

# NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

## *The Widowhood of Margaret Shippen Arnold: Letters from England, 1801-1803*

“Your dear father whose long declining state of health you have been acquainted with, is no more.” In these words, Margaret Shippen Arnold (1760-1804) conveyed the news of Benedict Arnold’s death in London in 1801 to her stepsons, Richard and Henry Arnold. For the next few years, until shortly before her death, Philadelphia-born Peggy Shippen carried on a correspondence with her stepsons in Canada that illuminated her thoughts and feelings as she struggled to come to terms with the loss of an intimate companion, to secure her financial and social position, and to ensure the future well-being of her children. The surfacing of the following group of letters in 1988, after many decades in family hands, presents an opportunity to analyze Peggy’s experience of widowhood in light of the concerns of historians of early American women.<sup>1</sup> Perennially tainted by association with her notorious husband, Benedict Arnold, and herself suspected of

I am indebted to Steve Fisher, Curator of Archives and Special Collections at Penrose Library, University of Denver, for calling the Arnold Family Papers to my attention. Special thanks go to Beth Goodman and Nancy Metger of the staff of Archives and Special Collections for their work on the letters.

<sup>1</sup> These letters form part of the Arnold Family Papers deposited at Penrose Library, University of Denver, in 1988. They were acquired from the heirs of Helen Chadwick, the granddaughter of Richard Arnold and the great-granddaughter of Benedict Arnold. Although drawn upon by early biographers, these letters have never before been printed in full. In transcribing them, I have been completely faithful to the original text. Nothing has been omitted and the language has not been modernized.

Lewis Burd Walker included excerpts from these letters in his filiopietistic compilation of family correspondence and related documents aimed at exonerating Peggy of all imputations of wrongdoing. See Walker, “Life of Margaret Shippen, Wife of Benedict Arnold,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (hereafter, *PMHB*) 24 (1900-1901), 257-66; 401-29; 25 (1901-1902), 20-46; 145-90; 289-302; 452-97; and 26 (1902-1903), 71-80; 224-44; 322-34; 464-68.

complicity in his treason, Peggy Shippen emerges as a somewhat enigmatic figure in the historical literature. Writers have concentrated on her role in Arnold's betrayal of his country<sup>2</sup> and they have emphasized the romantic elements in the relationship between the young Philadelphia belle and the celebrated general.<sup>3</sup> Until recently, however, they have not seriously considered Peggy Shippen Arnold's identity as a woman of the Revolutionary generation.<sup>4</sup> These carefully composed letters, with others Peggy penned to members of the Shippen family in Philadelphia, constitute a major resource for scholars seeking to gain perspective on eighteenth-century Pennsylvania women.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Peggy occupies a prominent place in the standard studies of Benedict Arnold's life and career. See Carl Van Doren, *The Secret History of the American Revolution: An Account of the Conspiracies of Benedict Arnold and Numerous Others drawn from the Secret Service Papers of the British Headquarters in North America . . .* (New York, 1941); James Thomas Flexner, *The Traitor and the Spy: Benedict Arnold and John André* (New York, 1953); Willard M. Wallace, *The Traitorous Hero: The Life and Fortunes of Benedict Arnold* (New York, 1954)—all of which conclude that she was not an innocent bystander when Arnold attempted to surrender West Point to the British. See also Isaac N. Arnold, *The Life of Benedict Arnold: His Patriotism and His Treason* (Chicago, 1880).

<sup>3</sup> Centered on the high drama of Revolutionary intrigue, Harry Stanton Tillotson's *The Exquisite Exile: The Life and Fortunes of Mrs. Benedict Arnold* (Boston, 1932) is a sensationalized narrative designed more to titillate than to inform. Two other biographies of Peggy Arnold written for a juvenile audience—Milton Lomask's *Beauty and the Traitor: The Story of Mrs. Benedict Arnold* (Philadelphia, 1967), and Lois Duncan's *Peggy* (Boston, 1970)—capitalize on the fascination of a young woman's marriage to a famous man twice her age. See also Milton Lomask, "Benedict Arnold: The Aftermath of Treason," *American Heritage* 18 (Oct. 1967), 16, 84-92.

<sup>4</sup> To Randolph Klein, the biographer of the Shippen family, the most significant fact about Peggy's life was her molding by the Shippens. Klein's book elucidates Peggy's role in the extended family network. Randolph Shipley Klein, *Portrait of an Early American Family: The Shippens of Pennsylvania Across Five Generations* (Philadelphia, 1975). Margaret Shippen Arnold's experience of widowhood is discussed in Lisa Wilson Waciega, "Widowhood and Womanhood in Early America: The Experience of Women in Philadelphia and Chester Counties, 1750-1850" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1986), 36-65.

<sup>5</sup> Excerpts from this correspondence are published in Walker, "Life of Margaret Shippen." The Historical Society of Pennsylvania holds a substantial number of Margaret Shippen Arnold's letters. Recent studies of eighteenth-century Pennsylvania women include a series of articles in the January 1983 issue of *PMHB*: Elaine F. Crane, "The World of Elizabeth Drinker," 3-28; Sharon V. Salinger, "'Send No More Women': Female Servants in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia," 29-48; Jean R. Soderlund, "Black Women in Colonial Pennsylvania," 49-68; Carole Shammas, "The Female Social Structure of Philadelphia in 1775," 69-84; and Terri L. Premo, "'Like a Being Who Does Not Belong': The Old Age of Deborah Norris Logan," 85-112—all in *PMHB* 107 (1983). Also significant are Lisa Wilson Waciega, "A 'Man of Business': The Widow of Means in Southeastern Pennsylvania, 1750-1850," *William and Mary Quarterly* (hereafter, *WMQ*) 44 (1987), 40-64; and Jean

Along with many female Americans who reached maturity on the eve of the American Revolution, and especially those whose sentiments or family ties led them to be Loyalists, Peggy Shippen found her life course marked by profound discontinuity.<sup>6</sup> Reared in a privileged environment in Philadelphia as the youngest daughter of wealthy attorney Edward Shippen, she grew up with a set of expectations that colored the rest of her life. Her introduction to society coincided with the outbreak of the American Revolution. She had socialized with British officers during the occupation of Philadelphia before meeting Major General Benedict Arnold, a hero of the Revolutionary war who had been appointed military governor of Philadelphia. Shortly after she married him in April 1779, he engaged in the treasonous behavior that forever changed her life.

Uprooted as a result of her husband's political choice during the Revolution, she resided for a time in New Brunswick, Canada, and then settled into permanent exile in England beside other Loyalist Americans. She stood by Benedict Arnold during their twenty-two-year marriage, despite his lengthy absences, the knowledge that he had fathered an illegitimate son in Canada, and the financial turmoil created for the family by his ill-advised investments. Five of the seven children Peggy bore survived at the time of their father's death. Two sons already had embarked on military careers. Edward Shippen Arnold (1780-1813) served as an officer in the Bengal cavalry, and James Robertson Arnold (1781-1854) was an officer in the Corps of Royal Engineers. Her third son, George Arnold (1787-1828), was studying at the Royal Military Academy. Peggy lived in London with her daughter, Sophia Mathilda Arnold (1785-1828), and her youngest son, William Fitch Arnold (1798-1846).

Peggy was widowed at mid-life, a relatively common experience for women of her generation. Like most widows, she had to face a number of urgent problems—regaining her emotional equilibrium after her

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Soderlund, "Women's Authority in Pennsylvania and New Jersey Quaker Meetings, 1680-1760," *ibid.*, 44 (1987), 722-49.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Beth Norton, "Eighteenth-Century American Women in Peace and War: The Case of the Loyalists," *WMQ* 33 (1976), 386-409; Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Boston, 1980); and Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill, 1980).



Margaret Shippen Arnold and child, painting (London, between 1783 and 1789) attributed to Daniel Gardner. Courtesy of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

husband's death, ordering the family's finances, and providing for her offspring. But Peggy Shippen Arnold had, in the legacy of her husband's treason, a greater emotional burden than most widows. Her responses to the challenges she faced furnish clues to her understanding of herself as a woman and of her values.

Peggy embarked on widowhood with trepidation. The major cause of her anxiety was the precarious state of the family's finances. Benedict Arnold's unwise investments in privateering vessels during the Napole-

onic wars, coupled with his general lack of astuteness in business affairs, had left his heirs with a mountain of debt. Although Peggy herself received an annual pension of £500, as did each of her children £100 annually, from the British Crown, the threat of creditors seizing the Arnolds' assets was both real and ominous. In his will, Benedict Arnold had designated his wife as the sole executor of his estate. Peggy undertook this duty fully aware of the handicaps she faced as a woman in the public arena. She wrote her stepsons that it "is most unfortunate that your dear Father did not join some male friend of respectability in the Executorship; upon whom so much imposition might not have been practiced." Frequently dependent on men to carry out her decisions and aware of the intensity with which her actions were scrutinized, she described her task as "the most troublesome business, that ever devolved upon a female." Nevertheless, she managed to see that her husband's debts were paid and in the process demonstrated that she could capably fill the role of head of household.

Complicating Peggy's work were her husband's bequests to the sons of his first marriage, Richard Arnold and Henry Arnold, both of whom resided in Canada.<sup>7</sup> Because they had questioned their father's integrity, she made a point of recounting to them in meticulous detail the tedious process of dealing with creditors. Repeatedly, she assured them that she would do everything in her power to fulfill Benedict Arnold's commitment to them. Yet she also reproved them, stating pointedly that they "so little knew his heart, his motives, and his embarrassed circumstances, as to be induced to write him in a style to wound, and distress him." Evidently, Peggy regarded her labors in her stepsons' behalf not only as the fulfillment of an obligation but as a means of salvaging her husband's tarnished reputation.

As she grappled with the knotty problems involved in settling her husband's estate, Peggy demonstrated sound knowledge of financial matters as well as shrewdness in assessing the strategies of her adversaries. Initially adopting a defensive posture designed to minimize losses and protect the family's economic stability, she soon learned to act decisively to advance the family's interest. She energetically pressed her case for potentially valuable Canadian lands that had been granted

<sup>7</sup> Benedict Arnold's first wife was Margaret Mansfield (1745-1775), the daughter of a prominent New Haven, Connecticut, family. Arnold married her in 1767.

to the family. Instructing Richard and Henry Arnold in firm language to use their contacts to assure the favorable location of these lands, she left no doubt that she was now the actual as well as the titular head of the family. As such, she willingly assumed responsibility for the support of Hannah Arnold, her husband's sister who lived in Canada.

The independence that came with being widowed allowed Peggy Shippen Arnold not only to set her own goals but to test her abilities in the male world. At first, she justified her actions as the product of necessity. How else could her husband's good character be preserved and her sons and daughter allowed to walk proudly in English society? But as she demonstrated her competence, she came to see herself in a more positive light. Although occasionally indulging in self-deprecating statements, she admitted that she was pleased with her accomplishments. "I believe I may without vanity say that there are few women that could have so far conquered [these difficulties] as I have done."

In seeking to place her family in as favorable an economic position as possible, Peggy was driven by a lifelong desire for superior social standing. Accustomed from childhood to the appurtenances of wealth, she was shaken by the necessity of moving to a smaller house and selling her furniture, plate, and wine. "The want of a Carriage I shall most feel," she confided to her father and sisters, "not only in point of comfort, but of respectability."<sup>8</sup> Material possessions symbolized one's place in society for Peggy, prompting her to compare her situation to that of her servant. "I am now living in a very small house in Bryanston Street, using Furniture purchased from Carlow; who is now a more independent woman than her Mistress." But her craving for the respect of the English social elite was gratified when she found "no reluctance in my friends in a superior line, to visiting me here."<sup>9</sup>

The dread of her family's social slide that had surfaced after she was forced into exile dominated Peggy's widowhood. As early as 1792, she had lamented the loss of "the means of educating [her children] in a style at all equal to what the former part of my life promised."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Wacieg, "Widowhood and Womanhood in Early America," 60-61.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 58.

<sup>10</sup> Margaret Arnold to Sir Henry Clinton, Nov. 13, 1792, quoted in Van Doren, *Secret History of the American Revolution*, 426.

Determined to keep up appearances despite her straitened circumstances, she deliberately and skillfully nurtured her connections to assure her offspring an upbringing consonant with the social position she expected them to fill in England. In 1802 she informed Richard and Henry Arnold that her “anxiety to get your little Brothers on in life” prevented her from returning to America to be with her father and sisters. She had “placed George at the New Royal Military College. . . . It is a most excellent Seminary, and embraces every part of Education, necessary to form the Soldier, and the Gentleman.”

As she negotiated the various agreements that led to the successful settlement of the estate, Peggy marveled at the fortitude that had enabled her to persevere under stressful conditions. But she was already suffering from what she termed “an internal complaint,” ultimately diagnosed by her doctors as cancer.<sup>11</sup> The harrowing description of her physical symptoms and the ineffective treatment prescribed shed light on the history of women’s health care in this era. The inevitable could not be forestalled, and Peggy died in 1804 at the age of forty-four.

Peggy transmitted to her stepsons an impression of Benedict Arnold as a blundering but benevolent father worthy of praise for his well-meaning efforts to provide for his children. But her letters to Canada contain little about Benedict Arnold as a husband or the nature of her feelings toward him. Although she alluded to the setback in her health caused by her spouse’s death, she chose not to disclose personal details of her bereavement. From other sources, however, we know that Peggy was deeply affected by her loss. As she confided to her eldest son Edward in 1804, “I can with truth assure you . . . that I have wholly conquered the depression of spirits, that at one time, had nearly overpowered me. . . . [W]henver I feel a disposition to repine at my present altered situation, I draw a comparison between my present feelings, and the agonising ones of two years back,-and am silenced.”<sup>12</sup>

Nor do Peggy’s communications to Richard and Henry Arnold give a full picture of the support network that sustained her during this

<sup>11</sup> Lomask, “Benedict Arnold: The Aftermath of Treason,” 91; Wallace, *Traitorous Hero*, 311.

<sup>12</sup> Margaret Arnold to Edward Shippen Arnold, Jan. 11, 1804, in J.G. Taylor, *Some New Light on the Later Life and Last Resting Place of Benedict Arnold* (London, 1931), 64. See also Waciegza, “Widowhood and Womanhood in Early America,” 40-43, 46-47.

difficult period. While it is made clear that her own sons' impeccable behavior and altruistic tendencies contributed greatly toward buoying her spirits as she confronted personal and financial crisis, the role of her English friends in her rehabilitation remains shadowy. Evidently, she relied heavily on several individuals for personal favors as well as assistance in business transactions. Moreover, the key part played by her kinfolk in Philadelphia in supporting her is barely hinted at in the correspondence to Benedict Arnold's sons in Canada. Despite political differences, Peggy never severed her ties with the Shippen family, and, indeed, she depended on them for material aid as well as emotional succor.

In the letters she wrote her stepsons during her widowhood, Margaret Shippen Arnold consciously or unconsciously defined herself for posterity. What stands out amid the details of pressing business is her resoluteness in pursuing her twin goals of satisfying Benedict Arnold's creditors and facilitating her children's advancement in society. Motivated in large part by her own preoccupation with social rank, she sought to extirpate the blight of financial failure from her family tree, so that she and her offspring could continue to move in the upper-class English circles she cherished. As she candidly explained to her son Edward, "I am making every exertion to keep up as much as possible the respectability of the family, and am determined, while it is in my power to prevent it, that the fortunes of my children shall not be marred by the change in our situation."<sup>13</sup>

Whatever reservations Peggy harbored regarding Benedict Arnold, she never repudiated him nor the cause he served. Electing to remain in England after his death, she envisioned her own and her children's destiny in the British Empire. Her final years offer striking testimony of the overwhelming attractiveness to her of a life style rapidly disappearing in her native land.

<sup>13</sup> Margaret Arnold to Edward Shippen Arnold, Jan. 11, 1804, in Taylor, *Some New Light*, 63.



## Letters

Letter 1:

Galleywood near Chelmsford

July 1, 1801

My dear Sons,<sup>14</sup>

Though laboring under extreme distress of mind, and ill health, I feel myself called upon to make an exertion to give you a piece of information, most harmful to you to receive.-Your dear Father whose long declining state of health you have been acquainted with, is no more. In him, his family have lost an affectionate husband, father and friend; and to his exertions to make a provision for them, may be attributed the loss of his life.-His last unsuccessful speculation,<sup>15</sup> with the mortification and distress attending it, pressed heavily upon him, and for many months before his death, he never lay two hours of a night in his Bed and he had every dreadful nervous symptom, attended with great difficulty of breathing, that can possibly be imagined.-I had flattered myself that a favorable change in his circumstances, which would restore peace to his mind, and enable him to get a horse, and go into the Country, would reinstate his health. But this wished for change never took place but on the contrary he had heavy demands upon him from different quarters.-On the 8th of June, he became much worse, and suffered greatly for several days, and on Sunday the 14th of June, at  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 6 oClock in the morning, expired, without a groan. For some days previous to his death, he had but short intervals of reason, when the distressed situation of his family prayed greatly on his mind and he was imploring blessings upon them.- Upon the 21st of June, the day after the Funeral, I was removed here;-I am a little better, but the many months fatigue and anxiety of mind I have endured added to my present distress leave me but little hope of a speedy recovery. I shall as soon as possible return to town, as business presses heavily upon me.-I shall send you a Copy of the Will, if I can possibly copy it, by this opportunity, if not in a few days.-I have not

<sup>14</sup> Richard Arnold (1769-1847) and Henry Arnold (1772-1826) were sons of Benedict Arnold and his first wife, Margaret Mansfield. At the time these letters were written, they lived in Canada.

<sup>15</sup> Benedict Arnold's investments in privateering vessels during the Napoleonic wars did not produce the returns he anticipated.

yet proved it, but shall, as soon as I am able to return to town.-In the mean time Mr. Moore,<sup>16</sup> a most kind friend who was concerned with your dear Father in the Contract, has promised to get the holders of your accepted bills, to wait till I am improved to act.-They became due the week after your fathers death, as well as others, to a considerable amount.-The amt. you draw for £127-and £149, your father did not accept, but as I know it was his wish, if it was in his power to pay them, to do it, it is also mine.-The accepted bills will come in the list of Debts, which must be first paid; the other two as a Legacy. But you may rest assured that if upon my being impower'd to act, I find I can with Justice and Safety pay those Bills immediately, I will do it, as I know this being returned will occasion you great uneasiness.-Your Father was obliged to sell the lease of the house a week before his death, to make provisions for the payment of his accepted Bills not having it in his power to raise the Money in any other way.-But it is impossible for me at present to say, whether I shall be authorized to pay them in preference to the other debts.-if it should prove that there are not effects sufficient to discharge the whole.-But you may rest assured that I will not only do strict Justice, but every thing in my power to prevent your being distressed.- I have not yet heard from Edward<sup>17</sup>; James<sup>18</sup> is in Egypt exposed to the greatest danger; but he writes in good spirits.-Your Sister<sup>19</sup> is in great affliction and ill health.-In short we are a wretched family, and added to our severe loss we shall have pecuniary distress to contend with.-Believe me my dear Sons, with every wish for your welfare

Sincerely yours  
M Arnold.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Moore (1753-1813), a Whig politician who was elected to the House of Commons from Coventry in 1803, was Benedict Arnold's partner in the privateering ventures.

<sup>17</sup> Edward Shippen Arnold (1780-1813), son of Margaret Shippen Arnold and Benedict Arnold.

<sup>18</sup> James Robertson Arnold (1781-1854), son of Margaret Shippen Arnold and Benedict Arnold.

<sup>19</sup> Sophia Mathilda Arnold (1785-1828), daughter of Margaret Shippen Arnold and Benedict Arnold.

Letter 2:

Gloucester Place July 27th 1801

My dear Sons,

I wrote to you some time ago, informing you of the melancholy event of your dear Fathers death, and in addition to his loss of the primary difficulties in which his family would have to struggle; and at the same time inclosed you a Copy of the Will. Before my health was sufficiently recovered from the shock, and long deprivation of rest, I found it absolutely necessary to return to town to prove the Will, and enter upon business.-Your accepted Bills, and others to the amount of £2000 rendering this measure indispensable. A few days ago, I received the Probate of the Will from the Commons, and the following day made arrangements, and gave orders for the payment of all the Accepted Bills. I informed you that your Father has not accepted your Bills for £149, and £127. But as I knew it was his wish, if possible, to have paid them, I was desirous to do it, but upon taking advice, I found that by doing it, I took all the risques upon myself as *Debts* must be first paid; and I am extremely sorry to say that they amount to so considerable a sum, that it is very doubtful whether the effects will be nearly sufficient to cover them.-Your hon. accepted bill for £127 became due the day of your Fathers funeral, when I was not in a situation or of course empowered to Act, but a few days after, Mr. Moore offered to settle it, but they refused to receive payment, to exclude damages, and in a most unfeeling manner took advantage of the distressed situation of the family, and returned it protested.-Your other now accepted Bill for £149.10 became due on the 24th Inst. I was advised by no means to pay it; but the fear of plunging you into great distress induced me to make an arrangement with the Bankers to take it up, for the honor of the drawer, and it is paid.- I find that your dear Father has expressed himself in a very sanguine manner to you, respecting his privateer<sup>20</sup>; on the contrary, she has caused his ruin, and in fact hastened his end. He has sunk five or six thousand pounds by her, and I have now Bills of near £3000 to pay, and God knows how it is to be done. She is still out, and has taken nothing; and until this unfortunate business is closed, I know not upon what footing I

<sup>20</sup> The *Earl of Spencer* was one of Arnold's privateering ships.

stand; or what expenses she may further involve me in. I was so little sanguine with respect to our affairs, that anything but respect to your Father's memory, induced me to administer; and I was distressed at the idea of all his Books, Papers, etc. being thrown into the hands of strangers.- I imagine from your Fathers letters that you have already located the Lands in Canada.<sup>21</sup> Pray let me know every particular respecting them. Letters go out from my friends here to Mr. Scott,<sup>22</sup> the Attorney General, requesting his assistance in the Business.-etc. etc.-

August 6th 1801

Since writing the foregoing, I have been made very uneasy at not being able to find your Bill for £199.14.5 which became due on the 15th June, the day after your dear Father died, when it was, as you may suppose utterly out of my power to pay it but should it be unfortunately returned, you must endeavor to settle it as well as you can, and as it was accepted, it will of course be considered as a Debt, and I shall be justified in paying it.-Your Bills for £40 £53 £100 and £150 I have paid with costs and interest; and the Non Accepted Bill for £149-by means of the Banker.- The unfortunate Privateer has arrived at Falmouth, unsuccessful, and has incurred a very heavy expense lately I have ordered her with the River<sup>23</sup> to be sold, and shall endeavor to close this unhappy business as soon as possible.-&c &c-

October 20, 1801

My dear Henry

The foregoing is a Copy of my letter to you and your Brother; since which yours of June 20th to your Father is come to hand. I am extremely sorry to find that the Canada Lands are not located, and that the non-payment of the trifling sum of seven Crowns, should

<sup>21</sup> The British Crown granted Benedict Arnold 13,400 acres of wasteland in Upper Canada as a reward for his services in the Revolution and in Guadeloupe.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Scott (1746-1824), appointed Attorney-General of Upper Canada in 1800, was in charge of the location of lands.

<sup>23</sup> The *River* was another of Benedict Arnold's privateering ships.

have prevented the Warrants from being taken up.-I am sorry to find that your Bill for £199.14.5 was sent back to New York protested; but as it was accepted, it becomes a *Debt* of your Fathers, and I expect its return daily, and shall provide for its payment.-I am more than ever discouraged respecting the winding out of our affairs, as the debts are numerous; and I have not yet been able to collect on any thing.-I am extremely wretched; and the situation of your poor Sister, and little Brothers is truly deplorable; as there is not a hope of anything being left for them.-&c &c &c-

January 7, 1802

My dear Sons, I have extracted the parts of my several letters to you that are of the most importance,-and am surprized that I have not heard from you in answer to them in that first inclosing a Copy of the Will; as letters have been received from Mr. Low, the gentleman who took it, some months ago, and he writes word that he forwarded it to you immediately when he arrived in Canada.-I have the satisfaction of informing you that your Bill for £199.14.5 was returned, and I have paid it; which I was glad to do, as it would not probably have been in my power to have done it, had it come much later.-The Tradesman, whose bills upon the Earl Spencer are paid & forgoing that I shall probably be under the necessity of calling them together, and making a dividend of what money I have been able to collect.-Brymer & Belcher's Bond is yet unpaid; it is to be brought to Arbitration, and if favorably settled will make a very material difference in our Affairs, as it will go a great way towards paying the debts that are ascertained; but what demands may be made by a hundred and fifty Sailors, for Prize Money, it is impossible to say.-I cannot describe the state of wretchedness, trouble and anxiety, the task I have undertaken has involved me in; had I been aware of half the difficulties attending it, without a hope of myself or my Children deriving any benefit from it; no consideration should have induced me to have Administered. And my health and comfort have been the sacrifice.-I have no expectation of saving even the Furniture and Plate as the nature of the speculations have such an opening for imposition, which it is impossible to guard against, particularly in the hand of an unprotected female. It is most unfortunate that your dear Father did not join some male friend of respectability in the Executorship; upon whom so much imposition might not have been practiced.-

Letter 3:

January 13, 1802

My dear Henry,

I have received yours of the 20 October and am much obliged to you for your kind condolences. I have already answered fully to it respecting your Bills, which have all been paid, except the one for £127. I wish I could immediately authorize you to draw for it, but not coming under the list of Debts, which must be first paid, I should not be justified, as an Executrix, in paying it as a Legacy;-and as a friend, it is not in my power to do it; for I fear I shall have nothing left, and that your unfortunate Sister, and younger Brothers, will be destitute; and that you and Richard will have received all of the worth of your poor Father's property, unless something more favorable should occur, in the winding up of affairs, than present appearances promise.-I wish your Father had accepted the whole of your Bills as if all is to go, it would be much better for you to have been wholly relieved, than to share it among the Creditors, to whom it is not so important.-I hardly know what to say respecting your Half pay.-The power to your Father was with his life;-in expectation of your drawing, previous to your hearing of the unfortunate event, I applied to the Pay Master to know if he would pay it, in case you draw, my guaranteeing his safety in doing it.-But it being wholly contrary to the rules of Office he refused. Whilst I am in London, if you think proper, I will save you the expense of agency and receive it, and pay your Bills; but my future residence is so uncertain, that if you have any other person here in whom you can confide, perhaps you may prefer it. I have been very unwell for some time past, which has prevented my going to the Pay Officer to procure a proper Power<sup>24</sup> to send you to file up, as the least informality would prevent payment. I will try to get out to day; and will advise with the Pay Master on the subject; perhaps I may prevail upon him to Accept and Pay your Bills free of expense.-which I should greatly prefer; at the same time that will give me pleasure to be of service to you in any way.

<sup>24</sup> A power of attorney authorizes a person to act as an agent or attorney for another individual.

16th January 1802

I have not been able to procure a proper form for the Power of Attorney from the Pay Officer, but they say it is in the usual way, and as you have granted others, you will no doubt be able to send one.-I do not find that the Pay Master will undertake transacting the Business without Agency.-If you cannot do better, sooner than you shall be distressed I will undertake to manage the Business, if you choose to send me a Power of Attorney for that purpose.-You will enclose your letters up in a small compress, by writing close as Postage, even by a Private Ship is enormous.- Every single piece of paper however small is paid for as a single letter.-I have just had a letter from my dear James, who had arrived at Gibraltar, on his way home, and I hope to see him in a Week or Two.-Poor fellow. He will find a sad change and a bad recompense for all his toils and dangers.-I have not heard lately from Edward;-your Sister is extremely delicate, and ill able to struggle with our personal misfortune. I am just about quitting this House, your Father having been obliged to sell the Lease a short time before his death to pay your Bills.-I have advertized the Furniture, which must be sold, if nothing turns up in a short time to prevent it.-I believe I shall go into a small House in Bryanston Street, furnished by my old Maid Carlow.-I am almost borne down with affliction, and have nothing to look forward to, but wretchedness.-I have only the excellence of my Children, with an upright conscience to support me.-I am convinced that my present misfortunes have not been in consequence of any imprudence of my own; and your dear Father's motives were so laudable, being actuated by his anxiety to provide for his Children, that we must admire them, though we lament the effects.-I shall write to you again soon; and may be able to tell you how some very important business is settled.-If favorably, I may be able to pay the Debts and Legacies; if not, I fear the deficiency will be considerable.-At any rate I have no expectation of saving anything from the Estate for myself or my Children.-But I trust the Almighty will look down with compassion upon them and not permit them to want.-I trust that your situation is flourishing, from the liberality of your dear Father to you.-Your not informing me more particularly respecting New Canada Lands leaves me wholly at a loss to know how to act.-I inclose you copies of the Duke of Portlands<sup>25</sup> letters ordering

<sup>25</sup> William Henry Cavendish, 3rd Duke of Portland (1738-1809), was a Whig leader. As the secretary for the Home Department, he granted 13,400 acres of land in upper Canada

the Grant; which I have got from Lord Hoberts<sup>26</sup> office.-But I expect the Lands will be wholly lost to me and the family, as I do not find anything has been done there.-

Letter 4:

London Bryanston Street  
June 10th 1802

My dear Sons,

I have just heard of an opportunity by Mr. Mallet,<sup>27</sup> of writing you a few lines, which I am glad to avail myself of, having been for some months past so afflicted with a severe nervous complaint, that I have been incapable of writing, or exertion of any kind. I am Thank God rather better, but still in a very uncomfortable, not to say hazardous situation.-I am grieved to inform you of the still unbalanced state of your dear Father's Affairs, the attempt to settle which has cost me so dear-The Arbitration with Brymer & Belcher is now going on and I had flattered myself that if we were successful I should be at last enabled to pay all the Debts; but within a few days the Captain of a Swedish Vessel, which was carried into Vianne by the Earl Spencer, has arrived in town, and is I understand about filing a Bill and will probably lay his Damages at some thousands, which should he be successful, will of course require ten times what there will be to pay. I have sold the Furniture, great part of the Wine, and am preparing to dispose of the Plate, and every other Article belonging to the Estate. It is a hard, and very cruel case, yet had it pleased God to have spared me the distressing complaint with which He has afflicted me, I would have endeavoured to have supported myself, and have got my poor Children on in the World.-I have done nothing further respecting the Canada Lands, not knowing what steps to take, or whether they will

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to Benedict Arnold and his family in 1798. Arnold was exempted from the residency requirements for claiming the land.

<sup>26</sup> George Hobart, 3rd Earl of Buckinghamshire (1731-1804), was the head of the Department of Land Grants in England.

<sup>27</sup> Jonathan Mallet, a close friend of Margaret Arnold, helped her with correspondence when she was too ill to write and with the location of the Canadian lands. He was named as an executor of her will.



answer the expense attending them.- I wrote to your Aunt Hannah<sup>28</sup> some time ago, informing her of my fears of the Debts more than swallowing up all the property.-But that I was so much distressed at the idea of her suffering, that I begged she would draw for £20 which I would (ill as I could share it) pay out of my own income, provided there was nothing left of the estate.-I have not since heard from her, and concluded that she is now with you, and that as you are the only part of the family who are likely to have a shilling of your Father's property, you have undertaken to support her, til it is seen how things will terminate. It afforded me pleasure to pay your Bills as the Money must otherwise have gone to strangers, and it must certainly enable you to get on very comfortably, and assist such part of your family as require it.-You have my best wishes for your success.-Your Sister is in very delicate health, and I fear the privation of the comforts she has been accustomed to enjoy, will bear heavily upon her.-she is a charming girl, and has supported herself and me wonderfully, but she seems now to be sinking. I am quite at a loss to know what to do with George, as it is extremely difficult to get a young man on in this Country without Money. Little William<sup>29</sup> is now at home, ill with the hooping Cough, and he's scarcely yet recovered from the Meazles.- I have got into a very small house in Bryanston Street, which I shall remain in, while it is necessary on account of business to continue in London.-I ought not to repent having undertaken it, as I have been the means of benefiting others so much, but myself and my Children would have enjoyed comparatively perfect happiness, if I had retired upon my Income from Government,<sup>30</sup> and never undertaken the settlement of Affairs so unbalanced. I shall write to you again soon in the mean time wish you every happiness.-The kind love of the family attends you all. Believe me my dear Sons, Yours very affectionately

M Arnold

<sup>28</sup> Aunt Hannah was Hannah Arnold (?-1803), Benedict Arnold's sister. She never married and helped raise her brother's three oldest sons. She lived in Canada with Richard and Henry Arnold and was granted an annual pension of £40 in Benedict Arnold's will.

<sup>29</sup> William Fitch Arnold (1794-1855), son of Margaret Shippen Arnold and Benedict Arnold.

<sup>30</sup> Margaret Shippen Arnold had been granted an annual pension of £500 by King George III in 1782.

James is now quartered at Hull in Yorkshire, and left the enclosed for you.-I have heard lately from Edward, who writes most affectionately and had just had a newspaper account of the loss he had sustained.-supposing his Father had left a handsome property he writes to a friend here desiring it may in his name be relinquished to me and the family. He is a noble fellow and James has shown himself equally decent in this

Letter 5:

London Bryanston Street Nov 5th 1802

My dear Sons,

I have just received your affectionate letters of June 28th, and am much obliged to you for the kind concern you express for me and my Children; and am gratified to find that you are sensible of the great exertions I have made for you, respecting the payment of your bills, to which I gave a decided preference to any other Debts; and as an Executrix, I had this power.-I very early informed you, that in undertaking the settlement of the most troublesome business, that ever devolved upon a female, I had not been actuated by the hope of benefiting, in the smallest degree, myself or my Children and that I was only induced to do it, from respect to your Father's memory;-the certainty that I could do more justice to others, than any other person could;-and the wish to prevent all private letters, &c. from falling into the hands of strangers: The event has too fully proved me right. Strong as my motives for exertion were, had I been aware of the effect it would have had upon me, I should have been wanting in duty to myself, and my poor Children, had I undertaken it;-for, for many months I was reduced to a state, that I now shudder to think of; and from which, it was apprehended I should never recover.-But thanks to the goodness of God, I am restored to serenity, and the power of exertion; and I shall perseveringly go on, in the arduous task I have undertaken; the only recompense for which, will be, the consciousness that I have done my duty.-I have been under the necessity of parting with my Furniture, Wine, and many other comforts, provided for us by the indulgent hand of affection; and have by these sacrifices, paid all the *ascertained* Debts, within a few hundred pounds; and hoped, from the result of the Arbitration with Brymer & Belcher, to be enabled, not only to discharge the remainder, but to pay a part of the Legacies; provided a demand, to a large amount, made by a Swede,

for the long detention of his Vessel, was not substantiated.-I hear that the Award is made; but it has not yet been sent me;-I have however had a hint given me, that it has gone against us;-if so, I have the mortification of knowing, that neither myself or my Children will *ever* have the value of a guinea from their dear Father's property; and that even the uncommon liberality of my beloved Sons, in giving up their Pensions,<sup>31</sup> for the use of the family, has been of no avail, and has only been the means of involving themselves in difficulties. But these things are I suppose, wisely ordained by the Almighty, for some good purpose, as His Justice, and Mercy, we cannot doubt.

A few months will bring things more to a close, when I will give you every particular.-While I have the means of preventing it, I will never suffer the Sister of my Husband to want, and shall supply her, from my own little Income with what is necessary for her. I approve highly of her residing with you in the future, as a situation of more comfort, and less expense than any other.-The Boy<sup>32</sup> who is with you ought to be taught, by his own labor, to procure his own livelihood;-he ought never to have been brought up with any other ideas.

My dear Edward is one of the most noble of youths;-he writes sanguinely of his prospects in India;-but at present, has only a Cornetry in the Native Cavalry; but from his pay he insists upon taking upon himself the entire expense of little William's Education;-he had before, made over his Pension, irrevocably, to his Sister.-Dear James is equally generous and disinterested, and is now living with great difficulty upon his Pay, that his Pension may be appropriated to the use of the family. My dear girl is all that is amiable and excellent; and George<sup>33</sup> and William promise fair to emulate the example of their elder Brothers.-Such Children compensate for a thousand ills.- I inclose you an extract of a letter from Lord Hobert to Genl. Hunter respecting the Lands, which is I think so pointed, that the Government in Canada can no longer refuse their Location, upon the terms evidently intended

<sup>31</sup> Each of Margaret Arnold's children received an annual pension of £100 from the Crown.

<sup>32</sup> "The Boy" was Benedict Arnold's illegitimate son, John Sage. Born in 1786, he lived in Canada with Richard and Henry Arnold. In his will, Benedict Arnold directed that Sage be given 1,200 acres of land and a £20 annual pension. He also provided for his son's education until he was twenty-one and bequeathed him £50 when of age.

<sup>33</sup> George Arnold (1787-1828), son of Margaret Shippen Arnold and Benedict Arnold.

by his Majesty.-I also inclose a Copy of a letter to Judge Powell.<sup>34</sup> I am greatly at a loss to know what steps it will be best for me to take;-I cannot expect that he will interest himself much in the business, as he is almost a stranger to me. I must therefore request your particular attention to it, and that you will do everything in your power to get them Located in the best situations, and upon the best terms possible;-all necessary expenses I will thankfully repay, and by that you will draw upon me for the amount, keeping in recollection my very confined circumstances.-From having been so long in the Country, you must be enabled to form a very good idea of the best situations; the proper mode of locating the Lands, and their value afterwards.-and I depend upon you doing everything in your power to assist me in this business, as hereafter they may be valuable to the family.

With respect to the Land bequeathed, by your Father, to the Boy who is with you, I shall take care that he shall have it, when he is entitled to it; it is therefore unnecessary for you to hold it in trust for him, and of course all the Deeds and Papers must be sent to me.-I shall make inquiries respecting the necessity of sending you Powers of Attorney to act in this Business; if it is, I shall send it out by the next Packet.-Your poor Father thought these Lands an object, and expended a great deal of interest and trouble in procuring them; they may be so, if judiciously located; everything must depend upon that.-My ignorance upon the subject renders me very incapable of giving the necessary directions, but I trust you will do everything in your power to promote the interest of the family in it.- I hope you have had no difficulty with the bill of £127. I sincerely wish it had been *Accepted* which would have enabled me to pay it as a *Debt*. Should the Swede establish his Claim, I greatly fear that I may be involved in some difficulty respecting your Bill for £149; and I must, in that case, account for every farthing, to prove that I have fully Administered and til every Debt is discharged, I shall not be justified in having paid any thing, that does not actually come under that description.- I am now living in a very small house in Bryanston Street, using Furniture purchased from Carlow; who is now a more independent woman

<sup>34</sup> William Dummer Powell (1755-1834) was appointed a judge of the Court of King's Bench in Upper Canada in 1794.

than her Mistress.- My Father<sup>35</sup> is very good to me; but for his Aid, I should have suffered still more wretchedness.-He and my Sisters<sup>36</sup> are very desirous of my going to reside with them; but my anxiety to get your little Brothers on in life, will deprive me of this gratification. I have placed George at the New Royal Military College, to which he was appointed (through the interest of the Marquis Cornwallis) by the India Company, who pay half the Expence of his Education, he being designed for their Service.-It is a most excellent Seminary, and embraces every part of Education, necessary to form the Soldier, and the Gentleman.- I beg to be remembered very kindly to Mr. H. Arnold, and to your Aunt, should she be with you. I write to her by this Packet.-

Believe me with sincere wishes for your welfare my dear Sons,  
affectionately Yours

M Arnold

Letter 6:

[First part of letter missing]

[received in May of 1803]

I feel extremely unwilling to relinquish it, as it is of more importance than anything that I have had to transact;-as we ought in justice to receive from him 10 or 12 thousand pounds.-It has cost us infinite trouble and anxiety.-This given up, and the Swede relinquishing his Claim, would enable me in a short time to bring things to a close; though I have yet constantly demands made upon me, some I pay, and some I am obliged to resist.-This most unfortunate Speculation has involved so much expense and trouble upon your father's Affairs, which otherwise might have been settled in these months.-I never so much repented of any Action of my life, my imprudence in undertaking them, but it is too late, and I must go through with it.- I received two days ago very long and delightful letters from my dear Edward, who is very sanguine as to his prospects, and flatters himself that their

<sup>35</sup> Margaret Shippen Arnold's father was Edward Shippen IV (1729-1806), a prominent Philadelphia lawyer and jurist.

<sup>36</sup> Margaret Shippen Arnold had three sisters, Elizabeth Shippen Burd (1754-1828), Sarah Shippen Lea (1756-1831), and Mary Shippen McIlvaine (1757-?), and one brother, Edward Shippen V (1758-1809).

realization will restore to me many of the comforts of which I have been deprived.-I have been so fortunate, through the interest of Marquis Cornwallis, to get George into the Royal Military College, nominated by the India Company, who defray half the expense, which is 90 Guineas pr Ann. They are taught everything that can form the Soldier and Gentleman, Riding, Fencing, and every other Accomplishment, with the Oriental language, which is very important; and it brings them much into notice, being particularly patronized by the first Characters in the Kingdom, George's character stands very high.

I shall send you, when a good opportunity occurs, some few things belonging to your Father; Also your poor Brother Ben's<sup>37</sup> Sword; which Sir Grenville Temple brought from the West Indies and gave to your dear Father.-Your Sister joins me in kind remembrance to you all.-I shall write again soon.

Yours very affectionately,  
M Arnold

I enclose a letter to be sent to Judge Powell, and have it open for your perusal.-

Letter 7:

London Bryanston Street March 31st 1803

My dear Sons,

I have not had the pleasure of hearing from you since November last, since which I have written several times. I feel gratified by your affectionate anxiety for me; and am happy to have it in my power to relieve it, by assuring you that I am infinitely better, and am thank God, restored to a great degree of comfort.-A variety of the most agonizing scenes, followed by such a press of the most harassing business, from a termination of which neither myself or my Children had any chance of deriving any benefit, had nearly subdued that fortitude which never before forsook me, and rendered existence a burthen to me.-But God be praised, I have conquered many difficulties, and am now very sensible that I have still many blessings spared me.-The excellence of my Children is a never failing source of delight

<sup>37</sup> Benedict Arnold (1768-1795), the eldest son of Benedict Arnold and his first wife Margaret Mansfield, served as an artillery officer with the British forces in Jamaica, where he died in 1795 as a result of wounds received in a skirmish with maroons.

to me, and the most uncommon attention and kindness I experience from my friends tend to make me much less sensible of the material change I have sustained in my situation.-I have before informed you that the situation of your dear Father's Affairs was such, as to render it necessary for me to have the most trifling article disposed of, or valued and paid for by myself; this has extended even to his Clothing.-A most extraordinary award has been given by the Arbitrators in Brymer & Belcher's business, giving us only £700 instead of £4000 to which we conceived ourselves entitled. Mr. Moore and Mr. Thornton have refused to abide by this decision, and the Case is to be reconsidered; but I have no doubt of its being amended. The delay in this business has been very cruel; the nature of it, and the concern that Mr. Moore had in it, appeared to render him the proper person to take the management of it;-this he has done which accounts for the delay, as he is so much engaged in Politics (in which I wholly differ from him) that he cannot attend to any thing else. I have wearied him with entreation to bring to a conclusion a business upon which depended the comfort of so many; and at length have nearly quarrelled with him upon the subject.-He is now scrutinizing a contested election, for a seat in Parliament, in which he has been the unsuccessful Candidate. He has promised me that ours shall be the first business, of a private nature, that he will attend to.- The Swede has not withdrawn his Claim for the loss of his Cargo, and long detention of his Vessel; but he does not pursue it with much vigor, and I am in hopes he will drop it.-I have been so fortunate, through friends to make an interest with the Swedish Consul, to whom it has been strongly represented the injustice of his Countryman's demand, and the inefficacy of his pursuing it, not only from the little chance of a decree in his favor, but that should he obtain it, there are not Assets to answer his demand. Til this is settled, the accounts with the Officers, and people of the Earl Spencer, cannot be finally closed, which is a very distressing circumstance to me. It is impossible to express to you the troubles and difficulties I have had to encounter, and I believe I may without vanity say that there are few women that could have so far conquered them as I have done.- I have still little occasional demands upon me, from different parts of the world, but I hope I nearly know the extent of those debts, due from the Estate. It will depend upon the issue of the Arbitration, whether or not there will be anything towards paying the Legacies: I have not reserved for myself

a bottle of wine or even a tea spoon, that I have not paid for.- I feel a great deal of solicitude for your Aunt, from whom I have not heard for a long time; I have written to her several times, within the last six months, desiring her to draw for another £20. I fear she may have been in distress, unless you may have supplied her, which I trust you have done.-I shall be glad to hear that she is settled with you in Canada, and shall have great satisfaction in contributing to her comfort.-I should be very sorry to find that you had any serious thoughts of quitting that Country, as I think so frequently changing your situation and plans must ever be attended with disadvantages to you; and if your circumstances are straightened, the remaining with society in a degrading situation, will be more mortifying and painful to you, than a seclusion from it.

I have had late letters from dear Edward; he appears to enjoy perfect health, and as much happiness as his separation from his family will admit of.-He is sanguine as to his future prospects, as the Commander in Chief, with whom he is upon terms of great intimacy, has promised him the first Staff Appointment in his gift.-Our dear James is now under Orders for the West Indies, and will probably sail in about a fortnight.-My sweet girl is tolerably well, and a great blessing to me; George has lately been admitted into the Royal Military College through the Interest of the Marquis Cornwallis and is educating for India.-and little William is at School at Camberwald. No Mother was ever so blessed in good Children than I am.

I have in all my letters written you very fully respecting the Canada Lands, which I am very anxious to have Located as soon as possible, and upon the best terms.-I have already enclosed you a copy of a letter from Lord Hobert to General Hunter, and shall repeat it in this letter.-I have written to Judge Powell requesting his assistance but do not place much dependence upon it. The value of the Lands must almost entirely depend upon their being judiciously located: Your knowledge of the Country, and the interest that you must feel in the business, render you the only persons, upon whom I can place [any] real dependence, or expect any services.-The impossibility of any other person's obtaining a Grant upon the favorable terms given to us, make the securing ours a very desirable thing; and I trust that no further difficulties will arise respecting the Fees. The expenses attending the Business, I will most cheerfully pay, and request you will draw upon me for the amount;-keeping in recollection my unfortunate situation



and endeavor to avoid, as much as possible, every unnecessary expense, however trifling.-

Extract of a Letter from the Right Hon. Lord Hobert to Lord General Hunter dated Downing Street September 4th 1802.

“A Memorial having been addressed to me by the Widow of the late General Arnold respecting the Fees payable upon the Grant of 13400 Acres of Land directed to be located to the General and his Family in Upper Canada, I am to acquaint you that it clearly appears to have been intended that the 8400 Acres granted to the General’s Family should be considered in the same favorable point of view, with respect to the Fees, as the 5000 Acres ordered for the General himself.”

April 9th 1803

I have just seen Mr. Cochran who is going out as one of the Judges of Upper Canada; he was a School companion and intimate friend of Edward and James, and has assured me that he will be happy to serve me.-He has Witnessed the Power of Attorney, which I now inclose, which will save me the Expence of the Lord Mayors Seal, &c. A Mr. Morley whom I have never seen, but who has offered his Services to a friend of mine, is to call upon me on Monday to Witness another; by him I shall also write to you-I trust it is not necessary to urge your paying attention to this business, which if well managed may hereafter be of use to the family.-With sincere wishes for your health happiness and prosperity believe me my dear Sons

Yours affectionately  
M Arnold

My friend Mr. Mallet writes again by this conveyance to Mr. Scott, the Attorney General, urging his attention to my business. I must repeat to you that I wish the whole of the Grant made out in my name.-When the Boy who is with you is entitled to any part of it, he will have it.- I shall send you by Mr. Morley some of your dear Father’s Hair, his Seal with his Arms, Sleeve Buttons, Knee and Stock Buckles, &c, &c, &c-Which as having been long worn by him will I doubt not be valuable to you

Letter 8:

London Bryanston Street April 13th 1803

My dear Sons,

I have written to you twice by this Fleet, one letter enclosing a Power of Attorney I forwarded by Mr. Cochran; the other by a Mr. Morley enclosing another Power, and by him also I sent a small parcel containing a Seal and some other things belonging to your dear Father-I now send, and I hope I shall be in time for Mr. Morley, an Authentic Copy of the Will which may be necessary to prove my right to Act.-I hope you will be able to have the Lands Located soon and eligibly,-as I am told they are rising greatly in value.-Mr. Morley gives me a most favorable account of that Country.-

Believe me my dear Sons,  
Yours truly,  
M. Arnold

Letter 9:

London Bryanston Street July 27 1803

My dear Sons,

My kind friend and neighbour Mr. Mallet, has just informed me that they shall dispatch a packet to Canada in an hour, and though not very able to write, I cannot neglect the opportunity of giving you a few lines.-I have written you very fully respecting the Canada Lands; and sent you a Power of Attorney, and a duplicate of it, to enable you to act to advantage in this Business-I trust you will do every thing in your power, for the advantage of the family in locating them, in the best situation, and upon the best terms.- I am sorry to inform you that I have great cause of alarm respecting my own health; and fear that my dear Children will soon lose their other protector.-I had greatly recovered my health and tranquility, after the severe blow, and accumulated distress. I had suffered, and was beginning to taste some comfort in the exercise of my duty, and the society of some valued friends, when an internal complaint, under which I had long labored, increased to a degree highly alarming.-For the last ten weeks I have been entirely precluded from the use of animal food, wine, beer, or any other thing that can enrich the blood-and have been almost entirely confined to a recumbent posture.-This has lowered me, and rendered me very uncomfortable, and does not appear to have abated any of

the unfavorable symptoms of the disease.-I shall have a consultation of Physicians two days hence, and wish to avail myself of the advantage I have of the best advice in the world, which I suppose London affords.-God knows how it will terminate;-I am endeavoring to prepare my mind for the worst, but when I reflect upon the unprotected state of my Children, whose welfare so greatly depends upon my exertions for them, I am almost deprived of that fortitude, so essential to my own support.- I have from time to time given you an account of your dear father's affairs; and had hoped 'ere this to have brought them to a settlement. By the most unwearied exertions I have nearly accomplished, what I am convinced no other person could have done, the payment of all the *just* debts, and have hoped that there might be two or three hundred pounds left.-But I have lately had several demands made upon me, on account of the vile Privateer, which I know not whether I can resist, or even if they are just.-I have several times mentioned to you, a Claim to a very large amount, made by a Swede, for the long detention of his Vessel, and the total loss of his Cargo.-The case is in the Court of Admiralty, and is expected to come on this week.-Should he recover, it will be a very iniquitous thing, and his demand will amount to probably ten times as much as there are effects to satisfy it.-You can form not the smallest idea of perplexity and trouble in which I have been involved.-The only reward for which is the having saved you from distress; and the gratification of having paid all your dear Father's just debts, so that no reflections on that score can ever be cast on his memory.-I have had even the most trifling article that I reserved, even to an old shirt, valued and have paid for it, so that it is most probable that neither myself, or my Children will have even a single guinea from any of their father's property.-I told you that the long-pending Arbitration was settled, and that we got but little more than £300-I am surprized and uneasy at not hearing from your Aunt for a long time, as I am fearful she may be in distress for Money-I have written repeatedly to her, and desired her to draw upon me for £25 which I will endeavor to allow her annually.- I have heard lately from Edward, who had just had a severe action with the Army of one of the Native Chiefs; whom, however they had not conquered.-James is now on his passage to the West Indies; George is at the Royal Military College, and will, if I live, go to the East Indies next year.-Your Sister is with me in tolerable health; and little William goes to the School at which all his Brothers were educated.- If I can

be of any use to you here, it will afford me great pleasure to render you a service-I lament more for the sake of others, than my own, my limited means of doing good-I am summoned to send my letters-

Believe me, my dear Sons,

Yours very sincerely

M Arnold

Letter 10:

Clay Hall Old Windsor Aug. 28, 1803

My Dear Sons,

I have received yours of May 21 & 30th and am very glad to find that you are so well satisfied with my conduct towards you, which I can with the greatest truth affirm, has been dictated by regard to you, respect to your dear Father's memory, and an earnest desire to act with uprightness, feeling, and tenderness.-Although I had much to be thankful for, during your Fathers life-time, I had much to struggle with, the solicitude he felt, to make a handsome provision for *all* his family, often involved us in difficulties, and eventually proved the cause of his death, and has involved that family in ruin:-But that solicitude was in itself so praiseworthy, and so disinterested, and never induced him to deviate from rectitude that his Children should ever reverence his memory; and for myself, I am determined, in my conduct to them to do every thing which I think would be pleasing to him, could he view the actions of those he has left behind.-It is certainly greatly to be regretted, that you so little knew his heart, his motives, and his embarrassed circumstances, as to be induced to write to him in a style to wound, and distress him; and now to cause little self-reproach to yourselves; but as the evil is now irremediable, I beg you will not suffer it to corrode your future happiness-We are all frail mortals; and sincere repentance is the first step to amendment.-Your dear Father forgave, and blessed you; God will accept your contrition, and I will not only destroy the fatal proofs in my possession, of your misguided judgments, but will endeavor to attribute it to the distress of your minds, at the time, rather than to the depravity of your hearts and as much as possible lose all recollection of it.-It will afford me sincere pleasure to be of any use to you, not only as the Children of the Man whom I have loved; but I trust from your future conduct; at present my means of befriending any body are but slender; but if

I live, my Father and my Sons may enable me better to gratify the feelings of my heart.-I am very sorry to find that you have had so much to encounter, in settling your Farms, and that you are still struggling with many hardships, added to impaired healths. But notwithstanding all these difficulties, let me earnestly recommend perseverance to you; I trust that you have got over the worst, and that in a little time you will be enabled to enjoy the fruits of your hard labor.-I am fully sensible that your present situation is trying, and is a painful seclusion from the world; but until better prospects open to your view, it might be hazardous to relinquish your hardly-earned, though slender comforts, to throw yourselves again upon the world; where in business so much money and interest is necessary, to render your exertions advantageous.-But I would not wish too much to influence you;-only will again repeat my assurances that I will do every thing in my power to be of use to you, and I am convinced that should fortune smile upon the exertions of my dear excellent Sons, you will find in them, *Brothers.*

I have the greatest satisfaction in informing you that the long-pending Admiralty cause of the Swedish Ship, is at length decided, and in our favor.-Their Claim was for the loss of the Ship, Cargo and two years detention, a thing so serious, that had they succeeded, ten times the property that I have, would not have satisfied their demand. As it is we gain nothing, and have only to pay our own Costs.-Upon this decision, every thing depended, and until it was given it was impossible to bring the business to a close.-For many months previous to your dear Fathers death, our door was constantly bent with the Sailors, clamourously demanding their Prize money, which they conceived was to a great amount, though in consequence of the ill conduct of the Captain,<sup>38</sup> little or nothing was due to them.-Their duns, so distressed and mystified me, that I often entreated your father to have a regular account of the proceeds of the prizes made out, with a separate one for each man, to have shown them, instead of giving them the unsatisfactory answer, to their highly raised expectations, that "Nothing was due to them."-But alas! this task was too arduous for his worn out frame, borne down by sickness, sorrow, mortification

<sup>38</sup> Captain Heale of the *Earl of Spencer*.

and distress; and all that I could do, was to keep their insolent demands as much as possible from his knowledge.-No sense of propriety, deter'd them from assailing me, even before your poor fathers remains were committed to the silent tomb.-What had I not at this time to encounter?-Conceive what must have been my struggles.-I was to take upon me the settlement of all unfortunate business, that had borne down a so much stronger mind than mine;-I was to encounter with, and put myself in the power of a lot of wretches, without principle or feeling, and all this without a prospect of eventually benefitting myself, or my Children;-but what was the alternative?-By declining to administer, I must give up every book and paper, both public and private, with a certainty that no earthly being but myself could or would take the trouble necessary, to ensure the payment of all the debts; and I trust you will believe me, when I assure you, that your situation weighed heavily in the scale.-It would most probably have proved your ruin, to have had your bills unpaid till this time, which would have been the case; as no Creditor who would have administered, would have had the power or inclination to *select* particular debts, to be *first* paid, as I did.-Although I have suffered, in my choice of evils, almost beyond human endurance, I now repent not having made it:-To you I have rendered an essential service;-I have rescued your Father's Memory from disrespect, by paying all his just debts; and his Children will now never have the mortification of being reproached with his speculations having injured any body, beyond his own family; and his motives, not the unfortunate termination will be considered by them, and his memory will be doubly dear to them.-

The first business that I undertook, was the making out a Prize List, which I had been so desirous should have been the work of an abler head;-to describe the trouble and difficulty of this task, is impossible;-to make out an account with, between two and three hundred seamen, unfurnished as I was with materials (it being the Captain's policy to keep me in the dark, and he had charged me with large advances made to them) occupied me for many weeks, night and day, and in this arduous task, I was only assisted by a common Clerk.-I succeeded beyond what could have been expected, considering the state of my mind and the various other difficulties I had to encounter; and when it was completed, I placed it in the hands of a most respectable Broker in the City, (who was in fact the principle Creditor) and ordered all the seamen who called at my door, to be

referred there;-some were satisfied with this Statement, others grumbled at it; but it was impossible to make a final settlement with any, until the cause of the Swede was decided; this being now the case, I must have a new Prize List made out; and where balances appear to be due, must pay them; but except to some of the Officers, little is due, as Capt. Heale made them large advances (in which he was not justified) which greatly exceed their Prize Money; and as he is a ruined man, I can have no redress from him.-I have been thus minute, my dear Sons, in order to explain to you one of the causes of the long delay, in the settlement of the Affairs.-This you will see has been wholly unavoidable, depending upon the High Court of Admiralty.-The debts due upon the Prize Account, Claim priority, the Articles of Agreement being *sealed*. I was aware of this, and that by paying book debts, or accepted bills, I was deviating from the *form* prescribed; and that in case of a deficiency, any thing I might possess here, or hereafter would be liable.-This pressed heavily upon my mind, when I was in so low a state, as at that time I met such frequent disappointments in receiving Money to answer the demands-But I have, by unwearied exertions, now nearly brought things to a close; such a one as could never have been effected by any body else; as I have in several cases been obliged to use my interest, particularly in recovering £1500 from the Treasury, which your Father could not effect; and which I am informed would not have been paid to me, had it been known that it would all have gone for the payment of debts, instead of benefitting myself, and my Children, for which purpose it was designed.-At the time of your Fathers death, there were bills accepted by him, of above £2000.-All the outfits of the Ship,-amounting to £1400.-Insurances to as great an amount;-the Prize Money due to the Officers and Men;-many other heavy demands, besides family bills, which had run unusually long:-All the Money in hand was little more than £2000, including what was to be received for the sale of the Lease of the House.-The Accepted and Family Bills I paid first; and the others, in different payments, first 10% in the pound, then 5%, and afterwards, the remainder.-I have now about £500 in hand, from which is to be paid the Prize Money; the Costs upon the Swede;-and perhaps some demands, which I am resisting, as unjust.-There is a little insurance business yet remaining unsettled (having depended upon the cause of the Swede) upon its issue, will depend my being called upon to pay nearly £100, or I shall receive about that sum-and I can to no other

quarter, look for the recovery of any thing more;-though I am convinced that much is still due in justice to the Estate.-I have been obliged to relinquish Capt. Tomlin's Suit, after keeping it on, in Chancery, for eighteen months. But finding he scrupled not to perjure himself I found it in vain to carry it on.-I have had frequent intimations from the Sailors, that Heale Ransom'd valuable Ships at Sea, for which he has never accounted;-but I cannot *prove* it; or if I could, has he the power of paying.-It has been a dreadful business; and minute as I have been in my detail, it is quite impossible for you to form an idea of what I have had to encounter, besides the sacrifice of all my accustomed comforts.-I have not even a teaspoon, a towel, or a bottle of Wine, that I have not paid for-But having nearly completed my great work, I was beginning to enjoy some degree of comfort, to which however my ill health is a great interruption.-

And now to the important business of the Canada Lands.-I am very glad to hear that the difficulty of the grant is overcome, more particularly as I understand that if they are judiciously located, they will certainly be of considerable value.-I sent you by Judge Cochran a power of Attorney to act for me; and another by Mr. Mosley; together with an Official Copy of the Probate of your Fathers Will.-I hope that no difficulties will arise, from not having a Power from Edward & James (they being of age) but these, or any others that may arise, I trust you will do every thing in your power to obviate.-It is impossible for me to point out all the proper steps for you to pursue, you are much better acquainted with the nature of the business than I am, that I must leave every thing to your judgment, and exertions.-I have in my former letters, urged the propriety of every thing being managed with as much economy, as is consistent with our advantage; and requested you to draw upon me for such sums as may be necessary, to complete the business; having, constantly in your recollection, the straightened state of my finances.-Pray write frequently, and *very particularly* on this subject.-I regret that you should have suffered weariness respecting your bill of £127, and wish it had been Accepted, when I could have paid it, with safety to myself.-You will see from the full statement that I have given you of the Affairs, that even if their [*sic*] was a much greater balance in my hands, that I should not be justified in paying any Legacies; the Debts not being paid; and demands yet coming, of which I have had no expectations.-But if you



find yourselves very *much pushed* you may draw upon me for the whole, or a part of that sum; and I must *rely upon your honor* to reimburse it, if necessary, to me, in case of a deficiency to pay the Debts;-At any rate, you will probably be obliged to be accountable to your Aunt for it, as there certainly will not be sufficient to pay her Annuity,-which you must be convinc'd should be paid, before you receive any thing more; you must not therefore draw, without her entire approbation; and at any rate, not without it is *absolutely necessary*, to relieve you from great difficulties.-This I am sure you will feel the propriety of, and that it would be very hard that my Children and myself should be deprived of every guinea of their Father's property, but that my own little income should be involved in the general wreck.-But I am induced to give you this permission, to convince you of my solicitude-for your welfare, and desire to serve you, with full confidence that you will make no improper use of it.-

I have sustained a small loss by the failure of our Bankers, Dorsett & Co. But though I could ill afford to lose any thing, I have consoled myself with the idea of how much worse it would have been, had it happened a short time before, when I had some of the Executorship Money, and my half years income, and that of the Children, in their hands.-I went to Guildhall before I left town to prove my debt, but I understand they will not pay 1% in the pound. I have written to your Aunt fully, respecting family Affairs-I depend upon your judgment, and exertions respecting the Lands, in which you have it in your power essentially to serve your family.-Believe me, my dear Sons, with sincerity

Yours affectionately  
M. Arnold

Sept 1st, 1803

In a letter that I have just received from Mr Coxe who is an intimate friend of Mr Elmsleys, with whom he has had much conversation on the subject of the Canada Lands, he strongly urges their *immediate* Location; in which case, he thinks they will be of considerable value. I trust that no difficulties will arise in the Location of the whole; but at any rate get what you can, in good situations; and should any fresh powers from any part of the family be requisite, we must procure them. Let me beg your particular attention to those Lands which I

consider may be of more value, as I understand that none can now be obtained, by any body upon the same terms.-

Yours  
M A.

Letter 11:

London Bryanston Street  
Sept. 8th 1803

My dear Sons,

I wrote you a very long letter about ten days ago, and sent it to a friend to be forwarded by Mr Elmsley; I returned to town yesterday, and finding he is not yet gone, avail myself of the opportunity of again writing most strongly to urge you to pay attention to the Location of Lands upon the best terms, and as *soon as possible*. Mr Elmsley upon being shown the Will, by my friend Mr Coxe, suggested an idea that some difficulties might arise with respect to the Location being made in my name, as by your Fathers Will, I appear only to have a life Interest in it.-I do not see how they can possibly arise, as though at my death the property must go to the Children, I have the power of willing it to them in such proportion as I may think proper.-Of course the Title should be made to me. I trust that no such difficulty will ever be started in Canada, to occasion further delay, but I think it right to prepare you to meet them, by mentioning them, in confidence, to you-I shall enclose a note I have just received from my good friend Mr Coxe, also a Copy of a letter to Mr Mallet from Mr Scott, to whom I shall write, by Mr Elmsley.

It is thought that those Lands may hereafter be valuable if they are judiciously located; and in doing it, much must depend upon your judgement and exertions.-And any delay will certainly be injurious.-I will with pleasure defray all the expense that you are under the necessity of incurring.- I mentioned very fully in my last letter the situation of Affairs, and that I could not yet pay any thing, not under the description of a Debt, without incurring ranquor. But that if you found yourselves really distressed, and obliged to make great sacrifice of property, to pay your Protested Bill of £127, you might draw upon me, and that I would pay your Bill, depending upon your honor to repay it, in case of a deficiency.- Your Aunts bill for £20, I have accepted. I wished to send you, and her, a few useful articles for this

Winter, but am sorry to find that all the Ships for this Season have sailed.-But I shall not be unmindful of you when it is in my power to render you a service.- As upon mature deliberations, I think it altogether most for the advantage of the family, for me to continue in London, if I can be of use to you, in receiving your Half Pay, I will with pleasure do it.-And should I find upon any occasion, that it is likely to be affected, from your absence, I will use my interest, to have it secured to you.- My health is at present in a very precarious state; and the more so as I am unable to use any walking exercise and cannot afford to take that of a Carriage.-I have written so fully by this opportunity that I have nothing more to add than my love to all the family

Yours affectionately,  
M. Arnold

Should any difficulties arise respecting the locating the *whole* of the Lands, pray do not let it prevent your locating a part, as soon as possible.-And should a Power of Attorney from Edward and James be indispensable, I will endeavor to obtain them, but this delay will render them of little value. At any rate, I must leave a great deal to your discretion and I trust you will do every thing in your power for our advantage.-

*University of Denver*

JOYCE D. GOODFRIEND

