

Letter in Support of Thomas Chapman of the 36th Regiment

Remonstrance of the officers of the district that formerly composed the 36th Regiment Virginia Militia. To his Excellency the Governor and Council of Virginia.

We the undersigned beg leave to express our sentiments to your Excellency the Governor & Council relative to the late nomination of the County Court of Prince William of a Lt. Colonel to be commissioned with the 36th Regiment.

We have ever considered the practice of regularly promoting officers by grade in this state and indeed in most countries as bottomed upon the soundest principles, & calculated to have the Militia Officers by men best fitted for command. It will not be denied but that every man when he accepts the commission of Ensign or Lieutenant & takes upon himself the drudgery of drill officer, does it under the prospect that he will be sooner entitled to promotion than the man who by refusing to accept such commissions, never subjects himself to such vexations & troublesome duties, it is the prospect of promotion and distinction that nerves the soldiers arm in the day of battle and stimulates the officers even at their firesides to learn the principles of discipline deprive your officers of this stimulus, & you close the door against all aspiring and worthy young men, and the Companies of Militia will be Officered by men whose only motive in accepting a commission will be to exempt them from the burthen of a musket. Say to the Militia that they are as near an office of distinction by being a private as a Lt. or Captain & you insure a refusal on their part to accept of an inferior commission; for who would be willing to bring disgrace upon himself, and it is a fixed principal among Military Men, that the man who is passed by in promotion, is to all intents & purposes disgraced.

At the November Court of the present year, John Gibson Esq. was nominated to your body as a Lieut. Colonel in the 36th Regiment in preference to Maj. Thomas Chapman who was also a candidate, the latter having borne badges of his countries confidence upon him for the last twenty years & having regularly risen through every grade from lieutenant to the command of a battalion, which he has had for upwards of ten years as we believe, in each of which various grades as far as his conduct has come under our notice, he has faithfully discharged his duty as an officer during our late war with Britain his conduct was frequently particularly under our notice 7 we hesitate not a moment in saying that his zeal and activity in his Country's Service could not have been surpassed by any man – And his watchfulness and attentiveness to his soldiers wants secured to him the most exalted esteem of them all. No man can examine the History of Major Chapman's Career as an Officer and say in this you have done wrong, or for that we censure you. Why then was it that so trustworthy an officer should have been so shamefully neglected by the Court. No adequate motive we dare publicly affirm presented itself to the court.

We the undersigned memorialist with confidence look to your body, as the only tribunal which can repair the injured & insulted feelings of our meritorious brother officer and by making him our Lieut. Colonel, bestow on him that honor than whom no man is more worthy and we venture with one accord to pledge ourselves that your confidence will never be abused.

November 13th 1819

Joseph R. Gilbert	Major 2 nd Batl.
Jas. Hayes	Capt. Lt. Inf.
Geo. W. Jackson	Capt.
Barnaby Cannon	Capt.
W. D. Simmons	Capt.
W. Chapman	Lieut. Com. Cavalry
H. M. Smoot	Lieut.
Wm. Cannon	Ensign