

MSA SC 6205-1-7

John Allen Thomas to William Smallwood

10 March 1782

Summary: [Thomas](#) writes to intercede on behalf of one of his former soldiers from the Fifth Independent Company, [Charles Thompson](#), who was captured by the British at the Battle of Staten Island in 1777, was impressed into the British army, then later escaped. Thompson was blocked by the Americans from reenlisting, but has now been arrested as a deserter.

Dear General,

The Bearer hereof Charles Thompson<sup>1</sup> being taken up by Captain Bruce<sup>2</sup> as a deserter, has requested me to lay his Case before you, which I willingly do believing that his Case is more than commonly particular.

He enlisted with me in 1776 and served the Campaign faithfully and was in the Second Regiment in 1777, and was captured on Staten Island with Major Steward<sup>3</sup>, after being some Time in Goal, he agreed to enlist with the Enemy--and by that Means made his Escape. He says that Genl. Putnam<sup>4</sup> engaged to discharge him, and directed him to the General for that Purpose, but the Army moved before he could get to the General. he returned home and has remained here in a public Manner ever since. three Years agoe Major Steward was down here, and Thompson waited on him, who (as the Major told me) thought, that he ought not continue in the Army, because if he should happen to be captured he would be treated by the Enemy as a deserter. last Winter Steward was down here and I saw him and Thompson talking together. Steward afterwards told me that Thompson had again mentioned the Matter and that he had told him the same thing. Thompson says that he has frequently seen Major Davidson<sup>5</sup> Capt. Manger<sup>6</sup> and several other Officers but they never intimated to him that he ought to join the Regiment, for if they had, he would without Hesitation have done it.

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<sup>1</sup> For more about Charles Thompson, see his [online biography](#).

<sup>2</sup> [William Bruce](#) (1752-1825), a native of Charles County, joined the First Maryland Regiment in 1776 as a sergeant. He rose to be captain in 1779, and served until 1783.

<sup>3</sup> [John Steward](#) (1753-1783) was a lieutenant under Thomas in the Fifth Independent Company in 1776, was promoted to major of the Second Maryland Regiment in early 1777, and was captured at the Battle of Staten Island. He died in 1783, just as the war ended.

<sup>4</sup> Israel Putnam (1718-1790), major general in the Continental Army, had command of the Hudson Highlands area of New York.

<sup>5</sup> [John Davidson](#) (1754-1807), a native of Annapolis, was also a lieutenant under Thomas in the Fifth Independent Company in 1776, before being made a captain the Second Maryland Regiment in 1777. He left the army in 1783 and a major in the Fifth Maryland Regiment.

<sup>6</sup> Nicholas Mangers, a captain in the Fourth Maryland Regiment.

From the Manner of making his Escape, and his Situation if again captured, I am induced to urge his Case to you. but if you are of Opinion that he ought to be considered still as a Soldier, I have to request in a particular Manner of you, that you will permit him to return home and that you will accept of a good Man in his Room, if he can procure one, and I will be answerable to you for his Return and faithful Compliance with your Orders. I hope you will excuse the Freedom I have taken, and be assured that no thing but a sacred Regard to (what I think) Justice, should at any time induce me to trouble you with Matters of this Kind.

I am with the greatest Respect  
Your most hble Sert.

J.A. Thomas<sup>7</sup>

10th March 1782  
St. Mary's

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<sup>7</sup> [John Allen Thomas](#) (1734- c. 1797) was a St. Mary's County political leader, serving at the legislative conventions of 1774-1776, and in the House of Delegates 1778-1779 and 1781-1782. In 1776 he was named captain of the Fifth Independent Company, which fought with the Continental Army in New York and New Jersey).