

**James Madison to William H. Winder, September 15, 1834. Transcription: The Writings of James Madison, ed. Gaillard Hunt. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1900-1910.**

**TO WILLIAM H. WINDER.2 MAD. MSS.**

2 The son of General William H. Winder.

Montpr., Sepr. 15, 1834.

Dear Sir I am sensible of the delay in acknowledging your letter of and regret it. But apart from the crippled condition of my health, which almost forbids the use of the pen, I could not forget that I was to speak of occurrences after a lapse of 20 years, and at an age in its 84th year; circumstances so readily and for the most part justly referred to, as impairing the confidence due to recollections & opinions.

You wish me to express personally "my approval of your father's character & conduct at the battle of Bladensburg," on the ground "of my being fully acquainted with everything connected with them and of an ability to judge of which no man can doubt."

You appear not to have sufficiently reflected, that having never been engaged in military service, my judgt. in the case could not have the weight with others, which your partiality assumes for it, but might rather expose me to a charge of presumption in deciding on points purely of a professional description. Nor was I on the field as a spectator, till the order of the battle had been formed & had approached the moment of its commencement.

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With respect to the order of the battle, that being known, will speak for itself; and the gallantry, activity & zeal of your father during the action had a witness in every observer. If his efforts were not rewarded with success, candour will find an explanation in the peculiarities he had to encounter; especially in the advantage possessed by the veteran troops of the Enemy over a militia, which however brave & patriotic, could not be a match for them in the open field.

I cannot but persuade myself that the evidence on record, and the verdict on the Court of enquiry, will outweigh & outlive censorious comments doing injustice to the character & memory of your father. For myself, I have always had a high respect for his many excellent qualities, and am gratified by the assurance you give me, of the place I held in his esteem & regard.