

Jessica Kim (editor)

*The Travels of Samuel Blackden after the American Revolution:
Letters to Sally Blackden (August 17, 1792, to September 18, 1799)*

Shelfmark

California State University, Fullerton.
University Archives and Special Collections.
SC 64.
War Memorabilia Collection.
Durkee/Blackden Correspondence.
August 17, 1792, to September 18, 1799.
Six letters (numbered 13 to 18).

Introduction

The six letters edited here were donated by Miss Florence Durkee of Brea, California, in 1973 and are part of the “Durkee/Blackden Correspondence of the “War Memorabilia Collection” in CSUF’s University Archives and Special Collections. The letters’ condition ranges from fragile to fair; some contain smudges and partial tears. They are written in cursive, in black ink, on small stationary paper, and they range in color from off-white to tan. Some of them show traces of the red wax seals with which they were once sealed.

Samuel Blackden is the author of all six letters which are addressed to his wife Sally. The letters were written between August 17, 1792 (letter 13), and September 18, 1799 (letter 18). They were sent from London, England (letters 13 and 14), Lisbon, Portugal (letter 15), Philadelphia (letters 16 and 17), and Boston (letter 18). According to letter 13, Sally must be in Paris, France, and Samuel mentions business affairs and Sally’s patriotism. Letter 14 suggests that Sally has traveled to Le Havre, France, where Samuel plans to join her; he provides details about his dinner, as well as a medicine that he is taking for his complexion and that the ladies appear to find attractive. Letter 15 finds Samuel in Lisbon almost two years later aboard a Danish ship, which apparently means that he has nothing to fear from the “Algerines” (possibly North African pirates); Sally has meanwhile traveled to New York. Letter 16 is written from Philadelphia, where Samuel is “still upon crutches” and has “business with the President” (George Washington), and is addressed to Sally in New York. Letter 17 finds Samuel still in Philadelphia and Sally in New York, and mentions his business affairs and her social circle. Letter 18 is written five years later from Boston to New York and discusses Samuel’s efforts to recover financial losses. These letters are historically significant due to their wide range of references to personal and public matters.

The transcriptions below preserve the lines, spelling, and capitalization of the original letters. Any additions are enclosed by square brackets. Loss and illegible deletions are indicated by three dots enclosed by square brackets.

*Edition: Letter 13, Samuel Blackden to Sally Blackden,
August 17, 1792, London, England*

Front left: [traces of red wax seal] [modern hand] 21 -From London - Aug 17, 1792 -
From S. B. - [printed] [ANGLE]TERRE [various stamped postal seals]

A' Madame
Madame Blackden
No. 74. Rue du Pettits Champs
Place Victoire
a' Paris

Front right:

London August 17, 1792
My Dear Sally

I have received yours of the 4th, the reason why
you have not more frequently heard from me is, that I
flatter[e]d myself from day to day that a final settlement would
take place between me and Claibourn[e], which all my endeavours
have been able to effect -

I have made him the most advantageous [sic] offers
and have given up much more than I ought to do, to bring
the whole matter to a conclusion but I find to day that
he is not capable of conducting his own business, and that
after all my endeavours to obtain a settlement I am just
[wh]ere I was before -

Our worthy Friend B[arlow] has been indefatigable
in the business, and has exerted himself as much for me as
I should in like circumstances have done for him, Tomorrow
I hope and expect that all things will be settled, and it is
possible I may come to Paris. Post haste, in the interim you
are able to judge what you should do for your personal
safety, and nobody can direct you better than any our
friends at No. 63 - Say to Col. S. ___ that I have not answered his
two letters for reasons that I shall give him, and which
will be satisfactory, but that I will pursue

Back left:

directions as soon as My affair with Clai[bourne] are finish[e]d which
have taken up all My time
your Patriotic letter to Mr. Barlow of the 9th has
been read to us this day you are the first daughter of
Liberty and we have drank your health in
a full Tankard of Porter -
Fear not my Dear Sally, we shall do Very
well B[arlow] and Leaven[worth] are attached to me by the
strongest ties of friendship and will bring my business to
a happy conclusion - Keep up your Spirits as you ough[t]
to do, and believe Me unalterably yours
S[amuel]. B[lackden]

Back right: [traces of red wax seal] [hole in paper; no writing]

*Edition: Letter 14, Samuel Blackden to Sally Blackden,
August 30, 1792, London, England*

Front left: [traces of red wax seal] [modern hand] 17 -From London - Aug 30, 1792 -
From S. B. - [printed] ANGLETERRE [stamped postal seal]

A' Madame
Madame Blackden
au soin de Mons[ieu]r Muller
Negotiant
A' Havre de Grace¹

Front right:

London August 30.th. 1792
My Dear Sally
I have your favor of the 26th and suppos[-]
ing you have gone to Havre I address my letter there -
The terms of settlement between me and Clai[-]
bourne we've agreed upon more than three weeks
ago but the attorneys have made such sad work of it
that the writings are not finished, we have changed
them several times, but they are all alike, notwith[-]
standing I hope we shall now finish in a day or two
and then I shall set out for Havre -
It would not give you any intertainment [sic]
if I was to recite to you all the embarrassments that
have empeded [sic] us in the business, Mr. Barlow has
been indefatigueable [sic], and Mr. Leavenworth exceedingly
kind in giving me advice and assistance -
Claiborne is married, and is so great in
Ideas [?] that he is obliged to put his affairs with the hands
of Mr. Rumsay, with whom we are making the
settlement, and happy shall I be when tis done -
I should not have wrote to you today but to assure
you that I am well, as an Evidence of which I have eat
half a pound at least of corn[e]d beef a large plate of
colcannon² & half a pudding, I have drank a pot of porter³

Back left:

and shall drink another before I go to bed, but I
have not tasted a Glass of wine these three weeks
I have pursued the use of a medicene [sic] which I
found in London and begin to have the complexion [sic]
an Adonis,⁴ and can hardly trust myself among the
ladies, they pay me so many compliments, indeed I believe
there are several fervently in love with me, however

¹ Presumably Le-Havre, France, a port city facing the English Channel.

² Mashed potatoes with cabbage.

³ Beer.

⁴ The human lover of the Greek goddess Aphrodite.

don[']t be affraid you have the intire [sic] possession of the
Heart and Affections of - S[amuel]. B[lackden].

Back right: [traces of red wax seal] [hole in paper] [swirly line]

*Edition: Letter 15, Samuel Blackden to Sally Blackden,
May 27, 1794, Lisbon, Portugal*

Front:

Lisbon 27.th. May 1794 -

My Dear Sally

I wrote you from Havre by Capt[ain].

Wilson but as he did not sail till the day we

did you may perhaps receive this as soon as that by him

I am onboard a Danish ship so that there

is no fear of the Algerines,⁵ we arrived (after a passage

of twelve days) the day before yesterday, but I have not

yet got permission to go on shore tho[ough] I expect it to day

We shall stay here a fortnight during which I shall write

you more fully, at present I have nothing to commu[-]

nicate but as the ship which will take this sails this

tide I would not omit giving you a line -

Remember me kindly to all friends and

accept my sincere love and affection from yours

forever - S[amuel]. Blackden

Back: [traces of red wax seal] [modern hand] 20 -From Lisbon - May 27, 1794 - From
S. Blackden

Mrs. Blackden

To the care of Mess[ieur]s Sam Broome

& Co. Merchants⁶

New York

*Edition: Letter 16, Samuel Blackden to Sally Blackden,
September 8, 1794, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

Front:

Philadelphia Septem[be]r 8.th 1794.

Francis's Hotel 4.th Street

My Dear Sally

It was my intention to set out tomorrow for

New York but I cannot before next week, as the Captain

whom I came with and to whom I am under the greatest

obligation is gone to Baltimore and being a stranger I must

wait upon him to New York - besides I have some business

with the President⁷ which must be done first, therefore should

you arrive before me have patience for a few days and write

me and particularly write me where your brother Luther

⁵ North Africans, in this case possibly a reference to pirates.

⁶ The firm of Broome & Platt.

⁷ U.S. President George Washington, residing in Philadelphia 1790-1797.

is - I am still upon crutches but am getting better, to
 which rest much contributes - Give my love to our
 Dear friend Mrs. Platt whom I hope to find well & happy
 Adieu ever yours -
 S[amuel]. B[lackden].

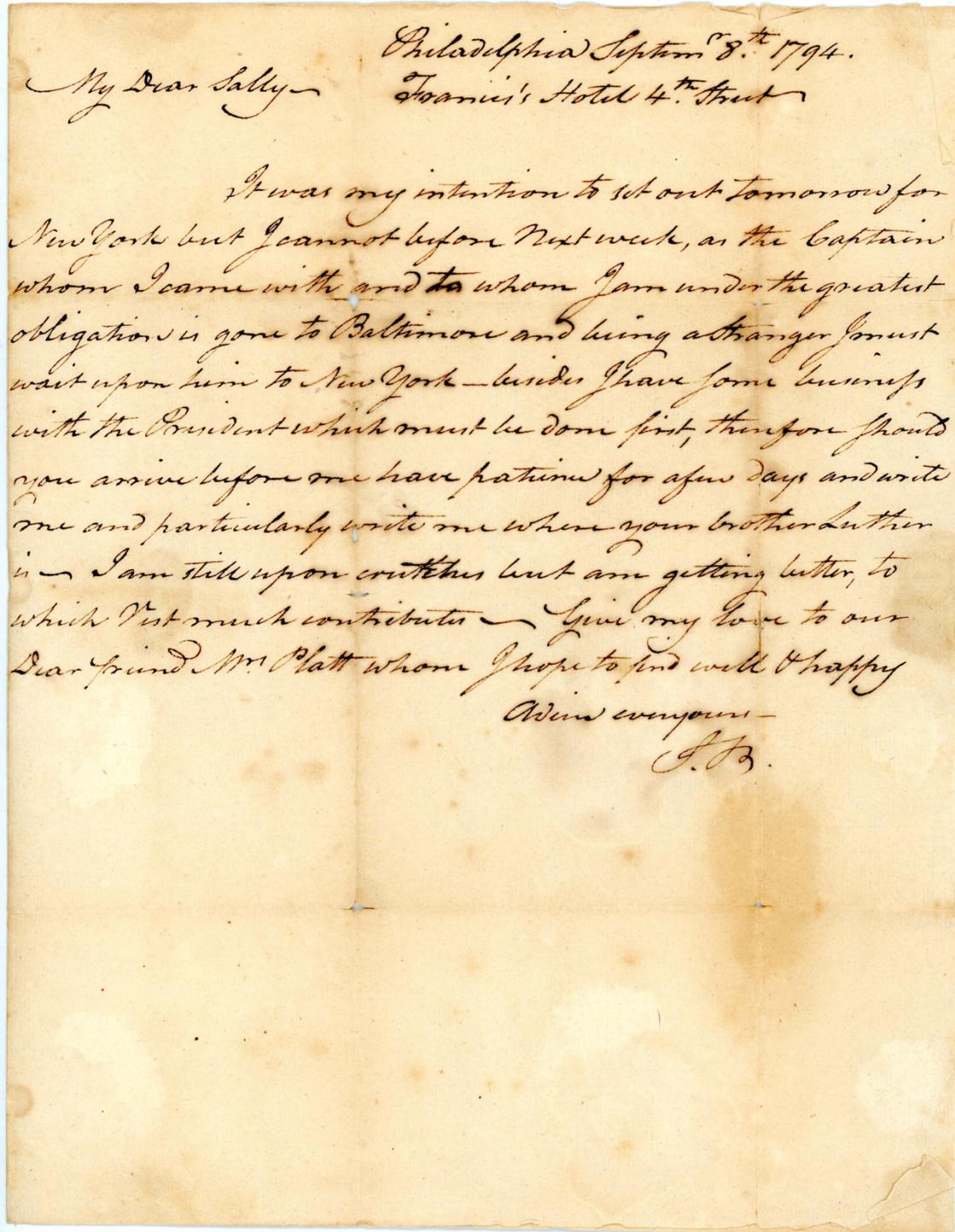


Figure (above): Letter 16, Samuel Blackden to Sally Blackden, September 8, 1794, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Front.

Back: [traces of red wax seal] [modern hand] 22 -From Philadelphia - Sept. 8, 1794 -
From S. B. [stamped postal seal]

Mrs. Blackden
Care of Mess[ieur]s Broome & Platt -
Merchants
New York

*Edition: Letter 17, Samuel Blackden to Sally Blackden,
October 17, 1794, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

Front:

Philadelphia Octob[er] 17.th 1794 -
My Dear Sally -
Your Person is safe, so set your heart at rest
on that head - your brother will set off at 3 o Clock to bring
you here, where I wish you to be placed during my absence, as
he will tell you everything, I need not write further upon
the subject - I dined yesterday with Mr. Frazier, his wife
is a charming woman and will make much of you, I count
upon eight or ten agreeable [sic] people to form your society, to Wit
Miss Anthony, Mrs. Frazier, Mrs. Knox, Mrs. Wolcot, Mrs.
Montgomery & Daughter, Mrs. Tellier, and if you can[']t find
[t]hat enough among them, you will soon find others -
The reason why I have not given an answer to Mr.
Brown, is because it has not been determined till last evening
where Capt[ain]. Her[r]ick would go, He now desires me to inform
Mr. Brown that the ship goes to Boston to take in a Cargo
and from there to Lisbon, that Mr Brown[']s company
will be Very agreeable [sic] to him and to avoid the appearance
of Obligation he may lay in his own stores -
I hope as you will receive this sometime sooner
by the post, than your brother[']s arrival you will be ready
to set off, as my journey is deferred to Embrace you
Adieu y[ou]rs S[amuel]. B[lackden].

Back: [traces of red wax seal] [modern hand] 7 -From Philadelphia - Oct. 17, 1794 -
From S. B. [stamped postal seal]

Mrs. Blackden
No. 46 Wall Street
New York -

Back left side:

Capt[ain] Smith
Ship Son & [?]

*Edition: Letter 18, Samuel Blackden to Sally Blackden,
September 18, 1799, Boston, Massachusetts*

Front:

Boston Septem[ber] 18.th 1799 -
My Dear Sally
Though I have been here a fortnight

it was not till yesterday I could see Mr. Bradford,
 he being in the country - he has not a sixpence of
 Swan[']s money, and notwithstanding he is his agent
 and holds his sole power of attorney he has used him
 as bad as he has me, - I have seen Col[onel]. H__n. he
 speaks severely of him, but of this when we meet - he
 says a bond of the person in question (Sw[a]n) for any
 amount would not bring a dollar, but has advised
 me to a mode for recovery -
 I must stay here untill I obtain money for
 our support [...] ⁸ till the bond can be Prosecuted and
 recover[e]d, which can only be done by his person, as he
 has conveyed away all his Property - This I hope to
 Effect in a few days, and will fly on the wings of affection
 to my Dear Sally -
 S[amuel]. Blackden

Back: [traces of red wax seal] [modern hand] 18 -From Boston - Sept. 18, 1799 - From
 S. Blackden. - [printed] BOSTON [stamped postal seal]

17

Mrs. Blackden
 at Mrs. Powells No. 34
 Dey Street
 New York

ABOUT THE EDITOR: *Jessica Kim of Irvine, California, earned her B.A. in History from California State University, Fullerton (2018), where she is also a member of the Theta-Pi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta. The primary-source edition published above originated in the "History and Editing" course offered by CSUF's History Department.*

⁸ Illegible deletion.