

Committee that refused upon the canvas for we had applied to makers of Congress dollars, the whole to the Marine Committee and that whole consisted of about 600 pieces instead of 2000, but it was not possible the Marine Committee could spare you a single bolt; because the Congress had but a day or two before your application ordered all the light drabs and other stuff, then in the publications or that could be bought in the City to be made up into tents and sent immediately to Genl Washington, the Marine Committee remonstrated against this measure alleging that none of the Continental vessels could be sent out if the canvas was taken from them, no matter they were told the soldiers should have tents if they stripped the yards of those Continental frigates and cruizers that had sails made up, and in consequence of this measure which nothing but the extreme necessity of our army could justify, we have now a parcel of fine ships lying here useless at a time at a time they might have been most advantageously employed. Therefore judge you, whether that Committee or the Congress itself could have justified sparing you the canvas you wanted. You may depend that no just grounds are ever meant to be given by Congress or any of its Committees for complaints like yours. We are all embarked in a cause that requires our utmost united exertions to carry us through, and be assured you can always command our utmost aid and assistance when it can possibly be given, consistent with the general welfare.

I have the honor to be Gentl^l for and in
behalf of the Secret Committee
To the Honble Council of Safety of the

Your most Obedt^l & ever & ever servant

Robt Morris.

Sir.

I was by the former Convention ordered to examine the Salt petre earth on the North bank of Potomack of which I produced a sample. The Convention having adjourned before my return I now take the liberty to make a report thereof. The place is on Patterson's creek about 12 or 14 miles from the North Branch near Colwell Heights. It is a perpendicular rock, in the middle of which is a cavern and which was formed from the stones composing the rock decaying and tumbling down carrying along with them a good quantity of rich mould, which contains the Salt petre, and as the Cavern is so deep that no rain can come in, the Salt petre is not washed off. If stones are broke off or lifted up, there is sometimes a good quantity of real sulphur in its white colour found, which can be scraped off out of the interstices, where it collects. As for its formation there is a similarity with old cellars which are known to contain often according to their age great quantities, with this difference only, that the collection of Nitre in these Caverns may be from thousands of years which accounts for their richness.

From the situation and cause I had reason to suppose that the mountains must contain a great many such caverns and accordingly informed the inhabitants with my notion, who have since searched and discovered about 3 miles further an other such Cavern equally rich, and as I have received a sample of Salt petre from the Ohio which was found and scraped off from interstices of stones in a cavern, which I hereby send for the inspection of Convention, it is evident that