The Letters of Captain Nicholas Biddle

"And a mighty precious volume it is, too," the late Gaillard Hunt, Chief of the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, wrote, in June, 1916, with a historian's appreciation, of a collection of letters and papers relating to Captain Nicholas Biddle, of the Continental Navy.¹

The volume proved not only a precious one, but an elusive one as well. Brief quotations from a few of the letters contained in it—just enough to whet the appetite for more—were used in a short article about Captain Biddle, published in U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings, in September, 1917. The author, the late Edward Biddle, was a collateral descendant of the gallant and ill-fated naval officer, who perished with 300 of his crew, when his 36-gun frigate Randolph blew up in an engagement with a British 64-gun ship of the line. Edward Biddle concluded his article with a promise of a future one, using more of the Captain's letters.² It never materialized. The years passed; Edward Biddle died, and the volume vanished.

Ten years or more ago, in planning a full-length biography of Captain Nicholas Biddle, this writer precipitated a search within the family for the letters. This effort disclosed that, in 1913 and 1914, Edward Biddle and his cousin Charles Biddle had presented the public papers of Nicholas Biddle, the banker, a nephew of Captain Nicholas Biddle, to the Library of Congress. In appreciation of this gift, the Library repaired, arranged, and bound all other family papers and returned them, in July, 1916, to Edward and Charles Biddle.³

¹ Gaillard Hunt to Edward Biddle, June 30, 1916. Copy in possession of the editor.
² Edward Biddle, "Captain Nicholas Biddle (Continental Navy)," U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings, No. 175 (Annapolis, 1917): "At some future time the writer may develop the subject from the correspondence adverted to."
The family search, in 1938, located the whereabouts of all the volumes so returned—except one, and that, of course, was the "precious volume," as designated by Gaillard Hunt. There were many possibilities. It might have been deposited with a historical society or a library. It might have been given to a distant relative. Or it might even have been returned to the Library of Congress. Inquiries of likely depositories, however, invariably drew a blank. Sporadically, thereafter, the hunt continued, but without success.

Then, in the fall of 1948, the volume was found. It had lain in an old sea chest in a bank vault, concealed beneath an assortment of family miniatures and mementoes, which had been put aside as of little value when Edward Biddle's estate was being settled in 1933. Through the courtesy of Nicholas Biddle, an executor of the estate, this "precious volume" was deposited with The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, where it can now be consulted and will no longer be imperiled by loss or mislaying.

By a letter written in 1880, and inserted almost as an introduction to the volume, it is evident that these letters and papers narrowly missed destruction and were lost for many long years before they returned to the custody of the Biddle family. From endorsements upon some of the papers, it seems likely that Captain Biddle's oldest brother, James, collected them from various members of the family some years after the loss of the Randolph. His intent was to prepare a biography of his brother and two rough drafts were partially completed.4

An article about Captain Nicholas Biddle, written presumably by his nephew, Nicholas Biddle, the banker, was published anonymously in the Port Folio in October, 1809.5 This memorial, however, shows no indication that the letters collected by James Biddle had been consulted. The Port Folio biography dwells more upon the events of Nicholas Biddle's life shared with his brother Charles, or imparted by him to Charles when they spent some months together in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1777 and 1778. As for the biographical notes on his brother's career gathered by Charles himself,

4 "Memor1 from Brother Nich8 Letters," Nicholas Biddle Papers, Edward Biddle estate; hereafter cited as Nicholas Biddle Papers.
5 "Biographical Memoirs of the Late Captain Nicholas Biddle," Port Folio, October, 1809; hereafter cited simply as Port Folio.
these also fail to disclose knowledge of the letters. Apparently James Biddle, who died in 1797, had left the letters and papers in custody of his son, Marks John Biddle, who, as Prothonotary of Berks County, filed them for safekeeping in the courthouse at Reading subsequent to 1817. There they remained forgotten for close upon three quarters of a century.

Then, in 1880, a historically minded gentleman with “antiquarian tastes,” the late Louis Richards of Reading, Pennsylvania, secured permission to examine “some old and dusty papers which had lain deposited for perhaps forty years past in a sort of rubbish room adjoining the main entrance of our [Berks] County Court House.” Some months before, Mr. Richards had been introduced at The Historical Society of Pennsylvania to Craig Biddle, a member of the Society and much interested, as a vice-president, in its activities. Hence, when a small package of papers picked out of the pile in the rubbish room disclosed letters written by Captain Nicholas Biddle, Mr. Richards thought of his recent acquaintance, and wrote him of the find. Craig Biddle expressed an immediate desire for the papers, and they were sent to him on December 24, 1880, Mr. Richards forwarding them “with the Compliments of the season.”

Back again as a Christmas present in the possession of the family, the letters remained untouched and forgotten until Gaillard Hunt assorted and bound them into that “precious volume,” and sent them to Craig Biddle’s nephew, Edward, in 1916.

The letters and papers in this volume fall into two periods. The first comprises twelve letters (1771-1774) written by young Biddle to his sister, Lydia McFunn; his sister-in-law, Frances Biddle; his brothers, James and Charles; and three autograph drafts of business letters written in 1771. They embrace the time during which he served as a midshipman in the British Navy and as a coxswain in Captain John Constantine Phipps’s polar expedition, and a brief period following his return to America.

In these letters are interesting pen pictures of life afloat in George III’s ships of war prior to the American Revolution. One contains a

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7 Louis Richards to Craig Biddle, Dec. 21, 1880, Nicholas Biddle Papers.
8 Richards to Biddle, Dec. 24, 1880, ibid.
paragraph describing his first contact with Benjamin Franklin; contemporary veneration and respect for the wisdom of "Poor Richard" are evidenced in every word of Biddle's brief account of this meeting. Several letters tell of his regard for Captain Walter Stirling, under whom he served for fifteen months, and whose elopement from Philadelphia years before with an heiress of the Willing family had been an exciting romance of colonial Pennsylvania. To his sister Lydia, his letters were bantering, jocular, and, as he admitted, occasionally filled with nonsense. In several, however, even while humorously styled, he passed along little items of London life in that period just before New Englanders upset tea in Boston harbor and tranquility in Great Britain. To James, who financed his journey abroad and upon whom he drew not infrequently when short of funds, Nicholas's letters were serious and informative. He confided his hopes and aspirations, asked advice on numerous problems, and expressed always a high esteem for the then male head of the Biddle family. To Charles, who was only a few years his senior, he wrote chatty letters, dwelling upon subjects in which they had common interests.

The second, and by far the largest, group of letters represents one of the most important contributions to Revolutionary naval history that has become available to historians for a number of years. Biddle's six letters to his sister and brothers during the period he commanded the brig *Andrew Doria* in Esek Hopkins's first Continental fleet in 1776, are illuminating disclosures of the inept and inefficient operations of the Commodore whom Congress subsequently removed from command.

One of the letters clearly disproves Hopkins's claim that his crews were sickly before they left the Delaware Capes. Another comments on some of the captains of the fleet, showing, in the light of their subsequent conduct, that Biddle had keen powers of discernment. Three months before a court-martial dismissed John Hazard from the Navy, Nicholas had termed him an ignorant man of low cunning. Three years before Dudley Saltonstall sulked while his reputation

9 Biddle was a member of a court-martial which sat on the *Alfred* at Providence, May 8, 1776, and convicted John Hazard on four counts—two of breach of orders, one of embezzlement, and one of neglect of duty. Papers of the Continental Congress, No. 58, 263, Library of Congress (LC).
tion went by the board in the Penobscot campaign, Biddle had characterized him as an “indefatigable morose man.”

In a jocular epistle to his sister Lydia, he throws new light on the episode of the capture of a deserter at Lewes, Delaware, an adventure described in the *Port Folio* biography. By the letter to Lydia, it appears that Biddle had first to convince the county court that he had prior rights to the man held in custody, before he could break down the jail door to get him out.

The captain’s description of the engagement between the whole Continental fleet and H.M.S. *Glasgow* damns the conduct of it and concludes with a statement indicating that Captain John Burroughs Hopkins, the Commodore’s son, should have lost his commission for bringing it on without orders. At one point Biddle pleaded with his brother to get him detached from following the fleet, so that he could cruise with some reputation to himself. In another letter, he makes the ringing declaration: “I fear Nothing but what I ought to fear. I am much more Afraid of doing a foolish Action than of loosing My Life. I aim for a Character of Conduct as well as courage, and hope never to throw away the Vessel and Crew merely to convince the world I have Courage. No one has dared to impeach it yet. If any should I will not leave them a moment of doubt.”

One letter he devoted largely to an account of his capture “with a speaking Trumpet” of two Scotch transports loaded with Highlanders. Another is an autograph draft of his official report to Hopkins on a brief cruise in July, 1776. Two letters from Charleston, South Carolina, tell of two cruises in the frigate *Randolph*, and of his troubles with vessel and crew in that southern port. There are also a copy of his will and the original power-of-attorney to Collison Read, both executed just prior to his departure on his final and fatal cruise. Of that last engagement there is an incomplete letter written by Charles Biddle, who went to Charleston to piece together the tales of survivors and eyewitnesses.

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10 Dudley Saltonstall was charged with the principal responsibility for the Penobscot disaster of Aug. 14, 1779. He was tried by court-martial at Boston in October of that year, convicted, and dismissed from the Navy. The Navy Board of the Eastern Department forwarded the results “respecting this Unhappy and inglorious Event” to the Board of Admiralty, Oct. 28, 1779. Letter Book, Navy Board, Eastern Department, LC.
Although Nicholas Biddle's formal education ended in 1765, when he was but fourteen years old, his letters show a proficiency in orthography unusual for his generation, and particularly for seafaring men. His handwriting is small, but well formed and legible. The chief foible in his choice of words is his preference for the French form "favoir" for "favor." He is given to parenthetical remarks, some of which are exceedingly long, and his conclusions, in his letters to his sister Lydia, are frequently flowery and involved. Altogether, however, the letters show that he continued a student long after his school days ended, and that he had a command of the English language, a familiarity with literature, and a power of expression rarely found among the Continental naval captains. In all his letters he expressed himself as a modest man would.

Apart from the Captain's letters, there are numerous documents of historic importance in the collection, among them a copy of the agreement whereby the captains of Hopkins's fleet went to the extremity of a pact to share the proceeds of all prizes even when not in company. Existence of this agreement had been known hitherto only through such letters as one written by John Paul Jones protesting its unfairness. Its actual content has never before been available.

Another document which has been missing, save for its adapted text in the Journal of Congress, is the report of the Naval Committee on the distribution of prize shares to a vessel's personnel. A copy of this, in the flowing hand of Timothy Matlack, secretary of the Committee, is among the Biddle papers. So, too, is a contemporary copy of court-martial proceedings on board the Andrew Doria in Philadelphia, in September, 1776, against Luke Matthewman, first lieutenant of the Lexington. Biddle was the presiding officer. There is also the original Naval Committee order to Biddle, dated January 6, 1776, bearing the autographs of Stephen Hopkins, Christopher Gadsden, Silas Deane and Joseph Hewes. A printed broadside—a large sheet containing the pay resolutions of November 15, 1776—which is not

11 "the Seamen have been very ill used and the Navy hath been much hurted by the Cursed Association for the Joint Share of Prize Money thro' the Fleet whether present at the Capture or Absent." John Paul Jones to Robert Morris, Jan. 12, 1777, John Paul Jones Manuscripts, LC.

mentioned in the bibliography of the Journal of Congress for 1776, is also in this collection.

There are four crew lists for the *Andrew Doria*, one of which, in Biddle's handwriting, enumerates the forty-nine sick men landed at New London at the conclusion of the first cruise. These lists disclose many more names of Revolutionary seamen to aid the researches of genealogists.

The Captain's letters in this collection are greater than the total of all other letters of his found in other repositories. Rather than print just those that have so recently come to light, permission has been secured to reproduce other important ones. Two of these are in the Library of Congress; three, in the Rhode Island Historical Society; one, in the Franklin Delano Roosevelt collection at Hyde Park; and one in possession of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Biddle's signature is also upon two receipts for sundry foods purchased for his mother, dated 1763 and 1769, respectively; two petitions to the Pennsylvania Committee of Safety from the captains of the Pennsylvania row galleys, signed jointly with other officers in October, 1775; and a requisition for clothing for the crew of the *Randolph*. The petitions and the receipts are in The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and the requisition is in the Roberts' Autograph Collection, Haverford College Library. No others have been located, although a certificate to James Read, dated December 17, 1776, authorizing prize money for John Rogers for his part in the New Providence expedition, was sold at an autograph sale in Philadelphia on October 9, 1928. Efforts to trace it have so far failed.

Nicholas Biddle was born September 10, 1750, the ninth child of William and Mary (Scull) Biddle. He went to sea before he was fourteen, and, with his older brothers, helped support his widowed mother. On his third voyage the vessel was lost in a storm in the Gulf of Mexico and he, with several companions, was marooned for two weeks on a deserted atoll. From 1767 until the period of the letters herewith transcribed, he made a number of European voyages, two of them bringing emigrants from the Palatinate. Ever adventurous, and envisioning war between England and Spain in 1771, Biddle armed himself with numerous letters of recommendation and sailed for London to seek active naval service.

*Brevard, N. C.*

*WILLIAM BELL CLARK*
My dear Brother

I have been several times with the Gentlemen I brought letters to and the kindness and Respect they shewd me was such that I can scarce Mention or bear to think of till I am convinced I deserved it—Mr. Mc'lean\(^14\) said he would get me an Officers birth in the India service or a free passage to the Indias if I would procure letters which Mager fell\(^15\) frequently on the Passage promised to give me to Merchants in the Indias in order to sail in their service—but heres the mi[s]chief of it no ships will be fitted out till November—away I went to Dr. Franklin\(^16\) told him I had seen Cap' Stirling\(^17\) that he told me if I do nothing better to come as Midshipman with him I

\(^{13}\) Autograph Letter Signed (2 pp.), Nicholas Biddle Papers.

\(^{14}\) Lauchlan Maclane (1728-1776) was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, and practiced medicine in Philadelphia, apparently as an army surgeon, in 1761. Under the patronage of Col. Barré, he returned to England and, in 1766, was appointed private secretary to Lord Shelburne, Secretary of State for the Southern Department. In 1772 he received an appointment for India where he became an agent for Warren Hastings and brought home that gentleman's conditional resignation of the office of Governor General in 1775. When Hastings disavowed his agent's action, Maclane took passage for India to re-establish his good name, but the ship was lost at sea with all on board. John Stockton Littell, ed., Memoirs of His Own Times with Reminiscences of the Men and Events of the Revolution by Alexander Graydon (Philadelphia, 1846), 42, 418-421; hereafter cited as Graydon. Also Samuel Wharton to William Franklin, Dec. [?], 1766, Franklin Papers, XLVIII, 130, American Philosophical Society (APS).

\(^{15}\) Maj. Fell, a fellow passenger with Biddle in the ship Britannia from Philadelphia to London in the spring of 1771, was probably the British army officer described by Alexander Graydon: "There were two other majors with whose company we were a long time favoured. These were Majors Small and Fell; and if names had any appropriation to the persons of those who bear them, these might very well have been interchanged; for Small was a stout, athletic man, who might be supposed to possess a capacity for felling, while the other was one of the smallest men I have seen. Some one asking, one day, if major Small was at home? 'No,' says Fell, 'but the small major is.' " Graydon, 75. Fell was most likely personal aide to Gov. John Penn, for he was reported as accompanying the Governor to New Castle, Del., in the spring of 1770. Thomas Rodney to Caesar Rodney, Mar. 14, 1770, in George Herbert Ryden, ed., Letters to and from Caesar Rodney, 1756-1784 (Philadelphia, 1933), 36.

\(^{16}\) Biddle carried to Franklin a letter of recommendation written Apr. 23, 1771, by Joseph Galloway. The letter has been preserved and is in the Franklin Papers, III, 50, APS.

\(^{17}\) Capt. Walter Stirling, R.N. (1718-1786), at that time commanded H.M.S. Seafor'd, a sixth rater of twenty guns, which was being put into commission at Sheerness. The Captain, in 1753, had eloped from Philadelphia with Dorothy (Dolly) Willing, daughter of Charles Willing, prominent merchant of that city. See The Dictionary of National Biography (London, 1937-1938), XVIII, 1271, where the family name is mistakenly listed as "Killing."
then told him what Mr Mcleane said when after weighing the Matter he to my great joy advised me to accept of Capt Stirling's offer and made a long speech full of good advise and encouragement but what struck me most was the kind and free Manner in which he delivered it—from him I went to Cap' Shirly who hearing the whole matter seemed satisfied said that a Midshipman's birth was as hard to be got now as that of Lieutenant was in the war and added that I should now be serving my time which is required in the Navy in a good school and if any thing better should offer I was always ready as long as we kept the Channel Station. I went from him to Cap' Stirling told him all and I am to go aboard in two or three days—I have dined with Cap' Stirling and his lady with Dr Franklin and breakfasted with Cap' Shirly. I want for nothing but the power of doing good (and a very great one as you will say) which with all my vanity I cannot but think sin the master hand. I intended this for our Maker and tell you of it because I know twill also fit you. I beg you will use all freedoms in writing to me that you will give my love to our Mother to whom time will not permit my writing by this opportunity and my respect to all my friends not forgetting the Ladies who recommended me to Major fell and Cap' Shirly. Farewell Friend Nicholas Biddle

Dont laugh at my Bulls and Blunders for people in a hurry are excusable.

[Addressed] To
James Biddle Esq
in
Philadelphia

[Endorsed by James Biddle]
L'le Bro Nicholas
Westminster June 1771

18 The identity of Capt. Shirly has not been determined. Apparently he had spent some time in the colonies, so he may have been Capt. J. Shirly, master of the ship King of Prussia, whose last visit to the port of Philadelphia had been in the summer of 1766. Custom-House, Inward, Outward and Cleared Entries, Pennsylvania Gazette, June 5 and 26, and July 10, 1766.

19 The elopement of Dorothy Willing with Walter Stirling was the cause of much gossip, and the bride's father never forgave her. Her favorite brother, Thomas Willing, however, liked his new brother-in-law and maintained cordial relations with his sister, who had been a reigning beauty in Philadelphia society. Lily Lee Nixon, James Burd, Frontier Defender, 1726-1793 (Philadelphia, 1941), 19.
To James Biddle

Nore, Seaford July the 13th 1771

Dear Brother

A few days before I left London I wrote to Commodore and inclosed his letter in mine. I shall for your satisfaction inclose you a Copy of that as well as another I wrote to Mr. McCleane the letters themselves will prove that Vanity had no share in my sending them to you. I saw Mr. McCleane afterwards who told me to call upon him at any time and he would give me what assistance lay in his power—I would be glad if you could procure a Certificate from Capt. Smith and if there is any one going to the Bay who could get one from Na[es]smith it would be of Service. I was twelve days in London but always slept aboard and was scarce twice in the same house. I have seen the Abby Vauxhall St. James and Hide Parks the Musium and among the rest those famous fellows who ride four horses at once. But nothing pleased and astonished me more than the great St. Pauls. I shall defer giving you my opinion of those things till another opportunity. I dont no where to tell you to direct your letters Capt: Falkner or Mr. Willing perhaps know We are going to Ports-

20 Autograph Letter Signed (2 pp.), Nicholas Biddle Papers.
21 James Biddle, in a "Memor1 from Brother Nich8 Letters," identifies the "Commodore" as "Commodre Hood." Ibid. This was Samuel Hood (1724-1816), later Viscount Hood, who in his earlier days in the Royal Navy had seen frequent service on the North American Station. Encyclopaedia Britannica (Chicago, 1948), XI, 724, 725.
22 Capt. Charles Smith, under whom Biddle had made several voyages to Europe in 1768 and 1769 in the ship Crawford. James Biddle's "Memor1 from Brother Nich8 Letters," Nicholas Biddle Papers.
23 John Lockhart Naesmith, retired naval officer, who had commanded the snow Ann and Almack in 1765, when Biddle had started his seagoing career. In the following year Naesmith had gone to the Bay of Honduras, running off with a Philadelphia married woman, and had settled on a plantation there. James S. Biddle, ed., Autobiography of Charles Biddle (Philadelphia, 1883), 15-20, 33; hereafter cited as Autobiography.
24 Nathaniel Falconer, master of the ship Britannia, in which Biddle had come from Philadelphia. Falconer had been a charter member in 1765 of the Captains of Ships Charitable Club, and was a shipmaster in the London trade until the outbreak of the Revolution. He was active in the outfitting of the first Continental fleet. William Bell Clark, Gallant John Barry (New York, 1938), 65. Falconer also was one of the Commissioners appointed in 1776 for the building of the four Continental frigates in Philadelphia. Papers of the Continental Congress, No. 78, xxiv, 331, LC.
25 Thomas Willing had succeeded his father as senior partner in the Philadelphia firm of Willing, Morris & Co., and had recommended Biddle to Capt. Stirling. Port Folio.
mouth soon. But where we shall be stationed is not known. I find myself much more agreeably situated than I expected. I was very glad to find that Captain Stirling was in want of a Midshipman there being only one who could do duty with whom and the Doctors Mate I now Mess. I must not forget Captain Falkner's kindness who desired I would use all the freedom in the world in writing to him for Money and he would answer my demands. If ever I was able, I might repay it if not he would never ask it.

To the Comm[d] ["] Sir, On letting Mr. Willing know my intentions of serving in the Navy, he was so good as to give me the inclosed. But fearing you might not be in England on my arrival, he gave me another to Captain Stirling with whom I am now going as Midshipman. If anything happens which requires the interest of my friends, I hope Sir, you will Pardon me if I presume on my Recommendation to solicit your Countenance in favor of Sir your Most Ob[liged] Humble Serv[ant]. ["]

To Lauchlin ["] Sir, I can Only express how much I am obliged to you for your kind proffers. But as it will be several months before there is a possibility of your rendering me the service I solicited I have with the Advice of my friends accepted of Captain Stirling's kind offer of going as Midshipman in the Navy in which station I intend to continue if possible till I have served the time required & if anything should happen in the mean time that requires the interest of my friends, I hope you will Excuse my presuming on your goodness to solicit your Countenance in favor of Sir yours &c ["]

I have not had the pleasure of seeing any of Our Passengers since they left us at Plymouth. My love to all friends. Tell Statia. I shall give him an answer the next opportunity. I was just going to knock off. But looking round I thought it worth while to describe our Room.

The muster roll of the Seaford shows two midshipmen on duty at the date of Biddle's letter, John France and Charles Stirling, the latter being the eleven-year-old son of the captain. There was no surgeon's mate listed. Muster Table of H.M. Ship the Seaford between the 1st of July and the 13th of August, 1771, Public Records Office, London, Admiralty, Class 36, No. 7678.

Stacy Hepburn, a family friend, who is mentioned frequently by Charles Biddle. Autobiography, 4, 31, 35, 42, 59, 66 and 167. Hepburn became a prominent Philadelphia merchant, and in the latter years of the Revolution was joint owner of several letters of marque. Papers of the Continental Congress, No. 196, xv, 40 and 84, LC.
which is Square about 8 feet by twelve. Chests are placed round a Table in the Middle; our Partitions and curtains are the same viz. Spare Hammocks; in a word I never was so well off for Room, [or] for time, But what pleases me most I Must always keep myself Clean in order to appear on the Quar[ter]deck the walking of which is the principle part of my duty. I have several letters in the press which I cannot send by this opportunity to Neddy[28] Charly[29] Fanny[30] Lydia[31] &c to all of whom I beg you will give the Compliments of your very good Brother

Nicholas Biddle

the Seaford is a 20 Gun Ship[32]

[Addressed] To

Mr James Biddle

in

Philadelphia

per Cap't Sparks

[Endorsed by James Biddle]

Lre Bro' Nich[8]

Nore July 31 [sic] 1771

[28] Edward Biddle (1738-1779) was one of the most distinguished of the Biddle brothers. He saw active service in the Provincial Army during the French and Indian War; represented Berks Co. in the Pennsylvania Colonial Assembly, of which he was speaker in 1775; was a member of the First and Second Continental Congresses, but was kept from regular attendance by ill health; and was a member of the Pennsylvania State Assembly from 1776 until his death. Autobiography, 389-392.

[29] Charles Biddle (1745-1821) was the author of the interesting Autobiography, which his descendant, James S. Biddle, edited in 1883.

[30] Frances Biddle, née Marks, was the wife of James Biddle, oldest of the Biddle brothers. They were married on June 30, 1753, and had thirteen children, eight of whom died under ten years of age. Autobiography, 367.

[31] Lydia McFunn, née Biddle, widow of Capt. William McFunn, and Nicholas's oldest sister. She was born in 1734 and died early in the nineteenth century. Autobiography, 367, 368, and 385.

[32] Biddle entered on board the Seaford, June 22, 1771, being listed on the muster roll as "Nich' Biddle, Mid." Muster Table of H.M. Ship Seaford.
Sir,  

as I am going to quit the Channel for the West India Station and Capt' Faulkner is not in London I am quite at a loss where to apply for 6 or 8 Guineas which I am much in want of. If You will be so good as to favoir me with that Sum to receive it from Capt' Falconer on his Arrival you will greatly oblige me. If you knew me Sir that I had the Assurance to write to you on such a subject would have been at once an apology and proof how strongly I was urged to it But as you may not be so well acquainted with my Character as I could wish it may not be a miss to tell you that it was not till my third attempt that I resolved to Ask a favoir which if Granted will ever be Acknowl- edged by Sir your Most &c.

To John Allen

[Portland, Spithead, November, 1771]

Sir  

I am much obliged to you for your favoir and according to your directions have enclosed an order on Capt: Falconer in your favoir to Messrs David and John Barclay and drawn A Bill payable to Mr Mathew King or Order for 10 Pounds I am &c.

To John Allen

[Portland, Spithead, November, 1771]
To David and John Barclay

[Portland, Spithead, November, 1771]

[ Gentlemen ]

According to the direction of John Allen Esq'r I enclose to you an order on Capt: Falconer in his Favoir and drawn on you for 10 Pounds payable at 6 Days sight to Mr Mathew King order

I am &c

To James Biddle

Portland Madeira December the 20 1771

Dear Brother

I have just seen Cap't Wallace who informs me you were well the day he left Philadelphia I hope our Mother and all the Family are as well as I am I shall enclose you some letters which I hope you will examine and write me your opinion of them I am very concern'd for fear you may have some Reason to wish I had not applied to him that I know not of—Cap't Stirling has introduced me to Mr Surles with whom I din'd in Company with twenty other Gentlemen and Ladys he was very Complisant to me and I have Reason to think Cap't Stirling is my friend here I cannot help telling you that he was not for my Comming into the Navy as there was no likelihood of war however after some Consideration he said it would be of service to me to be some time in the Navy I like it very well But Should very much better if there was a Prospect of Riches as well as honour. I have defer'd writing so long that I have but just time to tell you that we are going to sail for Antigua where I hope to hear from you by every opportunity My love to Fanny and all Friends

I am dear Brother your your Most Affectionate—N. Biddle

[ Addressed ] To

James Biddle Esq'r

in

Philadelphia

[ Endorsed by James Biddle ]

Lre Bro' Nich'

Madeira 1771

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38 Autograph draft (1 p.), on verso of John Allen's letter, ibid.
39 Autograph Letter Signed (1 p.), ibid.
40 T. E. Wallace was master of the snow Neptune, which cleared Philadelphia for Madeira around Nov. 10, 1771. Pennsylvania Gazette, Nov. 14, 1771.
41 See preceding three autograph drafts to John Allen.
42 "Mr Surles" has not been identified.
Dear Brother

We arrived at Antigua the 3 of May and saild the 5th for this place. Just before he saild one of Our Officers brought me the Letters you sent by Capt Cunningham which he received from a Gentleman at St. Johns. I have just received that you enclosed to Mr. Willing. I was very uneasy about Neddy as you have not spoke particularly of him but said all the family are well. I hope he is much better if not perfectly recoverd. I am very glad you approve of my proceed-ings. We are going to Antigua from there to St. Kitts from whence we sail for England the 16 of July. If any letter[s] you should send do not arrive till we are saild Mr. Willing will forward them from Barbadoes. Mr. Hockly from Antigua. I shall desire them to inclose them to Mr. Mathew King on Portsmouth Common where they will be taken care of for me. I wrote from St. Kitts to Lydia Tommy Polly Bond Polly McFunn also to you by Capt. Mckain in a Snow. I have plenty of time to study and improve my mind which I think I do not Misapply for I some how or other think Myself much more recond. Which I think proceeds more from my conversing with good Books than good Men you will perhaps know better how Capt. Stirling likes me from Mr. Gilbert than I can inform you Tho I cant help telling you that he has always shewd a Readiness to serve...

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43 Autograph Letter Signed (2 pp.), Nicholas Biddle Papers.
44 Gustavus Conyngham (1747–1819), in the brig Charming Peggy, cleared Philadelphia for Antigua early in March, 1772. Pennsylvania Gazette, Mar. 5, 1772. His arrival at Antigua is recorded in the Gazette, Apr. 30, 1772, which also contains the following: “Extract of a letter from Barbadoes, dated March 20, 1772: ‘Since my last arrived here Admiral Mann, with his squadron from the Leeward Islands, and are all at anchor in this bay, namely,—The Montagu, Admiral Mann, of 60 guns; the Portland, Captain Walter Stirling, of 50 guns; the Quebeck, Capt. Reynolds, of 36 guns; the Kennington, Capt. Clark, of 24 guns; the Active, Captain Williams, of 24 guns; the Favourite, Capt. Biggs, of 20 guns; the Seahorse, Capt. Pasley, of 20 guns, and the Spy sloop,—, of 14 guns.’”
45 Charles Willing.
46 “Mr. Hockly” has not been identified.
47 The references are to Lydia McFunn, his sister; Thomas Biddle (1752–1775), his youngest brother; Polly Bond, probably a daughter of Dr. Thomas Bond; and Polly (Mary) McFunn, only daughter of his sister, Lydia. Autobiography, 368, 369, and 372.
48 Capt. T. M'Caine, of the snow Penn, whose arrival in Philadelphia was recorded in the Pennsylvania Gazette, May 21, 1772.
49 Capt. A. Gilbert, of the sloop John, whose arrival from St. Vincent was announced in the Pennsylvania Gazette, July 9, 1772.
me I live With the rest just as I would chuse to do I have their Good will But am not their Companion. I shall write to you from Antigua or S' Kitts Please to remember me to all the Little ones I am Dear Sir your Affectionate

Brother N Biddle
give my love to sister Fanny I thought to write to her But have not time

[Addressed] To
Mr James Biddle
in
Philadelphia

[Endorsed by James Biddle]
Lre Bro' Nich
Barbadoes May 1772

To Charles Biddle

[Portland, Antigua, May 23–31, 1772]

[Salutation and two pages missing] The bobstays in stead of dead eyes have large thimbles in them of a triangular form well Leatherd it is the same with the fore and Main spring stays and Mizen stays round the Bowsprit and Masts are Collers splised as close as possible and a kind of thimble in the shape of a half Moon With a season at each end fixed in them For the Gears there is a treble block of Each side aloft and a double one on the yards it is a 6 or 6½ Shroud laid Rope going upon a wind we house the lee one a block and slack away the weather one this is done when the y'd is Braceing about when in stays besides the Gears there is a very large Coller that goes round the head of the Lower and heel of the topmasts and come through the top before the fore mast Crosstree there is another also on the y'd between the block seized close to the Y'd that above but just enter'd through the top they have

50 Autograph Letter Signed (3 pp.), Nicholas Biddle Papers.
61 As this letter gives a detailed description of the ship's rigging and contrasts it to that of merchant vessels, and as it also refers to the passage, it apparently was written from the Portland at Antigua in late May, 1772. In Nicholas's letter of May 14 to his brother James, he lists those of his family to whom he had previously written; Charles was not included in the list. The Portland sailed from Barbados, May 16; watered at Dominica, May 17–21; and arrived at Antigua, May 23, 1772. Portland's Journal.
thimbles and lashings in proportion the bite of our top sail tyes are clapt over the mast head the ends reeve through a double block on the Yd up again and through a Single block close under the Rigging the purchase below is two large Single blocks top Gt halliards come in the top with a big tackle purchase the fall on deck the Brace blocks are strapt close round the Yd except the top Gt Yd which have long brace pendants we have two Cat harper legs to the topmast shrouds and those in the fore and Main do not go from one side to the other But round the mast there is two long legs and a short one spliced to one of them the after part of the mast so that you have two round the fore part and three abaft those for each side are stript and leathered together in the Necke of the Mast most Merchant Ships have their Mizen mast nearly the same way When Studding sails are set we have a tackle on the topsail Yrd two thirds out another on the Boom Dt for which there is a long pendant on the Boom this is to support the Boom when the Lower one is set M top mast spring and Mizen top mast stays reeve through those close Collers and half moon thimbles under the top and are housed up and belayed in the top, we have a Gaff I do not know the use of a Yd unless you make use of the Mizen to Lie too under when the Bowling helps to Remove the strain from the Mast head and peak halliards lower down to where the Yd takes the mast tho I know Not any instance of its Carrying away the head of the mast nor do I believe it will our Captain is very particular in inspecting into the duty of the Ship on our passage every spare coil of Rigging hawsers and all were opend And towd three or four hours with a handspike at the end of them then hawld in dryd and made up the Sails have all been well soakd I have seen four Cables Veerd away and rid by for ten or 12 Hours then hove in and Quild [coiled] down We have two Capstains one between the fore and Main Hatchways calld the geer capstain which is made use of for the Viol, the Viol block is lashed round the Mt Mast the Viol is rove through carried round the four Mast brought to the Capstain and spliced the Messenger is Carried forward round the fore mast brought aft the other side taken three times round the Capstain abaft and the two ends lashed together for which purpose there is an eye in each end this is stopt to the Cable by stopers made on purpose of yarns like Salvagers the Number Clapt on is in proportion to the Strain that is hove The Messenger
is 12 inch. Suppose you reeve your Spritsail Lifts through a hole made on purpose in the Bees of the Bowsprit.

Why have you not given yourself the trouble to write a few lines to one who loves you as much as ever one Brother loved another and who delights in Conversing with you as much as Does your

Affectionat Brother
Nicholas Biddle

Let your Spritsail Brace pendants come through the Blocks under the top it is more purchace and not so clumsy as short ones a Block on the jibb guys are of no use.

[Addressed] To
Cap' Charles Biddle
in
Philadelphia

To Charles Biddle

Montserrat Portland June the 20 1772

Dear Charly

I intend to describe the situation I am in. I have Little too Little duty. I have plenty of time to Study or Learn what I chuse. This situation I liked very well with the expectation of a war and intention to continue in it not with standing I Lived at our Brothers expence the prospect of having it once in my power to Return it made me willing to accept of it. But as that prospect is past I cannot bear to think of Murdering more of my time and it was with great joy that I heard of our being orderd home. I find Cap' Stirling description of this Life very just and true. When he endeavord to perswade me from it, he told me that every officer only Lives from hand to mouth that kept up to the dignity of his station that he could afford to Live much better when he commanded a Merchant Ship that it was all show &c. I need not tell you I am wavering what to do. Some time I think of Coasting it a while then having a Little funn in waiting upon Laughlin as a most humble dependent which will afford me diversion if I can hold from Laughing in his August presence—I have Blushd in it before now—Tell Statia I would be glad he would send

52 For a glossary of rigging terms used in this letter, see Appendix.
53 Autograph Letter Signed (2 pp.), Nicholas Biddle Papers.
me Pilmore's morning prayer\textsuperscript{54} which he in his usual manner of expressing calls a damnd fine one. I hourly hear damnd ones But fine ones only on Sundays our Minister told me a few days ago that it was mere mockery to preach here besides he said he could not preach against any folly or Vice Scarcely without seeming to offer an affront to the whole Congregation. What a round turn I have taken began with duty and have got round to preaching. My Love to our Mother and all the family Dear Charly

I am Your
Affectionate Brother
N Biddle

\textit{[Addressed] To}
Cap$^1$ Charles Biddle
in
Philadelphia

\textit{[Endorsed by James Biddle]}
Lre
Bro$^e$ Nich$^*$ to Bro$^r$
Charles—
Montserrat June 1772

\textit{To Lydia McFunn}\textsuperscript{55}
Montserrat Portland June 20 1772

My Dear Sister

My Letters to you are Like an Uproar. I have so much to say and my thoughts flow in so fast that I can neither write them nor even separate them so that I must humbly beg you to be so kind as to pardon me for not doing that which I am not able to perform Dear Sister

I am your most Affectionate
Brother N Biddle

P S When we Lay at portsmouth one of the Leufenants used to talk much of his Wife that she was rec[k]ond one of the finest Women of

\textsuperscript{54} Rev. Joseph Pilmore, D.D. (1739–1825), had arrived in Philadelphia in 1769 on a mission from John Wesley, and introduced Methodism to the city, preaching from the steps of the State House. Later he became an Episcopalian and was for many years rector of St. Paul's Church. Henry Simpson, \textit{The Lives of Eminent Philadelphians Now Deceased} (Philadelphia, 1859), 801–804.

\textsuperscript{55} Autograph Letter Signed (2 pp.), Nicholas Biddle Papers.
the age &c. I was anxious to see once more a person so amiable so beautiful and good as she was represented to be. forgive my extravagance when I declare that [I] really expected to see a miss clifton or miss stirling. but oh what a disappointment. no doubt the comparison I had formed helped to lessen my opinion of her. her person is tolerable well shaped. cleanly featured. ruddy complexion. but in her manners she was very awkward and wanted very much a little of that gracefulness the above persons are so conspicuous for. one good quality she had however, a very remarkable one for an ignorant woman. I mean that she was free from that impertinent talkativeness the vulgar are given to—when I was viewing the rarities in the british museum in company with about 30 other gentlemen and ladies amongst the rest a new married pair, poor fellow I blush for him when ever I recollect it. his wife who perhaps but a few days before would scarce deign to smile upon him was continually crying lovey do this or lovey do that. tis wonderfull to think what an expanse of blushes there was for none were so insensible as not to see either her folly or his concern—I wish you would tell me what it is that keeps me from home I hardly know myself. I think a longer stay in the navy is only murdering time and as I grow in years I am more anxious of making money by some sure way. if I have any encouragement I intend to take one trip to india and so come round by land call at reading visit the northampton merchants in my way and so come on and surprize you—

It was my misfortune about 35 years ago to read the following remarkable line in pope the proper study of mankind is man. I took the man’s word for it and left astronomy and indeed every branch of what the works calls useful learning even the admirable art of finding how many different sounds every particular syllable will bear which I thought I was within ten years of attaining to the knowl-

66 Anna Maria Clifton (1741–1811). of her benjamin rush wrote in his commonplace book, apr. 13, 1811: “Miss Ann Clifton died in the 70th year of her age of a dropsy. . . . she was the survivor of 3 sisters, all very handsome. . . . Miss Nancy was uncommonly beautiful when young, and retained the remains of it to the last year of her life. her manners were polished and her conversation pleasant and full of anecdote.” george W. corner, ed., the autobiography of benjamin rush (princeton, 1948), 295.

67 Members of the biddle and scull families lived in both berks and northampton counties. autobiography, 380, 389.

68 alexander pope, essay on man, epistle II, line 1: “Know then thyself, presume not god to scan; the proper study of mankind is man.”
I left all to pursue the proper Study and now find myself as far off as ever every Man being different from all the rest of the world in some one particular or other so that whenever I see a strange face I have new work. Now it can't be supposed that I could be deceived in the Man's meaning but he was certainly mistaken—I am studying Algebra by the powers of which I hope soon to be able to bring Philadelphia and London together if you have no objection. Now this is the greatest proof I can give of my esteem for you to submit to your pleasure in an affair I have much at heart. I think it may be done with the same ease that my son John moved his house allowing only for the greatness of the undertaking a due proportion of every necessary article [balance missing].

[Addressed] To

Mrs. Lydia McFunn
in
Philadelphia

To Frances Biddle

Montserrat Portland June 20 1772

Dear Sister

When I was at Barbadoes I set down to write to all my friends but was quite mistaking in the quantity of thoughts my head seemed so full of whether some of them had retired through sulkiness for not being called in their proper turn or from a consciousness of my incapacity they slunk off[f], whatever was the cause or whether there was any or no tis certain I was quite out before I had wrote what would scarce fill a quarto volume—I am now convinced by my own reason that I ought not to lengthen my letter I even know how insipid it is for a person to read the writings of those far inferior to themselves in knowledge therefore the fear of offending in being too troublesome obliges me much against my inclination to leave a task I am unable to perform either to my own satisfaction or your entertainment you will not imagine me so ignorant either as to think

59 Autograph Letter Signed (2 pp.), Nicholas Biddle Papers. The recipient of this letter was the wife of Nicholas's oldest brother, James. She was born in 1731, the daughter of David Marks, a Reading merchant. Autobiography, 369.
I mean to give you an opportunity of passing some compliments on me. No, no, I can never expect praise at the expense of your veracity. Please to give me compliments to Mrs. Marks, Mrs. Graydon, and Miss Genny. My love to dear Lydia Marks and the other Chaps. I am dear Madam.

Your Most
Affectionate Brother
Nicholas Biddle

[Addressed] To
Mrs. Frances Biddle
in
Philadelphia

To James Biddle
Antigua Portland July 6th 1772

Dear Brother,

I received your kind and affectionate letter by Cap't Williams. Lydia and our good mother had not time to write as you supposed; however they sent a promise to write as you supposed. However, they sent a promise to write by Cap't Cunningham. I was not much disappointed at their non-performance as I expected Mr. Gilbert would arrive there and stop them. We are now at St. Johns in daily expectation of the admiral's arrival upon which we sail for England. I believe Cap't Stirling has not received the letter you mentioned and being apprehensive of his not receiving it while in the country and fearful of our lying a long time at Spithead before we are paid off, I have drew an order on you for nine pounds 18 currency which Cap't Cunningham very cheerfully accepted. Mr. Hockly is a

60 Mrs. David Marks, Frances Biddle's mother.
61 Mrs. Alexander Graydon, a sister of Mrs. Frances Biddle. Autobiography, 74.
62 Miss Genny was possibly Jane Biddle, oldest daughter of Nicholas's cousin, Owen Biddle. Ibid., 372.
63 Lydia Marks was probably Lydia Marks Biddle, youngest child of James and Frances (Marks) Biddle. Ibid., 368.
64 Autograph Letter Signed (2 pp.), Nicholas Biddle Papers.
65 Capt. Samuel Williams, in the brig Carpenter, cleared Philadelphia for Antigua toward the end of May, 1772. Pennsylvania Gazette, May 28, 1772.
very Kind and Friendly Man and has treated me with great Respect on your and the Rest of the familys account I shall always Esteem him for his behaviour to me Especially as it was out of his great esteem for the family—My Dear Brother I have sometimes thought that any one might tell by my Countenance that I was not so well provided with Cash as my appearance deserved. the Command of it in case of emergency certainly gives a person an air of Assurance very Requisite in all Stations of Life put [but] particularly in this However you may depend on my being as great an Eoconomist as you would wish I shall Make a purchase of a Sextant If I can meet with one that is Cheap as I know every Method yet proposd for finding the Longitude I will also get a three foot telescope if I Continue in the Navy in which I intend to be guided by Cap Stirlings advice I am extremely fond of him he has not only the Character of an Excellent Commander but that much Nobler one of an Excellent Man I must now conclude with my Love to our Dear Mother to Fanny and all the dear Little ones to all friends and believe me to be Dear Sir your Affectionate Brother

Nicholas Biddle

[Addressed] To

Mr James Biddle
in Walnut street
Philadelphia

[Endorsed by James Biddle]

Lre Brof Nich
July 1772

To Lydia McFunn

London October the 20th 1772

Dear Sister

The Portland is paid off and Cap Stirling being in a bad state of health dont chuse to be employd But the case is otherwise with your Most Obedient I am Ready for any service or station Yet am somewhat nice at present I refused going in the Lynks in expectation

67 Autograph Letter Signed (2 pp.), Nicholas Biddle Papers.
68 The Portland was paid off at Sheerness, Oct. 13, 1772. Muster Table of H.M. Ship the Portland.
of better bread which if I do not get I know and am always prepared
for the worst. As the British Nation in Revenge for the many insults
they have Received from European powers have Wisely Vented
there wrath on the Indians of St. Vincents they will hardly dare to
War with any other Nation till that is happily concluded — So that
finding all my hopes Blasted I determine to Learn to Despise that
power I could by no means attain accordingly I began to say that all
was Vanity that nothing was great the contempt of Which was great
&C faith I could give a lecture that would take three feet from the
height of Geny's Cap that make Polly forget her Lover for half an hour
and Statia Sleep a whole night without dreaming of the Isaacks and
even make myself think the Grapes sower while I was speaking
Messr Franklin McClane & Allen are out of town Cap Shirly since
I was here last fell from his horse and broke his Arm and two of his
ribs and has lately lost his eldest Daughter I dined with him
yesterday at Mrs Randolfs an old Play mate of yours. She is a
Daughter of Cap Hardgraves — I force see Your curiosity will not
be satisfied with what I have already said therefore shall endeavour
to do as far as my Abilities will Let me. I wear my own hair Black
hat Cloth coat knit Breeches Paper Coulored Stockings Leather
shoes Metal Buckles and Linen Shirt. I Lodge in London and Sleep
on a bed. There is many very well looking Girls here But I have had
a bad opinion of their Taste as I have walkd much through the City
and not been spoke to by any whom I would Chuse to Converse with
—Again I am Peculiarly happy in having the Well wishes of Many
Excellent Persons and I believe of every Person who knows me. Yet

69 The Caribs on the island of St. Vincent had resisted British efforts to take over control
of the island, which had been ceded to Great Britain by France as one of the spoils of the late
war. Encyclopaedia Britannica, XIX, 862.

70 See note 62.

71 Polly (Mary) McFunn. See note 47.

72 Presumably a reference to Stacy Hepburn's interest in a daughter of the Isaac family of
Philadelphia.

73 "Mrs. Randolf" was Sarah Randolph, nee Hargraves, who had visited in the colonies
and had been a friend of Lydia Biddle McFunn and also of Sarah Franklin Bache. Twelve
years later, in July, 1785, Mrs. Randolph wrote a plaintive letter to Benjamin Franklin, stating
that she lived in an almshouse in Deptford, owing to misfortunes "due to the late unnatural
war." Franklin Papers, XXXIII, 162, APS.

74 "Cap Hardgraves" has not been identified, but was probably a merchant marine captain
who had plied between England and the colonies.
fortune is determind to Baffle all our intent and Fate swears I shall
never Command any other Person But have intire Power to rule over
Self and every Requisite appertaining thereto is accordingly granted
I encourage every Principle to Perform its office according to their
Different functions indeed Mr Conscience seems to Play the Tyrant
at times however Reason always Reconcile us when I fall out with
her Shame follows me like a Spaniel and is Rather too officious
Upon my word since I took the Government of myself in hand my
wonder daily increases to think how I Could suffer it to Lie so long
uncultivated—Whereas I shall be able to Reach the Bottom of the
Page without the help of more Nonsense Ill Change the Subject and
or Conclude with desiring that you would be so kind as to Remember
me to our Dear Mother to our Brothers Sisters Relations Friends and
so forth Also beg as a Very great favor that you believe me to be
your Affectionate Brother

N: Biddle

[Addressed] To

Mrs Lydia Mcfunn
in
Philadelphia

To Lydia McFunn

London October the 18\textsuperscript{th} 1773

My Dear Sister

I wrote to Charles yesterday and directed the letter to you for
fear in Case of his Absence you should be Rob'd at least for some
little time of so inestimable a treasure

Tis three days since we were discharged from the Carcass\textsuperscript{76} and I
intend (But why need I tell what at this moment I purpose to do
when my Mind like the wind or ten times more wavering like Women
and to the full if possible as fickle and inconsistent (I only speak from

\textsuperscript{75} Autograph Letter Signed (3 pp.), Nicholas Biddle Papers.

\textsuperscript{76} Nicholas had entered the \textit{Carcass Bomb} as a seaman, on May 4, 1773; rated as coxswain, May 11; and participated in the Phipps Polar Expedition of that summer. The vessel had been paid off at Deptford, Oct. 14, 1773. Muster roll of H.M.S. Carcass Bomb, Public Records Office, Admiralty, Class 36, No. 7567.
hearsay and the General Opinion of the impartial not from my own Knowledge and experience which directly contradicts it and if I had not an Abrahams faith and the Curiosity of a Locke to search after truth I should certainly have my doubts concerning these Aspersions on the fair) is constantly making and Breaking Schemes it hourly and minutely forms) to wait as many more for my friend Duncan then walk off[f] Do not imagine the Person about whom I used to write so often and so much is going to take another spell on shore no no He is at present incog in the Character in which He shirks being that which is most agreeable to and most suitable for him viz tar Neither of his Friends or acquaintances knew where he went nor do they know he is now Returns He says he intends God willing (that his sanctified manner of Speaking you know he is a half Quaker half P——n names which convey the same Idea and with all Wise Men are synonimous terms to ——— ———) to see his Friends in Delf next Spring not with a view of getting into an employ no indeed he does not mean to lay himself at the feet of any Slave to solicit support the Manner in which he spends his youth will Make Greenwitch a comfortable sanctuary for his grey hairs & poor Creature how I feel for him

I do not intend to go to Greenland again for there I had no oppor-tunity of writing or receiving letters from you a very Suficient Reason Five months and not Clap pen to Paper Suppose I should now give you some small account of our proceeding or do you not think it would be most Proper first to forewarn you not to Credit Idle tales for you must know I have been so frightened so terified at hearing of the surprizing difficulties we encounterd the Dreadfull dangers we were in that I am positive my hand shakes while I write and what astonishes confounds and frightens me most of all is that during the whole Voiage I did not apprehend danger But now good lack a daizy perceive it plain as the Balled in sister Pollys hand Pray does she sing sweetly as ever has she learnt any of My songs methinks I hear a melody Like the Screaching of a Jack when Polly winds and every

77 The town of Delft, Holland, near Rotterdam, the port of embarkation for the Germans of the Palatinate, who were brought to America by Capt. Charles Smith in the ship Crawford in 1768–1770. Pennsylvania Archives, Second Series (Harrisburg, 1890), XVII, 486, 490, and 494.
wheel grates like the file on stubborn steel. Should I tell you of the Suns not setting for two months and of our observing him when lowest at 12 P M or with Merridian in order to find the Latt: the same as at 12 Midday You who are perfectly well acquainted with [sic] those things would be apt to answer certainly in the Latt: 80 or 81 it will be so Should I tell you that all the Valleys Coves &c are fill'd with What once was snow and is now so on top But the under part either warmed by the upper coat or by the Sun when upper most is Congeald into Ice and from these Coves fall Large Pieces of Ice which appear higher than than [sic] any to be met with at Sea and Places from whence they Part are Perpendicular higher than Delf Steeple78 That all the Ice you meet seems formd of the Same Materils Coverd with Snow &c that most the Ice you meet with at Sea is her[e] 2 or three feet above the surface of the water some 4 or 5 and some few hammocks 18 or twenty feet would you Answer you Supposed so Whatever you would say wherever you are whatever you do May God of his infinite Mercy Bless and Protect you from all Evils both now and evermore so sincerely Prays your affectionate Brother

N Biddle

Pray Remember my Love to our Dear Mother to Fanny and all Friends God Bless them Pray Lydia What do you Mean by Ironical Ment Letters you alarm me I cannot conceive your meaning and therefore beg you would distrust your judgment if it cannot interpret a fairer meaning I did not think I writ so dark a manner as to Leave my meaning doubtfull I wish I had the Means to testify my Love otherwise than by words God who knows all hearts knows how much I Love and Esteem You Ask him whether my Affect[ion] for you is not as great as ever a Brother was for a Sister

[Addressed] To

Mrs Lydia Macfunn
in third Street
Philadelphia

[Stamped] New York

78 The Delft Church, built in 1476, is famous for its fine tower and chime of bells. Encyclopaedia Britannica, VII, 161.
My Dear Brother

I went the Other day with the Gentlemen who are concernd with me and the Person who acts for Ch' Lukens & Surveyd the Land I had a Warrant for. 81 I am desired by them to Beg you would as soon as You conviently Can Apply for 250 Acres adjoining and Westward of land Granted to Mary Read, in Turbutt Township, North'd County. I will write to Charles to Leave some Money he Was to let me have in Your hands for that Purpose. 82

I go to morrow for Moconoy 83 I am not quite so anxious about Clearing that Place as I was, Every one objects to the Situation and I am in great hope of getting a tract more Pleasantly situated. That of Jacky scull 84 is what I much wish for Give My love to Fanny and the little ones And believe me to Remain your Aff' Brother

N Biddle

[Addressed] To
James Biddle Esq'
in
Philadelphia

[Endorsed by James Biddle]
Lre Bro' Nich'
North'd Oct' 1774

79 Autograph Letter Signed (1 p.), Nicholas Biddle Papers. This is the first letter extant from Biddle after his return from England. He probably sailed with Capt. Falconer in the ship Mary and Elisabeth, which arrived at Philadelphia Apr. 26, 1774. Pennsylvania Gazette, Apr. 27, 1774.

80 Nicholas dated the letter "Friday," and his brother endorsed it "October." Land grants to Nicholas of 300 acres in Northumberland Co. were made Tuesday, Oct. 18, 1774. Pennsylvania Archives, Third Series (Harrisburg, 1897), XXV, 66. Hence, the earliest possible Friday date in October that Nicholas could have gotten to Northumberland Co. and completed a survey would have been the 28th.


82 Torbot Township lies in the northern part of Northumberland Co. Nicholas secured another grant of 100 acres in that county on Dec. 29, 1774. Pennsylvania Archives, Third Series, XXV, 67.

83 The present Mahonoy City, Schuylkill Co., Pa.

Sir

Please to Pay the Bearer Michael Mingham for 8 and a half Cord of Oak and two and a quarter of Hickory Wood which he has delivered on Liberty Island for the use of the fleet

Your most Obi

To Peter Long

[Endorsed by Long] Nich. Biddle's order favr of Michl Mingham £ 10 . . 5 . . 3 paid Peter Long

Account with the Naval Committee of Congress

[Philadelphia, January, 1776]

Naval Committee of Congress Dr
To Cash paid for Officers and Seamen Board Wages as Pr enclosed Account £ 53-15-3
To a Months pay Advance to John Chisnell James Wilson George Kelly John Moies and William Adams Seamen and Peter Miller Landsman 17-10-0
To Cash paid Mr Josiah for his expences in Philadelphia in quest of Deserters for 9 days 1-13-0

85 Autograph Letter Signed (1 p.), Simon Gratz Autograph Collection, 5, 27, HSP.
86 Biddle had been commissioned Captain of the Pennsylvania galley Franklin, on Aug. 1, 1775. The galley had not been launched until Aug. 28. As each galley was armed, it was dispatched to Liberty Island, where nine of them, including the Franklin, had arrived by the end of October. Hence, the probable November date for the letter. Colonial Records (Harrisburg, 1851–1853), X, 296; William Duane, ed., Extracts from the Diary of Christopher Marshall (New York, 1835).
88 Autograph document (1 p.), Nicholas Biddle Papers.
89 The approximate date is established by the items in the account. Biddle was appointed to command the Continental brig Andrew Doria, on Dec. 9, 1775, and resigned the same day from the Pennsylvania Navy. Colonial Records, X, 425.
90 James Josiah (1751–1820) had been commissioned first lieutenant of the Andrew Doria, on Dec. 11, 1775. He served with distinction through the war and made several voyages to
1950 LETTERS OF CAPTAIN NICHOLAS BIDDLE

To Cash paid Mr. Josiah for Boarding five Men for four days in Philadelphia and for Supper and Lodging for the Boats Crew one night £1-10-0

To Cash paid Liu* Josiah for Horse hire and other Expenses he was at in travelling from Philadelphia to Port Penn with five Seamen, as p Account 5-19-0

To Cash paid John Berketts for Boarding 6 Men from the 2nd to the fourth of January 1776 10-0

To Cash paid (for wages due) to Mr. William Moran* 1st Mate 6-10-0

To a Months Advance paid to John Mergeson 3rd Mate 3-15-0

To Cash paid for an Arm Chest 1-5-0

Naval Committee C've

By Cash Received of Silas Deane Esq* 88-10-0

By Cash Liu* Josiah Received from Silas Deane Esq' 4-2-6

92-12-6

92-7-3

£ 0-5-3


91 William Moran, first mate of the Andrew Doria, was commissioned a lieutenant in February, 1777, and assigned to the Continental sloop Hornet in which he was captured in April of the same year. He was sent to England, confined in Forton Prison, and escaped in November. One of those who helped get him out of England called him "a cleaver fellow, was Mait of Biddle." Moran outlined his services in a letter to Franklin, written from Dunkirk, on Dec. 6, 1777. He stated, "I have served since the year Seventy-five." Franklin Papers, VII, 135, APS; B. F. Stevens, Facsimiles of Manuscripts in European Archives relating to America, 1773-1783 (London, 1889-1898), No. 294.

92 John Margeson, third mate of the Andrew Doria, was landed sick at New London, in April, 1776, and, when recovered, was sent to the Continental sloop Providence, John Paul Jones, first mate. When Jones transferred with his crew to the Alfred, Margeson went with him, and was sent prize master in the ship Betty, Dec. 8, 1776. Muster roll of the Andrew Doria, Nicholas Biddle Papers; Muster rolls of the Providence and Alfred, Massachusetts Archives, Boston; John Paul Jones Manuscripts, LC.

93 Silas Deane (1737-1789), member of the Naval Committee of the Continental Congress, was active in the creation of the Continental Navy. George L. Clark, Silas Deane, a Connecticut Leader in the American Revolution (New York, 1913), 29.
To Lydia McFunn

[Andrew Doria, Delaware Capes, February 15, 1776]

(A Speech) of N.B. Before the County Court held at Lewis town Feb: 14th 1776 N:B: The Sheriff was afraid of being account[able] for the dept and desired the Court to indemnify him.

[''] I was this Morning inform'd that one Green who had deserted from me was last evening on that account taken up and put in your Goal. As it was very common whilst we lay at Reedy Island for the Good People about New Castle to apprehend deserters, and either send them on board or keep them in Goal till we sent for them, I thought I had nothing more to do than to send an Officer to pay his Goal fees and take him out. But it seems that after he was put in Goal for desertion a writ has been served on him for a debt in consequence of which the Sheriff has Refused to deliver up My Man

[''] This Man May it please the Court and you Gent. of the jury was put in Phila: Goal for Raising a Mutiny in the Gallies and I Obtain'd an Order of the Committee to take him out. Provided he enter'd into the Continental Service? and on no other terms would he have been Released. I beg the favor of the Court to Read a Resolve of Congress Respecting the arresting of Men enter'd into their Service which is directly in point. And which I hope you will allow aught to Supercede all other Laws whatever. (the Resolve) by this Gents you see the debt must be attested on Oath before a writ can be issued. In this Case no oath has been made, Neither before nor since the Arrest.

[''] I know not the Particular laws of Your Country. But will Venture to say that if you make a distinction between the Goal and

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94 Autograph Letter Signed (3 pp.), Nicholas Biddle Papers.
95 While the salutation and apparently one or two pages of the letter are missing, its date is established by James Biddle's rough draft of a memorial which states, "1776, Feb 15. And Doria at the Capes—1 Lre to me and one to Lydia." Nicholas Biddle Papers.
96 William Green had been involved in a mutiny in the Pennsylvania fleet and was sent to jail in Philadelphia from where Biddle took him for the Andrew Doria. Colonial Records, X, 425, 432.
97 "[Resolved] That it be recommended to all creditors whose demands against any person who is enlisted, or shall inlist in the continental service, shall not amount to the value of 35 dollars, not to arrest any such debtor till the expiration of the time for which he is enlisted." Journals of the Continental Congress, IV, 103 (Jan. 30, 1776); Pennsylvania Gazette, Feb. 7, 1776.
Goal Yard, and that it [is] against Law to arrest in the Goal and not in the Goal Yard. Your Laws differ from those of the Rest of the World. They are both equally Places of Confinement. I again say such Procedure is without Precedent in any other Laws & directly against those of the Congress. It is most strongly Recommended by the Congress to Abate as much as possible the Rigours of the Laws in such Cases. In the Present it is stretched far beyond its bounds. I should be very sorry to have the least Cause to Suspect this County of want of firmness in the Cause. But Really this Conduct seems Calculated to counteract their Measures. I shall only add that it is in your Power to give Me the Man as you plainly see that He is not or cannot be Legally detaind. If I am not to have him Let me know the Men by whose power & Authority he is kept in Order that I may transmit their Names to the Congress, And let them take order in the Matter. ['] We will send for his Creditors and talk with them [']—What!!! Whenever I Ship a Man I must send through the Provinces or Continent to know to whom he is indebted and whether or not tis agreeable to them I should have him ['] Oh damn. I believe you may take him———[' ']

twas near five Oclock before I got ashore and what with turning Orator and Breaking the Goal Door made it so late that I did not see my favoirite Mc Corman [sic]

Four Raskels stood on their defence Barricaded their Room door which Obliged me to force it. Tell Couzin Clemmy I must owe him a letter till I can find Something worth telling I am very happy in having Sam Nicholas in the fleet If he wants any news in the small ware way, tell him come to you, that I write you ten times as [much] as you can have patience to Read. Give my love to Mother Charles and all Friends I am Yours Affy

N: Biddle

98 Clement Biddle (1740–1814), Nicholas' first cousin, served from 1776 to 1783 in the Quartermaster's Department of the Army. Autobiography, 421-423; Francis B. Heitman, comp., Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army (Washington, 1914), 102.

99 Samuel Nicholas (?–1790) was the first commissioned officer of the Marine Corps (Nov. 28, 1775) and served as captain of marines on the Continental ship Alfred until June, 1776, when Congress commissioned him a major. He saw no more sea duty and retired from the service on Nov. 22, 1781. Papers of the Continental Congress, No. 78, xvii, 301; also Publications of the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania, XI, 84.
Cap' Hazard, a Stout Man Very Vain and Ignorant—as much low cunning as Capacity
C: Hacker of the Fly an Active Smart Seaman
C: Stone A Very Stout and Very Good kind of Man
C: Saltonstal, a Sensible indefatigable Morose Man
C Hopkins a Good Naturd Man
C B—a Mighty good Young Man

[Addressed] To Mrs
Lydia Mcfunn
in third Street
Philadelphia

100 John Hazard, a New York shipmaster, commanded the sloop Providence until dismissed from the Navy by court-martial, May 8 and 9, 1776. New York Gazette, July 1, 1771; Papers of the Continental Congress, No. 58, 263.

101 Hoysteed Hacker served in the Continental Navy from Dec. 22, 1775, when he was commissioned a first lieutenant, until June, 1781, when he took leave of absence to enter private employ. His final Continental services were on courts-martial in 1782 and 1783. He petitioned Congress for relief in October, 1786. Papers of the Continental Congress, Committee Book No. 190.

102 The Continental sloop Fly, which had brought seamen from Rhode Island, was taken into the fleet by direction of Congress, Jan. 16, 1776, and was destroyed in the Delaware, Nov. 21, 1777, to avoid falling into the hands of the British. Journals of the Continental Congress, IV, 60 (Jan. 16, 1776); New Jersey Gazette, Dec. 5, 1777.

103 William Stone, a Baltimore sea captain, owned the sloop Hornet and commanded her from December, 1775, to April, 1776. Maryland Journal, June 19, 1776.

104 Dudley Saltonstall (1738–1796) served as commander, in turn, of the ship Alfred, frigate Trumbull, and frigate Warren. In the latter, in 1779, he lost his reputation, his fleet, and his commission, in the Penobscot Bay disaster. Subsequently he commanded privateers. Journals of the Continental Congress, III, 443 (Dec. 22, 1775) and V, 696 (Aug. 22, 1776); Navy Board of Eastern Department Letter Book, LC.

105 John Burroughs Hopkins (1742–1796) was the oldest son of Commodore Esek Hopkins. He commanded the brig Cabot until wounded on Apr. 6, 1776, in the engagement with the Glasgow. He was assigned June 6, 1776, to the frigate Warren, and was suspended from command, May 3, 1779. Subsequently he was in private service. Journals of the Continental Congress, III, 443 (Dec. 22, 1775) and V, 422 (June 6, 1776); Navy Board of Eastern Department Letter Book, New York Public Library.

106 Nicholas Biddle himself.
To James Biddle

Andrew Doria Feb: 15th 1776

My Dear Brother

I have the Pleasure to inform you that since I wrote to you we have Received a Reinforcement of 120 Men from Rhode Island and have also encreased our fleet with a Sloop of ten Guns and 70 Men and small Schooner of 8 two pounders from Maryland. I now muster 109 Men in the Whole, and am in every Respect well equipt. have by great odds the fastest sailing Vessel in the fleet, except a Small Sloop call’d the Fly and the Schooner from Maryland with which I have not had a fair tryal. Tis now twelve Oclock & we are now lying at Anchor in Old keel Road at C: Henlopen waiting for wind. tis quite calm and like a Summers day. Fare you well my Dear Brother May the Mercifull God who has upheld Me in all My Dangers and Difficulties Preserve you and Proteckt you from all Evils. May He who has Mercifully led me through the World keep My dear Brothers Cheek from ever being staind with a Blush for me. I well know the Glorious Cause I am engaged in. And if ever I disgrace it May My Kind father who gave me being instantly Blast me in Mercy to me. I mean not to be desperate beyond measure. But to do my duty to the utmost of My Ability. If in spite of my best endeavoir I should be taken. If Fortune Should frown on me I hope I shall bear up against it with that Fortitude Patience and Resignation which I usually found Myself Possessed of, Which has hitherto been sufficient for my purpose And that they ever will be proportionable to my wants Whilst I am Conscious of having disc[h]arged my duty I cannot doubt. I am thank Heaven in Good health and Spirits. And never in my Life was better pleased with a trip I was going to take than I am with this.

I beg you to give my Sincere Love to My dear Sister Fanny to My Mother and all the Family and believe me to be Most Affectionately Yours

N: Biddle

107 Autograph Letter Signed (2 pp.), Nicholas Biddle Papers.


109 “on Tuesday y* 13th was join’d by y* Sloop Hornet Schooner Wasp, Arm’d Vessels from Baltimore.” Ibid.
Feb. the 16th I forgot to tell You that all the Officers and Men of the Fleet have Signd an agreement to Share all Prizes that may be taken in Case of seperation the same as if the whole fleet were together and concerned in taking Such Prizes. Tis a fine evening and at the turn of the tide I hope to sail.

[Addressed] To

James Biddle Esq
in Walnut street
Philadelphia

[Endorsed by James Biddle]

Lre Bro Nicholas
Feb 15, 1776
The Capes

To Lydia McFunn

New London April the 26th 1776 A:Doria

My Dear Lydia

I think I may safely say that this is the first spare moment I could find since our first arrival at this port, to speak one word to you. I have been either Sailing or under Sailing Orders continually, and could find no time to tell you what I know you long to hear. I mean [an] account of our Proceedings. And now unfortunate fellow that I am, it is too late, A very circumstantial account having appear'd in the papers—Had the Plauguy papers held their confounded tongues what a fine field Should I have had before me. With what Pleasure could I have said that in Lattitude North and Longitude West we did Wonders and that in Latt South and Long East we did a great deal more. But Alas I have now nothing to tell you worth your notice except that in the beginning of April one very fine morning we exercised Great Guns and small Arms and had two men hurt by it. And that I am most Affectionately yours. dont be Angry or fright-ened or Amazed. I am not going to follow Charles example to write

110 See Appendix.
111 Autograph Letter Signed (3 pp.), Nicholas Biddle Papers.
112 The first account of the cruise was printed in the Connecticut Gazette and Universal Intelligencer, New London, Apr. 12, 1776, and was widely reprinted.
113 This was the engagement with the Glasgow, on Apr. 6, 1776, although the journal of the Andrew Doria lists only the brig's drummer as being wounded. Shuldham, 287.
a note instead of a letter. No no My Dear Lydia I am too much like Genny G. and Nancy B.\(^{114}\) (that's a Rhyme and believe me I did not intend it,) and your own dear self to be so soon tired of talking.—Do give My most sincere love to those two Dear Girls—But don't tell them that I am in love Because I am not quite certain of it Myself. to be sure I was a few days ago. But there never was a more free sociable set of dear Creatures got together in any one place as in this. And so I went into another Company. And so I alter'd my Mind And so I am at a Loss. Yes at a Loss to know which I love most. I am sure I begin to grow Old for My Love fits don't hold half their Usual time. I have known the day when I have been held in Chains during a whole tide of Ebb. I wish you would write to me in Providence or Newport and tell me whether or not My old flame H G\(^{115}\) is Married. Yet I won't own I have a hankering that way.

I think I was never more happy from home than at present, owing as I take it to my being fully employ'd. I am now (I do not mean at this instant I am writing) Cleaning my Brig for a Cruise, and hope in three or four days to sail. Should I feel in a writing humour before I go out you may probably hear from me again. If You should not swear that I had not time, or any thing else you Please except that I wanted inclination. Remember me most sincerely to Our dear Mother tell Her She may depend on hearing from me as soon as ever Madam Fortune is pleased to Smile upon me. Tell My dear Sisters and Brothers how Much I love them, but that you Cannot. Tell Andrew Robeson\(^{116}\) I long to hear from him and from all the Rest of My most sincere friends. Tell Cato\(^{117}\) and his Party that if I take a trip to Purgatory I will never Return to America if they Make peace with the English D-gs. Tell Your Dear Polly\(^{118}\) that I love her a thousand times better than She thinks I do. Tell the Dear Girls in Your

\(^{114}\) "Genny G" has not been identified. "Nancy B" was Nicholas's first cousin, Ann Biddle, who married Gen. James Wilkinson. Autobiography, 375.

\(^{116}\) "HG" has not been identified.

\(^{116}\) Andrew Robeson (1753-1781) was appointed Register of the Admiralty Court of Pennsylvania, in April, 1776. His death, in his twenty-ninth year, brought a eulogy from the Pennsylvania Packet, June 2, 1781, which stated: "Few instances have happened where the death of a man, at so early a period of his life, has occasioned more regret among his fellow citizens in general, and a large number of particular friends."

\(^{117}\) "Cato" was the signature of the writer of a number of letters appearing in certain colonial papers, which sought to undo the effectiveness of Thomas Paine's Common Sense.

\(^{118}\) Mary Biddle McFunn.
Neighborhood I long to be acquainted with them. Tell Yourself that Katy Hucheson\textsuperscript{119} alias Hudson is the finest Woman in Providence except My Polly Gold.\textsuperscript{120} She was in St. Vincents when the Caribbs were subdued and has since been in London Bermuda and Philadelphia. She enquird but could not find you out. Do not scold so abomanably. I will conclude as soon as ever I can tell You that I am your most Aff\textsuperscript{1} Brother

\textit{N: Biddle}

\textit{To Charles Biddle}\textsuperscript{121}

[Andrew Doria, New London, May 2, 1776]\textsuperscript{122}

[No Salutation]

I with great pleasure Receivd your \textit{Note} but did not see Capt. Allen,\textsuperscript{123} As I Lay a League below the town While he was here—What is it that now Ails our Dear Brother,\textsuperscript{124} Why was you not more particular on that head, Why do you tell me only just enough to keep me in doubt and suspence about What is of much more concern to me than any thing that can happen Myself. Does the Damn'd Rhumatism still hang on him. How does our Dear Betty\textsuperscript{125} keep up her Spirits. I would write to her and to all the Family, but must first forget in some measure the Shamefull Loss of the Glasgow.\textsuperscript{126} A More imprudent ill conducted Affair never happend. We were just off a port in which we knew a fleet of Superiour force to ours Lay We had five prizes in Company and all the Stores taken at [New] Providence on Board our Arms Vessels. It was in the night, the Glasgow was Standing off from the Land, And we were to windward of Her. We ought, in my opinion to have jogged on with her, till daylight for had

\textsuperscript{119} "Katy Hucheson" has not been identified. She was, no doubt, a friend of Lydia Biddle McFunn, while the latter resided in Antigua in 1760 or 1761. \textit{Autobiography}, 15.

\textsuperscript{120} "Polly Gold" has not been identified.

\textsuperscript{121} Autograph Letter Signed (2 pp.), Nicholas Biddle Papers.

\textsuperscript{122} The date of the letter is established by the fact that the careening of the \textit{Andrew Doria}, referred to in it, was completed May 1, and the brig sailed on a cruise on May 3, 1776. Shuldham, 295.

\textsuperscript{123} Capt. Thomas Allen, for whom Charles Biddle expressed the warmest attachment, was lost in his ship with his entire crew in a heavy squall off the North Carolina coast in 1783. \textit{Autobiography}, 62, 188, 189.

\textsuperscript{124} Edward Biddle had been taken seriously ill in 1775, and never fully regained his health. He died Sept. 5, 1779. \textit{Ibid.}, 389-392.

\textsuperscript{125} Elizabeth Ross Biddle married Edward Biddle in 1761. \textit{Ibid.}, 370.

\textsuperscript{126} H.M.S. \textit{Glasgow}, of 20 guns and 130 men, Tyringham Howe, commander. Shuldham, 8.
the Ships been with her then, that were in Company with her the day before. We should every damn’d Soul of us been either taken or sunk. She had all the appearance of a Warlike Vessel. And no one in the fleet doubted her being an English Man of War. And therefore there was no room to think She would fly from us till She felt our force. And as there was a tender just to Leeward of her it was more than Probable the Rest of the fleet were out for they seldom separated. If we were a match for the fleet Why did we not Chase her in. tis possible they might have afforded us some Assistance from the the [sic] Shore. I had Rather have Dawson’s Pilot Boat to Cruise where I please than be even in the A.Doria and follow the fleet. I never but once wishd to have the Command of the Columbus.— And yet I do not see how the Admiral can be Blamd for whether it was against his judgment or not he could not help the Action being brought on. For there was no signal from the time (about two o'clock) I made the one for seeing a Strange sail and the one (about six) for giving over Chase. The Cabot and Columbus run on without Orders but the Cabot got off[?] again as quick as possible and came no more up. In fact She and the Alfred Received their Dose in about a Quarter of an Hour. I know the papers say three Glasses. they must mean half Minute Glasses.—

I have just careend and expect to sail tomorrow or next day to join the fleet who have got safe into Providence. There is a Frigate and twelve Gun Brig off here. And I expect to be forced to run the Ga[ul]ntlet. The Ships must have passd them in the Night as they see nothing of them.—

Give my Love to our Dear Mother and all the Family and believe me to be Dear Charles Your

Most Affectionate Brother

Nicholas Biddle

[Addressed] To

Cap’t Charles Biddle

in

Philadelphia

[Endorsed by James Biddle]

N[ew] L[ondon] 3.8

127 “. . . and at 3 o’clock engaged her with Part of the Fleet, for 3 glasses.” New London dispatch, Connecticut Courant, Hartford, Apr. 15, 1776.

To James Biddle

Providence Sat: Night May 10th [1776]

My Dear Brother

I have been exceedingly disappointed in not having a line from any of the family except one Short note from Charles since I left the Capes. I have wrote at different time to Charles, Lydia and Yourself but fear My letters have not Reached You. And as Cap't Dunn (a Brother of one of My Officers and a Man much Respected here) is going to the southward I shall make another attempt to speak with you.

On our Arrival on this Coast we took a few Vessels the Masters of which Informd us of a fleet being in Newport which we thought much stronger than ourselves. And we Began to look Round for a safe port to Shelter in, When at 1 Oclock on the Morning of the 7th of April we saw a Ship to leeward dogging of us as we steerd off Shore. As it was well known that the Enemy seldom separated we had all the Reason in the world to Believe the Rest of them were not far off.

If it was thought the Conquest would be easy there was Courage shewn in the Attack. If it was judgd otherwise there was no Conduct in Making it before the Prizes had some orders given them—And as it was I think there was neither. there was no order in the Matter. Away we all went Helter Skelter one flying here another there to cut off the Retreat of a fellow that did not fear us. I kept close to the Admiral that I might the sooner Receive his orders. But he had none to give. And the Cabots Running off Obliged Me in order to Clear her to go a little out of my way. And before I could Regain my Ground the Alfred had sheerd off. Had I behavd as Capt. Hopkins did, had I run on without Orders and brought on the Action in the Night I think I should have lost my Commission before now.

The day we arrived at New London I Asked to go out for a few days and the sixth Returnd with a Schooner prize. From that we

129 Autograph Letter Signed (3 pp.), Nicholas Biddle Papers.
130 Benjamin Dunn was sailing master of the Andrew Doria. The brother may have been Samuel Dunn, Jr., of Boston. Muster roll of the Andrew Doria, Nicholas Biddle Papers.
131 John Burroughs Hopkins, of the Cabot.
132 The prize was a recapture, the schooner John and Joseph, retaken Apr. 12, 1776. Shuldham, 292, 293.
were kept under sailing Orders But were afraid to go out for fear of some Ships we heard was on [the] Coast till April the 22\textsuperscript{nd} (though I often Askd to go out to discover their force) when I was ordered up to the town of New London to Clean and the Rest of the Vessels saidl for this Place. I was unlucky in heaving down and got My Vessel twice full of water but was attended with no other ill consequence than detaining me a day or two Longer. When I was Ready I Run out a head of a Number of Merchant Vessels to no Whether the Coast was Clear. I See the Cerberus\textsuperscript{133} and gave them timely Notice But as We were far to windward and the time of day favoirable they thought they might with safety stand on. I thought so too. And if I had not I had no Right to stop them. When I parted with them I had to run so near to her that had She Chased me She could easily have come within gun shot of Me. I have been here this week Ready for Sea and waiting Only for orders. The Cabot is to go with Me And I expect to sail in a day or two on a Cruise. I wish with all my Soul I was not Obliged to be taging after these Dam’d Ships I ask Nothing more of the Congress than the Vessel I have. Good God of Heaven I am out of all patience with being kept so much a port. Do Get Me a Cruizing Commission if it is possible to obtain it. And then You may expect to hear from me. Before you Cannot. Give my Love to the Family And believe Me to be

Your Aff\textsuperscript{c} Brother

N: Biddle

P S Do take Notice of Capt Dunn he is a worthy Man

\textsuperscript{[Addressed]} To

Cap\textsuperscript{t} James Biddle
at the Prothoneters Office
in Walnut street
Philadelphia

\textsuperscript{[Endorsed by James Biddle]}

Bro\textsuperscript{t} Nicholas
L R Island
May 1776

\textsuperscript{133} H.M.S. Cerberus, of 28 guns and 160 men, John Symons, commander. Shuldham, 9.
To Esek Hopkins\textsuperscript{134}

Andrew Doria May the 21st 1776

Sir

The Night after we left Newport being Chased by a Vessel we took to be the Cerberus the Cabot Run a more direct course for Nantucket Shoals than I thought safe to do by which Means we have lost company with her. This Morning we took a Sloop bound from Saltetudas to Liverpool in Nova Scotia.\textsuperscript{135} Mr. Brown\textsuperscript{136} my third Mate to whom I have given Charge of Her will Give You what further information You may want to know.

I am Sir your most Obedient Sert:

N. Biddle

[Addressed] To
Honble Esek Hopkins Esq
in
Providence

To Charles Biddle\textsuperscript{137}

[Andrew Doria, Newport, June 16, 1776]\textsuperscript{138}

My Dear Brother

It is with the greatest Pleasure imaginable I Received letters from home as it convinces me that I am not intirely forgot which I had some Reason to suspect, as I have not before Received any except the single line you were pleased to favoir me with, since I left Reedy Island, Altho every other Officer in the Fleet got letters by every post and I seldom let an opportunity pass without writing to one or other

\textsuperscript{134} Autograph Letter Signed, Esek Hopkins Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society (RIHS).

\textsuperscript{135} Sloop Two Friends, Abraham Copland, master. Newport Mercury, May 27, 1776.

\textsuperscript{136} Philip Brown, who was shipped as a master's mate at Providence in May, and who became acting master on June 17, 1776. Alverda S. Beck, ed., The Letter Book of Esek Hopkins (Providence, 1932), 69.

\textsuperscript{137} Autograph Letter Signed (4 pp.), Nicholas Biddle Papers. The recipient of this letter is identified as Charles Biddle by the reference to "the single line" received from him, and the previous comment in the letter of May 2, 1776, to James Biddle, that he had only received "one Short note from Charles."

\textsuperscript{138} The date of the letter is based upon Biddle's statement, "Night before last I arrived here," and a dispatch from Newport, June 17, 1776, stating that Biddle had arrived "Last Friday [14th]." Pennsylvania Gazette, June 26, 1776.
of the Family. Not a syllable has ever pass'd between the Admiral and Myself about either the Action or letter you speak of. For the Action he deserved the severest censure And the injustice and Partiality of the letter were so very glaring that it needed no comment, tis not from him that I can expect justice.\footnote{Esek Hopkins's official report to Congress was dated Apr. 8, 1776. A deleted version of it, dated Apr. 9, was first published in the Pennsylvania Gazette, Apr. 17, 1776. In neither the original nor the printed version did the Commodore mention Biddle or the Andrew Doria.} It must depend on Fortune throwing an opportunity in My way. At Present She seems to sport with me. I have just Return'd from a short Cruise two days after I went out I took a sloop\footnote{The Two Friends. See Note 135.} a week after early in the Morning I see two Ships close together I took them with the Speaking trumpet: they were two transports\footnote{The Oxford, carrying a company of the Forty-second Royal Highland Regiment, and the Crawford, with a company of the Seventy-first Regiment, both taken May 29, 1776. "Authentic Account of the Fate of the Scotch Expedition from Clyde," Public Advertiser, London, Sept. 16, 1776.} with Highlanders on board who came out with thirty three sail on board of which were three thousand troops bound for Boston. It Blue fresh and there was a very heavy Sea so that it was night before I got every [thing] to Rights. I put all the Soldiers on board one of the Ships. In the other two of the Officers had their wives Them with two other Officers who were sick I left on Board with the Ladies\footnote{The officers on the Crawford were Capt. John Smith and Lieut. Robert Franklin, of the Forty-second Regiment, and Capt. Norman McLeod, Lieut. Roderick McLeod, and Ens. Colin Campbell, of the Seventy-first Regiment. The wives of Capt. McLeod and Ens. Campbell were also on board. Peter Force, comp., American Archives, Fourth Series (Washington, 1846), VI, 1055.} Four of the land Officers the Captains Mates and all the Crews I took on Board the doria And Mann'd the Ships with my own People. For thirteen days we kept together On the 14th in the Morning we see five sail of Vessels to windward (wind at North) and soon after they gave us chase. I ordered the Best sailor the one the Soldiers were on Board to steer South the other S S E and I went under an easy sail steering a little wide of them. This I did for two Reasons, that they might think we were Vessels of war that wanted to hem them in, or that we might stand a better Chance of escaping should they come up with us. about Eigh[t] oclock a squall came on and the Ship that steerd south
hauld on a wind to the Westward. And when the Squall blew over
She was nearly out of sight to windward. The Vessels who chased us
then hauld on a wind to the West ward and when we had Run them
out of sight we did the same About four Oclock we saw them again
in the N W and at six I saw a large Vessel bearing east steering to the
West ward. I wore round and order'd the ship to steer S W At Eight
Oclock The Vessel to the E'ward was about 3 Leag* off those to the
N N W about the same distance when I haul'd up West The Prize
then about a mile and half from me in half an hour we lost sight of
her and about 9 o'clock we heard several Guns to the N E. But I was
in no condition to know the Occasion. I had forty Prisoners who did
duty on on [sic] Board and when I cleard Ship for Action they were
put below under guard and I had but fifty three Men and boys sick
and well to fight. I see no Vessels from that time (Except a Sloop
outward bound that I brought too one night) till I arrived which was
the night before last. I landed my Prisoners and Yesterday Morning
some guns being heard in the offing I told the Admiral if he Pleased
I would go out and see who it was, he Assented, and I went out and
met two of our Sloops and Brig from the west Indies with 13 tons of
Powder and other Valuable Articles on Board the Brig had 12 Guns
and being chased in by a Frigate our Sloops thought her to be her
tender and had fired the Guns we heard at her. The Columbus and
Sloops followed me out and we chased the Frigate till four Oclock.
I had got so near as to see the Men in her tops but being Obliged to
Make several tacks to weather point Judith After She had passd it,
She got considerably the [a line cut from the bottom of the page], of
me. Had She behaved well She could have taken or driven us back
into port again.143

I have almost given over hopes of seeing my Prizes any more. I am
Glad however that I have got all their Arms and ammunition. I lost
one of the Ships ['] and one of my own Boats in carrying the People
and things from one Vessel to the other but happily no lives were
lost. It was in Lat 42 and Long 55 that I took them. If the Admiral
does not send me to that out of the way Place Providence I may be
Ready for another Cruise in a few days as I have only to wood and

143 This engagement probably was with H.M.S. Merlin, of 16 guns and 100 men, William
C. Burnaby, commander, then cruising between Martha's Vineyard and the east end of Long
Island. Shuldham, 266, 267.
water and get a New bowsprit. I had pitched away my bowsprit and
spritsail Yard in a Calm and Reeft him near three foot the the [sic]
day before I was Chased—Give my Love to the Family tell them
they Shall hear more from me When I am More at Leisure. give my
compliments to Montgomery 144 Rice 145 Henderson 146 Houston 147
Boyce 148 &c And believe me to be most Affectionately
Yours N. Biddle

P S I fear Nothing but what I ought to fear. I am much more
Afraid of doing a foolish Action than of loosing My Life I aim for a
Character of Conduct as well as courage And hope never to throw
away the Vessel and Crew merely to Convince the world I have
Courage No one has dard to impeach it yet. If any should I will not
leave them a Moment of doubt

To Esek Hopkins 149

New London June the 28th 1776

Sir

I arrived here the 26th of June in company with Cap't Hacker in
the Fly Who saild for New York with a fair wind yesterday morning
There are several Vessels here outward bound Cap't Kennedy who
commands one of them Shew me a paper sign'd by one of the Com-
mmittee of Congress Directed to the Commander of Continental or
Provincial Vessels of War Desiring they would Assist them in getting
Clear of the Land And Another to the same purpose signed by
General Putman. As soon as a favourable opportunity Offers I pur-
pose going out a Head of them and to give them a Signal to Return
in case I see danger.

Capt Jones 150 has according to Your Orders gone to Boston. I shall
send You with this the Account of Stores &c on board the Doria

144 James Montgomery, as captain of the galley Ranger, had served with Biddle in the
145 John Rice commanded the galley Dickinson in 1775. Ibid., 278.
146 Alexander Henderson commanded the galley Bull Dog in 1775. Ibid., 252.
147 Thomas Houston had been Biddle's first lieutenant on the Franklin in 1775. Ibid., 294.
148 Nathan Boys had succeeded Biddle to the command of the Franklin in 1775, and served
continuously in the Pennsylvania Navy to 1780. Ibid., 294, 298.
149 Autograph Letter Signed (1 p.), Esek Hopkins Papers, RIHS.
150 Capt. John Paul Jones had succeeded John Hazard to the command of the sloop
Providence, May 10, 1776. Papers of the Continental Congress, No. 58, 149.
And have Ordered Cap* Jones and Cap* Hacker to transmit You theirs as soon as possible

I am Sir your Humble Ser* Nicholas Biddle

[Addressed] To

Esek Hopkins Esq*
Commander in Chief of the Continental Navy in Philadelphia

[Endorsed]

New London June 28th
1776 from Cap* Biddle—
And w Doria.

To Esek Hopkins

Newport July the 22 17[76]

Sir

I am to acquaint you that I saild from this place in the Continental Armd Brig Andrew Doria on the 25th of June, and accompanied the Armd Sloop Fly as far as New London on her way to New York. On the 30th I saild from New London on a Cruise And on the 11th of July took the Nathaniel and Elizabeth a Ship bound from Jamacai to London commanded by William Hoare who is the Principle Owner. Just as I had taken the Captain and Crew out of the Ship and Mann’d her another Vessel came in sight to which I gave chase ordering the Prize Master to make the best of his way to the first Port of safety he could get to. The Vessel I Chased Proved to be a French Ship. Cap Hoare saild in Company with a fleet of fifty Sail under Convoy of a Fifty Gun Ship.

I Cruised till the 15th without seeing any of the Rest of the fleet and as the wind blew hard from the S W had no doubt of their having passd me. I then Steerd for Newport and Arrived here Yesterday. I had the Misfortune to strike on a Rock coming out of New London

151 Autograph Draft (1 p.), Nicholas Biddle Papers.

152 The Nathaniel and Elizabeth was run ashore and bilged behind Fisher’s Island, off New London, while escaping from H.M.S. Cerberus, July 17, 1776. Pennsylvania Evening Post, Aug. 3, 1776.
which makes it Necessary for to Careen the Vessel. I shall Make what dispach I can in getting Ready for Sea And wait for Orders
I am Sir
Your Humble Servant

To Nicholas Cooke

Andrew Doria, July 26th, 1776

Sir

A gentleman in Philadelphia desires me to make enquiry concerning a certain Cap'n Golly, who was taken in a vessel from Philadelphia, and carried to Halifax, from which place he made his escape, and on his way home was stopped, and confined in Providence goal. As his wife and friends have not heard any reason assigned for his confinement, they are very uneasy on his account. I am not acquainted with Cap'n Golly, but the gentleman who writes to me in favor of him is a warm friend to the cause of liberty.

The subject I write on, will, I hope, apologize for my troubling you and the mentioning the matter induce an enquiry into the cause of his confinement, which if it is (as is apprehended) only on suspicion of being inimical to the cause, may be the means of procuring him his liberty.

I am Sir, with the greatest respect
Your most humble servant
Nicholas Biddle

To James Biddle

My Dear Brother

I have just got here after one of the most disagreeable Passages that ever I experienced—We sprung our Fore Mast and were forced to get every thing off it to keep it from going over the side. And a

153 Autograph Letter Signed (1 p.), Nicholas Cooke Papers, RIHS.
154 Capt. Golly has not been identified.
155 Autograph Letter Signed (2 pp.), Nicholas Biddle Papers. The frigate Randolph had sailed from the Delaware Capes on a cruise about Feb. 12, 1777. Anne Izard Deas, ed., Correspondence of Mr. Ralph Izard of South Carolina (New York, 1844), I, 264, 265. Biddle had taken command of the Randolph in October, 1776, shortly after his return to Philadelphia from a final cruise in the Andrew Doria. Journals of the Continental Congress, VI, 861 (Oct. 10, 1776).
few days after we lost our Main Mast which gave way even with the
deck, and gave us little more warning than was Necessary to stand
from Under. As it Blew a fret of wind and a very high Sea going to
see it stagger from side to side with the rowl of the Vessel was as
unpleasant a sight as ever I wish to behold. We rigged Jury Masts
and very fortunately have got in just before a Gale of Wind came on
that would undoubtedly put us ashore. The Randolph is the very
Best Vessel for Sailing that ever I knew I hope soon to be out in Her
again—

A Person of Credit Declares to me that He knows those Spars our
Masts were made of to have lain these 18 Years in the Water at the
Mast Yard—

A Gentleman told me today that He se[e] Charles in Hispaniola
the Middle of January That he was well and had Purchased a Brigg
very Cheap. Said that He was either to come here or go to Phila-
delphia—

I lost 14 or 15 Men on the Passage by sickness but have been very
Hearty Myself. Give My Love to Fanny and the Family. I will write
more fully when I have more Leisure. If an oppertunity Offers soon
do[embrace it and let me know how Neddy is

God Bless You
Nicholas Biddle

Charles Town
Feb: [March] 11th 1777

[Addressed] To
M'r James Biddle
Philadelphia
p Express

[Endorsed by James Biddle]
Lre
Br. Nich's Ch't Town Feb: 1777

156 Charles Biddle had been captured by the British. He had escaped from Jamaica and had
arrived at St. Nicolas Môle, Hispaniola, in January, 1777, in command of a brig which he had
purchased jointly with a resident of Jamaica. Autobiography, 97.
Randolph Sep 1st 1777

Sir

I have the pleasure to acquaint you that I have at last got once more without the Barr of Charles Town Since I wrote my last letter to you I had another Main Mast Split with Lightning We had been ready for Sea for some time and only waited for Men A Bounty of Thirty Dollars I offered had little effect and some of the State Armed Vessells being in Port nothing could be done by the State untill they were manned Since I have had my New Main Mast (the third I have had in this Port) the President has given an additional Bounty of Twenty Dollars by the help of which I have got many Men I have Officers & Boys included about Two Hundred & Ten People

Several Capts of Privateers have been detected in carrying off my People but I can get no redress of them From one I had taken four Men in lieu of as many he had enticed & taken from me but the Civil Power obliged me to give them up I applied to the President and he ordered the Capt to replace my Men or he would not let him pass the Forts The Capt Sailed without giving me a Man A few Days since a Privateer Brig Charles Morgan Commander was comming in I had certain intelligence of his having four of my Men on Board I sent my Barge to Board him but he would not bring too I was Determined to Sink him if he did not and fired at him He brought too and I got two Men from him Two others he had put in a Prize I sent five Men to the President who swore he had Ship’d them knowing them to belong to me But as I could not Stay for a tedious Law Suit no Satisfaction is to be had. It tis easy for those Fellows to act so as to make it difficult to prove they knew of their being on Board untill they Sailed but this was not the case in this instance I wish to have instructions how to conduct myself in such circum-
stances Also with respect to State armed Vessells. If none of my People had been taken away I could have been at Sea Three months ago and long before my last Main Mast was Struck. Indeed I had despaired of getting Men and was the Day the Lightning Struck us

158 John Rutledge, president of the South Carolina Privy Council.
159 Privateer brig Fair American.
Bending Sails  Thinking it better Risk to getting Men at Sea than
Lie here on an uncertainty at this Season so bad for the Worms

Lieut' Falconier\textsuperscript{160} of Marines is so exceeding Troublesom and has
behaved in so many instances unworthy the Charrracter of an Officer
that I can not hesitate a moment to comply with the Request of the
Officers which I inclose under cover to you and which contains the
principle Charges against him\textsuperscript{161}  I have ordered him to proceed to
Congress

I am with the Greatest Respect Your most Ob't
Humble Servant

Nicholas Biddle

[Addressed] To the
Hon'bte Robert Morris Esq't

P:S: The Ship does not Sail well owing to Her being foul

\textit{To Robert Morris}\textsuperscript{162}

Sir

I have the Pleasure to acquaint You that on the fourth of Sept\textsuperscript{t} 30
Leag\textsuperscript{e} S E of Charles Town Barr I met with and took after a little
Resistance the True Britain Thomas Venture Master\textsuperscript{163} of twenty six
pounders and seventy four Men

The Brig Charming Peggy Cap't Lyon\textsuperscript{164} both Laden with Rum for
the British Army and Navy and bound from Jamacai to New York—
The Ship Severn Cap't Henderson of eight four pounders who had
been taken by an American Cruizer on His Passage from Jamacai
to London, And Retaken by the True Britain.\textsuperscript{165} Also a French Brig

\textsuperscript{160} Panatiere de la Falconnire was commissioned a lieutenant of marines by the Marine
Committee and assigned to the \textit{Randolph. Journals of the Continental Congress, V}, 747 (Sept. 9,
1776).

\textsuperscript{161} The detailed charges against Falconnire are in the Papers of the Continental Congress,
No. 78, ii, 239.

\textsuperscript{162} Autograph Letter Signed (2 pp.), \textit{ibid.}, 241.

\textsuperscript{163} The \textit{True Briton} had a cargo of 399 hogsheads of rum, 20 hogsheads of sugar, 7 hogs-
heads of coffee and 10 pipes of Madeira wine, and carried a number of passengers bound for
New York. \textit{Gazette of the State of South Carolina, Sept. 15, 1777}.

\textsuperscript{164} The \textit{Charming Peggy} carried 250 hogsheads of rum. \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{165} The \textit{Severn} had been taken, on Aug. 3, 1777, by a North Carolina privateer, and had
been retaken, on Aug. 17, by the \textit{True Briton}. The \textit{Severn's} cargo consisted of 195 hogsheads
and 74 tierces of sugar, 53 puncheons of rum, 50 bags of ginger, and 11 tons of logwood. \textit{Ibid.}
laden with salt going from the West Indies for Charles Town Which Cap't Venture had made Prize of—There was a small Sloop in Company with those Vessels that made Her escape (the Weather being Squally) whilst I was Manning the Rest—I Arrived Safe here with My Prizes the 7th inst: I have not laid Claim to Salvadge for the French Brig as I thought it would be most agreeable to Congress to give her up.—For an account of the Cargoes I beg leave to Refer You to Mr Dorsius's letter—

The Randolphs Bottom is very foul having lain in this Port the three worst Months in the Year since We Cleaned—And Being apprehensive that the Worms will Ruin her Bottom unless they are soon destroyd, I have thought Proper and am preparing to heave Her down

I shall be as expeditious as possible and hope to be Ready to execute any Orders You may Please to send by the Return of the Express—I cannot omit telling You that My Officers have on every Occasion given Me the greatest satisfaction Two better Officers are not in the Service than Barnes and McDougall My first and second Lieuts: And the Men I took from here behaved exceeding well—

I am Sir with the Greatest Respect

Your Most Obedient Humble Servant

Nicholas Biddle

[Addressed] To

The Hon'ble Robert Morris Esq

[Charleston] Sep' 12th 1777


167 John Dorsius was one of the Continental agents at Charleston, S. C. His letter, dated Sept. 12, 1777, is in the Papers of the Continental Congress, No. 78, vii, 127.

168 William Barnes, first lieutenant of the Randolph, had been a colonial shipmaster as early as 1764, and was commissioned to the Randolph by Congress, on Aug. 13, 1776. In his will, made at Charleston, Jan. 14, 1778, he bequeathed most of his property to "prossa Walker of great valey in Treduerin Township Chester County." *Pennsylvania Archives, Second Series, II, 640, 645, 651; Journals of the Continental Congress, V, 649 (Aug. 13, 1776); Will Book, 1774–1779, Charleston Free Library (CFL).*

169 John McDougall, a nephew of Gen. Alexander McDougall of New York, had served with Biddle since the creation of the Continental Navy. He had been appointed third lieutenant of the Andrew Doria, in December, 1775, and had been promoted and transferred to the Randolph at his captain's request. *Will Book, 1774–1779, CFL; Muster roll of the Andrew Doria, Nicholas Biddle Papers.*
My Dear Brother

If you could form any Idea of the unhappiness I feel at not having a single line from home during the Many months that I have staid here You will I am sure favoir me with on[e].

If an express or Gentleman comes in from Pennsylvania My friends here tell me they hope all My Friends at home are well. And I am sick of Repeating that I do not get a line from any one there. They Naturally conclude I am a Person very little Esteem’d or some one or other would surely take notice of me—These considerations together with an ardent desire I have of doing My duty made me on the first of Sep’t when the Pilot wish’d Me joy on being safe over the Bar of Charles Town burst into tears and cry God Bless You, Altho we struck twice in going over and (as I have since found) knocked off 11½ feet of the false keel.

On the fourth We came up with two Ships two Brigs and a small armed Sloop—They fired on us for about an Hour as we run down before the wind upon them one Ship had 20 the other 8 Guns—Both Ships and one Brig Struck after giving them a few BroadsideS. The other Brig and Sloop steerd different Courses. The Brig I Chased and took—but the Sloop got off—One of the Brigs was a Frenchman I let Her go—But they Came here under My Convoy—The Eighth of Sep’t I got My Prizes safe in Port—Their was not a Man Kill’d on either side and but three or four wounded—My Ship being very full of Barnacles and oysters which grow Amazingly fast here in the Sunshine thrive on Vessels Bottoms—I came in to Clean I wrote to Neddy but find the letter was mislaid and not sent by the express.

The Prizes altogether sold for about [torn]ty Thousand Pounds Sterling—Agents Commission and expences attending the Sales will amount to 12 or 15 thousand sterling. The half of the rest will will [sic] be divided among My self officers & Crew—I think it a dam’d Shame that an Agent should have nearly as much as Myself and all the Commis’s officers on Board for doing no Business and Running no Risk either of Property or Person For he employs a Gentleman

170 Autograph Letter Signed (3 pp.), Nicholas Biddle Papers.
who for one and half per C‘ does the Business, Runs all Risks of bad debts Bad money &c—"171

Since I wrote the foregoing I have Received a letter from You by Major Butler.172 It is the only one from any of the Family (Nancy & C Biddle, excepted) Since I left You

I have had a very narrow escape from a Fever that laid Violent hands on me soon after I came in to Port.—And to Comfort Me in my distress the Randolph was Sunk in Careening and lay under water two Weeks before they could get Her up.173 I need not tell you that I felt much more concern on account of the Ship than for My own Safety—I am now well and hope Soon to Sail—But as it [torn] on getting Men in place of those wh[torn] while the Ship was Sunk I cannot certainly say how soon it May be.—

Andrew Robeson has My Power of Atorney I wish it could be instrumental in getting You What Prize Money May be due to Me from the Northward—I wish You to get it and Make use of it for the Family

I will write to Neddy by the next oppertunity—Give my Love to the Family and believe me to be Most Affectionatly

Yours Nicholas Biddle

[Addressed] To James Biddle Esq'

To the care of the Honble

Robert Morris Esq'

[Endorsed by James Biddle]

Lre

Bro' Nicholas

Cha' Town Nov. 1777

171 The Continental agents at Charleston were Levinus Clarkson and John Dorsius. Clarkson, however, had taken a leave of absence in April, 1777. Charles Oscar Paullin, ed., *Out Letters of the Continental Marine Committee and Board of Admiralty* (New York, 1914), I, 38, 116.

172 Maj. Pierce Butler, of the South Carolina Militia. Heitman, 137.

173 A Britisher, who sailed from Charleston on Oct. 7, 1777, reported on his arrival at New York that "at Hobcow on the eighth of September, she [the Randolph] overset, and, notwithstanding every effort was made use of to weigh her, she lay full of mud the fifth of October, and there was little hopes of her floating again." *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, Nov. 20, 1777.
To Robert Morris

Charles Town November the 23rd 1777

Sir

I enclose to You a letter I have received from the Navy Board and My Answer, for your Perusal. As the Answer contains the intelligence I should have sent to You, a Repetition I suppose needless.

I have not Received any instructions from the Honble the Marine Committee since My cruise altho the Board of Commerce writes Mr. Dorsius word, that letters have been sent to me.

The Randolph is Rigged, with her Guns and most of Her stores on Board. I have Recruiting Parties out and A Prospect of getting from Here in two or three weeks. I am Sir with the greatest Respect

Your very Humble Sert

Nicholas Biddle

[Addressed]
To the Honble
Robert Morris Esqr.

Charles Biddle to James Biddle

Newbern June 10th 1778

My dear sir

Thinking that my going to Cha's Town might be of some service in Settling Our poor D' N. affairs, as soon as I was Certain of his fate, I imedately sett off And return'd a few days ago—the most disagreeable journey I ever undertook, the Excessive heat of the Weather, and the Necessity of my being soon back, made me ride it in seven days: it is near three hundred Miles, a deep Sandy road, it has fatigued me much, but I Enjoy a perfect State of health—No Man Ever fell more lamented than our Brother what a figure Would he have made had God permitted him to have Continued a little longer Where was there a More Virtuous Man? a More prudent

174 Autograph Letter Signed (1 p.), Franklin Delano Roosevelt Collection, Hyde Park, N. Y.
175 The whereabouts of these letters, if still in existence, is not known.
176 The Marine Committee wrote to Biddle from York Town, Pa., Oct. 24, 1777, directing him to proceed on a cruise to France. Paulin, I, 161, 162.
177 Autograph Letter (4 pp., incomplete), Nicholas Biddle Papers.
brave and Vigilant Officer? that damn'd Ship: what a Chance that he fell in with her—\(^{178}\) I fret to think I was not with him in the Randolph, if I could not have prevented I should have shar'd his fate—but he Could not bear me to talk about it. he pursuaded me not to go in the G:\^M: \(^{179}\) and told me (what I well knew) that with the Crew she had I could get Neither honour to myself or Country, poor dear fellow; he told me when I left Ch' Town, as the plan was Altered about attacking the Ships of[f] the barr, he did not beleave he should go Out with the fleet. he told Miss Atheson \(^{180}\) After I left C. Town that he thought it too Much for his Mother to risque two sons in the ship.

the Night I got in to C.Town I heard from M^rs\(^{181}\) Dewees that a Gentleman in a large Company had given a toast that seem'd to reflect upon the Conduct of Our D' N. In the temper I was then in, I felt a gloomy pleasure in thinking I should have an oppertunity of Calling out any Man, that dard to say a Word against him: when she saw I was much affected, She endeavou'd to Conceal the person that told her, but I soon found it was Col: Stockholm. \(^{182}\) it was then Eleven oClock at Night. I went Imedeately to him. he said he did not think he Could be Answerable to Mention the Gentlemens Name, Without Consulting some of the Company; & knowing wether they took it in the same light that he did: As I knew him to be a warm freind of N. I did not make use of the language I otherwise would have done, but told him I must and Would know who dar'd to give it. After somet ime he informed me it was Cap^ Morgan, \(^{183}\) as he was an Old Acquaintance I was much Shock'd, however I should have Challenged any Man that would throw Out the most distant reflection upon such a Brother—I slept None all Night. Indeed the thoughts of my being in the bed, that I so Lately us'd to sleep with our Brother

\(^{178}\) H.M.S. Yarmouth, 64 guns, Capt. Nicholas Vincent.
\(^{179}\) Ship General Moultrie, of 18 guns and 200 men. Charles Biddle had commanded her briefly, from Dec. 27, 1777, to Jan. 6, 1778. Autobiography, 104.
\(^{180}\) Miss Atheson has not been identified.
\(^{181}\) Mrs. Dewees was a Charleston landlady with whom both Nicholas and Charles Biddle roomed while ashore. Autobiography, 106 (where the lady is called Mrs. Dennis). This whole incident, as described in the letter, differs materially from the story in the Autobiography. As it was written soon after Charles Biddle's return from Charleston, the letter is likely the correct version.
\(^{182}\) Col. Stockholm has not been identified.
\(^{183}\) Capt. Charles Morgan, of the brig Fair American.
in, would have prevented me, if nothing else. I knew Morgan had a
difference with N. when he came in from sea, he hoisted his pendant,
and not hailing it down the minute he was ordered, N. fired a shot
into him, some gentlemen on board, ask'd him, if he was not
acquainted with Cap'n Morgan, he told them, he knew no person
when his duty call'd upon him to take notice of them, & had his
Colours brought on board—Early in the morning I sent the following
note to him—[''] Sir—I heard last night, that you had given a toast
in public company that was thought by some present to reflect
upon the conduct of my brother, from you as an officer in the
expedition it was taken more notice of than it would have been, by
one, who had not been in the fleet—send an immediate explanation
by Major Love, 184 who waits upon you for that purpose—['']—In his
answer he express the greatest surprize that any one could take the
sentiment in the light it had been mentioned to me; that what he
gave was “more wisdom to those at the head of our navy” that he
meant to reflect upon the people at C* town who fitted the vessels
out, & knew nothing about it: that so far from reflecting upon my
brother, there was no man living he had so high an esteem for, and
he would lose his existence if he could bring him back to life; that he
was sure a braver, nor better officer never liv'd and he would be one
of the first to call any man to an account that said a word against
him and was willing to publish anything to that purpose. I had some
thoughts as the toast was given in public company to have pub-
lished my letter & his answer but was afraid it might be look'd upon
as a piece of vanity, however he will do public justice to his char-
acter—I found afterwards that from his first arrival he had been
lavish in praise of N. and never mentioned him without tears—he
din'd aboard him and spent the whole day with N. before the fatal
7th of March there were three hundred and six men on board, and
not a man sick, but Fanning, the third lieutenant, 185 who went sick
from C* town—he says they spent the day merrily and N. call'd to
him after he was in the boat, now Morgan I wish to be a long side
of any thing they got but a two decker—they saw the damn'd ship

184 Probably William Lowe, or Love, of the Third South Carolina regiment. Heitman, 358.
185 Lieut. Joshua Fanning, who had served in the continental navy since December, 1775.
He was originally sailing master of the ship Columbus. Efforts of his descendants to recover
wages and prize money due him form an interesting collection of letters in the John Fanning
Watson Manuscript Annals, HSP.
upon their Wether Quarter about four o Clock, the Randolph Ime- 
edately Wore, and hove Out a signal to Chase, at dark as she was bearing down upon them, they hove too—for sometime they lost sight of her—about half past Seven she fir’d a Gun, hove too & hail’d Sullivan\textsuperscript{186} in the G\textsuperscript{1} Moultrie, who Answered the Polly, She Ask’d what Ship that was a head, he told them the George (then the fleet where in the following Situation the Randolph a Little ahead of the G.M. the Fair American off the Randolph’s lee bow, the Polly off the G.M. lee Quarter and the Notre Dame a stern of her, then they haild the Ship a head. Sullivan Could not here to distinguish their Cross words, but they hailed Ime- 
edately from the Randolph asking what Ship that was, they answered the Yarmouth, with that N. told them, this is the Randolph, Biddle—the officer on board the Y——Cried out Hoa. Hoa are you there, with that the Engagement began and lasted for upwards of twenty Minutes (a hotter I believe never known) before the Randolph blew up—poor N. had an Acc\textsuperscript{t} from the Vessell he took the day before, & before she Sail’d, that there was Nothing larger than a frigate Cruising in that Lattitude and he Could Suppose her Nothing Else, for as she came ranging up [balance of letter missing]

**APPENDIX**

Glossary of rigging terms from Nicholas Biddle’s letter of May, 1772, to his brother Charles.

Bee—a piece of hard wood bolted to the side of the bowsprit; also called the bee block.

Belay—to make a turn or turns with a running rope around a cleat to hold secure.

Bite—to take hold of firmly.

Bobstay—a rope extending from the stem to the end of the bowsprit to hold the latter down.

Block—a grooved pulley incased in a frame which is provided with a hook, eye, or strap by which it may be attached.

Cat harpen (cat harpin)—one of the short ropes used to brace in the shrouds toward the masts so as to give free sweep to the yards.

Collar—an eye in the end of a stay or shroud to go over the masthead.

\textsuperscript{186} Capt. Philip Sullivan, whose lack of judgment is described by Charles Biddle. *Autobiography*, 393–395.
Dead eye—a rounded, flattish wooden block encircled by a rope, used to set up shrouds and stays.

Gears—the rigging in general, or specifically, the equipment required for any particular sail or spar.

Head—the top of a mast.

Heel—the lower end of a mast.

House—to stow or secure.

In stays—in the act of going about from one tack to another.

Messenger—a rope passed around the capstan and having its two ends lashed together to form an endless rope.

Neck—the part of a mast just below the heel of the topmast.

Pendant—a comparatively short rope depending from a spar, having at its free end a block, or spliced thimble.

Purchase—a pulley or tackle.

Salvager (selvegee)—a skein or hand of rope yarn wound round with yarn or marline for stoppers or straps.

Spring stay—a preventer stay, to assist the regular one.

Sprit sail lift—a rope leading from the masthead to the extremity of the yard to support it.

Stay—a strong rope used to support a mast of a vessel; to support or secure with a stay or stays.

Tie (tye)—a rope passing through the mast and made fast to the center of a yard, the other end being attached to a tackle, for hoisting or lowering.

Thimble—a ring of thin metal formed with a grooved outer edge so as to fit within an eye splice and protect it from chafing.

Viol—a large rope, sometimes used in weighing anchor.

Agreement to Share Prizes when Separated

[February, 1776]

We further agree as an Addition to the above Invitation that all Prize or Prizes that shall be taken in Company or in Case of Separation...
tion by the Ship Alfred D: Saulterson Esq¹⁰⁰ Commander; Abm Whipple Esq' of the Columbus, N Biddle Esq' of the Brig' And: Doria—Jn° Hopkins Esq' of the Brig' Cabot, Jn° Hazard Esq' of the Sloop Providence, & Hoysteed Hacker Esq' of the Sloop Fly, shall be equally Divided according to ye resolutions of the Congress, as if at all Times they were Embodied in one Fleet, In Case any of ye above Ships or Vessells should be taken, Lost or cast away they shall be entitled to as good a Share or Shares thereof as if they had actually been at the Capture of the aforesaid Prise or Prizes during the Term Mentioned in the above Invitation, Provided always that the Officers or Seamen so cast away or taken shall do their best Endeavours to gett on Board some one of the above mentioned Vessells, And the Captains of each ship should send as soon as may be to the Commander in Chief a Certificate under his Hand, that his Ships Company had subscribed the above Agreement.

¹⁰⁰ Dudley Saltonstall.