Washington 5 July 1813.

C. P. Comegys Esq.

~~My~~ Dear Sir:

near Dover

Delaware —

Your favour of the 17th. of last month was duly rec.d and with it the open letter addressed to the Secretary of War: The contents of both were immediately communicated to Mess.rs Wells & Cooper: We were all of opinion, that under existing circumstances, it would be most prudent not to communicate to the Secretary of War the letter addressed to him, and this being our opinion I conceive that my intimacy with you would warrant me in ~~retaining~~ withholding it at least till I rec.d further orders from you respecting it — I therefore still have it in my possession and shall retain it till I hear from you. If you so direct it shall be immediately transmitted to the ~~Head~~ of the War department —

I have been delayed ~~from~~ in replying to your letter by endeavouring to obtain correct information on several points mentioned by you, & in expectation of the Senate's determining on the nomination of Mr. J. B. Davis — The Senate have not yet determined on this nomination, nor is it possible for me to say how they will determine — I am inclined tho to think that the nomination will be confirmed —

With respect to rank & right to command of officers of the militia & of the regular army when acting together I have taken some trouble to inform myself, and will give you the results of

my inquiries and deliberations — The militia of the several States when in the service of the United States are to be commanded by officers appointed by the State to which they belong — These officers however and the militia under them may frequently be liable to be commanded by an officer in the regular army of the United States - for instance, a battalion of the Delaware militia may be ordered to join a regiment of the regular army of the United States, in this case the colonel or lieutenant colonel of the ~~regular~~ regiment of regulars will command both the battalion of militia & the regiment of regulars and all the officers belonging to ~~both~~ each — because in this case the colonel or lieutenant colonel, as the case may be, is the highest officer in rank present — Again if a battalion of Delaware militia under the command of a major appointed by the State and a battalion in the regular army of the U.S. ~~under~~ the command of a major in the U.S. army, are serving together at the same place, with no officer present of higher rank than a major, in this case the major ~~of~~ of the army of the U.S. will command both battalions, whether his commission be of ~~date~~ prior or of subsequent date to the commission of the ~~militia~~ major of militia - for if his commission ~~should~~ be the oldest universal practice has established his right - and if it be the youngest the practice during the whole of the revolutionary war has sanctioned his claim to the command — If however

then

should be a body of militia acting together with a body of regular troops and the officer of highest grade present should belong to the militia, he will command the whole — On these points there cannot be any difficulty, they seem to be so well settled — There may ~~the~~ be other questions arising more difficult of solution — ~~parti-cularly~~ one of which I will state — Suppose a body of militia say a regiment under the command of a colonel, is stationed ~~a~~ particular place in the service of the U.S. and a colonel in the regular army of the U.S. without ~~a reg regiment of~~ troops under his command is ordered to the station, in this case who will command? Altho I have never heard of any practise to govern a case of this kind ~~I have no hesitation in saying that~~ my opinion decisively is that the colonel in the regular army whether his commission be older or younger than the commission of the other will not have a right to command the regiment — if he should ~~have the right~~ the colonel of militia would be superceded & the militia placed under an officer not appointed by the State to which they belong, which cannot legally be done —

When I return I will carry to you all the Laws of Congress relative to the army & militia — or if an opportunity occurs sooner I will send them to you — Yours with great regard

H. M. Ridgely

C. P. Comegys - from & to -
- June & July 1813 -

28 July 1813 sent back to
Mr. Comegys his letter to the
Secretary of War -

Farm. Little Pipe Elm. July 12th 1813

Henry W. Ridgely Esqr

Dr Sir

Your esteem'd favour of 5th Instant came safe to hand, and is now before me. were it not on account of the superiority of your talents, over and above mine, I should feel, by fare, much less difficulty and embarrasment in replying thereto, a moments reflection however, and I enter free'd from those shackles of embarrasment which would otherwise be more burthansome than I could well bear. — In that reflection, I recognise in your known, good and amiable disposition, with infinite satisfaction and pleasure, the utmost willingness to make such allowances as unfortunately exists, owing in a measure to the extreamity of my Ignorance and the want of a Classical Education, of those two particulars I am too sensible to be mistaken'd, and to them alone (I regret to say it) must be attributed the cause of my sending to you the unpaid'd letter address'd to the Secretary at War. These admissions you will doubtless agree with me are rare and unusual. "Truth may be blame'd, but cannot be shame'd". They are such tho. as I am well satisfied the magnanimity of a real Gentleman, will not be disposed to sport with or ridicule, and it was, by, through, and under the influe

ances of those impressions that actuated me in submitting for your inspection and perusial said letter, accompayned with the most implicit confidence, That if upon perusial you should discover any thing improper or that would in the least degree expose my Ignorance, you would not "under existing circumstances," suffer it to escape your hands, this being the case (as I am induc'd to believe from the first paragraph of your letter) I can assure you, my Dear Sir. the course you have adopted meets with my entire approbation and merrits my best and warmest thanks.

The Information you have given me, relative to the Command of the Detatch'd or Drafted Militia &c I have no doubt (from the pains you have taken to inform your Self, and the sound reasoning display'd in support of your arguments,) is strickley correct, and conjeneal to military usage, but I must confess it does not comport with my Ideas (you know I am no biggot) nor can I discover the greate utility in the Executive of the Several States, appointing Militia Officers to command the Drafted Militia, when the only thing necessary for the General Government to do, to get command of them is, to send to such place, an Officer in the army of the U S. with a mere handfull of men of higher rank or Grade, However this does not now concern me as an officer, Brig Gen Bloomfield has long since dispos'd of my Importunities on this head by assigning to me the command of two Companies. (Captn Green & Captn Riddens, the former stationed between the Mouth of Little Creek & Mohons Ditch the latter between the mouths of Mispillion & Broadkiln Creeks) by "Gen Orders" by said orders Lt Col Davis has the command of the Drafted Militia at Lewis Town. — I continued to persist in refusing to give up the command to him

Until the arrival of Gen Orders by which the Command I now have was assign'd me, and altho it was much better for me as I could be much more at home. I left Lewis Town. and the command of the detatch'd Militia to an Officer by them Universally hated and dispis'd, with more real reluctance. than you can easily immagine

It is said the nomination of Adj.t Gen Duane has been rejected by the Hon the Senate. if so. his feathers must be cut. It would doubtless be to the Hon and Interest of this suffering and infortunate country to cut in like manner some of the Officers of the 32d Regim.t of the U S. Army some (the Characters) of which you will know.

I enclose you a piece from the Statesman. I have no knowledge as to the author. my respects to our friends & Rep.ts in Congress

with sincere sentiments of great Esteem

I have the Hon to be verry Respectfully

Dr Sir

Your Obsequious Hble Sr.

Cornelius P. Comegys

{The Court Martial was not adjourned as is said in the Statesman. I Promised it protection the next day at the Risque of everything they set two days after, without interruption or Molestation. C. P. C

P. S. I have read with attention the Speaches of Messrs Hanson Oakley & Grosvenor. they are to my mind conclusive evidence of the wicked wantoness with which the administration was determined on plungeing this nation into an "unrighteous and Cruel" war. They deserve the thanks of their Country. — the truth must now come. as I understand the resolutions have pass'd. be pleas'd to enclose and send it back to me at Dover. the letter in your possession address to Gen Armstrong. — Should be pleas'd to hear what's going on in Congress & if Davis appointment is ratifyed —

Yours &c C. P. Comegys —

Dover D
July 12

Free

Hon Henry M Ridgely

Washington

Garrison at Lewis Town June 17th 1813.

Henry M Rigely Esqr

Esteem'd Friend

I have taken the liberty to inclose for your inspection an unseal'd letter directed as you will percieve to the Hon John Armstrong Secretary at war, you will easily discover from the perusal of that letter, that I am here not altogether without difficultys, some of which I have been doubtfull would have terminated in a serious manner, but until the present moment things (altho a little squally at times) remain as peaceable and as quiet as can well be expected.

You well know, my Dear Sir, I am perfectly raw and inexperienced in Military affairs, and in my uninform'd State together with the crookedness of the present administration, I aught to have my mind well convinced, that the right I contend for, is unquestionably my own, least I should eventually be found maintaining a right which does not belong to me, I have no Criterion at this place to regulate my conduct by, neither have I one single act of Congress to consult, relative to the Militia, and it is upon all difficult matters I am reduc'd to the necessity of troubling my friends for their opinions. The whole of this confusion proceeds from an ambitious disposition to be considered the commanding officer of this little Garrison, or in other words the Lord of the Soil. When I was last at Dover I had conversation with my friend the Chancellor, he told me he would consult "the Books," and give me his opinion, he had done so, and in his letter, when speaking upon the subject of the right of Command he says. "All the Laws seem to contemplate that the detatch'd Militia should be commanded by their own officers; and I suppose this to be the case, except when a regular officer, of the army in service, elder in commission or of higher rank, is present; then it would be a right that such elder officer or of superior grade should command." His opinion was too

Correct for me to doubt. I had however previous to the reception of his letter, resolv'd in my mind upon takeing possession of the Batteries, and mantaining the command of them at the risque of every thing sacred, but the above sentence in the Chancellors letter, together with the advice of some of our best friends, and as well a sight of Gen Bloomfields orders to Lt. Col. Davis, produc'd in my mind a pause, and concluded I had better yeild one small point (the mere matter of giving the countersign being of but little consequence) least I should be found acting wrong, and eventually find my self in a disagreeable situation, The possession of the Batteries were never given up to the Detatch'd Militia or they would, this day, be found in their possession, Gen Bloomfield gave orders to Captn. Holland (a pilot) to muster fifty men for the Forts. he has done so, and from Gen Bloomfields orders considers themselves as being under the direction of Lt. Col. Davis, Gen Bloomfield treats Col Long & my self with great contempt. we have never got a single scrip of the pen from him, since we have been here,

If the principle is a correct one (which seems to be the opinion of some few here) That all the General Government has to do, to get the command of the Detatch'd Militia, is merely to send a regular officer of higher grade. Is it not a monstrous stretch of power. I should be pleas'd to hear from you, you can give me advice in this buisness. if Gen B. (as I have written to him also) & Gen Armstrong decides contrary to what I think is right. I have still one remedy left, and that is to hand my Commission to the Governer. I never will be under Lt. Col. Davis. I am not alone in this sentement, the Officers are united, the men would act in Conjunction. a nod from us, will carry any point we want. On the 22d Inst. The Democrats & some of the Federalists mean to remonstrate against a Confirmation of his appointment. you will then see the particulars. the publick sentement is strong against him. excuse imperfection & Haste. (over) I am Dr. Sir. Your Obt. St. C. P. Comyss

P.S. nothing of moment be side to communicate. when you read the letter to Gen Ar-
-mstrong be so good as to seal it, and send it to him, The Enemy's force is the
Stattira & Spartan. they have several prizes. Cepleas'd to write me imm-
-edeately and send me the different acts of Congress pass'd latterly on the
subject of the Militia. if convenient. Yours obt St. C. P. Conyss

Lewes Town Del. June 17th

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Hon Henry M Ridgely

in his absence The Hon Wm H. Wells. D. Cooper or C. Horsey

City of Washington