

THE LIFE
PUBLIC SERVICES, ADDRESSES
AND LETTERS
OF
ELIAS BOUDINOT, LL. D.

PRESIDENT OF THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS

EDITED BY

J. J. BOUDINOT

MEMBER OF THE NEW JERSEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

IN TWO VOLUMES

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the consideration of Government, and does not doubt but some small provision will be made for them, in Case of their intire dismissal from the public Service.

In this representation it is not meant to include the Director, Assayer or Treasurer, as neither of these depend on their Salaries for support — All which is respectfully submitted to the President by his Obedient humble Servant

ELIAS BOUDINOT Director.

The President of the United States.

(Endorsed)

BOUDINOT, ELIAS, Phil^a Apr. 17, 1802.

recd Apr 19.¹

MR. BOUDINOT TO HIS EXCELLENCY THOMAS JEFFERSON.

(Private.)

ROSEHILL, August 10th 1802.

DEAR SIR

Knowing your fondness for Agriculture, and everything connected with it, tho' in a collateral respect, I take the liberty of troubling you, amidst the arduous affairs of government, with the following fact —

If it is new to you, your curiosity will be gratified; if not, the information you will be able to give me, as to the native soil of this production, will lay me under peculiar obligations —

In the fall of 1800, I was presented, at second hand, with a few quarts of an extraordinary wheat,

¹ MSS. Archives, Department of State, Washington, D. C., Jefferson papers, series 2, vol. viii. p. 33.

from a distant Country but from whom it came or from what country, have wholly slipped my Memory

At seed time, when cleaning it for sowing, I discovered four uncommon grains, which I was wholly unacquainted with, the legs & beard (which I afterwards found belonged to them) being entirely broken off by the friction, with the wheat — I put them up carefully till the Spring, and then planted them in a good soil — At Harvest they turned out to be a species of Oats of a peculiar Nature — when ripe, I was collecting them from the straw by hand — Having picked 14 or 15 I laid them on the grass, till I gathered more; but in 10 minutes they disappeared, and could not be found. I gathered a number more & put them in the center of a Salver with a perforated rim, and carefully placed it over night, where it could not be disturbed — The next Morning, I found every grain at the rim of the Salver, with its head thro' the holes of the Rim — I then dipped one in water, and laid it on paper, when it not only plainly discovered a power of loco-motion, but sprang about half an Inch. On bringing others I was convinced that providence had endued them with this power to propagate themselves. On carefully examining them with a Magnifying glass, there appeared a spiral line round the upper part of the leg, which I presume is the cause of their motion. I have

called them, animated Oats, for indeed they are the nearest line between vegetation and animation, that I know of.

Many gentlemen, both natives & foreigners, have seen them during the past year, but no one could inform me of their native country.

The last Spring, I sowed more of them and have just gathered a new crop— They are so great a curiosity to me & my acquaintance, that I have ventured to trouble you with a small Box containing a few of them for your examination. If I should be mistaken and they should not be new to you, I hope you will charge it to my ignorance of natural history, and excuse the liberty I have taken, from a desire of gratifying your love of Agriculture.

By taking one of them by the end of his long legs, and dipping him under water about the second of a minute, and laying it on a sheet of Paper, you will soon perceive its operation— They should be carefully dried in the Sun, or air, and when wet again they will repeat the Motion— Some of them may fail, on account of their not being thoroughly ripe— They are most brisk in damp weather—

I have the honor to be

with great respect Dr. Sir,

Your Obedt Hble Servt

ELIAS BOUDINOT.

The President of the United States.

(Addressed)

Private

with a small box,

The President of the United States,

Washington.

(Endorsed)

BOUDINOT, ELIAS,

Rosehill, Aug. 10, 1802.

rec^d Aug. 16.¹

HIS EXCELLENCY THOMAS JEFFERSON TO MR. BOUDINOT.

MONTICELLO, Aug. 3, 04.

SIR

Your favor of the 30th Ult. came to hand last night as to the question how far we can place the Indian funds under private direction & cooperation lies within the department of War, I have this day written to Genl Dearborne on it. if he be still at Washington I may expect an early answer: if gone on to Maine, it will be some time first. in either case, as soon as his answer is received you shall hear from me.

Accept my salutations & assurances of respect

TH: JEFFERSON

ELIAS BOUDINOT, Esqr.²

In 1805 Mr. Boudinot resigned from the Directorship of the Mint and retired from all public duties, having served his country in positions of the highest trust for the greater part of thirty years. He built a commodious house in Burlington, N. J., where, surrounded with a charming

¹ MSS. Archives, Department of State, Washington, D. C., Jefferson papers, series 2, vol. viii. p. 36, b.

² MSS. Archives, Department of State, Washington, D. C., Jefferson papers, series 1, vol. x. p. 132.

circle of friends, he spent his remaining years, devoted to Biblical studies, to the protection and freeing of slaves, to educational interests in various quarters, to the civilization of Indians, to the American Bible Society of which he was founder, and to the interests of the poor and the spread of Christianity.