GEORGE READ
DECLARATION SIGNERS
ART MEDAL

GEORGE READ, A SIGNER OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, was born on his father's plantation near North

East in Cecil County, Maryland, on September 18, 1733. Read's father, John, came to the American colonies from Ireland at an early age, marrying Mary Howell, the daughter of a Welsh planter. The Reads moved to New Castle County, Delaware, shortly after the birth of George, the first of six sons. It is said that their first born was educated at Chester, Pennsylvania, and later at the academy of the Reverend Francis Allison at New London, Pennsylvania. Two of Read's fellow students at Allison's school were Thomas McKean, later a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and Hugh Williamson, a signer of the United States Constitution.

Read then went to study in the offices of a prominent Philadelphia lawyer, John Moland. A fellow student there was John Dickinson, who was later to enjoy some fame as a revolutionary writer. Admitted to the bar at the age of nineteen in 1753, Read established his law practice and residence at New Castle. Soon enjoying a prosperous practice, Read married the widowed daughter of an Episcopal minister, Gertrude Ross Till, in 1763. They were to have five children. Through his brother-in-law, John Ross, Read was appointed attorney general for the Three Lower Counties (known as Delaware) in 1763. Two years later he was elected to a first term in the house of assembly for the three counties, which, though part of Pennsylvania, had their own legislature. Read was to serve a total of twelve years in the assembly.

Read was named a delegate from Delaware to the First Continental Congress in 1774, resigning his position as attorney-general because of its association with the British crown. Also serving in the Congress from Delaware were Ceasar Rodney and Thomas McKean, an old friend. Read was opposed to the complete break with Great Britain during the crucial congressional debates of June, 1776. However, both Rodney and McKean were for independence and Delaware approved the historic document. Though he didn't vote for the Declaration of Independence, Read signed it on August 2, 1776, and shared the dangers of those who voted in its behalf. During his terms in Congress, Read was a member of the first naval committee that helped found the U.S. Navy. He also served as president of the Delaware Constitutional Convention in 1776, which was called to organize a constitution and government for the Three Lower Counties. After the constitution was drafted and approved, Read became speaker of the council and vice president. With the capture of the state's president, John McKinley, Read was called upon to serve as acting president from about mid-October, 1777, until March 1778.

After service in the Delaware legislature, Read was appointed a judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for admiralty cases in 1782, holding that position until about 1789. He also served as a delegate to the Annapolis Convention to study a successor to the Articles of Confederation in 1786 and the U.S. Constitutional Convention of 1787. Read is said to have been an ardent supporter of recognition for the small states and the imposition of a strong central government during the debates. Read became a strong supporter of the constitution drafted by James Madison of Virginia and signed it on September 17, 1787. He thus became one of six men to sign both the Constitution and Declaration of Independence. Read carried his support for the document back to Delaware, where that state became the first to ratify it on December 7, 1787.

Read was elected a United States Senator under the new Constitution and served from March 4, 1789, until September 18, 1793. He then resigned to accept the position as chief justice of the Supreme Court of Delaware. He continued in that position until his death at the age of sixty-five on September 21, 1798. He was buried at Immanuel Churchyard at New Castle.

THE REVERSE OF THE GEORGE READ MEDAL depicts a map of the New York Campaign by the British in 1776, part of the effort to split the American colonies via the Hudson River Valley. During March, 1776, General George Washington successfully flanked the British positions at Boston and forced General Sir William Howe, the British commander-in-chief, to evacuate the city and colony. After repairing to Halifax, Howe sailed with his troops for New York early in June, 1776, landing on Staten Island (lower left corner of map) early in July. After prolonged preparations, Howe launched his attack at the American positions on Long Island on August 22, landing six thousand men on the beaches in the first wave. Howe promptly attacked Washington's positions at Brooklyn Heights and flanked the Americans, forcing Washington to withdraw to Manhattan Island (see map).

General Howe, again slow to follow his advantage, finally attacked at Manhattan above New York City on September 15. The British quickly dispersed the American skirmishers at Kip's Bay and could easily have cut off the American path of retreat on the island but paused to permit a second wave to come ashore. The Americans won a relatively minor victory at Harlem Heights on the day following the landing, September 16, but New York City fell to the British. General Washington continued to straddle the Hudson River above the city and avoided a general battle with the British.

Washington's goal was to prevent the British from fully investing the Hudson and blocking communications between Connecticut and New Jersey. He thus retreated up the Hudson to White Plains, leaving the river blocked by a row of sunken hulks and two forts, Fort Lee on the Jersey side, and Fort

Washington on the New York side. Fort Washington fell to the British with surprising ease on November 16, costing an estimated three thousand prisoners. Fort Lee was then precipitately abandoned, costing the rebels large quantities of equipment and munitions.

During the winter months of 1776-1777, Howe chased Washington into New Jersey, where his pursuit was frustrated by the Delaware River. While Washington had not won any important victories, his tactics had drawn Howe's attention from the Hudson and prevented his link-up with the British from Canada pushing down the Hudson under General Sir Guy Carleton. Carleton faced a makeshift American fleet on Lake Champlain that winter and was unable to pass Fort Ticonderoga in his drive down the river. His army finally moved back into Canada for the winter, ending the threat that the colonies would be divided by the Hudson River Valley.

In addition to the map of the New York Campaign of 1776, the reverse design also carries a reproduction of George Read's signature as it appears on the Declaration of Independence and the years of his birth and death, 1733-1768.

THE SCULPTOR, RALPH J. MENCONI, is using the reverse of each medal depicting a signer of the Declaration to portray people, places and events from the American Revolution. A native of Union City, New Jersey, Mr. Menconi was educated at Scarborough Prep School, Hamilton College and Yale University, where he received the bachelor of fine arts degree in 1939. A decorated veteran of World War II, Mr. Menconi rose to the rank of major and served three years in the European Theater. He received seven battle stars and the Bronze Star during the war.

Mr. Menconi, who has produced all of the medals in this series, is a fellow of the National Sculpture Society and a member of The Century Association, Municipal Art Society of New York City, American Numismatic Association and the American Numismatic Society. He has received virtually hundreds of commissions, including medallic portraits for the last three U.S. presidents, Nixon, Johnson and Kennedy. Mr. Menconi resides in Pleasantville, New York, but maintains studios in New York City.

THE GEORGE READ MEDAL IS THE 35TH OF A SERIES COMMEMORATING THE FIFTY-SIX SIGNERS OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE. This historical series has been undertaken by PRESIDENTIAL ART MEDALS, INC., of ENGLEWOOD, OHIO. The George Read medal is available in bronze, silver (serially numbered and limited to 7,500 pieces) and platinum (serially numbered and limited to 25 pieces). Each medal is struck in high-relief and measures one-and-a-quarter inches in diameter. PRESIDENTIAL ART MEDALS also produces historical series commemorating World War II, the nation's presidents, the nation's states and their famous sons, the Apollo moon program and Great Men of Medicine.

GEORGE READ
DECLARATION SIGNERS
ART MEDAL

GEORGE READ, A SIGNER OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, was born on his father's plantation near North

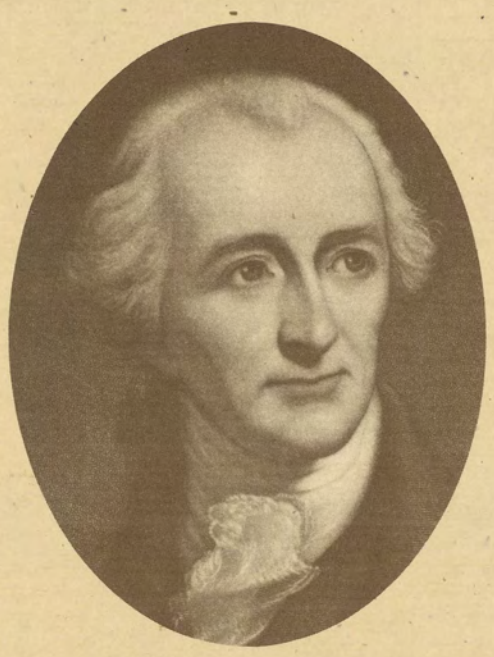
BANK OF DELAWARE

in close cooperation with

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF DELAWARE

is extremely pleased to present during the early months of 1976 a series of Bicentennial Exhibits featuring the three Delaware signers of the Declaration of Independence

First Exhibit



Geo. Read

January 19 through February 27, 1976

"A Cautious Man, Not A Timid One"*

Born in Cecil County, Maryland in 1733, George Read moved to New Castle in 1753 after studying law in Philadelphia. An able lawyer, Read became Attorney General for the Lower Counties in 1763, and two years later was elected to the General Assembly. At the same time he became involved in the protest that flared in the colonies following Parliament's passage of the Stamp Act. Appointed to the Continental Congress in 1774, he was the least radical of Delaware's three delegates. Read refused to vote for the original resolution for independence, feeling it was premature. Since Caesar Rodney was at home when the vote was taken the Delaware delegation was deadlocked. An urgent summons brought Rodney back to Philadelphia to swing Delaware for independence. Despite his vote, Read was willing to risk trial for treason by signing the Declaration of Independence with Rodney and Thomas McKean.

During and after the Revolution, Read served as a delegate to the state constitutional convention, acting President of Delaware, admiralty court judge, member of the first United States Senate, and Chief Justice of the Delaware Supreme Court. He died in 1798.

*This is a paraphrase of a character assessment of George Read written by the grandson of the signer, William Thompson Read, in his Life and Correspondence of George Read (1870).

The Read family coat of arms

George Read's combination watch key and locket containing a lock of George Washington's hair

The chair was a gift to Read from George Washington

Portrait of George Read's wife by Robert Edge Pine

A Queen Anne style dresser owned by Read

A contemporary painting of Read's mansion in New Castle which burned in 1824

Shoe buckles worn by Read

Since the history of the original Bank of Delaware so closely parallels the nation's Bicentennial, we are extremely pleased to join with The Historical Society of Delaware in presenting a series of historical exhibitions. These are designed to dramatize some of the people and events closely related to the three Delaware delegates who played such an important role in the Second Continental Congress. The exhibitions are to be located in the first floor lobby of the Main Office of the bank at 300 Delaware Avenue.

January 19 through February 27, 1976

GEORGE READ

March 8 through April 16, 1976

THOMAS McKEAN

April 26 through May 28, 1976

CAESAR RODNEY

OLD TOWN HALL (right) . . . of Wilmington, built in 1798, has been restored by The Historical Society of Delaware and houses the Society's museum.

READ HOUSE (below right) . . . Old New Castle, was the residence of George Read II and is now owned by The Historical Society of Delaware. The house is scheduled to open for public tours in April, 1976.

WILLINGTOWN SQUARE (below) . . . a Historical Society of Delaware project undertaken with the City of Wilmington, is presently under construction on Market Street opposite Old Town Hall. When completed it will provide a setting for six restored colonial houses and a plaza for public gatherings.

All photographs courtesy of The Historical Society of Delaware

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#94

COPY FOR MISS SHAW

George Read (1733 - 1798)

George Read, eldest son of John Read and Mary (Howell) was born in Cecil County, Maryland on September 17,1733. His father, member of a wealthy English family living in Ireland, had emigrated in early manhood; his mother was Welsh-born but American bred. The family moved to Christiana Bridge, in Delaware, in George Read's childhood. He was prepared at Dr. Francis Alison's academy at New London, Pennsylvania, and trained in the law in the office of John Moland, a distinguished peactitioner in Philadelphia. After admission to the bar he continued for a few months as an associate of his preceptor, practicing in Lancaster and New Castle as well as Philadelphia. In March, 1754 he settled at New Castle, his home for the rest of his life.

There he became increasingly prominent professionally and in public life. In 1763 he was appointed Attorney General for the Three Lower Counties [Delaware], the first to hold the post. He early protested taxation without representation, warning that it could provoke a movement for independence.

In 1774 George Read was a delegate to the Continental Congress, resigning his Crown office of Attorney General as incompatible with his new duties. By July 2, 1776, however, he still believed separation from Britain was premature and voted against it in committee. He nevertheless signed the Declaration of Independence and took an increasingly active role in the new governments of the State and Nation.

He continued in Congress; was President of Delaware's constitutional convention; became Speaker of the ~~Colonial~~ Council [Senate] in the State Assembly and as such succeeded to the Presidency of

-continued-

Delaware when his predecessor was captured in the fall of 1777. He served from mid-October 1777 until March, 1778.

In 1786 Read was a delegate to the Annapolis Convention that laid the groundwork for the Federal Constitutional Convention. At the latter, in 1787, he was active, especially in efforts to protect the integrity of the smaller states. After adjournment, he was influential in securing ratification by his own State, which became the first to join the new Union.

Under the Constitution of the United States, George Read served as a Senator from 1788 to 1793, when he resigned to become Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Delaware. He held the latter commission at his death on September 1, 1798.

George Read's wife was Gertrude Ross, daughter of a distinguished Episcopal clergyman at New Castle, and sister of another Signer of the Declaration of Independence. The couple had three sons and a daughter. Through them there was a numerous line of descent. The statesman is buried in Immanuel Churchyard at New Castle.

Summarized from:
Life & Letters:
Scharf I
Conrad, III
Prepared Apr. 1970

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Gn'l Ref

GEORGE READ.

Was eldest son of Colonel John and Mary (Howell) Read, born September 17, 1733, in Cecil County, Maryland. Received classical education under Dr. Francis Allison. Studied law and was admitted to Philadelphia bar in 1752. Moved to New Castle, Delaware 1754. Married Gertrude, daughter of Rev. George Ross, January 11, 1763. Member of First Continental Congress 1774-1777; a signer of the Declaration of Independence; appointed April 30, 1763, the first attorney-general of the Lower Counties; president of the State constitutional convention in 1776; vice president of the State under this constitution; delegate from Delaware to Federal Constitutional Convention; member of Delaware House of Representatives in 1779 and 1780; judge of United States Court of Appeals in admiralty cases in 1782; elected to United States Senate, and served from March 4, 1789, to September 18, 1793, when he resigned, having been appointed Chief Justice of Delaware; served in this capacity until his death at New Castle, September 21, 1798. Buried in Immanuel Churchyard, New Castle, Delaware.

Sanderson in Biography of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence states that Reed was born in 1734 and was admitted to the bar in 1753.

Chapter 1 of Life and Correspondence of George Read states that he was born September 18, 1733.

Scharf claims he was born September 17, 1733.

Conrad states that he was born September 17, 1733.

Report to the General Assembly.

Gentlemen,

In Pursuance of certain Resolutions of the General Assembly of this day I have administered as well the Oath of Allegiance and Declaration of Faith as the Oath of Office to his Excellency Cæsar Rodney Esquire President of the Delaware State as directed by the 22d. Section of the System of Government and your Said Resolutions and I have a Certificate of the Same ready to return into the Secretary's Office.

Dover the 2d. April 1793.

Geo. Read Speaker of the Council

General Ref.

Report to the General Assembly.
April 2d 1778. ~ Sett Qualifyg
V. Presidt.

Hermitage 15th March 1805

Dear Sir,

Had you thought an apology necessary to me, it would have given concern

My invariable rule has been, whenever a carriage required much repair, to part with it & get a new one — my present chariot having run ten years, & wanting some repairs determined me, (in my late excursion to Phila) to make some enquiries respecting the present fashion & prices — Bingham being my quandom operator, & more reasonable than those harpies in town, I sent out to Germantown for him — we examined a chariot lately — imported from England, the construction of which pleased me, diverted of some

ornaments — having fixed upon my plan for a carriage, which was neat & fashionable, but not gaudy — The next point to be considered was, the price, which to prevent disputes, had better always be settled — after some consideration, he said £250, was his price, this he considered rather as a favor, because I had been a good customer, & added, that the first Coachmakers in Town would ask me £300 — of the truth of this have little doubt — The sum so far exceeding former prices, & my Idea of the matter, that I dismissed him with saying I would wait till the price was reduced —

On my return home, I sent for a man who has lately set up the business in Trenton, he makes handsome Phaetons & Sulkeys, but has never yet finished a Chariot — I told him every thing which had passed with Bringhurst, & asked him whether he thought, he could build me a Chariot such as I described, & at what price — he made no doubt of the execution, & fixed his price at £175 — He is the bearer of this to Mr Clay, & goes down with his first workman, to take the exact model of the imported one I made choice of — I have agreed for two, one for my Friend Mr Clymer, the other for myself — As I pass his door almost daily, shall pay tolerable attention to the business in hand —

I am an Enemy to Partition's for several reasons, & if your box is made to take off, it is liable to many inconveniencies without the strictest attention; I believe the present mode would not so readily admit of a removal, as the former —

I have lengthen'd this scrawl to give you every information in my power, that you may determine for yourself —

If the difference of price, should incline

you to make choice of my Neighbours, you may be assured of my paying the same attention to yours, that I do to my own — If you would prefer Bringhurst I wish me to give him directions, I will execute your commands in either way with pleasure —

With my Compts to Mrs Read

I am Dear Sir,

With great Esteem & Regard

Your most

Obt Servt

Philemon Dickinson

Geo. Read Esq.

Dr Ps Philemon Dickinson

From estate of
Miss Frances Dickinson
Trenton, N.J. Nov. 1860

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Dear Papa.

The little probability of the receipt of this by you should you leave the City to morrow, had almost induced a determination in me not to write; But to have let pass any conveyance that could inform You of the situation of the family would have thrown a censure on my feelings which I would not wish to experience.

Little alteration has taken place in the family since You left it except a recovery generally from the violence of the influenza which seems so prevelent. Mamma is much recovered as is likewise the two little Boys & Mr. Pearce. It is the common Complaint of the County tho' its effects seldom proves mortal, we have had one or two deaths amongst the lower Class of people tho' probably produced from other Causes.

If it would not be inconvenient to you (as I should be sorry to be troublesome to you) I could wish You would purchase me three pair of Gauze Under Stockings at about half a Dollar a pair. One of them I wish for my Brother of whom I borrowed a pair last winter & with which I mean to repay him. As this may be inconvenient to you & out of your line I wish You would mention it to Aunt Bedford who will procure them for me with a great deal of pleasure. The family desire their love to You Aunt Bedford & Uncle John And wish him a speedy recovery as does

Your Aff.t Son

John Read Junr.

New Castle November 8th 1789

Pur. Paul C. Richards
Brookline, Mass. c. Mar. 1967

#944

Hermitage 11th Nov. 1786

Dear Sir,

Inclosed are the accounts with receipts, relative to your Carriage & Horses, for the amount of which, have drawn on your Brother, in favor of Mr. Hunt —

The horses have been kept by a Brother of Mr. Hunts, who has done them the strictest justice, being now in the highest order. His account, amounts to a considerable sum, but when you consider the condition he rec.d them in, the length of time, & their present order, it will not be considered an extravagant charge for such large horses, & such high order —

You will observe a charge of two Guineas given to the different workmen,

which I mentioned to you last morning then,
to which you assented— This is a usual bar=
tin with me, & I think it money well laid out.

As yours Horses are large, they will
require much more feed than smaller ones,
this you must attend to, being now in the
highest condition, they will not take such
feeding, as has been given them lately—

I say inwardly with, they may
meet Mrs Roads & your approbation, which
will afford the greatest pleasure, to

dear Sir

Yours sincerely

P. Richmond

P.S. The reasons for
beginning to feed them so
early, was from an expectation
of the Carriage being finished
months ago, which Idea, was constantly
held up by the builders— The charge of the few days keeping was
to the person who drove them in his waggon, previous to their arrival.

From estate of
Miss Frances Dickinson
Trenton, N.J., Nov. 1960

George Read Esq
in
Mr. Moore New Castle

The Hon. George Read.
Geo. Dickinson —

Phila. October 8th 1796

Dear Papa

I cannot forese the period when I shall cease to be the direct or indirect cause of trouble to you, I am sure nothing I can do can repay the past, however strong my inclination may be.

The Secretary of the Treasury called on me at my office this morning to know whether I was in possession of the Laws of Delaware & could give him any information relative to the Taxation of that State. Upon some conversation with him I found his wishes more extensive than I could satisfy, which are contained in a Circular a Copy of which is enclosed addressed to the supervisors of the excise one of which has been sent to that of your State & remains unanswered. After examining some of the late Laws which I have he seemed to press the subject so much upon me that I promised him my endeavours to procure as much as I could, supposing at the same time that he expected you would be the source applied to. In consequence of this conversation he addressed his letter of this instant to me with its inclosures. Knowing how immersed you are in editing the Laws & probably on the eve of departure from home it is with real pain I make this communication to you. By the Secretaries letter to me you will perceive it will be satisfactory to him to have the Laws on this subject with such observations as may "be deemed useful." I am in possession of all the acts since the new Constitution which are the only revenue laws in force as I presume it will therefore be sufficient to note them to me & if in

& if any observations occur a minute of them will be acceptable. It is not the Secretaries wish or expectation that all the Questions in his Circular should have seperate answers the enclosure was only to shew what were the nature of the several Cases he wished. I was seduced into an offer of my service from the manner in which the request was made, I could not with hold it though I know it would give you trouble.

When the issue of the election is known through the State I will thank some of the family to inform me of it & what is conjectured to be the Politics which will pervade the majority. I am lead to this wish from some conversation I had with Mr. Wolcot to whom I wish to make the communication.

We have no late European News -

Sophia Chew was married last night, & the report is that Mr. S. Chew is very ill - I saw uncle James this morning he was then complaining Polly Read has her little boy & Anna an infant - Mrs. Read joins in love to yourself Mamma & family -

Your Aff.t Son

John Read Jun.

I received Q. Read's letter Mr. P. attends to the Contents - We thank him for the beef bill: it expects on monday - I will thank you to order Belvile to make me a pair of stocking boards -

Per. Paul C. Richards
Brookline, Mass., c. Mar. 1967

George Read Esqr.

New Castle

Hermitage 10th Sept. 1806

Dear Sir,

I have been so extremely disappointed as to the time of your carriage being finished, that I am really at a loss what to say on the subject.

The poor man's situation, is very different from what it was when I bespoke it, or he would most assuredly never have engaged in the present business. The delay has been wholly & solely owing to him, & not to any neglect of mine. If had it been in my power, to make him return the 100 dollars advanced, I would have had it built by another Workman. This was not practicable, therefore I have for a long time

partly, & still am putting him very hard to complete the carriage—

It is now lined with a most beautiful white enterprise cloth, which cost 35/ pr yard, hammer cloth of the same— has rec.d the last coat paint, (14) the painter will begin the gilding on monday, the leaf ready— Glasses in, harness in hand, carriage part put together, & painted once over— all this has the appearance of a speedy conclusion, & yet I will not venture to say, it will be finished within 10 or 12 days— but this I will say, he shall have no peace untill it is.—

Your Horses are in good hands, a Brother of Mr Hewes, he has fed them with grain for some time back & they are improving; had I expected the delay of your carriage would have been so great, should have advised your sending for them, am promised a moderate bill, wh.n shall send you when the carriage goes down. Mr Hewes says, they will sell for £130— I am more mistaken than ever been, if they will not suit Mrs Read exactly, perfectly gentle, great strength, good eye & colour, & decent well looking nags—

It being very uncertain when this same Vehicle will be finished, no time can be fixed for your sending for it— had it not better (when done) be sent down to your Mothers care in Philad.a? your answer is expected, by

Sunday

Yours

With great Esteem

P Dickinson

From estate of
Miss Frances Dickinson
Trenton, N.J., Nov. 1960

This Bill binds me William Brown of Dover in Kent County
Merchant in the sum of Fifty Pounds in Gold & Silver lawful
lawful Money of the Delaware State to be paid to George
Read of the Town of New Castle or his Assigns One Month
after date For the true Payment whereof I bind myself
Heirs & Admrs unto the s.d George Read his Heirs Admrs &
Assigns in the Penal sum of One hundred Pounds of like
Money firmly by these Presents sealed with my seal
dated this 2[illegible] day of December 1781

Wm. Brown

Sealed & Delivered
in the presence of
John Read

Recd this 15th of Feb: 1782. of Mr. Brown Twelve Pounds ten Shill: by the payment of my order in favor of Mr. Batt. &c

G W Field

£12.10.0 Recd this 10th April 1782 Twelve Pounds ten Shill: more from Mr. Brown —

G W Field

£12.10.0

Gen Rec
#84

Hermitage 19th April 1805

Dear Sir

Immediately on the receipt of your letter, I wrote you the fullest information in my power, respecting the proposed carriage — Agreeable to your directions enclosed my letter, to Mr Curtis Clay's —

My not having heard from you since on the subject, makes me a little suspicious, it may have miscarried from which you may infer, anxiety in me — As it will on every occasion afford me singular pleasure to serve you,

I could not omit so safe a conveyance, as Colonel Cadwaladers taking this Newcastle, mentioned, to inform you of my attention to your commands

With my Compts to Mrs Reed

I am
Dear Sir,
With great Esteem & Regard
Your
Obt Servt
William Pitkin

Geo. Reed Esqr

From estate of
Miss Frances Dickinson
Trenton, N.J., Nov. 1960

George Reed Esq.
in
Col. Cadwalader's New Castle

Free
Chas. Ridgely
Gov. Delaware