

G48 (3) Letter, John Claude to Dr. Dennis Claude, Sept. 16, 1814  
Re: Naval Battle

Claude Collection      See also G36, G259, D450



Plattsburgh Sept. 15<sup>th</sup> 1814

Dear Brother -

At length the fate of Plattsburgh, the Campaign, and I believe our Country is decided; Plattsburgh is safe, the War past, and Columbia free. - Thanks to our gallant Foes and their brave Commanders. Upon the Action on the 11<sup>th</sup> our all rested - had the fleet fallen, our Army I'm afraid could not have resisted the force which would have been brought against us. - And if so, the Country would have been (beyond the possibility of doubt) ravaged to Albany, perhaps to York; nay, I seriously believe from intelligence from the South that we should have been again reduced to Provincials.

The strength of the British Army from the best information we have been able to collect was from fifteen to twenty thousand and judging from the Desertions I have seen, as fine troops as ever were brought to the field. The strength of our Army say two thousand (morning report 1700) independent of Militia - Our fortifications were as strong as the time for preparation allowed and the nature of the Soil would admit - within their hearts as brave as ever filled a bosom. - But alas! alas! two to thirty is a fearful odds - Had our fleet fallen we should have died within our intrenchments, and left as here the Sons of Switzerland, our ruins for our Monument.

Heaven decreed otherwise - Our Forts are standing, and their defenders still upon the land of the living. - The Assault upon Plattsburgh commenced on the 5<sup>th</sup> and ended on the 11<sup>th</sup> both days inclusive - The first five were passed in constant skirmishes - a small creek only separating the parties. We lost some few brave fellows - the enemy I am convinced many more. To this kind of War we were becoming familiar - it was sport for our Gallant young heroes, many of whom could not be prevented from occasionally crossing the Bridge and bringing off articles from the Shore in the possession of the British Army - really in the very face of death. - The Conduct was such, yet still I could scarcely censurish seriously - A Soldier without Courage is a fool.

On the Morning of the 11<sup>th</sup> between the hours of 3 and 4 the imperial flag of Britain made its appearance, and in the course of five minutes, the thunder of our Artillery began - in about ten the fleets (ours at anchor) were almost yard arm and yard arm to - their heavy Ship laying along side our Sweet little Brig - By Heaven, her Commander should be a Commodore.

When I looked at the difference of their Size I trembled for the little party, but she was true American and dauntless - she poured it a right twist wind and water, like the Colossus vomited again. - They lay thus pouring in broad side for broad side for about an hour and a half, when I saw the little lightning bug hauling off - Not knowing positively the situation of the Ship, I put a sort of a cord's thick run through me - but I was soon warned again for in a few minutes the Ship's flag is all laid down. The Brig did it dauntless. - Then haul a for the Brig, and her Commander, and her Gallant crew -



This settled the business for the British Brig was so preciously peppered she could not  
get off — so says I to myself all's just as slick as grease — The flutes ours and  
the Army's dish'd — and so it was, — though they kept saluting our Batteries  
with Bombs, Rockets & Minnie about two Clock — When all was still as the silence  
which reigns through Nature after a violent Summers storm — Not even the Rain is  
heard to patter on the Peasants Cot. — Tho' Tho' gave the remains of their Com-  
modore and some of his brave Compatriots to the grave — I speak to their ashes, and  
if their deaths should purchase the worlds peace, they have indeed fallen gloriously.  
Heaven grant it may be so. — but you know my failing a little to womanish or so,  
a stroller for the tooth of dreams — But even under their impression, and they have left a  
dark shadow over the Crown of Britain (Money's Diadem is down) I venture to hope  
the Worlds storm is past — if so its Millennium must shortly begin.

A word or two of our Patriotic Militia — They are men and have done their  
duty, have done wonders — they met the dark hour like heroes and made our Woods rather  
again — The British troops will not shortly forget Vermont or rather Vermont Militia  
Men or Mob men as they term them — A damn bush fighting say they and bless it say I  
when our Peasantry in their present state have to war — it is their Element, whilst they  
move in it they are at home and sure of Victory — Nothing as they say can out hunt them  
or out shoot 'em, and they've made their words good, for they did pepper the Veterans of  
Spain and France, till the Shady groves even became too hot for 'em — Much having  
been said of the barbarity of British Warfare, I hold it just to state that they have left  
Monuments of Mercy in that portion of Plattsburgh, which was in their possession, which can  
never be forgotten. Private property as far as possible has been respected and the Village re-  
turned into the hands of its owners in as fair a state as they left it, save a few Houses which  
inferior necessity demanded the levelling of. An Officer betrayed by the Villainy  
or Cowardice of his Waiter became their prisoner — He was treated like a Soldier  
and immediately paroled. In short their conduct here has been truly noble and has  
impressed me more fully with the belief that they are as a people dreadfully Standard  
Wood to Heaven an Union could take place — So generous an Enemy must prove  
an invaluable friend. In the return of killed and wounded you will meet with  
the name of Lieut. Rank — he lived and died a Soldier — Wood he has fallen  
in a general Conflict — Fat across shoulders. As was with myself



an guard at the Village, and fell by a random shot from the opposite shore  
To see a Soldier dying produces feelings, which cannot be expressed... Our Country  
seems to taste possession of our bosom, and while she drops the tear of separation  
feels a pulse of joy, which says, with such foes my sword on is invaluable.  
~~Her~~ Her dying Moror in silent response sighs *Adules est pro patria mori*

You will doubtless think me extravagant whilst expressing a fear of our Country  
being again reduced to Provincials - or thinking it possible that an Army of twenty  
or thirty thousand Men could force a passage from Canada to York - Could  
you witness as I have the state of our blessed Land in a Military point of view  
you would not think any thing impossible to regularly discipline Troops -  
Though the State of York is invaded ~~and~~ I have not seen or heard of any  
force from thence coming to her relief - When facts are thus what have we not to  
fear - Our Regular Army is but a shadow for the defence of our Country and  
our Militia in an open Country weak indeed - then my Dear do think not my  
- presumptions wild, they are the result of opinion - The Current has been turned by  
the loss of their Fleet and notwithstanding Southern discomfitures I have  
the most sanguine hopes of a happy and honorable termination of the war  
With respects to all friends believe me to

Would I was attached to the State Army -  
" Fighting for Cora and in Cora's presence Oh I should  
become a God " *J*

Yours affectionately  
J. M. M.

15th  
1776



Plattsburgh  
Sept. 21

Sept. 16 1814

25

Battle of Plattsburgh

Genl. Dennis Claude

Annapolis

Maryland