

Citation: Transcription of letters of John McNutt to Joseph H. LaMotte, 1855-1858, LaMotte-Coppinger Papers, Missouri History Museum Archives, St. Louis.

The following five letters of John McNutt to Joseph H. LaMotte were transcribed by Dennis Northcott in 2010. In many cases words or groups of words could not be deciphered. Text in brackets was supplied by the transcriber.

San Antonio, Texas
June 3d, 1855

My dear Major,

I had the pleasure of receiving yours enclosing a draft for 825 dollars, which desired me to loan for you. I have done so for one year at the rate of 2 ½ per cent per month, or 30 per cent per annum. This I consider a very excellent loan, as the security is by deed of trust upon real estate property which will sell under the hammer at not less than 4,000 dollars. All the papers are made in your name. The deed of trust is signed by the person who took the loan (Mr. S. Smith) by me for you, and by Mr. Cleveland, an attorney of this place, as trustee. This latter person has been employed in[?] examining the title of the property given as security, and has charged for making this examination 10 dollars, which I shall take out of the first months interest on the loan.

I enclose a power of attorney which you will please execute and return to me, as I could not proceed very well without such a document.

By last mail Sebastopol is (not) taken. Wise[?] is defeated for governor of Virginia. This shows that Know-nothingism is in the ascendance in that state.

Col. Roberts of the Rifles is here waiting for the meeting of the court for the trial of [name unclear]. Capt. [name unclear] of the Rifles left only two days ago for [one or two words unclear] to return again soon and wait for the court, which he is a member.

You ask me what Dashiell[?] sold his property for. He got 14,000 dollars, or thereabouts for what he sold, which was not all he owned about San Antonio. I am told that he is very much dissatisfied with Charleston and that he is trying to effect an exchange with Hutter[?] in order to get back to Texas.

As to the new appointments, I am not well enough acquainted with the military character of most of them to be able to give an opinion as to their merits. I am told that some of them have given great dissatisfaction to the army. I am glad Rink got a captaincy, tho I would have been better pleased if he had gotten some staff position, particularly that of asst. adj. Genl. [assistant adjutant general] which I think the one best suited for him.

The cholera has again appeared in St. Louis and in New Orleans but in a less severe form than in preceding years. The H^d. Qu^{trs} [headquarters] of the Dept. of Texas[?] are to remain at Corpus, by last accounts.

When you write please give me the news of your place.

Yours truly,
J. McNutt

Major J.H. LaMotte
U.S. Army

San Antonio, Texas
July 20th[?], 1856

Dear Sir,

Agreeably to your report in your last letter to me, I enclose, herewith, a draft of the quarter master at this place upon the asst. [word unclear] U.S. at N. York for \$692.77, being the full amount of the money belonging to you at present in my hands. I would have sent it sooner to you, but for the difficulty of procuring good exchange, the government officers not having any funds placed to their credit[?] in the eastern cities until within a month. I delayed, also, a little in order[?] to collect all I could before writing to you. I would have been able to collect still more if some of the parties had not been absent. They will probably be here before I leave, in which case I hope to be able to send you another remittance.

Capt. Whiteley[?] has been here since the 26th of last month to relieve me and we have been busy most of the time in examining stars. I shall not get entirely through until the last of this month, when I shall according to orders report in person to the Col. of ordnance at Washington. Where I shall be stationed I know not, but suppose at some of the foundries, as the order of the Sec. of War assigns me to "foundry" "duty."

I shall, before leaving this place, turn over to Mr. Cleveland all your papers and take receipts which, with the additional money that I shall have collected, I shall send to you. I think that there will be little difficulty in getting in your [word unclear], and I have full confidence in the integrity of Mr. Cleveland. I know no one that I would trust sooner.

Please acknowledge the receipt of the enclosed draft, and address me to the care of Col. H.K. Craig, Washington, D.C.

Yours truly,
J. McNutt

Maj. J.H. LaMotte
St. Louis, Mo.

San Antonio, Texas
Jan. 5, 1857

Dear Major,

I beg to state that I have collected and reloaned the 1000 dollars which were loaned to Asa Mitchell. The loan was taken by T.H. Basshard[?], R. Kemple and George Herzig jointly, at the same rate as before (2 ½) and for the same period (one year). The security is of the best kind, being a deed of trust upon city property valued at over 4000 dollars. The loan begins on the 22^d of Dec., 1856.

Since writing to you Major Vinton[?] has made his appearance to relieve Meyers[?] who will take his departure from this place in a few days. I believe I mentioned before that McDowell[?] had arrived to relieve Buell[?], who had left for Baltimore.

The great[?] court martial on Major [name unclear] has not yet adjourned. A Court of Inquiry is about to convene at Indianola to inquire into certain charges made against Capt. Van [name unclear]. We have had quite a happy New Years.

Truly yours, J. McNutt

Maj. J.H. LaMotte

San Antonio, Tex.
Oct. 1st, 1857[?]

Dear Major,

I have reloaned to Smith the \$1618.74 which was due last month (4th). The loan dates from that time and extends for another year. The interest is the highest allowed[?] by law viz: 12 per cent per annum, or 1 per month. This is now considered the only safe rate at the present time, owing to the great pressure[?] of the times arising from the total failure of the crops this past season.

The accruing interest upon all the notes, amounting to about nine hundred dollars, commencing with the best in which the past[?] interest was included, which is [name unclear], will be taken up with the \$500 paid by Denison in April last, and which I have not been able to loan again owing to the tightness of the times. This will make the next loan amount to \$1400, which I am now engaged in resoliciting[?]. I shall put it out at the same rate as Smith – 12 per cent per annum.

Business has been very dull in San Antonio. The past[?] summer[?] and the drought has scared many of the settlers out of the country. But we expect that all this panic will pass off next season.

Notwithstanding the times, the place is steadily improving, and several buildings of a kind unusually fine have been built and others are now in the course of erection.

Very truly yours,
J. McNutt

Major J.H. LaMotte
St. Louis, Mo.

Washington, D.C.
Sept. 7th [1858]

Dear Sir,

I enclose, herewith, Cleveland receipts for the papers concerning your money at San Antonio[?].

Your letter acknowledging the receipt of the draft which I sent to you a short time before I left there I found at the ordnance office when I arrived in this city.

There is very little new here. Genl. Harney is here making preparations to prosecute the war against the Indians in Oregon and Washington territory. He will probably leave here in a few days. The Secretary of War with Genl. Scott & staff, Col. Cooper and Capt. Maynadier have just returned from an excursion to Old Point Comfort. They had reviews and feasting[?] in plenty of course. Scott & staff stopped in N.Y.

I went over to N.Y.[New York] on the [word unclear] to witness the great celebration on account of the atlantic cable enterprise.

I can assure you that it was an affair worth seeing. There probably was a greater turn out upon that occasion than was ever known in N.Y. Some speak of the celebration of the completion of the Erie Canal as being greater, but most think that the present one was greater by far. From 3 to 6 p.m. there was a continuous procession. The few [word unclear] of which you doubtless have seen in the papers. After dark we had the illuminating of fire works, and the crowd was so great that it was with a great deal of difficulty that I could get along Broadway. All the omnibus lines had to leave for other streets on account of the jam[?] of people. The hotels were all full before I arrived in the city which was on the morning of the 1st[?], and I had to get lodging in some private house near the N.Y. Hotel where I stopped. This affair of the celebration was exceedingly exciting to me who had been so long in Texas, and I felt like a boy at a general muster.

I have not yet received my orders, but it has been signified to me that I will be stationed at the Foundry near West Point. I probably shall proceed to my station in a few days. How I shall be able to stand the winter of the climate remains to be seen. I fear it will go hard with me.

Please acknowledge the receipt of the papers, and give me the news of St. Louis.

Yours truly,
J. McNutt

Major J.H. LaMotte
St. Louis, Mo.