

To Silas Dinsmoor

Coweta Tallahassee, January 6, 1799

I have had the pleasure to receive your packet of the 30th Novm. safe. It was sent to me from Hillaubee Upper Creeks by an Indian. It is much to be regretted that in our Indian transactions words lose their force and meaning and that we are not sufficiently exact in executing as we promise in our stipulations with them. I read the treaty with attention and had before I saw it the opinions of the Indians at Etowah of their misunderstanding of this line which corresponded with the treaty stipulation. As you are where you can see the report I shall be glad to know how and upon what principal the line terminates on Hawkins' line (the line leading from the end of Campbell's line to the ford on Cumberland river at the Kentucky trace) on the west side of the Cumberland mountain instead of the point called for on Campbell' line which terminates on top of the mountain. To save appearances at least it might have been worth the Commissioner's time to terminate it at the point called for although he found it convenient to cross over the mountain, as this might have been done without losing an acre on the ground the line now covers if he had run up the mountain along Hawkins' line, then down the mountain eastwardly along Campbell's line to the point called for. You must not charge me with advising a devious line, but advising a salve for what appears to me to be such an one, and which I believe your red charges will tell you is so, and a violation of their treaty stipulation.¹ On my arrival to Hillaubee I found that Mr. Grierson had brought off your weaver from Oostanaulah, Rachel Spillard, and he gives her 200 dollars for one year, and she is to live in his family. I had repeatedly advised him to set up a manufactory of cotton, he has a large family, and makes annually 2000 lbs of cotton for market. The old man seeing the simplicity of the operation at Oostanaulah, brought off your ass't there. He has five wheels each with two spinners. Two of them his Indian wife and daughter. The others black girls. Rachel told me she should not have left the department there without your leave, but the offer was tempting, the blacksmith could get one to replace her and she was going where she should be equally useful in teaching the Indians to spin and weave; I let her have some money.

I can assure [you] of what from any other source, you would discredit from your knowledge of my charges here, I have been one month without a single complaint against the creeks from any quarter. I have been visited by a deputation from the twelve towns on this river Chattahoochee and receive from all them assurances that the winter shall pass away as it has commenced and that we shall meet in the Spring and congratulate each other on this wonderful change.

I have purchased all my supply of corn, meat, and fowls for the winter from the Indian women with clothing, which gives them a high idea of the new plan. I have introduced weights and measures instead of guess work heretofore in use, and they are pleased at the change. I am making arrangements to get fences made, and to introduce the plough. I am applied to by the upper towns already for one hundred ploughs. I have prevailed on some families to move from the towns into villages and the villagers to farm. They begin to consult me upon all their private and public concerns.

¹ Hawkins was concerned about the wording of the Tellico Treaty in designating the new Cherokee boundary.

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The past year has been very sickly throughout this nation, by report they have lost 500, in the spring by the Pleurisy; and in the Autumn, with fevers accompanied with pains in the head preceded with chills. I applied the cassine² and snakeroot to the first, emetic and cathartics to the latter and always with success. I sometimes give nitric three or four times a day in their drink and in a few instances where they complained of want of sleep, I gave half a pint of Sassafras tea with 25 or 30 drops of laudanum in the evening, had their feet bathed in warm water, and left the rest to nature. They have always slept well and perspired freely. If you should have occasion and know anything better, practice it, if not follow my rule.

I have some wheat growing which promises well. I have commenced a garden on a large scale in which I am planting everything I can gather. I have now of my own raising pumpkins, turnips, beets, radishes, cabbages, coleworts, carrots, shallots, lettuce and parsley. The Indians view with surprise my laboring in the winter sowing seeds and planting my flowering shrubs, strawberries and aromatic plants from the woods, and above all at the green appearance of the wheat in the depth of winter. I shall infuse a taste for those things in to the traders and the Indians. [INHP]

² Word not clear

Citation: