



**Letter by John Rice Homer Scott [to Brig Gen B McCulloch], December 3, 1861
(John Rice Homer Scott Collection, 1836-1895)**

TRANSCRIPTION

Head Quarters Battallion, Arks. Cavalry Volunteers, Camp Culloden, Carroll County Arks, Decr. [December], 3rd 1861.

General,

I have under arrest (and daily making) more?) Some thirty- five or Forty men positively proven to belong to a secret society held together by secret signs tokens pass word and and under penalty of "Death" should one of their members reveal the same.

I have been enabled from their own confirms upon each other to obtain their oaths signs, tokens & words etc.

I conceive the organization to be of of Northern origin having in view the subjugation of the South; It breaths Treason and insurrection of the most conclusive and positive nature:

Some of the most important signs, tokens etc. are given Thus (from their own statements)

A member when leaving home was to suspend from his door or window a piece of "yellow ribbon, calico or paper" to distinguish them as members and as a token "that if a friend or the Northern Army came along That his property & family would ^ (not) be molested by seeing and finding This sign at his door.

Another token was to say "Secession" which If recognized by a member would be answered. by saying "In the Southern Confederacy"

Another token or word or reading up to a members house was to say "Dark night" if the proprietor was a member he would answer "It will be darker before day" But if there was a secessionist or an enemy in the house he would answer in order to caution his friend of this being these & that he should be on his guard, "Perhaps it will be darker in the Morning"

There was an other to be used in camps which some termed a Camp signal and by which it appears some members (to blind the South) were to volunteer & go into the army of the South and there work our destruction, this signal word noise or token was to "Hoot like an owl" which was to be answered by the "Howl of a wolf" there are several other named.

This society was called by some of them a "peace party or peace society" or to Unite the friends of Peace".

The first signal was to place the forefinger of the right hand upon the nose twice, & then let it fall to the side of the body, The answer to this was to take and place the two forefingers of the right hand separated on the throat under the chin & draw them down



twice to the breast & then letting their hand fall down to the side, The 2nd sigh was to "pull with the two forefingers of the right hand the shirt collar (illegible word) buttons around the throat twice 'As if to relieve if it bound the neck too tight & then letting the hand face to the side". The answer to this was "To open the palms of the right hand and placing it upon the left breast then letting (sic) it fall to the side. There are a good many other signs, but these are the main & important ones, all corresponding very well in their statements on examination before the Judge of the County Court and a Justice of the peace holding their court at my Camp especially called to examined into etc.

This Society or organization numbers several hundred and extends throughout Fulton, Izard, Searcy, Newton, Van Buren, parts of Conway Pope Marion & Carroll Counties, there has been nearly one hundred arrested in Clinton, Van Buren Co. Berryville in Searcy county, and I have arrested thirty-five or forty in Marrion Searcy Newton & Carroll Counties, all around my Camps and are daily making them it seems almost universal in certain localities

I do think that the contract ought to have been let out for building our cabins to (illegible word) in me need not go north to find our enemies they are all around me bound together by solemn secret oaths etc. Some of the prisoners have stated it was an understanding that if the Northern Army did dim your command before them that this Squadron would have been attacked or ~~that they would~~ "laid such hints" & if I made or attempted to arrest persons in certain places after I commanded making them & their plans etc. were deleted that they would "give me a fight" etc.

I think it would be advisable to station some of the companies of my command in Wiley's Cove Searcy County, there is a Camp Meeting ground with some good buildings a very large Harbor and near or in midst of this secret society etc. I think Capt. Boon is in the vecinity or county of the same kind Of men but - fear not - able to procure Wentin (illegible word) command. I am in hopes I may be permitted to Station the Companies, if found necessary separately in the most disaffected and unloyal localities or adjoining Counties within reach or days ride from my lead (word). It will be better in giting the use of buildings in part now erected at certain points by religious Societies & in neighbor hoods where protection would be needed etc.

I shall take this liability of acting as I have suggested having it May need your approval, should I receive no answer in time to the applications and circumstances shall require it in every judgement.

I am etc. very respectfully
 your own servant
 John Rice Homer Scott Capt.