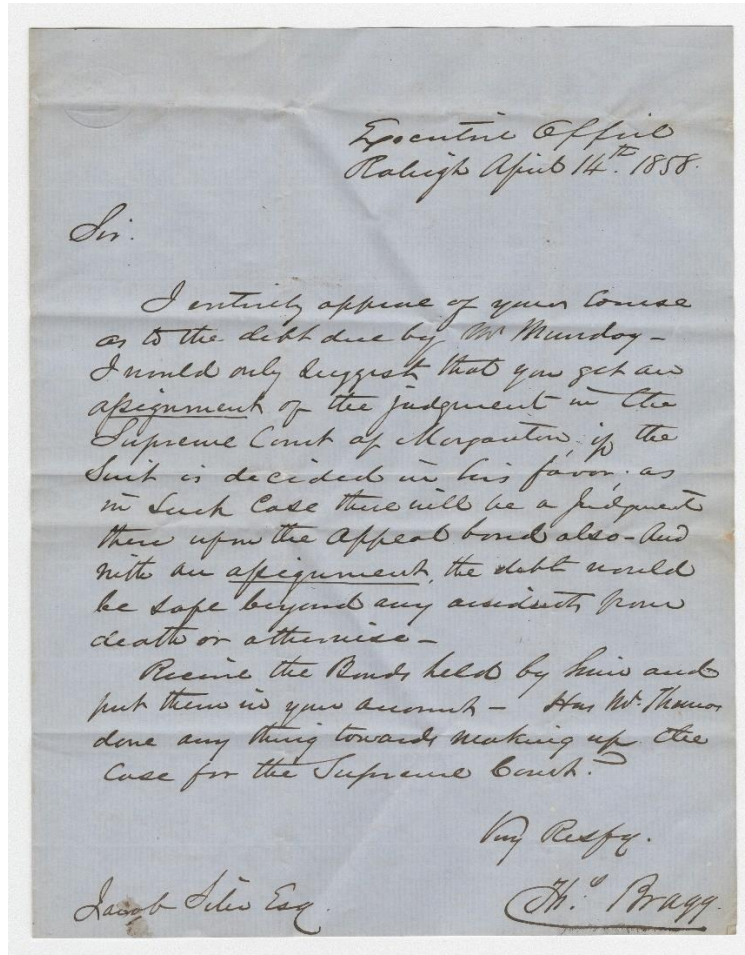


Letter from Gov. Thomas Bragg to Jacob Siler  
April 14th, 1858

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Edited and transcribed by Kate Stone  
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 were prepared by students in ENGL 618: Research Methods in English, the required gateway class for the MA in English at Western Carolina University. 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 students. While these students take great care with their transcriptions and annotations, errors are always possible. As these students learn throughout this class, good scholarship requires checking of sources and corroboration by authoritative sources. It is hoped that the transcription and annotation of WCU Special Collections materials will be useful to the institution, students, scholars, and other patrons and users of WCU's Special Collections materials.

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

## Introduction to the Document

In this document, NC Governor Thomas Bragg is responding to a letter from Jacob Siler about a debt owed by Mr. Stephen Munday. Bragg approves of Siler's motion to take it to court but suggests that Siler get an assignment of the debt just in case the court rules against him.

Governor Thomas Bragg was born in 1810 in Warrenton, North Carolina to Thomas and Margaret Crossland Bragg. He was one of six sons. He studied law under Judge John Hall of the North Carolina Supreme Court and after being admitted to the bar in 1832, he began a private law firm in Northampton County. He married his wife Isabelle M. Cuthbert in October of 1837. He began his political career as Democrat and served a single term in the North Carolina House of Representatives in 1842. For the next ten years, he would serve as a delegate to the Democratic conventions of the years 1844, 1848, and 1852. In 1854, Bragg was elected Governor of North Carolina. He was a strong supporter of states' rights and opposed a strong federal presence. In 1859, after serving two terms as Governor, he was elected to the United States Senate. In 1861, he withdrew from the Senate though some sources argue Bragg was actually expelled for supporting secession from the Union. Later that same year, Bragg took the position of Attorney General under Jefferson Davis who was president of the Confederate states. He resigned in March of 1862. After the war, Bragg returned to practicing law and passed away in 1872.

Jacob Siler was born on June 1, 1795, in South Carolina's Pendleton district. Sometime in his youth, his family relocated to Buncombe County, but in 1817, he left the area to explore the land along the Upper Little Tennessee River with William Britton. He eventually settled in Macon County and was appointed magistrate of the county in 1828, an office he also held for Haywood County. Siler and Colonel Joseph Cathey established the line between the two counties. He then took the position of county surveyor before resigning in 1835 to serve in the North Carolina legislature. In 1839-1849, he served as an Agent for the state of North Carolina. Around the time this letter was written, Siler was in his early 60s. This is the same year Siler's first wife, Matilda, passed away. The two had five children together. In 1864, Siler married Mary Thornton Highsmith. The couple had two children together before Siler died in the spring of 1871.

The letter mentions a man by the name of W. Thomas. It is likely that he is referring to the famous figure William Holland Thomas who was serving in the North Carolina Senate during the time this letter was written. Thomas was born in 1805 in Haywood County to Temperance and Richard Thomas. Richard Thomas drowned before his son was born. At twelve years old, Thomas was recruited as an apprentice to help Felix Walker in his trade store located in Soco Creek. During this time, he was adopted into the Eastern Band of the Cherokee by chief Yonaguska who referred to him as Will-Usdi or "Little Will." He learned the written and spoken Cherokee language. After the removal of the Cherokee, Thomas bought a homestead in Whittier which he called Stekoa, after a settlement that had been destroyed by Rutherford in 1776. He owned five stores at the time of the Removal: Quallatown, Murphy, Charleston, TN, Robbinsville, and Webster.

During this time, he also practiced law for the Cherokee. He worked to draw up a form of government to help the Cherokee respond to government policies. He represented the tribe in

Washington from 1836-1848, but despite his commitment to the Cherokee, he often participated in the buying and selling of Cherokee lands after the removal. Thomas also aided the Army in locating and capturing several other Cherokee hiding in the mountains to escape removal. It is common belief after the death of Yonaguska that Thomas was named leader of the Cherokee people, however that has been heavily debated in recent years. He married Sarah Love from a prominent Waynesville family in June of 1857, despite being over twenty years her senior. The couple had three children. Thomas served in the North Carolina state senate continuously from 1849-1861, during which he often sponsored legislation in support of better infrastructure for the area. During his time in office, Thomas found himself deeply in debt. In May of 1861, he voted in favor of secession. Shortly after, he persuaded many of the Cherokee to join the Confederacy and joined himself in 1862. He was one of the last confederates to surrender. After the end of the Civil War, his financial situation continued to decline. Much of his land was seized by creditors, including over 100,000 acres he had purchased for the Cherokee. They had to go to court to fight for the land. Thomas died in May of 1893.

This letter would be of interest to those who study local law. It would also be beneficial to those who are interested in figures such as W. H. Thoman and his interactions with other prominent political and local figures of the time.

### **Editorial Statement**

This document is written on official congressional stationery with a seal in the top left corner and a watermark on the paper. The letter is folded in half; the rest of the page is blank. When folded, this document measures 10in (length) x 7 ¾ in (wide), but when it is unfolded it measures 15 ½ in (wide) x 10 in (length). The paper has grown thin over time, but the ink is still visible. There is no fading or holes in the paper, but there are a few smears on the paper.

This is a diplomatic transcription, meaning the transcription is as close to the original manuscript as possible. Any misspellings, grammar mistakes, or other issues will be included in their original state. Any words that I question are in brackets[]. Bragg's writing is incredibly neat, as befits his station as Governor, and was fairly easy to read. His handwriting is titled to the right significantly and he draws the words out. Some features of his handwriting include:

- His lowercase "f" and "p" look similar, they are both tilted and do not always connect.
- His lowercase "s" can often look like an "f" as seen in the word "assignment."
- His "n" can be mistaken for a "u" as seen in the "annal" which I originally thought read "annual."
- He uses an abbreviations for names, such as "Tho. Bragg" and "W. Thomas." He also uses the abbreviation "resfy" for "respectfully."

[MS page 1]

Executive Office  
Raleigh April 14th, 1858

Sir,

I entirely approve of your course as to the debt due by Mr. Munday – I would only request that you that you get an assignment of the judgment in the Supreme Court of Morganton<sup>1</sup> if the suit is decided in his favor; as in such case there will be a judgment there upon the appeal bond also – and with an assignment, the debt would be safe beyond any accident from death or otherwise –

Revise the Bonds held by him and put them in your [account] – Has W. Thomas<sup>2</sup> done any thing towards making up the case for the Supreme Court?

Very Resfy.<sup>3</sup>

Th. Bragg

Jacob Siler Esq<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1846, the North Carolina General Assembly passed legislation that required the Court to hold an August Term in Morganton for the lawyers situated in the western counties. This stopped after the started of the Civil War.

<sup>2</sup>It is likely this is referring to William Holland Thomas. For more

<sup>3</sup> “respectfully.”

<sup>4</sup> “esquire.”

## Works Cited

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I used this source to find out about Thomas Bragg's involvement with Jefferson Davis.

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