and died in Kentucky in 1851. She came to Kentucky in the fall of 1784, being delayed in coming at the same time with Mrs. Wilkinson, on account of the death in Philadelphia of her youngest child (Wilkinson to Shiell, from Beasam Town, ten miles west of Red Stone fort, now Brownsville, Pennsylvania, October 12, 1784. A. L. S. in the Kentucky State Historical Society. This letter is also cited in note 8 ante.) Dr. Shiell died in Kentucky in September, 1785, and Mrs. Shiell was the executrix of his estate (Abstract of Wills, Lincoln county, Stanford Court House, Kentucky, quoted in Kentucky State Historical Register, XII. 80, and in advertisement for settlement of Dr. Shiell's estate in Kentucky Gazette, September 6, 1787). Mrs. Shiell married, second, Judge Henry Innes, February 10, 1792 (National Cyclopedia, X. 3). Her daughter, Catherine Harris Shiell, born, August 19, 1782, married Thomas Bodley, December 29, 1803. Mrs. Shiell's only child, by Judge Innes, Maria Knox Innes, married, first, John H. Todd, and, second, John J. Crittenden, afterward Senator from Kentucky (Abstract of Wills, op. cit., Kentucky State Historical Register, XII. 80 fn).

\(^{48}\) The Wilkinson's lived in the Wilderness, at what is now Frankfort, and later near Versailles. They moved to Lexington in the spring of 1789. In the Kentucky Gazette, April 25, 1789, Wilkinson gives notice, dated at Lexington, April 9, 1789, that he "will attend in town of Frankfort ... to offer a number of Lotts ... payable in produce next autumn." In 1786, Wilkinson had secured the passage of "An act for establishing a town on the lands of James Wilkinson, in Fayette county, and a ferry across the Kentucky River", which latter Wilkinson owned and operated (Henning's Statutes, XII. 390; Lewis Collins, Historical Sketches of Kentucky, II. 182; Wm. Littell, Statute Law of Kentucky, I. 247; L. F. Johnson, "Franklin County, Early Settlements on the South Side of the Kentucky River", Kentucky State Historical Register, May, 1908, 50-53).
every day to visit you, & my children seem to join me most ardently in my wish even my little Biddle. Mrs. Harris & myself were riding out this morning, & our conversation was about our dear Philad. friends which seem’d to interest the lovely children much for they were in the carriage with us. Biddle look’d up in my face & says mama when Biddle go & see Grand Papa. I could scarce refrain from crying when I answered the question, tho I really flatter myself it will not be more than a year, or two, before I embrace you all—I put John & James to school about three weeks ago, the man is a Poor Simple looking Simon but he told me he was taught by Anthony Benezet of Philad. which Prejudic’d me in his favor, & I concluded he could not learn them bad Pronunciation, at any rate it was better than running about the streets—my very dear becky must excuse my not writing particularly to her, for it is late at night, I am obliged to have on my spectacles & yet my eyes are so extremely painfull I can with difficulty see the letters I make, she must therefore look on this letter as partly to her—John & James desire much love to all there dear cousins & request cousin Tommy will write to him, & hopes to have a letter shortly from cousin George—I hope my

*Joseph Biddle Wilkinson. Cf. note 33, ante.

No record that Mrs. Wilkinson returned to Philadelphia, prior to the time Wilkinson re-entered the United States army in the fall of 1791, has been located. This was probably due to a lack of means or facilities or both. As soon as Wilkinson became the army commander at Fort Washington (Cincinnati), he came into the receipt of a steady, if small, income and also had at his disposal abundant "official" facilities for travel. The usual travel eastward from Fort Washington was up the Ohio to Fort Pitt (Pittsburgh), and thence overland, via Carlisle, to Philadelphia, Baltimore and New York. Mrs. Wilkinson took immediate advantage of the opportunity, for, in the summer of 1792, General Anthony Wayne at Pittsburgh wrote Wilkinson advising of accommodations and an escort (Ensign William Henry Harrison, afterwards President of the United States), "to accompany Mrs. Wilkinson to Philadelphia," where all of her children at intervals received education (Wayne to Wilkinson, Pittsburg, July 7, 1792, Wayne Papers, XX. 61).

Reference is to Anthony Benezet, a French Quaker, born January 31, 1713, died May 3, 1784, who came to Philadelphia, in 1731, and after a short trial in the mercantile business, abandoned it to take up teaching. He established the Friends English Public School (now William Penn Charter School) in Philadelphia, in 1742. In 1755, he established a girls school and later became interested in the amelioration of the condition of the Indians and slaves (Dictionary of American Biography, II. 177-78). Perhaps Mrs. Wilkinson's reference to the "Poor Simple Looking Simon" relates to the "Lexington grammar school opened by Isaac Wilson formerly professor in Philadelphia college" (Kentucky Gazette, January 12, 1788).
little dear Molly\textsuperscript{52} will not forget to Tambour me a pr. off ruffles. I shall be extremely Proud of them—Kiss all the dear Children for me, I long to see them—Adieu my dearest Father, Brother, & Sister, with Sincere prayers for your Happiness

Affectionately yrs

N. WILKINSON

I have a Strong Suspicion Betsy Harris will stay in Kentucky, there is a very Worthy Young Fellow\textsuperscript{53} Courting her, but unfortunately her Mama is averse to her staying in the Country, I am inform’d, & the Gentleman Cannot leave it—do my dearest Father write me soon, & don’t let Sister Becky neglect it—

thy Sincerely
Affectionate daughter

N. WILKINSON

V.

My dear Father

I left writing to the last moment in hopes of having the Pleasure of informing you of the arrival of my Belov’d Wilkinson, but am disappointed. My anxiety about him is so great that I scarce have Composure enough to write, not a foot steps quick into the House but agitates me, his Continual absence keeps my Mind on the rack. My Health is much as when Doctor Beatty\textsuperscript{54} left here, my belov’d Sons are all well, John very anxious to write thee but I believe he must defer it now, & Poor James as much Mortified that he cannot do it, the Master disapprov’d putting him to writing & when he found his Cousin Becky\textsuperscript{55} could write so Prettily it hurt him very much, but I am in hopes he will get in joining hand soon—they Promise themselves great Pleasure from the letters they expect to receive

\textsuperscript{52} Children of Clement and Rebeckah Biddle (Jordan, op. cit., 182).

\textsuperscript{53} The "Worthy Young Fellow" was Thomas Todd, who had served as the Clerk of the Danville Convention in December, 1784, and also in subsequent conventions. He was a Kentucky member of the Virginia Constitution ratification convention in 1790. He lived in Lexington and later in Frankfort where he, in common with many other prominent men, conducted a store, at the same time engaging in the practice of law. He was made Judge of the District Court, December 19, 1791; Judge, Kentucky Court of Appeals in 1805; and an Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court in February 1807. He died February 7, 1826. His wife, Betsy Harris (cf. note 46, ante) died in 1811 (Lewis Collins, op. cit., I. 274-76; II. 260, 355, 357, 360, 405-6, 498, 509, 543).

\textsuperscript{54} A frontier doctor. He advertised for those who owe him to call and "settle their accounts as he intends to leave the District the last of the month" (Kentucky Gazette, November 15, 1788). If he left the country, apparently he returned. Perhaps, like others who could do so, Beatty made occasional trips to Philadelphia, staying for longer or shorter periods.

\textsuperscript{55} The daughter of Clement and Rebeckah Biddle, born November 7, 1782; died September 2, 1870. Married Professor William Chapman, September 1, 1808 (Jordan, op. cit., 182).
from their dear Cousins, by Beatty—inclosed is a letter for my
dear Sally\(^{56}\) that I must request dear Brother Clement to direct
and forward, I wrote her a few Weeks ago & sent it by the way
of New York, it would add greatly to my Happiness hearing
from her & you, I hear very Seldom from you lately which in-
creases my anxiety—I shall take it as a favor if my Belov’d
Father will send me some thread or Cotton Stockings for the
Children for ‘tis impossible to Purchase any in this Town,
a few Pair of Short Color’d Gloves for myself, & must request
Sister Becky to send me a Pattern of a Black Sattin Cloak as
I must make me one & wish to have it fashionable & let me
know how they trim them—I think it Probable we shall spend
Part of this Winter at the falls however it will depend greatly
on My Jimmys Business\(^{57}\)—Mrs. Fowler\(^{58}\) spends a great deal
of her time with me. Mr. & Mrs. Short\(^{59}\) Stay Constantly

\(^{56}\) Sarah Biddle Tillier. Cf. note 28 ante.

\(^{57}\) The reference is to Wilkinson’s shipments to New Orleans and to
his real estate transactions. The statement regarding spending “Part
of this winter at the falls” refers to contemplated removal to Louis-
ville. Apparently Wilkinson moved in the late summer or early fall
of 1789. Tegarden & M’Cullough, merchants, advertised they had “Just
opened a store in Lexington on Main Street in the house formerly oc-
cupied by General Wilkinson” (Kentucky Gazette, November 21, 1789).
Likewise, in the Kentucky Gazette for December 12, 1789 (and for the
next six issues), General Wilkinson advertised live stock, “a valuable
tract of land of 10,000 acres together or in small parcels” as well as
“several houses and lots in this town [Lexington]”, all “to be sold for
cash or exchanged for merchandise”. Another fact that would seem to
indicate that the Wilkinson’s moved to Louisville in the summer or fall
of 1789 is that at that time it is reported Wilkinson, with nine others,
was appointed by the Virginia Legislature as a Trustee of Louisville
(J. S. Johnston, Memorial History of Louisville, I. 54).

\(^{58}\) Wife of Captain John Fowler. Cf. note 39 ante.

\(^{59}\) Reference is to Peyton Short, brother of William Short, who helped
to negotiate the Treaty of San Lorenzo with Spain (A. P. Whitaker,
The Spanish-American Frontier, 1783-1795, 146-48, 150-52, 180-183ff),
and a business partner of Wilkinson’s. Short lived in Lexington and
is reported to have met his future wife, Mary (Polly) Symmes, in Wil-
kinson’s home (Speed, “The Political Club”, Filson Club Publications,
IX. 79). She was the daughter of John Cleves Symmes who was the
mainspring of the Miami Purchase speculations (Beverly W. Bond, Jr.,
The Correspondence of John Cleves Symmes, 28 fn 8, 193, 198; Mc-
Bride, Pioneer Biography, II. 228). Short was an important person in
early Kentucky commercial and political life, serving as the Federal
Revenue officer at Louisville, and also as one of the managers for the
lottery authorized by the General Assembly for raising £500 “for erect-
ing an Academy to the Transylvania Seminary” (Kentucky Gazette,
October 10, 1789, and June 18, 1791). He and Wilkinson eventually
disagreed, as evidenced by a letter which Short wrote Wilkinson, from
Cincinnati, the home of his father-in-law, in which he upbraided Wil-
kinson for his treatment of him and asked for an explanation (Wil-
kinson MS. Letters, Short to Wilkinson, August 15, 1795, in Chicago
Historical Society, I. 37).
that I am happy in having good friends around me—it is aston-
ing how fast this Town improves it is by far the largest in the District & it is expected the Emigration this fall will be greater than ever, report says there are Seventy familys in the Wilderness now on there way to Kentucky—do my dear Father write me if it is but three lines, & I beg Sister & Brother would do the same—My love to Sister Sally, Brother Owen & family, Doctor Hutchinson, Cousin Sidney & my Belov’d James, tell the dear Boy Aunte begs him to write his Cousins, Johny writes my dear Tommy & George—Salute all thy Sweet Children for me, does Clem. & my little Lydia grow finely—my love & good wishes attend you all—Adieu my dear Father, Brother, & Sister, pray dont neglect writing me—

Affectionately

Yrs.

N W—

Lexington Sept. 25th [1789]

The 1790 United States Census gives Lexington a population of 834 people. It was then the capital of Kentucky. In December, 1792, the Capital was removed to Frankfort and occupied, as the Capitol building, “the Wilkinson house located on the bank of the Kentucky River” (Lewis Collins, op. cit., II. 182, 245).

The files of the Kentucky Gazette for 1787, and subsequently, contain many notices of the organization of parties to traverse the Wilderness. The usual place of assembly was Crab Orchard. All of the men were urged to come armed for defence against Indian attacks.

Residence in Lexington, and the remark concerning spending “Part of this Winter at the falls”, fixes the date of this letter as in the year 1789. Wilkinson apparently lived in and about Lexington when he first came to Kentucky. He is reported to have opened the first store in Lexington in the spring of 1784. It was stocked with merchandise from Philadelphia and contained much “finery” that appealed to the feminine part of the population (G. W. Ranck, History of Lexington, Kentucky, 106–8; Perrin, History of Fayette county, Kentucky, 202). Soon after Mrs. Wilkinson came to Kentucky, and after the arrangement with Dr. Shiell was dissolved, Wilkinson moved into the Wilderness and lived much of the time at various points between and in Frankfort and Lexington. John D. Shane, reporting one of his interviews to Draper, says his informer had told him that Wilkinson lived “near Versailles” before “coming to Lexington”. In 1789, he had “kept a coach and four, with two riders seated on the horse-Block” (Draper Ms. 11CC247). In the early days in Kentucky the Indians were such a continuous menace that military companies were organized at all points of population concentration. In 1789, at Lexington, a company known as the Lexington Light Infantry was organized; Wilkinson was elected as its first Captain and remained as such until 1791. This company is the oldest military company in Kentucky (Ranck, op. cit., 108).
Letter of December 17, 1928, from Kentucky State Historical Society, citing papers in its possession and quoting from a letter from James Lincoln, dated St. Eustatius, December 1, 1780, to Hugh Shiell, of Philadelphia. It is probable that the “Moylan”, in Barclay, Moylan & Co., was a member of the Irish family of Moylans which was closely identified with Philadelphia in Revolutionary days and subsequently. Stephen Moylan of Philadelphia apparently acted as the American agent of Barclay, Moylan & Co. In several of his letters to Dr. Shiell written from Kentucky in the fall of 1784, Wilkinson mentions dealing with “Moylan” (Letters of General Wilkinson”, Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society, September, 1926, XXIV, 264–66).

James Moylan, in L’Orient, a port on the Bay of Biscay south of Brest, apparently was one of the European principals. Stephen Moylan was a Revolutionary cavalry officer. At the close of the war, shortly after his promotion to the rank of Brigadier General, he retired from the army and engaged in commercial pursuits and in politics in Philadelphia, being appointed Commissioner of Loans in the State of Pennsylvania in 1793. He seems to have been particularly interested in the export business and to a certain extent in land speculations in Kentucky. He left no estate to speak of. James Moylan, after engaging in business for a time in Philadelphia, removed to France and located at L’Orient where, about 1778, he became the American commercial agent. Another brother, John Moylan, had been a merchant at Cadiz before coming to America. On March 22, 1781, he was appointed Clothier General to the army then at Morristown, New Jersey, a position formerly held by General Wilkinson. Still another kinsman, Jasper Moylan, a half-brother, came to America in 1781 (Sketch of Stephen Moylan, American Catholic Historical Researches, new series, V. 236–38).

In 1846, probably as a result of the settlement of Mary Moylan’s and her sister’s estates, some 240,000 acres of Kentucky land, in four parcels of 60,000 acres each, located in what is now Rowan county, Kentucky, seventy-five miles east of Lexington, were granted to the heirs of Maria, Jasper, Colonel John, and Stephen Moylan. There is no record of any land entries in Kentucky in this amount in the name of any Moylan. Perhaps the land was entered by someone else (James Wilkinson?) and then sold to one of the Moylans (W. R. Jillson, “Old Kentucky Entries and Deeds”, Filson Club Publications, XXXIV. 436, 133). There are no entries in the name of Barclay or Barclay, Moylan & Co.

Dr. Shiell apparently was still in Philadelphia in the early part of 1784, though Wilkinson was already in Kentucky (cf. note 6 post). Colonel William Grayson of Virginia, who had been one of General Washington’s secretaries and a colonel in the Continental Line, writes from Dumfries, Virginia, March 30, 1784: “. . . Since I wrote you I have seen my nephew, whose description of the Western Country is extremely favorable; he says the lands are amazingly rich, and well adapted to Tobacco, Indian corn, wheat, Hemp, flax and for raising stock; though he thinks good mill seats are scarce; he has no doubt of a trade up and down the river Mississippi as he has brought in ac-
counts of some more locations which are very valuable, I am willing to furnish you for your own account on lower terms; therefore if you want I don't think we shall disagree—as I wish to serve you. . . . I have hear of but one person, John Lewis, carrying goods from this State this spring; whether any have gone from Pennsylvania is more than I can tell; my nephew says he saw Gen'l Wilkinson in the neighborhood of the falls, who expected some;—The emigrants from this country this spring will be considerable; . . . in short nothing but inability will prevent me from carrying this scheme into execution—and I advise you to do something in this way if an opportunity offers providing too great a number have not already engaged in it,—which however I do not think very probable; as the demand this summer will be infinitely greater than heretofore.” After some discussion of the question of what Congress will do about the western lands, Colonel Grayson continues: “I expect to be at Richmond when the Assembly sits; this is the place for buying up officers land warrants. I will be on the watch and if a good bargain offers will give you immediate notice. In the meantime I advise you to be on your guard in case they are offered to you in Philadelphia.” (William Grayson to H. N. Shiell, March 30, 1784, in Manuscript Room, New York Public Library, New York). Mr. Temple Bodley in his “Introduction” to “Reprints of Littell’s Political Transactions” (Filson Club Publications: No. 31, p. x), says Wilkinson pretended “to be a member of a large mercantile company in Philadelphia”. Wilkinson’s correspondence, so far as it has been located, does not indicate that there was any pretension on Wilkinson’s part, but rather a mutual trust and confidence on the part of those whom he represented or with whom he had business transactions. For the next seven years Wilkinson was a prominent figure in the commercial, political, and military life of the Kentucky country. For further information relating to Dr. Shiell cf note 47 post. The fact that Wilkinson’s relations with the Biddle family of Philadelphia were always very friendly would seem to negative this remark of Bodley’s. In the summer of 1784 in one of his letters to Dr. Shiell Wilkinson wrote: “I find I shall be under the necessity of employing about £40 of your cash to discharge sundry engagements incurred on Act of the old cargo, for which I will give you a bill at 30 Days on Col. [Clement] Biddle” (“Letters of General James Wilkinson”, Kentucky State Historical Register, XXIV. 261–September, 1926). In a long letter to his brother-in-law, Dr. James Hutchinson in Philadelphia, Wilkinson discusses the sale of lands on which he made entry and also in reference to the purchase of merchandise to be sent him for sale in his Lexington store. In conclusion, referring to his relations with Shiell, he writes with reference to an account then in dispute: “I have undeniable vouchers, tho. Hugh I make no doubt, very speciously attempts to prove to the Contrary, as he has asserted it in a letter to myself, but I can bring him to no settlement, by Arbitration or any other way”. In addition to the foregoing letter, which is dated in Kentucky, June 20, 1785, there are later letters, notably one of August 18, 1786, which indicates that Dr. Hutchinson
was both acting as Wilkinson's agent in selling Kentucky lands and as his representative in Philadelphia, purchasing and forwarding merchandise, paid for either from the proceeds of land sales or out of Dr. Hutchinson's own funds ("Letters of General James Wilkinson addressed to Dr. James Hutchinson of Philadelphia", *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XII. 57ff). A letter from Dr. Hutchinson to Wilkinson in Kentucky, dated at Philadelphia, February 7, 1784, would seem to indicate that Dr. Shiell, then in Philadelphia, was glad to make what use he could of Wilkinson's services, both in locating suitable lands and in disposing of merchandise. Hutchinson writes: "Shiell has this moment sent me notice of another opportunity. . . ." The letter continues with news of Wilkinson's wife and children who were still in Philadelphia (Wilkinson MS. Letters, Chicago Historical Society, I. 6). There is no entry in either of Jillson's volumes of land entries in the name of Dr. Shiell (W. R. Jillson, "The Kentucky Land Grants", *Filson Club Publications*, no. 33, and "Old Kentucky Entries and Deeds," *ibid.*, no. 34), though under "Military Entries" there are eight entries totaling 800 acres in the name of Clement Biddle (*ibid.*, no. 34:374). There are no entries in the name of Dr. James Hutchinson. Apparently Wilkinson made the entries in his own name from Warrants purchased with funds supplied, at least in part, by others. In connection with Bodley's strictures on Wilkinson it should be noted that Dr. Shiell's daughter married Thomas Bodley, Bodley's grandfather (cf. note 47 post).