

William Holland Thomas to Jacob Siler

Nov 19th 1853

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Agency Office
19th Nov 1853

Mr. Jacob Siler. I have received an
Order from Dr. B. Allison to
you for five hundred dollars
and as much more as I wanted to
be credited on the said certificate
filed in the name of Allison
and Welch, I therefore authorize
you to return of said certificate
seven hundred and sixty one $82\frac{1}{2}$ dollars
for which I have received credit except
the sum of \$84.00 set apart for
Lise R. Siler, loaned to him

W. H. Thomas

19th Nov paid of this \$675⁰⁰ 84⁰⁰ 1/2
will pay 1/2 when he apply

Transcribed by Johnny Holloway

For English 618: Research Methods in English

Instructor: Dr. Brian Gastle

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Introduction to the Series

This transcription and its attendant annotations, explanatory material, and bibliography was prepared by students in ENGL 618: Research Methods in English, the required gateway class for the MA in English degree program at Western Carolina University (WCU). The learning outcomes for this class include the following:

1. Conduct appropriate, effective, and ethical scholarship.
 - a. Effectively find and use advanced research tools (handbooks, databases, guides, bibliographies, etc.) appropriate to a subject.
 - Students will be able to use a wide variety of such tools and evaluate those tools.
 - b. Find appropriate advanced research (print and electronic scholarship) and apply that research to specific disciplinary questions or issues.
 - Students will be able to find a variety of scholarship, evaluate both the appropriateness and rigor of that scholarship, and incorporate that scholarship correctly and effectively.
 - c. Develop accurate bibliographies and reference citations.
 - Students will be able to annotate, abstract, and cite materials following standard MLA format.
2. Understand the process by which the texts we use are made available.
 - Students will be able to conduct basic editorial work and evaluate the editorial work of others.

All work is presented as submitted by the graduate students. While they take great care with their transcriptions and annotations, errors are possible. As they learn throughout this class, good scholarship requires meticulous research and corroboration by authoritative sources. Our objective is to provide transcriptions and annotations of WCU's Special Collections materials that will be useful to the institution, students, scholars, patrons, and all users of our library's resources.

If you wish to submit an emendation or correction for this document, please email Dr. Brian Gastle (bgastle@wcu.edu).

Introduction to Document

This manuscript is a letter written from William Holland Thomas, political envoy, confederate officer, and legal correspondent to the Cherokee Native Americans, to Jacob Siler, lawyer and friend to the Cherokee Native Americans. In the letter, dated November 19th, 1853, Thomas informs Siler that he has received an order from Mr. B Allison to Siler for five hundred dollars to be credited to the road certificate, filed in the name Allison and Welch. Thomas goes on to authorize Siler to retrieve seven hundred and sixty one dollars and 82 cents, for which Thomas says he has received credit, except for 84 dollars set apart for Jesse R. Siler, Jacob's brother. The letter concludes with a post script saying that as of the 19th of November, Thomas paid of this 675 dollars and 84 cents. He concludes by saying he will pay J.R. Siler when he applies.

William Holland Thomas was born in Haywood County to a lower-middle class family, and was raised by his mother, his father having died by drowning. Thomas was adopted by the Cherokee and grew up learning to read and write in both English and Cherokee. Thomas's business in the area would become primarily dedicated to allocating monies dedicated to burgeoning road projects, likely stemming from his owning 34,000 acres, purchased from the Cherokee Cession lands in 1835 (Godbold, 68-69). John L. Bell, in the "Economic Development" chapter of *The History of Jackson County*, states that roads were pivotal for eased transportation of humans and goods during the development of Jackson County. Maps from 1844 show only two roads in Jackson County, one from Balsam to Cowee, and the other from Waynesville to Charleston. The construction of roads began with state authorized toll roads, beginning with the Western Turnpike, authorized in 1848, which extended from Salisbury to the Georgia Line. The Western Turnpike was financed by money from the sale of Cherokee lands by the state, and was sixteen-feet-wide. Residents were allowed to travel freely within the county, but the turnpike operated as a toll roads to all others, creating revenue for the state. The turnpike was completed in the 1850s, and in 1851, around the same time, the state authorized the Tuckasegee and Keowee turnpike company to build a road from Webster to the South Carolina line, joining with the Keowee Turnpike, and was later extended from Webster to Qualla. This road was likely completed at the latest by 1872, wherein it was commented by commissioner that the road was "poasted, with mileposts" (Bell, 193).

Editorial Statement

The manuscript itself is written on thicker paper than the two others transcribed, such that the writing from the reverse-side cannot be seen. The letter is written in an unusually neat hand for Thomas, but still features his signature “e” which looks like an “o,” attesting to his writing it himself. The dimensions of the letter are 6.75 inches height by 7.5 inches width. The letter appears to have been folded three times length-wise. The letter is quite short and appears to have been ripped in half. There is a postscript at the bottom of the letter which looks more customary for Thomas’s hand.

William Holland Thomas’s hand is usually more difficult to read than in the instance of this particular correspondence. Instead of the small, pinched letters seen in the other two transcriptions of letters set to Jacob Siler, the characters are large and well-spaced, with the loops covering far more space than usual. The effect is that coming from the other letters to this letter is somewhat disorienting, and suggests that along the way a scribe may have been relied upon.

Regarding the transcription itself, words that I am fairly sure of but cannot confirm are bracketed. I have not transcribed any words I am not sure of after having consulted multiple sources, including my peers, the resident research specialist, and my professor. Where the text is still altogether illegible, I have noted as much and suggested the closest possible guess. I acknowledge that I am merely human, and that mistakes do happen.

Transcription

Page One:

Agency Office

19th Nov 1853

Mr. Jacob Siler, I have received an order from Mr. B Allison¹ to you for five hundred dollars and as much more as I wanted to be credited on the road certificate filed in the name of Allison and Welch, I herefore authorize you to retrieve of said certificate seven hundred and sixty one 82/100² dollars for which I have received credit except the sum of \$84.00 set apart for Jesse R Siler³, leaned to him

W.H.Thomas

19th Nov. paid of this \$673 & 84/100

will pay J.R. Siler when he aplys⁴

Page Two:

W.H.Thomas

Order

For \$761.82⁵

On Allison

And Welch's

certificate

¹ Unidentified.

² Eighty-two cents.

³ Jacob Siler's brother, after which Siler's Bald was named.

⁴ "applies"

⁵ Cents.

Annotated Bibliography

Bell, John L. "Economic Development." *The History of Jackson County*, edited by Max R. Williams, Jackson County Historical Association, 1987, p. 193.

DeJong, David H. "William Medill: Commissioner of Indian Affairs (October 28, 1845–June 30, 1849)." *Paternalism to Partnership: The Administration of Indian Affairs, 1786–2021*, University of Nebraska Press, 2021, pp. 69–75. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv2cw0sp9.18>. Accessed 2 Dec. 2023.

Godbold, Stanly E. and Russell, Mattie U. *Confederate Colonel and Cherokee Chief: The Life of William Holland Thomas*. 1st ed. University of Tennessee Press, 1990.

Porter, Leona B. "The Families of Jacob Siler, Margaret Siler Gash, John Siler and Mary Siler Henley." *The Family of Weimar Siler (1775-1831)*. Franklin, NC Committee, 1952, p. 64.