

Feb^y 16 1776

On the 18th Oct^r last a Fleet under the command of Cap^t Mowatt burnt the Town of Falmouth as you've undoubtedly heard by M^r T— Your House Barn Out Houses. Fences & Office are all in Ashes. We had so few Hours notice of our Destruction, that we had no Time nor Team to save either your Furniture or mine — I was obliged to flee for my Life — I knew not where till a Quaker offered me a lodging in his House, which had not a finished room in it — However I was obliged by the offer — and my Wife & I were forced to foot it with large Bundles on our Arms about 6 or 8 Miles & abused as we passed the Road — What little time I had was employed in throwing my Furniture into the Garden from whence a good deal was stole and the most of the remainder broken or torn in pieces — The Church is also burnt but not the Meeting House — All below Doct^r Watts except a few Houses in Back Street and Bradbury & M^{rs} Ross's two Houses are clean gone — The upper End of the Town supposed to be about one third of the whole is standing among which is the House I lived in by reason of that fortunate Event, I saved some of my Furniture but am still in the Woods, where if I cant get off either to London, Boston or Hallifax I intend to remain till Peace be restored to this infatuated, this distracted Country — Capt. Mowatt

Feb^y 16 1776

On the 18th Octbr last a Fleet under the command of Cap^t Mowatt burnt the Town of Falmouth as you've undoubtedly heard by M^r T—. Your House Barn Out Houses. Fences & Office are all in Ashes. We had so few Hours notice of our Destruction, that we had no Time nor Team to save either your Furniture or mine — I was obliged to flee for my Life — I knew not where till a Quaker offered me a lodging in his House, which had not a finished room in it— However I was obliged by the offer— and my wife & I were forced to foot it with large Bundles on our Arms about 6 or 8 Miles & abused as we passed the Road What little time I had was employed in throwing my Furniture into the Garden from whence a good deal was stole and the most of the remainder broken or torn in pieces— The Church is also burnt but not the Meeting House— All below Doct^r Watts except a few Houses in Back Street and Bradbury & M^{rs} Ross's two Houses are clean gone— The upper End of the Town supposed to be about one third of the whole is standing among which is the House I lived in by reason of that fortunate Event, I saved some of my Furniture but am Still in the Woods, where if I cant get off either to London, Boston or Hallifax . I intend to remain till Peace be restored to this infatuated, this distracted Country— Capt. Mowatt

Contributed to the Maine Memory Network (document 1283)
by the Maine Historical Society (Local Code: Col. 422 v.1 p.54)
Date of Creation: February 16, 1776
Description: Letter describing the burning of Falmouth (Portland)
by Capt. Mowatt of the British Navy.

Mowatt was so kind as to offer us (those I mean who had formerly fled to him for Protection), a Passage to Boston, but it was impracticable for us to get on board—tho we wished to, for had we been discovered in the attempt, we should have been shot from the shore by the Rebels—nor could we have carried the least Article with us supposing we could have got off ourselves, that alone therefore would not have stayed us—I am now at Stroudwater Falls, at Mr Geo. Knights Sea to the Lieut.—With me (besides Knights and Family) are Mr. Dommetts & Doct Coffins' Families to the number of 23 souls in a single story Sawm House—we are obliged to have three Beds in the same small Room, where we eat and drink—but still not at ease—for we are constantly alarmed—3 days fixed upon for a Mobbing—Judge how miserable we must be, but indeed it is almost beyond Description or Conception—Mr Dommett was not able to save any of his Furniture except his clothes and a Bed or two—I am told that whilst your house was on fire a Band of Thieves got into it & have taken a good deal of your Furniture—This I mention, but as you are on the spot you may form some Estimate of the Value of your House & Furniture—for I have no doubt, but Administration means to make good to the Friends of Government all losses sustained in consequence of the present Rebellion—indeed it will be but Justice—You may depend that Mr

[Mowatt] was so kind as to offer us (those I mean who had formerly fled to him for protection), a passage to Boston, but it was impracticable for us to get on board—tho we wished to, for had we been discovered in the attempt, we should have been shot from the shore by the Rebels – nor could we have carried the least article with us supposing we could have got off ourselves—that above however would not have stayed us—I am now at Stroudwater Falls at Mr Geo. Knights—soon to the Lieut; –With me (besides G Knights and family) are W. Dommetts & Doct Coffins' family to the number of 23 souls in a single-story farm house We are obliged to have three beds in the same small room, where we eat and drink—but still not at peace—for we are constantly alarmed & days fixed upon for a mob[b]ing [?]-Judge how miserable we must be, but indeed it is almost beyond description or conception—W. Dommett was not able to save any of his furniture except his clothes and a bed or two—I am told that whilst your house was on fire a band of thieves got into it & have taken a good deal of your furniture

This I mention that as you are on the spot you may form some estimate of the value of your House & furniture—for I have no doubt—but administration mean to make good to the friends of Government all losses sustained in consequence of the present rebellion—indeed it will be but justice—You may depend that Mr. D

D and I did every thing in our Power to preserve your Interest, but all we were able to do was to save your Papers that were in a white Trunk—
I have had no Opp^s since Sept^r to send a Letter in — it is eight Months since I had a Letter from my Father — I think as a faithful Subject & one who has been imprisoned & otherwise suffered & still suffering by the Rebels on Account of his Loyalty who has lost some hundred by the Destruction of the Town, has some Claim on Gov^t for a Provision —
I will make you acquainted with the Story of my Imprisonment — After Capt Mowat had gone off, I moved into Town again, hoping to spend the Winter quietly there — but the Cerberus Capt Simons came in Nov^r & demanded — Sheep & other Cattle of the Towns People, which they positively refused, & sent a Committee on board to tell him so — Capt Simons thought proper to keep the Committee Prisoners till the Town complied. Upon this Mr D & I were immediately seized upon and a guard set over us — and we were ordered to write to Capt Simons to acquaint him of our Imprisonment, and that we were to be held as Hostages till those he had on board were set free — Capt Simons was so good for our sakes to let them at Liberty which procured our enlargement, otherwise we should have been close Prisoners at this Day —

and I did everything in our power to preserve your interest—But all we were able to do, [] to save your papers that were in a white trunk—

I have had no [] since Sept^r. To send a letter in – if is eight months since I had a letter from my father—I think as a faithful subject & one who has been imprisoned & otherwise suffered & still suffering by the Rebels on account of his loyalty & has lost some hundred by the destruction of the [town], has some claim on gov't for a provision-

I will make you acquainted with the story of my imprisonment – After Capt. Mowat had gone off, I moved into town again, hoping to spend the winter quietly there—but the Cerberus Capt. Simons came in Nov^r. & demanded—sheep and other cattle of the town's people which they positively refused, & sent a committee on board to tell him so—Capt. Simons thought proper to keep the Committee prisoners till the town complied. Upon this Mr D & I were immediately seized upon and a guard set over us—and we were ordered to write to Capt Simons to acquaint him of our imprisonment, and that we were to be held as hostages till those he had on board were set free. Capt Simons was so good for our sakes to set them at liberty which procured our enlargement. Otherwise we should have been close prisoners at this day.