
Letter from Richard Corbin to Edward Porteus (Beilby Porteus' brother), July 3, 1759¹

Mr. Edward Porteus

July 3, 1759

I have delayed to answer your letter of the 20th of August last because I was willing to send you those original papers which you desired me to procure for you. After many months' fruitless search, I have been only able to discover some bills and answers in Chancery relative to the New Bottle estate, which appear to me of no great moment. No person now pretends to controvert your father's title. It is indisputable in the length of possession only, even supposing the original deeds lost, or, which is more probable, burnt in the Capitol, so I think you may be quite easie upon that head.

To fix a value upon this estate at a future period is difficult. In respect to the land, it cannot alter much; it will sell equally well three or four years hence, but I can hardly think it will raise six hundred pounds sterling. The Negroes and stock, if they were now to be sold, would, I believe, raise £1200. Their value 3 or 4 years hence will a good deal depend upon the circumstances of the times and more particularly upon the importation of slaves. If the importation should be small, their value may be more; if large, less. The present tenants would be glad to throw up their lease; they have lost at least £30 a year but the same motive that would persuade them to give it up must be a very strong one with you to suffer it to run out its term. You may rest satisfied of every service in my power; your brother's kindness to my son demands it of me. I constantly send every fall to see that the Negroes are well cloathed and taken care off, and this I shall continue to do to the end of the lease. When this is expired, you may be assured of my best assistance in the sale of the estate. The rent, I have no doubt, will be punctually paid at the time agreed. Should the least appearance of a failure happen, let me have immediate notice.

The last settlement made by Mr. Smith with Prior I knew nothing off when I settled with Prior. When I received it from Mr. Smith, I found there was a mistake, of which I advised your father, but I have not been able to do any thing with Prior, and it is to little purpose to try.

I have supposed a value upon this estate in consequence only of your desire; you cannot place any certain dependance upon it. I have endeavored to fix it at a medium; it may sell for a good deal more. When it is disposed off, the best way will be by auction, to give 12 months' credit, taking good security, and to give two months' previous notice of the sale. Acquaint Mr. B. Porteus that his brother's widow is living, and the land valued at £50 sterling.

Let me be remembered to all my relations, and believe me to be, with truth,

Dear sir,
Etc.

¹ Scheib, Jeffrey Lynn -- editor's edition, "The Richard Corbin letterbook 1758-1760" (1982). Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects. Paper 1539625163. <<https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-en8z-z871>> pp. 101-2.