

Mansfield October 21 1791
 Sir after Mr Edwards would inform you that
 these Leave me well hope that they
 will find you and your family so
 I have not forgot the debt that I owe
 you and had layed ^{out} to have sent the money
 by the baver Capt Swift but got disappointed
 I have got a yong shipping hors suitable for
 the french islands and there was a man that
 bought such horses told me that he could procure
 the money for the hors this fall. but the difficulty
 that has arose with the Negroes has put a stop
 at present to all Exportation I hope you
 wont think hard of me I had layed that plan to
 pay you but got disappointed at present but
 hope that the markets will be opened before
 Long so that I can have a chance to sell him
 for I want to pay you so I have sent four
 dollars to pay the intrist that the debt must
 grow so biged if you will please to indors it on
 the Note I hope to send the principle Next
 Sir I Remain your friend and humble servt
 Forth Nichols

Jonathan Nichols

[Archive]: Letter to a Creditor Informing Him that the Debtor is Unable to Pay What He Owes because Trade had been Interrupted by the Haitian Revolution

Mansfield, Massachusetts: 1791

\$1000



One-page folded letter measuring 7½" x 10". The letter is dated October 21, 1791 and is annotated "Favored per Capt Swift." The letter is very good with some edgewear.

A 1791 letter to a creditor by Jonathan Nichols informing him that he is unable to pay what he owes because trade has been interrupted by the Haitian Revolution. Nichols repeatedly apologizes for not being able to pay off his debt because he has been unable to sell a prize horse. He writes, "I have not forgot the debt I owe... I have got a yong shipping hors sutable for the French islands and there was a man that bought such horses told me that he could procure the money for the hors this

fall but the difficulty that has arose with the Negrous has put a stop at preasant to all Exportation. I hope you wont think hard of me I had layed that plan...but hope that the markets will be opened before long."

The Haitian Revolution was the largest and most successful slave rebellion in the Western Hemisphere and the only one anywhere to result in an independent nation. In the 18th century, Haiti (then known as St. Domingue) was by far France's wealthiest colony due to the massive use of slave labor in producing sugar, coffee, indigo, and cotton. When the French Revolution began in 1789, there were five distinct racial-economic groups on the island: white planters who owned thousands of slaves, white merchants and craftsmen who owned few if any slaves, free blacks (about half of whom were mulattos) many of whom were at least as well off as the white merchants and craftsmen, the slaves, and runaway slaves who lived by subsistence farming and were known as maroons. All told, the slave and maroon population approached 500,000 while the white population numbered about 40,000. Slavery as practiced in Haiti was exceptionally harsh, although not as harsh as in the British Caribbean, and rebellions had periodically been repressed.

In 1790, revolutionary fever, spurred on by the French Revolution, ran high among the planters, white merchant class, and free blacks. However, although all three groups supported slavery, each sought different goals, and a three-sided civil war began among them. Simultaneously, a former slave, Toussaint l'Overture, inspired and led a tremendous uprising of the slave and maroon populations which began on August 21, 1791 which soon overwhelmed the three other classes. By 1792, l'Overture's slave army ruled over one-third of the country. Despite forces sent from France to quell the rebellion, fighting continued until 1803 when the France realized it would never be possible to reestablish the slave-based colony, and its army departed in defeat, leaving the remaining white population to be completely massacred sparing only a few Polish deserters from the French Army, a handful of German settlers, several medical doctors, and women who agreed to marry black Haitians. It almost goes without saying the "difficulty," Nichols mentioned, "that . . . arose with the Negrous" prevented markets with the "French islands" from opening "before long."

An interesting letter showing the effects of the Haitian Revolution. [\[BTC#423811\]](#)