

SECTION IX

LETTERS AND PAPERS: 1793

FROM JOHN ASKIN TO THOMAS SMITH¹

Detroit January the 5th 1793

Dear Sir: I have just received your letter of the 31st Dec. and as it was always my intention, so soon as the ice was good to send out a sloop by which you could come in so as we might have some conversation together, and as I have still the same desire, I will for the present only give a few general answers to what you have wrote me. First respecting Lafond² I would never wish to trust a man that requires watching; but as it is done & perhaps I would have done the same, I now [wish] every fair means may be taken to get all you can from him & all others that owe for surely in so small a trade I find the debts very considerable, & many of them I fear very doubtful, so much so that I would now take the same articles that were given, back again in payment. when I have seen you we will determine whether or no it will be best to send M^r Norton³ to Lafond, for whilst you are in

¹ From the original manuscript in the Dominion Archives in Ottawa.

² Apparently this was Antoine Lafond, who was a fur trade employee in the Maumee region in this period. A contract made by him with Ronald McDonell at the mouth of the Glaize, Sept. 15, 1796, to serve the firm of Leith, Shepherd, and Duff of Detroit as clerk for the ensuing season, under the immediate direction of John McDonald, is preserved in the Burton Hist. Coll. Prior to this date he had been employed in the same region by George McDougall of Detroit.

³ John Norton was a half-breed, his mother being Scotch and his father a Mohawk. He was educated in England and seems to have enjoyed the favor of Joseph Brant, upon whose death in 1807 Norton put himself forward as principal chief of the Mohawk. According to another account Norton was a Scot who served as a private in the British army, from which he obtained his discharge in 1788 and subsequently settled on the Grand River and "assumed all the appearances, habits, and manners of the Indians." Whatever his ancestry, there is no doubt that Norton posed as a chief of the Mohawk, and was accepted as such by the British Indian Department. An entry in John Askin's Journal, April 25, 1798, indicates that he was then interpreter at Niagara and that he had formerly been engaged in trade. He was active in the War of 1812, and commanded the Mohawk in the battle of Queenston. He seems to have been regarded by the British authorities as a man of undoubted ability and influence, but much given to scheming and intrigue. He died sometime subsequent to March 3, 1819; where and how, is unknown. See *Canadian Archives Report for 1896*, viii, ff.

here it is my intention that he takes care of the property until your return. The task will be very easy as I never in future intend any trust shall be given. At the rate dry goods are selling in the Indian country, both by your account & others, I would not take the 30 packs of racoons Rouleau⁴ made and give what they cost if you were to give a £100. My sole dependance in your quarter is on rum, bread the blacksmith's work &c; if these will produce any thing very well, if not I can take them back & be much better pleased than to see them gave for bad debts, you have not a pins worth of dry goods, but what I could sell here for a sure profit, and unless you can do the same, I mean to have them brought back on slays, for it is very hard for me to be paying cash dayly for Indian goods, whilst I have some in the Indian country either unsold or what is worse must be given in credit to those who never will pay. To buy any dry goods, to send to the Foot of the Rapids, I never will except something very trifling. All I beg of you is, & I will be satisfied and endeavor to satisfy you also, to drop this uncertain part of the trade, to collect all you can of the debts due, and not make new ones, to prepare wood for kegs of all sizes & dispose of your rum so as to make 24/ or more per gallon & not less. If you strictly adhere to these rules both you & I will suffer less anxiety and I am sure have more satisfaction in the end & be assured If you act agreeable to these my wishes, I will always be satisfied whether you make packs or not. I shall make only one remark relative to the Indian trade, or what the trader[s] generally say & that is when an article or two is wanting, it would seem as if all others were not worth anything, it is very different with us, for tho' I am out of more than 20 articles, I still can sell such as I have.

4. Apparently Charles Rouleau. His ancestor, Gabriel Rouleau *dit* Sanssoucy, born in the parish of Tourouve, in Perche, France, in 1618, married Mathurine Leroux and migrated with her to Canada prior to 1653. They lived at Isle of Orleans, where Gabriel was buried, Feb. 23, 1673. His great-great-grandson, Charles Rouleau, born at St. Laurent, Isle of Orleans, on April 26, 1761, married at Detroit, May 8, 1797, Jane Ann Chauvin, daughter of Noël Chauvin and Jane Meloche. They lived at the Southwest Coast of Detroit, in the vicinity of the River Rouge, where in 1807 and 1808 Private Claims 29 and 567 were confirmed to Charles Rouleau. They had fifteen children, born in the period 1797-1828. Information adapted from Denissen, *op. cit.*, and Farmer, *History of Detroit*, 978, 981.

JOHN ASKIN PAPERS

I have the pleasure of saying that your family were all well a few days ago. I wish you health & happiness & remain

Dear Sir, Your Most obed^t Humble servant

John Askin

P. S. Salt is now worth about 2/ the lb., a great deal of that article remained on the communication. Don't part with Indian corn, on the contrary purchase what you can, towards Sandusky perhaps some could be got, it has not for cash been higher than 8/ here but there appears little or none for sale.

Peltries greatly fallen, minks from 2/ to 2/8 here & I believe not so much below.

Tho^s Smith, Esq. Foot of the rapids.

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES IN LOWER CANADA

Quebec 20 January 1793

Dear Askin I was favoured whilst at Montreal with your esteemed Letter of the 2^d of November and as there will probably be no other opportunity of addressing you than this express untill the Spring I cannot let it pass without dropping you a few lines in return. your partiality to me I have long known and if I can discharge the duties of the public employments I have been raised to equal to your wishes I shall not be apprehensive of forfeiting the good opinion which others have the goodness to entertain of me. I can answer for my heart but the Head may be wrong at times.

Our Legislature met on the 17th ult^o and as you will no doubt see our newspapers I need not take up your time with repeating the Governors Speech, the addresses of the two Houses &^e but referr you for them to the Gazettes.

Hitherto our time has been taken up in framing Rules for proceeding to business so that no Law has yet been brought forward and we have a point to discuss which I fear will set us at variance for the Canadian Members will have all civil Laws passed in the French Language & only a translation of them in English. you will readily suppose that no Englishman can agree that a small Province shall treat the mother

Country with such disrespect besides ever since the conquest of the Country the Laws have been passed in English & not a word said about it, but it would seem that the French revolution & M^r Paines Book on the rights of man have turned peoples Heads, for it is well known that the Governor cannot & that the Legislative Council will not pass any Law whatever in any other Language than in English. so much for our politics here and as to matters of business I shall refer you to the House.

I beg my best Compliments may be made acceptable to M^{rs} Askin & your family & that you will believe me,

My dear Askin, Your affectionate Friend

James M^cGill

John Askin Esq^r

Addressed: John Askin Esq^r Detroit

Endorsed: Quebec Jan^y 20^h 1793 Jm^s M^cGill Esq^r to Jn^o Askin recv^d 11th March Answ^d April 7^h

PURCHASE OF CORN FROM NIAGARA

Detroit 26th Janry 1793

Dear Sir By the fall Vessels I had the pleasure of receiving a letter from you dated the 13th of November mentioning your not being able at that time to let me Know the price of Corn & flour no doubt it can now be ascertained but whilst waiting for information the opportunity of purchasing may be lost I have therefore to beg you will on receipt of this Buy for me 300 Bushels of the former on the best terms you can and have it transported to Fort Erie for the first vessels in the Spring as I shall want it early with 500 I also write M^r Hamilton to procure for me As to flour I will not want any unless the price is low, but Corn I must have cost what it will as the Crop has failed in this quarter.

Mess Meldrum & Park jointly with me are building a fine Vessel fit for the Mackinac business she will carry yourself & property with more safety than your Weazell, Swans, Muskratt &^e

The Indian Country [is] at Peace, but owing to no Snow

and very little frost the Indian hunt wears a poor prospect

Miss Grant Married to Doctor Wright⁵ a few days ago,
my family in good health & present their Complements
I am Dear Sir

Your Most obed^t humble Servant

J A

Endorsed: Detroit 26th Janry 1793 from John Askin to
Mr William Dickson⁶ Niagara A Copy

MARRIAGE OF MADELAINE ASKIN

Queens town 31 Janvier 1793

Mon cher papa Je profite de loccasion de Mr David
Smyth qui accompagne le Gouverneur jusque au Detroit
Je suppose quil Sera recue avec beaucoup de Joiè, surtout de
Notre famille, Car Je scai quil Est un grand favori de vous il

⁵ Therese Grant, daughter of Commodore Grant, was born at Detroit, Feb. 13, 1776. In January, 1793, she married Thomas Wright, who was commissioned surgeon in the Sixtieth (Royal American) Regiment on Oct. 16, 1793. In the winter of 1794-95 he was at Fort Miamis, where Askin sought to befriend him in a garrison feud to which he was a party. In the summer of 1799 he was sent to Jamaica where he died, apparently of yellow fever, prior to April, 1801. Mrs. Wright attempted to return to her parents at Detroit, but died at New York en route; all but one of her four children, according to the Grant family genealogy, died of yellow fever at this time. The surviving child, Therese, a girl of four years, was taken into the home of Mr. and Mrs. William Macomb, former residents of Detroit, until she could be sent on to her grandparents, by whom, and her aunt, Mrs. Thomas Dickson, she was reared. She subsequently married Robert Nichol, for whom see *ante*, 324. She married (second)

Boyd, a captain in the British navy, who is said to have attained the rank of admiral. Information adapted from Askin Papers, *passim*; British army lists; and P. J. Anderson, *Major Alpin's Ancestors and Descendants*, 15-16.

⁶ William Dickson, born in Dumfriesshire, Scotland, in 1769, migrated to Canada along with his brothers, Robert and Thomas, about the close of the Revolution. Robert, the eldest, entered the fur trade and was prominent in the Northwest for a generation, being particularly active in influencing the Indians west of Lake Michigan to support the British cause in the War of 1812. He died at Drummond Island in 1823.

William Dickson settled at Niagara, where he became a barrister and where most of his life was passed. In April, 1794, he married Charlotte Adlam, whose father was a captain in the British navy. During the War of 1812 Dickson was carried captive to Albany, and in his absence from home his house was burned by the Americans. In November, 1815, he became a member of the parliament of Upper Canada. In 1811 he had acquired a tract of some 94,000 acres of land on Grand River where now is the city of Galt, and for a number of years after the war he devoted his energies to colonizing and developing this property. In 1827 he made his residence at Galt, but returned to Niagara in 1836. Here he died, Feb. 19, 1846. He had three sons, Robert, Walter, and William; the last two were barristers at Niagara, the first-named resided at Galt. A somewhat extensive sketch of Dickson's career and ancestry is contained in Niagara Hist. Soc. *Publications*, No. 30 (Welland, 1917).

vous donnera de mes nouvelles Je suppose que vous avez
 deja recue. oui cher papa il ne manquoit que le reste de la
 famille pour nous rendre parfaitement heureux. mon mari
 votre fils se joins à moi pour vous assurer de ses respect Et
 vous demander la permission de vous appeler son pere. Je
 suis assuré mon cher papa Connoissant votre bon Coeur que
 vous ne refuserai point Cette favour. Car Je scai Combien
 vous ete interessé aux bonheur de vous enfants il me recom-
 mande de vous marquer quil gardera toujours comme un de
 ses plus grand devoir davoit soin de votre fille, Et moi de
 Conserver la tendresse de toute la famille. Je noubli-
 rai jamais les intensions de M^r H envers nous ainsi que notre
 chere Kity Je suis bien prèssé Je suis faché que Je ne puis
 en Ecrire plus long. Jassure Ma chere maman de nos res-
 pects Et amitie a nos frere Et soeur.

Et suis avec respect

Votre affectionné fille

Madelaine Richardson

Addressed: M^r John Askin Detroit

Endorsed: Queenston Jan^r 30th 1793 M^{rs} Madelaine
 Richardson to John Askin rec^d & answ^d in February

Translation

Queenston, January 31, 1793

Dear Papa: I am taking advantage of the opportunity by
 Mr. David Smith, who accompanies the Governor⁷ as far as
 Detroit. He will be joyfully received, no doubt, especially
 by our family, for I know he is a great favorite of yours. He
 will give you news of me which I take for granted you have
 already received. Yes, dear Papa, there is wanting only the
 rest of the family to make us perfectly happy. My husband,
 your son, joins me in assuring you of his respect. He asks
 permission to call you father. I am sure, dear Papa, knowing
 your kindness of heart, that you will not refuse this favor, for
 I know how much you are interested in the happiness of your

⁷ John Graves Simcoe, first governor of Upper Canada, for whom see *ante*, 403.

children. He charges me to say to you that he will always guard as one of his highest duties, the welfare of your daughter, and on my part, to cherish the affection of all the family. I shall never forget what Mr. H[amilton] did for us, and also our dear Kitty.

I am very hurried. I am sorry that I cannot write about things at greater length.

Assure my dear Mama of our respect and love to our brothers and sisters.

I remain with respect, your affectionate daughter
Madelaine Richardson

FROM WILLIAM ROBERTSON TO JOHN ASKIN

London 31st January 1793.

Dear Sir: By the arrival of M^r Leith here the 3^d of this month, I had the pleasure to receive your obliging letter of 10th October; both from it, & from the more ample detail of M^r L—, I was particularly happy to find your family, as well as yourself, in so good a state of health; that you had had such a fine season, & that the general tenour of affairs in your settlement wore an aspect so promising, circumstances which will never cease to give me the most heartfelt pleasure, & to promote which, I shall never think one of the least of my duties; at the same time I do not find myself disposed, for many reasons, to revisit you again at present. The system of political government laid down for Canada, if pursued with temper, moderation & discernment, I am persuaded is capable of producing the fairest & happiest consequences to the colonies, as well as to the parent state.

As this goes out by the way of New York in the care of a young man I am sending out to my brother, & as I shall send all the newspapers &c by him to the present date, I shall therefore refer you to them for the political events of the day, the most interesting & astonishing that the page of modern or even ancient history ever recorded. For the cause of liberty (for the best cause may be disgraced by the mode & means of carrying it on) I regret the violent & sanguinary conduct of the French on many occasions, but their execu-

tion of the King, which happened at Paris 24th of this month is an act condemned by the laws of justice, humanity & sound policy! All the powers of Europe who were before neutral, seem now arming to attack them, & we expect every day hostilities will commence between them & us. what the event may be no human eye can penetrate. to this country, loss of trade & increased taxation are certain, but what else, time only can unfold. To the staple of Canada, little less than destruction; for the prospect of war here, added to the effect that on the continent it had before produced, will in all probability lower furs at least twenty or thirty percent: The Hudson's Bay Beaver, which last year (*the fine*) sold for 19/ & 20/, sold the other day for 13/ a[nd] 15/, & so on of the rest! Deer skins however will suffer very little if any diminution of last year's prices.

I shall attend to your orders, as well as to the purchasing of a lottery ticket, so that you may be once again within the pale of fortune: if I buy you a large prize, I expect five percent commission, brokerage &c &c & I hope to have it in my power to state such an account. M^r & M^{rs} Meredith were very well. we dined (M^r Leith, A Todd & myself) [with them] a few days ago. I beg my most sincere respects to M^{rs} A, Miss Therese & all the family, Com^r [Grant] & his & am, Dear Sir,

Your friend & humble servant,
William Robertson

J. Askin Esq^r

P. S. Febr^y 2. The Deerskin sale is now over, & I am sorry to find, even *they* have fallen short of expectation as you will learn, when you know yours average only 4/10. what may be the consequence to furs, I fear almost to surmise, for the prospect is every day more alarming. I have just got a letter from Capt Mercer, he was pretty well after an attack from the gout. M^{rs} M & the young ladies very well, but not particularly fond of Dublin

Addressed: John Askin, Esq^r Merchant, Detroit p^r M^r Innes⁸

⁸ Robert Innis, whose coming to America is accounted for in the present letter,

Endorsed: London Jan^y 31st 1793 M^r W^m Robertson to
Jn^o Askin Answ^d y^e 26^h June recv^d June 10th

SCHEME FOR CONDUCTING MAUMEE AND WABASH TRADE

Sir With the Utmost Submission and defferance to your Excellencys better Judgment I beg leave to Sugest a Mode of Carrying on the Indian Trade to the Westward by Means that would in the first Instance in a great measure Secure the Lives & property of the Traders, in the Second procure a greater Consumption of Goods & larger remittances in Furrs, & in the third furnish the Indians with what Commodities they might want on the Frontiers and by that Means prevent their retiring from the best Hunting Grounds & l[e]aving that part of the Country free & oppen to the Encrochments of their Enimies.

That the Fidelity & good Character of Each person desirious to Trade with the Indians beyond the foot of the rapids be Assertained to the Satisfaction of the Commanding officer Coll. M^oKee & such Others as they may think Worthy of Trust After which such Person to be Admitted as a Joint Partner in all the Indian Trade carried on beyond the Afors^d Place he conforming to the regulations made for that Purpose which regulatons before Carried Into Execution to be Transmitted to you by the Commanding officer of this Post for your Excellency's Approbation.

That all the Trade of that Country should be Carried on by a Company to consist of Persons of the forgoing

reached Detroit in June, 1793, and remained a resident here until the American advent, when he signified his desire to continue a British subject, and removed to the south side of the river. At Sandwich he was engaged in trade for many years and apparently attained a considerable degree of prosperity. For a number of years he was in partnership with Robert Grant under the firm name, Innis and Grant. In the spring of 1812, Innis and McGregor were owners of an eighty-ton vessel at Sandwich, the *Thames*. In the War of 1812 Innis served as quartermaster of the First Regiment of Essex Militia, of which Matthew Elliot was colonel, being present at the battles of Mongaugon, Brownstown, surrender of Detroit, Frenchtown, and River Raisin. Innis married Margaret, daughter of Matthew Donovan, schoolmaster at Detroit. A sister of Margaret Donovan became the wife of Matthew Elliot. Information adapted from *Mich. Pio. Colls.*, *passim*; *Officers of British Forces in Canada During the War of 1812-15*, 34, 89; and mss. in Burton Hist. Coll.

Characters. That no Traffic should be carried on but in Stockaded Trading Forts nor less than Twenty four men Exclusive of the Trader & his Interpreters in Each Fort, which men should take the Oath of Allegiance & by their Agreement be Obliged to Mount Guards & do Duty as Soldiers so far as Necessary for the Preservation of the lives & property of the People in it. That these Men should be Commanded by a Person of Fidelity & Prudence Approved of by the Commanding Officer.

I beg your Excellency will Excuse my want of method in conveying my Ideas & Suffer me to say that I have no wish so much at Heart as that of promototing the wellfair of his Majesty's Gover[n]ment Under your directions & should it Please your Excellency to Enact any Laws for the regulation of the Trade on the Frontier and that any Information I'm possessed of would on that Occation be Necessary, I will with Much Chearfulness go to Niagara for that purpose and Always think myself greatly Honored in Executing your Commands.

I am with Great Submission Your Excellencys Most Obedient very Humble Servant

Detroit February the 22^d 1793

Governor Simcoe

Endorsed: Coppy Detroit Feb 22^d 1793 John Askin to Lieu^t Governor Simcoe

FROM THOMAS SMITH TO JOHN ASKIN

say April

Foot Rapids 3 March 1793

Dear Sir M^r Norton sets off for Detroit tomorrow morning according to your desire. he will deliver you an Inventory of the Goods Peltries &c and also an exact account of his transactions between the 17th of January and the 12th of March.

As M^r Norton is acquainted with Lafond and some of the Mohawks I think he would be a proper person to be sent to upper Sandusky so soon as it may be convenient to you, in order to look after your property in that quarter, which

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if neglected might eventually prove a loss. he has great interest among the Mohawks hunting towards the Scioto which may prove favorable in recovering the debts. I need not say more; your good sense perhaps may induce you to act with some policy although the apparent profits arising on this adventure within this two months past may put you out of patience as well as myself. you will hear from me very soon, I am in the mean time

Dear Sir Your most obidient and very humble Servant

T Smith

Jn^o Askin Esqr

Addressed: To John Askin Esqr^r Detroit pr M^r Norton

Endorsed: Foot of the rapids the 3^d April 1793 M^r Tho^o Smith to Jn^o Askin recv^d y^o 5th Answ^d [illegible]

COMPLAINT AGAINST AMERICAN SPY

Personally appeared before me John Askin Esquire one of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the western district, John Miller of Detroit Mariner and voluntarily declared on Oath that a man who lately came from the American States and calls himself William Erwin,⁹ came to his house one evening about the Tenth of March last and asked leave to stay there all night; that after some conversation he said to Miller you are a great fool to stay here, if you will come with me I will make a Gentleman of you. I am come lately from the American States and intend returning there soon and that on Millers telling him he had no inclination to leave this Country he said well if you will not go to the States, will you go round the works with me? I wish to know the weakest part of the Fort. That Miller replied he would not; on which Erwin told him that if he would not go with him he would go himself. That Miller then said if he went out of his house that night he should not return. That this and such conversation had continued till between Twelve and one

⁹ Irvin, or "Irvine," was confined by Colonel England and sent down to Niagara for such action as the governor might think proper to take concerning him. Colonel England regarded him as "too worthless a Fellow in every respect to be employed as a Spy." See *Mich. Pio. Colls.*, XXIII, 587.

oClock at night. That he then gave him some Blankets to Lie on locked his Door and Erwin went to Bed. That he returned and slept at his house for four or Five nights more during which time he frequently made proposals to said Miller to assist him in examining the works of the Garison and going with him to the States and that he got Paper from said Miller to Draw a Scetch of the Fortifications, which Scetch he Afterwards shewed to s^d Miller He added that he meant only to work for a month or so here and then go back for that a large Army would come against this place sooner than he Miller expected. That then those who Used him well should be rewarded, but those who treated him otherwise should be Marked. That on Miller's telling him once that he suspected he was a Spye he Answered its no matter to you what I am.

his
John X Miller
mark

Sworn before me at Detroit this 2^d day of April 1793
John Askin J. P. W. D.

FROM ARCHANGE MEREDITH TO JOHN ASKIN

Woolwich 7th April 1793

My dear Father It affords me no small pleasure to address you, and inform my good Parents that admist [amidst] all this bustle of War, my dear husband is still with me, and not as I dreaded, ordered away on foreign service, for tho many of the officers are now serving in Holland against the French, it has not yet reached M^r Merediths turn upon the roster, but he is now within one of them, how long he may be allowed to remain here I can not say, but I hope at least, till after I have recovered from my confinement, which I expect will be the beginning of next Month, but should he unfortunately be ordered, it is essential I should submit to the seperation, as it is proper every Soldier should take his tour of duty, and I know his disposition to be such, that he would never shrink from attending any service he may be ordered upon, however painfull it might be his

parting with me, which without vanity I can assure My dear Father, would be as distressing on his part as that of my own. It seems we are daily getting the better of the French, which I heartily rejoice at, as I think such a set of cruel wretches as those who have caused such horrid massacres, ought to be extirpated from the Earth, and I am happy to find that the generality of people in this Kingdom, possess the same opinion, which was plainly evinced by the general mourning worn in this Country, for the late unfortunate Louis, the sixteenth. There is a report for some days past, of a counter revolution in Paris, but it is not yet confirmed, I think it not at all improbable as no doubt, many were against the King being beheaded, but their party was so weak at the time, that they dared not declare their sentiments. You will excuse me my dear Father for being so bad a politician, I do not pretend to it, what I have said, is the prevailing talk, but the Papers of which you have a sight, will give you every information, respecting the proceedings of the National Convention, and the affairs of France, so much my dear Father for this subject, at which I am but a lame hand. We received a letter the other day from Cap^t Mercer, who is now at Uxbridge, after a short stay in Ireland, they all enjoy health he is come home on the recruiting service, and I suppose will be fixed in this Country for some time, they mention not having heard a long time from you, tho I believe you are very punctual at writing them, I am happy at having no reason to make the same complaint, and beg to express my gratitude, to my dear Parents, for that great mark of their affection, and attention, which does not permit them to miss an opportunity of writing me, my dear Meredith renders me very happy by searching opportunities of conveying letters to you, and gives me the earliest intelligence of it, therefore it would be unpardonable did I not seize it immediatly. * * * *

Tho I say it my dear Parents, few Women are so happy as your Archange, who is fully sensible that she possesses the entire affection of the best of husbands, one who sacrifices every thing for my comfort, and happiness, and there cannot

be a greater proof of tenderness, from a man who has always been used to the best of company, than the decided preference which he gives to mine. Our society here is extremely pleasant, amongst whom are some very good chess players, and M^r Meredith frequently wishes that the Commodore was one of the party, it is held once a week at each others houses, *un petit soupé, a bon marché*, which consists of toast and ale, a *l'angloise* &c &c closes the evening, I begin to know a little of the game which I find very pleasing and interesting.

M^r Meredith is now on guard about a mile from me, and before he went begged I would insert his kind love to you all, he means by the same opportunity to write you, I shall not see him till eight o'clock tomorrow morning, when he will be relieved, and come home to breakfast, the guard mounts at seven, which is rather early, but rising earlys wholesome, the nights that M^r M. is on guard, the two maids and myself protect the house, and as my dear Meredith has taught me to fire a pistol *sans peur* and there is always a brace of them loaded on the mantle peice of the room in which I sleep, I am under no uneassiness whatever during the night.

When promotion shall make my dear M a Cap^t Lieutenant, which cannot be long from the vacancys which fall, he will endeavour to procure an exchange to Canada, should he not legally fall into those Companys, therefore my dear Parents I beg you will make yourselves happy in the idea, that please God we all live for some years longer, we shall have the happiness to meet again, a circumstance which I anticipate with the utmost delight, the dear little Family I left at home will be quite grown, kindly remember me to them all, with assurances of my love, I intend writing my dear Mother and Sister by the next opportunity, My dear Mother will take this letter in part for her, as it is meant so; in respect to fashions I can only inform the female part of the family, that low crowned chip hats, with large bows of strip coloured ribbon, is the prevailing system, with frilld calico jackets, and broad sashes, and nothing is now so vulgar for either gentlemen, or lady, as to be seen with a silk stocking

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that appears the least blue, M^r Meredith joins me in kind esteem to the Commodore my aunt and cousin Grant. my affectionate regard attend you all and beleive me your ever loving Daughter

Archange Meredith

Endorsed: Answ^d y^e 9^h Oct^r 1793

PROGRESS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

London 10th April 1793.

Dear Sir, I wrote you 31st January since which I have not the pleasure of any of yours to reply to. By the present opportunity I send you the little articles you mentioned. they are put up along with my brother's, except acts of parliament relating to the office of a justice of the peace, which are too voluminous in my opinion for your use, for almost every statute is more or less connected with that matter—& I know none better than Bram [?] which you no doubt have. I bought you a lottery ticket, & I wish I could announce better success than a £20 prize, it cost £15. I may as well keep it & try your fortune with it again. Before this reaches you, you will have learnt the great fall of furs, & that the war, in which we are now parties against France is likely to produce a further depreciation of their value. It has produced a total stagnation already in almost every branch of trade & manufactures, a total stop to credit & confidence, bankruptcies of the most alarming magnitude, generally thirty in a week, where the distress will end we know not. The success of the French was rapid, their losses & defeats have been equally so. After various battles, in which many thousands fell on both sides, they have been driven out of the Austrian Netherlands. The country is torn with intestine commotions & insurrection. Dumourier, their general-in-Chief was suspected by the Convention of treachery: they sent commissioners to arrest him & bring him to their bar. *he* arrested their commissioners, sent them as hostages to the Austrian general for the safety of the young king & royal family at Paris, to which place he ordered his army to march, to dissolve the Convention,

restore royalty & establish order. we have just heard, that finding he could not depend on his troops for this purpose he has deserted to the enemy with a squadron of horse. What effects this may have produced in Paris we are not yet informed, but I fear most horrid carnage will be the result. When the distractions, or how, of that devoted country will end God only knows, & I fear by their violence they have lost the fairest opportunity of establishing a free government that ever was within the reach of any people ancient or modern!

Capt. Mercer & his family are at Uxbridge. they were very well a day or two ago, as were M^r & M^{rs} Meredith, from all of whom you will no doubt hear by this opportunity.

I beg my compliments & best wishes to Com^r Grant & family, to M^{rs} Askin & all the rest of your family, & believe me,

Dear Sir, Your very humble servant

William Robertson

J. Askin Esq^r

P.S. Ap^l 27th The detention of the ships at Portsmouth for convoy gives me an opportunity of filling up the sheet. Since the 10th little else has taken place but failures & bankruptcies. they are now so numerous, & of such magnitude that ministry seem alarmed & are going to submit a plan to Parliament for issuing four millions of exchequer bills to assist such houses as have actually property but from the present great scarcity of money cannot convert it into cash. Many are sanguine in their expectations that this will relieve the evil that now oppresses & threatens general ruin to trade, but I do not think it. It is singular to see the minister, after borrowing six millions to carry on the war, going to lend four, when he himself must soon want other six! In the mean time troops are embarking to assist our allies to "subdue the French & bring them to reason, & to establish order in that devoted country"! The French are so far from feeling the obligation that they are preparing to resist with all their power. The defection of Dumourier did not [as] was expected & reported, produce any tumult

JOHN ASKIN PAPERS

at Paris or in the provinces: much altercation indeed took place in the convention, but neither signs of fear nor submission. Gen^l Dampie[r]re was appointed to command & has been very successful in collecting their army together in the neighbourhood of Valenciennes; recruits & reinforcements are moving from all quarters to join him. the Convention have ordered their army to be raised to the number of one *million* of *effective* men. the insurrections have been quelled, with great slaughter of the insurgents in the field, & much bloodshed on the scaffold. They have taken a great many Dutch & English ships in the Mediterranean, but we here of no marine operations as yet of importance. I am sorry to say that by last accounts, of very recent dates, Furs are a mere drug at China, & report [?] actually coming home again; that here the furs that were sold at last sales, altho' then at a great loss, would not now bring within twenty percent of the price, & the purchasers will lose by them. As to next year I should not be surprised if Racoons were at $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{1}{6}$ here!

W.R

Addressed: (P^r Everetta) John Askin, Esq^r Merchant, Detroit Care of Mess^{rs} Todd, M^cGill & C^o Montreal

Endorsed: London April 10^h 1793 M^r W^m Robertson to Jn^o Askin Answ^d y^e 28^h Sep^{tr} 1793

OUTLOOK FOR INDIAN TRADE

London 23^d April 1793

Dear Askin I wrote you Last fall acknowledging receipt of your favor of the 9th Octb^r it gives me sincere pleasure at all times to hear of you and family enjoying Good health, and particularly the reestablishment of Miss Askins, I hear Madeline has changed her Name and taken that of a good young Man as you will receive Letters from friend Robertson, Capⁿ Mercer & M^r & M^{rs} Meredith [I] will reffer you to them for News &^{ca} as I am at this time much hurried I am sorry to acquaint you there will be a Loss on your furs and, your Sons, and that the prospect for Next

year is so bad thers, no saying what price they May bring
 perticularly Racoons upwards of 40 000 bo^t here are sent
 to N York & Philadelphia, I wish you to avoid them as
 much as posible, this change in the furr Market will occasion
 a certain Loss this Year and can only be remedied in future
 by a different mode of trade, and not giving half the value
 you now give for Furrs, and of course not have occasion
 for half the Indian Goods, knowing this and that many more
 Goods was ordered then was necessary, I thought it for your
 Sons Interest and all concerned Not to have his order for
 Indian Goods executed as you, and the House at Montreal
 will have more then there will be wanted and he can be
 supplyd from you on as good terms, You will have hear,d
 from the House that I had & have the promise that You
 and M^r Robertson shall supply all the flower wanted by
 Govern^t at your place, and I hope you will be carefull to
 execute it so as to give satisfaction to all concerned both as
 to price & quality, this with what we can procure you from
 the NWest and, other friends, will I hope be a more profit-
 able and safe business then the Indian Trade, for be assured
 that if furrs continue to fall as is expected there is not a
 Shilling that has been gained for some Years past that will
 not be Lost in Less time, by those who persue the Trade,
 unless there is a change in the mode of Trade and expense
 that I scarsely think will happen as M^r M^cGill and the
 House will give you the Necessary information on Matters
 of business [I] shall reffer you to them. with Complemt^s
 to the Commod^r & family and best respects to M^{rs} Askin &
 yours belive me Sincerly your friend

Isaac Todd

M^r John Askin

I find I every day grow older tho I enjoy as good health
 as I have reason to expect.

Addressed: John Askin Esq^r Detroit

Endorsed: London April 22^d 1793 Isaac Todd Esq^r
 to Jn^o Askin recv^d y^e 22^d Oct^r Answ^d y^e 3^d April 1794

JOHN ASKIN PAPERS

FROM JOHN ASKIN TO WILLIAM ROBERTSON

Detroit June 24^h 1793

Dear Sir, I had the pleasure of Receiving your Favour dated the 31 Jan^y as also the joint Letter you wrote your Brother & me with one to myself Annexed. I can Assure you it Affords my Family & Self much Satisfaction to learn that you were in good health & we beg leave to Express the Gratefull Sen[s]e we have to your Friendship, & Attachment not only to Ourselves but to all our Connections where ever you meet them. The Supplying of y^e Garrison of Mich and this with provisions will be of great advantage to your Brother & me & I have Reason to think will in some time make a favour^{ble} Change in my Affairs and for which I will always consider Myself Indebted to you & M^r Todd there is no manner of doubt but we could Even now furnish Beef throughout the Summer Season for 8^d N.Y^k Cur^e p^r ct as often as y^e troops could want it (which may be three days in the week) and could we be allowed for y^e fresh Rations what Government makes Artificers pay vit 10½^d Half^x we would make very handsomely by it, as y^r Brother & I will write a joint Letter on this Subject its unnesseracy for me to say more. I have been Uncommonly unlucky in my Returns from y^e Indⁿ Country this Year & those who make many packs paid too much for them. Little News you may well Suppose in our Country. There is some Quakers & others now here¹⁰ waiting y^e Arrival of y^e three American Commissioners from Niagara to go with them to y^e Indian Council to be held at Sandusky. My private oppinion is that no Peace between the Americn and Indians will take plaice for Imprudently some American Troops are said to be advancing in y^e mean time, if so I should not think the Commissionairs Safe you Know the dispossession of Indians. I'm always verry troublesome to you with Small Memorandums which take up your time & give no profit, will you be so Kind as to Excuse my sending you one now. I have got a pretty large stock of Cattle most[ly] my own Rearing &

¹⁰ The allusion is to the Quaker peace delegation whose experience and activities are recorded in Jacob Lindley's Journal, reprinted in *Mich. Pio. Colls.*, XVII, 565-66.

mean to have Many more & as no person here has Knowledge to cure them when sick or the Necessary Druggs for that purpose I'm Obliged to order a few out. The Commodores Family are well he [is] now at Niagara Enacting Laws which I fear is not long to Effect this Side of y^e Watter if I may judge from Appearance as his Excellency Governør Simcoe seems to wish to withdraw the Inhabitants from this side however many are possessed of such property as will not admit of their Removeing let their Inclinations be what it will. Your Acquaintances here are all well, My Family begs to Assure of their best wishes as does

Dear Sir Your Obliged verry humble S.

(Signed) John AsKin

William Robertson Esq^r Mer^t London.

Endorsed: Detroit June 24. 1793 (Copy) of a Letter to Mr William Robertson in London.

LEGISLATIVE PROCEEDINGS AT NIAGARA

25 June. 93

My dear Sir! I was long flattered with the Hope of seeing You.

I am disappointed, particularly as you complain of your health.

Do send my account. I asked 2 or 3 for the petition against the Contract. It was not then delivered, I understand it now is. & if I have interest enough, you shall have particulars. the Contract is generally complained of. I have not seen your advertisement.

We have made no law to free the Slaves. all those who have been brought into the Province or purchased under any authority legally exercised, are Slaves to all intents & purposes, & are secured as property by a certain act of Parliament. they are determind however to have a bill about Slaves, part of which I think is well enough, part most iniquitous! I wash my hands of it. A free man who is married to a Slave, his heir is declared by this act to be a slave. fye, fye. The Laws of God & man cannot authorize it.

JOHN ASKIN PAPERS

I am in hopes the Militia bill will please You, as M^cKee I understand intends you, for a field officer.

A Marriage Bill, A Wolf Bill, A parish Officer Bill, A Probate Bill, a Common pleas Bill, & some others have gone thro' the Houses

God forever bless You, I am Completely hurried, but at all times

Yours most faithfully
D W Smith

Addressed: John Askin Esquire. Detroit

Endorsed: Niagara June 25^h 1793 L^t D. W. Smith to Jn^o Askin recv^d y^e 10^h & Answ^d y^e 11^h July

RELATIVES OF JOHN ASKIN

Detroit Upper Canada July 1 1793.

Dear Sir I was some time ago favoured with your Letter of y^e 18^h Aug^t last to which you should have had an Immediate Answer had I Known by what means to have had it Conveyed with Safety to you for the M^r Noal who was so Kind as to take charge of y^r letter never came here nor Even wrote me so that I'm at a loss to Know who he is tho Acquainted with Several of that name I can never Sufficiently thank you for your Kindness in Endeavouring to give me Information Respecting my family who by the last Accounts I Rec^d from Ireland (which is long since) are Dead or so disperced that I could not Obtain any Satisfactory Account of them. I have the misfortune to say that I never have met with any Relati[ve] of mine in this Country, M^r Richard Rea an uncle of mine Excepted who died at New Y^k several Years ago. for y^r Information & that of M^{rs} Campbell & in hopes of discovering in one or both of you some part of my family I have to say that I was Born at Aughnacloy in the North of Ireland in 1739 that my Father was a Shop Keeper in that Town his name James & my Mother name Alice Rea, that I had two Brothers the Elder named William & the Youngest Robert, as also two Sisters the Elder named Mary & the youngest Named

Sarah, (who its possible may be M^{rs} Campbell) That I came to this Country in 1758 and most of my time since have been in Trade first at albany near New York where I Kept a Shop & since that at a placie called Michilimakinac & for these last thirteen Years past here. I married in 1772 & have a large Family some of my Daughters [are] Married one of which to an Officer of y^e Royal Artillery at Woolwich near London a Liu^t Maderith [Meredith] what makes me perticulize him is that should Widow Campbell prove to be my Sister my Daughter would be most happy to see her. I have also many other perticular friends in London a M^r Issac Todd [and] a M^r Will^m Robertson both may be found at Mess^s Phyn Ellis & Englis in London, any Letter delivered them for me I will Receive for certain, I observe you spell your name Erskine wheras my Father & myself have wrote ours Askin yet I learn my Grand father Spelt his as you do. The best chance I Know of this geting Safe to you is my giving it in charge to a Quaker Gentleman now here Named [name not inserted]¹¹ who lives in Phledelpha & I'm sure will not only take the Utmost care to forward it to you but will be Equally carefull to transmit any letters you may favour me with to this place. My Family tho unknown to you beg leave to assure [you] of their Esteem

I am D^r Sir Y^r very humbl Ser^t

(Signed) Jn^o Askin

M Jn^o Erskin Easton Eastern Shore Maryland

Endorsed: Detroit July 1 1793 Copy of a Letter to M^r John Erskine at Easton Eastern Shore, Maryland.

PROPOSAL FOR PARTNERSHIP IN TRADE

Detroit July 9 1793.

My Dear Sir Since writing you & other Friends verry Fully this Spring, I have been favoured with your joint

¹¹ Probably Jacob Lindley, of the Quaker peace delegation, whose Journal is cited *ante*, 475.

Letter to M^r D^d Robertson & me dated y^e 19 November last & can never sufficiently thank you for your Friendly attachment to me & mine. I have great hopes that the part I hold in furnishing Provisions for this post & that of Michlimakinac will bring about a favourable change in my Affairs which is much wanted for I have Even been more disappointed this year than heretofore, was it possible to get Honest men as many as I should want into my Service and they Execute my plans as I direct them I'm certain I would Yearly make Money & in the end if God preserved me get clear of the greatest burden, but Except what is conducted under my own Inspection (Generally Speaking) all goes Rong & had I even health to Voyage in my Absence its likely matters would not go on well here, and my share of the Trade of this post is too Inconsiderable to make much unless I had a Store like that of M^r Robertsons which Requires a large Caputal. Your Nephew Andrew is to be here in Aug^t next at which I'm peticularly happy as I have Formed a plann which I will communicate to him to be mentioned to M^r M^cGill below & if it meets with his & your Approbation I will put it in Execution. The Outlines is to take my Son John into partnership with me for Ten Years, allowing him a third of y^e Profits, each to Maintain their famalies Seperately, whats taken from Store for the use of either to be Replaced the year following with an Allowance of 6 p^r C^t. my Houses Lands Cattle &ce to Remain to myself & the partnership to continue if Even any accident happened to me, but not so if any happened to him. The advantages I foresee would be a greater Security to you in the first place, next having an Interested Person to Visit frequently those who are Trading out is Absolutely Necessary & my hea[l]th will not permit me to do it. In the third place a Security in Case I should fall sick or any Accident happened to me that the Bussiness would not meet with any Interruption nor your property be less Secure, there is many other Advantages in my Oppinion would arise from this Connection which cannot be Inserted here. John is perfectly Sober, honest, Industrious & Saving & now

Married is cured of the principal fault I Ever Knew him to have, he has no family & therefore lives at very little Ex-
 pence, but the Indian Trade alone in its present State affords
 a poor livelyhood for any person.

The Only News in this Quarter is the Indians being as-
 sembled near Sandusky to treat with the American Com-
 missionairs who have been long since at Niagara & who I
 realy believe will not come farther or if they did that it
 would not answer any purpose, for what they want the
 Indians never will agree to. however I believe they would
 consent to a new line if the latter would let them have
 near y^e Miamis Town. All my Family Enjoy good health
 as does the Commodore & other of your Acquaintances.
 M^{rs} Askin & Theresse joins in every wish that may tend to
 your Happiness

Adieu My Dear Sir Yours,

(Signed) John Askin

Endorsed: Detroit July 9 1793 From M^r Jn^o Askin to
 M^r Issac Todd in London

(Copy)

SALE OF CATTLE FOR GOVERNMENT USE

Detroit July 17th 1793.

Sir I received a line from you last night which requires
 no answer. The intent of this is to beg of you to wait on
 Conolel M^e Kee & request that he would be so kind as to
 have the Oxen I sent out Estimated and grant Certificates
 for their weight of which there must be three of the same tenor
 and date, please observe to him or those who value them
 that as I cannot get either hide Tallow or Offals, I hope
 these will be considered at east as a fifth Quarter which is
 the case always. My reason for wanting the Certificates
 so soon is in order to settle with Captain Elliot from whom
 I had most part of the Cattle, and give him a draft in
 payment which I would wish to do on those who draw
 the Money below

I am Sir &c

John Askin

M^r Rob^t Stevens foot of y^e rapids

P. S. I intend shortly to send out a Baker & Flour if nothing else which may be the case until I hear of Lafonds Peltries coming in & then he shall have his Assortment

Since writing the foregoing M^r Smith is Arrived who tells me them Ten head of Cattle which I sent out were estimated at 750^{lb} each which is no more than 600 the four Quarters for you know the Hyde Tallow Entrails &c are considered as a fifth quarter therefore 150 More. Please observe to Co^l M^cKee or the Persons who he may direct to Estimate the weight of the Cattle that I took from the same hird 4 Oxen two of which were killed by M^r James Donaldson and two other by M^r Peltier or in his Presence, that the four Quarters of these four Cattle weighed 2531^{lb}, that adding one fourth more for hides, Tallow Heads Entrails &c makes 3164^{lb} which avarages each at 791^{lb} w^t I dont by any means find fault with what is done at same time I fear the fifth quarter was not Estimated fully, however as there are 20 more head of these Cattle still to be appraised I mean their weight they may, I mean those who estimate them make amends provided only that on a revisal of the matter they think as I do that the others were rated low

I am Sir Your most obed^t Hble Serv^t

John Askin

Endorsed: Copy To Robert Stevens at foot of the Rapids July 17th 1793

FROM DAVID W. SMITH TO JOHN ASKIN

Niagara. 3^d August, 1793.

My Good Friend: I thank you for the Balsam you so kindly offered. my heart is not yet sufficiently healed, to be fit for so kind & reasonable a Salve. I have however read your Letter twice, & am not worse for it. thanks for your attention to the Remains of my lovely Maria. My father is well, my Mother melancholy enough & with a bad sore Leg, from a hurt, my wife, thin, but not worse in

health than usual. she has had many severe trials as well as myself; & I feel very old upon it.

Your Common pleas I understand is re-established, & the Bench I'm told is to be filled by the Ho[no]rabbles Col M^oKee & W. Macomb.

There has been a dreadful Cabal against the Contract Business. Petitions & Remonstrances one on the other very thick, if I had received your Letter of 11 July, previous to the closing of the Sessions, I should have been glad. I was alone a long time in my opinion, at length every Member in the lower House but myself consenting to sign a petition & not being furnished with Matter enough to turn them from it, my arguments too, weakened by Affliction, I signed with all the rest. I do not think myself Government at home will alter the plan, & I shall take care to acquaint the Gov^r with the Liberal terms on which you receive the flour.

Dopray¹² drew on me at 3 days sight for the amount of your account immediately. I am sorry it has laid so long. if any other mode of payment is more convenient to you, pray adopt it. When I came away I intended to leave a memorandum with You of some Money Reynolds was to pay You, I think about £8, which I thought I had put on a bit of paper & given M^r—— (Clerk). Perhaps I did not arrange it with Reynolds, in which Case it is of no Consequence.

God bless You, thank You for all favors. I hope to see you in my new house some day or other. accept the Affection of us all

particularly

D W Smith

M^r Richardson is gone to Toronto. the Gov^r is there. he was wishing to arrange, so as to make you a fie[l]d

¹² Apparently Jean Baptiste Duprat (Dupré, Dupras, etc.), who was born at Beauport, May 23, 1735, and came to Detroit as early as February, 1765. On Feb. 10, 1766, he married Agnes Tremblay, daughter of Pierre Tremblay and Magdelene Simard. She resided at Fox Creek, Grosse Pointe, and here Duprat made his home. To the couple fifteen children were born. Jean Baptiste Duprat was buried at Detroit, Dec. 16, 1817; his widow was buried April 17, 1827. Denissen, *op. cit.*

officer of Cavalry! I regret the Difficultys, & admire your feelings & Sentiments!!!

Endorsed: Niagara Aug^t 3^d 1793 D. W. Smith to Jn^o Askin recv^d the 11^h, & Answ^d the 12^h

REGISTRY OF SLOOP *Athabaska*

PROVINCE OF }
 QUEBEC, Ss } N^o 1.

IN pursuance of a Law of the said Province, intituled "An Act or Ordinance for promoting the Inland Navigation," I Gregor M^cGregor Esquire having authority by Commission under the great Seal of the said Province, to be a Superintendant of the Inland Navigation, do certify that the vessel, called the Athabasca being a Sloop of the burthen of Forty Tons or thereabout, was built and launched at the Grand Portage within His Majesty's Government, on or about the Fifteenth day of August in the year of our Lord, one thousand seven hundred and Eighty Six, and that the same vessel is wholly owned by Subjects of the British Crown, to wit—

One part therof by Daniel Sutherland residing at Montreal and the other parts thereof by Persons Partners of the North West Company

All which appeared by the oath of the said Daniel Sutherland they holding as He deposed, the greatest share and interest in the said vessel, her tackle, apparel, and furniture; and I do further certify, that Bond hath been given in the sum of Eighteen Hundred Pounds of lawful money of this Province by the said Daniel Sutherland & John Askin with condition that if the said vessel shall at any time afterwards be employed in any destination other than such as her clearance or pass shall from time to time specify, the said sum shall be forfeited.

Given under my hand and seal at Detroit this Seventeenth day of August in the year of our Lord, one thousand seven hundred and Ninety Three in the Province aforesaid.

Gregor M^cGregor
 Superintendant of the inland
 navigation at Detroit

Endorsed: Register of the Sloop Athabasca 17th Aug^t
1793

MISCONDUCT OF THOMAS SMITH

Detroit 26th Sepr 1793

M^r Thomas Smith

Sir I'm sorry to say you have quite broke your word with and injured me much you positively promised to be here when the Court set to prove your accounts this you have not done and no person you trusted will pay me otherwise I'm sure if you recollect ever so little you will find I dont desir[v]e such treatment, but to lay all that aside I gave you a certain Sallery to perform certain Services which you have not done and I insist must be done otherwise I will by next term take the necessary steps to do justice to myself. I find also by M^r Nortons accounts that you ordered payment to be made by him which I know nothing about and at rates which you were not authorized to do. In short their is a necessity for some clear account to be given and that when Norton & Stevens is present that these constant contradictions may have an end I'm frequently asked for Rum flour &° said to have been left under your care and taken by you and in your Statement, I see no account of any such thing.

I am Sir Your most obed^t humble Servant

J A

Endorsed: Detroit 26th Sepr 1793 from John Askin to
M^r Tho^s Smith foot of the Rapids Miamis River A Copy