of long experience and are found in practice to be most conducive to the administration of the law with truth, justice and mercy. They are the rules which prevail in Maryland in Liberia. It often so happens that an impression prevails in a community without any apparent origin, and which cannot be traced. If the existence of such an impression was alone sufficient to convict the person, you can see at once no individual in society would be safe however virtuous he might be in fact. On the other hand impressions often exist which are founded in truth about which no one entertains a doubt, but which when brought before the courts, in the shape of charges of crime, cannot be proved according to rules of evidence that are of binding force there. In this way it often happens that a guilty person escapes: were it otherwise it would often happen that an innocent one would be punished: and you will, I am sure, all agree that many guilty should escape punishment than that one innocent person should suffer it. In the dilemma in which lawgivers were placed with regard to the proceedings of Courts, they adopted that rule which favored mercy, life, and Liberty even at the risk of permitting vice & crime at times to go unpunished.

I state this at length to you, because the Board of Managers approve the sentiments of virtuous abhorrence of crime expressed by you, and they are desirous that your judgment should be brought to bear upon what they feel satisfied you will recognise as a sufficient reason for the decision to which they have come; that the case of Mr. Thompson cannot now be made the subject of investigation. Of his guilt or innocence no opinion is intended to be expressed. The Board respect the opinion of the tribunal that has acted in the matter - they bow to its decision, - and felt that it precludes them.

In conclusion, I would in the name of the Board to suggest to you the importance of the greatest respect and deference for the judgments of your Courts. It is the law that speaks through them. The individuals on the bench are its ministers, - they, to use a strong expression of the natives around you, are "its mouth." When you pay respect to the court, you bow not to the judges, but to sacred and holy justice herself. You must see this distinction and I trust will make. The law brings you safety in your persons and property, - and the surest and first evidence of the degradation of a people is found in its disrespect for its tribunals and disobedience to their mandates. Cherish your Courts of Justice; they will protect you when bayonets will not and let your boast be, that you are a community of law and order.

I remain, most respectfully
Your friend,
(Signed) John H. B. Latrobe
Pres. M.S.C.S.

Maryland Historical Society

The Maryland State Colonization Society Papers

XI. Liberian Colonization
B. Miscellaneous Affairs

1. Trial of James Thomson, 1837