
CHAPTER 6—1858



"Basement of the Houses of Congress, showing the extensive heating apparatus for warming the buildings," June 1858 *U.S. Senate Collection*



Balustrade of the staircase and ornamental railing, Capitol extension, 1858 *U.S. Senate Collection*



"View from Capitol extension Washington, looking N.W. machine shops and smith shops" 1858 *Architect of the Capitol*

Meigs family members

*All from The Papers of Montgomery C. Meigs,
Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Shorthand Journal, Volume 3 (1858-1860)*



Meigs' parents, Dr. and Mrs. Charles D. Meigs, 1859



Louisa Rodgers Meigs, July 1859



John Rodgers Meigs, 1859



Scenes from Meigs family 4th of July picnic, 1859: (left) Mary, Louisa, Meigs, Loulie; (right) Loulie, Meigs, Louisa

CHAPTER 6—1858

[longhand transcription follows]

Captain Montgomery C. Meigs, U.S. Corps of Engineers

Diary commencing 1st January 1858. For 1853 to Dec. 31, 1857 see two previous volumes.

System of writing as found in Benn Pitman's works on Phonography.

Cincinnati, Ohio [illegible word] publishing

[Printed material inserted.]¹

[shorthand transcription follows]

JAN. 1. I begin the year 1858 well in body and of sound mind, charged with the construction of the extension of the Capitol, of the dome of the Capitol, of the Post Office building, of the Washington aqueduct, and of Fort Madison. All these works are now in progress and employ probably 3,000 men or more, for many are employed at the quarries and elsewhere who do not appear upon our rolls.

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[JAN. 1 CONT.] My children are growing up well. John is nearly 16. I have applied, with strong recommendations, for him to go to West Point, and I hope I shall succeed. He is a boy of talent. His teacher at the college says of extraordinary mathematical talent and has a taste for engineering and science, which I think will be best trained at West Point.

Mary is a [good] deal as her mother. She begins to sing a little and is a good and rather good-looking girl.

Monty is still at school, a schoolboy, rather timid, but affectionate, and good.

Our youngest, Louisa, is a weird child. She is passionate, obstinate, bright, lively, nervous and beautiful. And ever darling.

My father and mother still live in Philadelphia, where 3 of my brothers are still living. John, a widower, practices medicine, with a very large practice. Emlen, who has been by the late moneyed convulsion

¹An article from the Washington *Evening Star* of December 28, 1857, praising the new House chamber.

thrown out of employment. Frank, the youngest, who is and always has been doing nothing. They are unmarried. Charles,² my 2nd brother, and William are both married and settled in Indiana, near Romney, Tippecanoe County. Henry is in Columbus, Georgia, where he is married and prosperous.

Emily, my sister, is a widow in Philadelphia, well off in money but sad in heart at the loss of a father and devoted husband. Mary, my third sister, lives with my father and mother, unmarried.

I have the pay of a captain of Engineers, full occupation, money enough to live plainly and keep out of debt. We live with my wife's mother, Mrs. Commodore Rodgers, keeping house, in her house. She and her daughter [Jerusha] live with us. My wife's sister Anna—her husband, Captain Macomb is a topographical officer in Santa Fe, New Mexico—lives with us, too, with her 3 children.

[JAN.] 2ND. At the office today. Some time with Speaker Orr, who wishes to have a refreshment room provided. I can find rooms enough, but he does not know how to dispense with the committee rooms.

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[JAN. 2 CONT.] Reverend Mr. Register writes me a good letter about speaking in the Hall. He says that he never in any room spoke with so much ease, that it was less fatiguing than the _____ church, in which all who speak are struck with the goodness of the acoustics. It is small. In this immense Hall, however, he found that he could speak with more ease than even in that.

[JAN.] 3RD. I went today, Sunday, to hear the service at the Hall of Reps. Mr. Paul preached a sermon not remarkable for its interest. He promised to send to me a note upon the ease with which he spoke, which he said surprised him.

Mr. Paul, to whom I was introduced after the sermon, said that he would with pleasure send me a note of his opinion of the qualities of the Hall for preaching, saying that he found it surprisingly easy to speak in.

On my return, I overtook Miss Cass, Mrs. Canfield³ and Mr. Ledyard.⁴ They had been up to the Hall, where they said they were surprised to find so beautiful a room and such perfection of hearing. I told Miss Cass that I hoped she would make a good report to her father, who had never felt any confidence that I should succeed in this

²Charles D. Meigs, Jr. (1817–1895).

³Mary Canfield was a daughter of Lewis Cass and the widow of Captain Augustus Canfield.

⁴Henry Ledyard, married to Lewis Cass' daughter Matilda, was elected mayor of Detroit in 1855 and later served in the Michigan senate.

attempt. She said he had always had great doubts and indeed did not believe that I would succeed, believing as he did that it was an impossible problem which was proposed to me for solution.

Mr. Healy, the painter, came in this evening to consult me about the form of a letter which he had written to Mr. Pearce, the chairman of the Library Committee, informing him that he had in the Rotunda of the dome a full-length portrait of ex-President Fillmore. . . .⁵

He showed me a letter from the ex-President, speaking of his account of the Hall of Reps, saying that it gave him pleasure to hear so good an account of it; that he had seen the reporters' statements and had told Healy, while painting him, that he was distressed by them.

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[JAN. 4] The House of Representatives assembled today, after the holidays, and went vigorously to work. They got through their business with great speed and ease. So much more knowledge of what is going on can be attained without much effort or attention that the business proceeds with great rapidity.

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[JAN. 4 CONT.] My father writes that the Philadelphia *Inquirer* on the 2nd of January published the article from the Washington *Star* upon the new Hall with an awkward preface in which they ate dirt. They had published from the Washington correspondent letters abusing the Hall, and at his suggestion that it was only fair to let their readers of the *Star* study a [description] of the matter, they published this as an amend.

I saw several Members of the House of Representatives today. They said that they were getting more pleased with the Hall and that it was very comfortable. Had some complaints still about the drafts. The fan cone is hung and will be started in about 8 to 10 days. We are at work upon the boilers of the north wing.

Mr. Haskin⁶ of New York says that he held the committee together in order that they might make a report upon the heating, ventilation, acoustics, etc., of the Hall, doing me justice especially, as he saw the letter writers had made an attack upon me, and that they would do it.

I hear that there is a rumor on downtown today that I have been relieved from the aqueduct and from the Capitol extension. For myself,

⁵The Healy portrait of President Fillmore is now at the White House.

⁶John B. Haskin (1821–1895), Democrat of New York, served in the House of Representatives, 1857–1861.

after Davis' conversation with the President, I do not much expect any further interference.

The galleries of the House of Representatives today were better filled than I have ever seen them. They did not look too large.

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[JAN.] 6TH. I met the Speaker and Mr. Cobb⁷ of Alabama at the Speaker's room at 10 a.m., or rather I was there to meet them. They did not come until some time afterwards. Arranged with them and with General Quitman to give up to [George] Houston of Alabama the room now occupied by the Military Committee, upon the proper Military Committee room being made habitable though not decorated.

We went to see Mr. [James] Walker, the artist, to see what progress he had made. He could not get for some time the proper canvas for his large painting. He had got a smaller piece upon which he was blocking in the figures of his picture. He had a beautiful landscape and was making good progress, but I regret to see so much labor lost and told him to confine himself to the merest blocking out until he could get into the committee room and, putting up the proper canvas, go on with the picture itself.

This preliminary study, of course, will cause the picture to be painted more rapidly when he is ready to begin it.

A Mr. [Baumgras]⁸ has a room above him at 46 Louisiana Avenue. He seems to have come here in hopes of employment upon the Capitol, but the sketches which I saw in his room, he happening to be absent at the time, were very poor.

* * *

[JAN.] 8TH. I was called before the Committee on Public Buildings of the Senate today. They have been ordered by the Senate to present a plan for the assignment of the rooms in the north wing. They went over the plans and over the building with me and made up a list of assignments, changing in some unimportant particulars the assignment which I had made. They kept me at work with them till 3 p.m.

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[JAN. 8 CONT.] At home I found a note referred to me from the Committee on Ways and Means asking for an estimate of the cost of building the aqueduct.

⁷Williamson R.W. Cobb (1807–1864), Democrat of Alabama, served in the House of Representatives, 1847–1861.

⁸Peter Baumgras (1827–1904) was a German artist who worked on the Capitol under Brumidi's direction.

[JAN.] 9TH. This morning I got also a set of notes asking for the estimates of cost to complete the Capitol extension, Post Office, etc.

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[JAN. 9 CONT.] I called this morning upon Senator Broderick⁹ of California. He had sent me word by Mr. Davis that he wished to see me yesterday at noon, but the committee of which Davis is chairman had me before them from 10 till 3 p.m., so that I did not see him. I found his card at home when I returned late in the evening.

Today I went to his house on my way to the Capitol. His object was to speak in favor of a boy, young Joyce, whom I had taken as an apprentice in the bronze shop under Casali and who, since his death, has been under Lassalle's direction. He has not behaved himself, and having been not only idle but having told Mr. Lassalle, when he reproved him, to go to hell, he had been reported to me and dismissed. He has a widowed mother dependent upon him and his wages in great measure for support.

I told him that I had already sent a letter and spoken to Lassalle in his favor and told him that if the boy could be made to behave himself and would make a proper apology, I wished him to be kept in service and restored to his place, but that he had not done this but had undertaken to report that Mr. Lassalle had allowed things to be made in the shop for private account, thus stealing the material of the United States.

I had investigated this to some extent and was satisfied that if anything of the kind had been done, it had been done with the approval of Mr. Lassalle and that it could have been only some very small thing. Otherwise, I would have known of it.

Mr. Broderick then asked me of my situation and occupation. I told him how I was at this time with Mr. Walter, etc. He advised me to take some steps to show to the President that I had friends in the Senate, and I told him what I had done. He said the President was apt to yield to constant importunity and that he was surrounded by a very bad set of men. William Rice he particularly instanced. Bigler he thought very ill of, that he had influence of the President from his present position.

I received today letters referred to me asking for estimates of the amounts necessary to complete the aqueduct, Post Office and Capitol extension.

I went to the committee room to ask precisely what they wanted, whether the detailed estimates or my statement of their result. After some explanation, Mr. Phelps, at whose motion in the Committee on

⁹David C. Broderick (1820–1859), Democrat of California, served in the Senate, 1857–1859.

Ways and Means the letter had been written by the chairman, Mr. [J. Glancy] Jones of Pennsylvania, said that he only wanted some officer's statement of the amount, that this sum of 1,000,000 was expected to finish the aqueduct. And so of the others. I then went to the office, and as soon as I could get free from interruption, I wrote the letters and estimates.

I need yet to finish the aqueduct	\$1,000,000
Capitol extension	1,185,000
Post Office	100,000

* * *

[JAN. 11] I wrote for the Secretary today a note in regard to the coal purchase, telling him that the delay in attending to this had caused the lowest bidder to back out and that the next lowest offered at an increased cost of 30 cents per ton, \$6.20 instead of 5.90, which for 700 tons, the quantity needed, was \$210; that I asked immediate authority to buy upon these terms, as I feared that further delay would only lead to further cost. By sending up twice about this, I got it done by 4 p.m. and ordered the coal. Here is \$210 waste added to the cost of the Capitol by this act of the Secretary.

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[JAN. 11 CONT.] Upon going to my office in the morning, . . . I was told that Mr. Davis had been to see me. I went over to the Military Committee room and wrote out a report for the Public Buildings Committee, with a drawing of the north wing plans, giving the assignment of rooms, which they adopted and intended to move in the Senate today.

* * *

[JAN. 11 CONT.] Ordered some roughs [?], etc. Wrote out tonight the estimate of the expenditure upon different supplies for the next quarter. This is a report which Floyd has called for from the departments generally. The only object which it can serve is to enable him to give orders to dispense patronage so as to make use of it with his friends, without reference to the interest of the United States. He deserves to be hung for this as much as if he had received instead of given a bribe out of the public money. For what is it but a bribe when he gives to a worthless fellow, an editor of Virginia, a contract for what he knows nothing about?

* * *

[Printed material inserted]¹⁰

[JAN. 13] Tonight I went to the reception of the Secretary, not from any personal respect for him, for that has been growing less every time I have had a letter or note from him, but because I thought my staying away might be remarked. Louisa went with me. A great crowd in a small house.

* * *

[JAN. 14] I spent some time at the Treasury Department today and saw, after waiting for some time, the Secretary, Mr. Cobb. I explained to him the danger to me of being obliged to keep in my office, not fire-proof, as I am tomorrow to move into the new office upon the street north of the [eastern] square, \$200,000 in treasury notes, which they wanted to give me, as I should be at the mercy of any incendiary boy who might choose to make a fire of my house. Cobb agreed with me that it was not to be expected that I should do this and that I ought not be called upon to do it. He promised to see officers of the disbursing office downstairs in the morning and make some arrangement by which they should keep the notes for me.

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[JAN.] 15TH. I moved my office today out of the Capitol extension into a building in Carter's [?] Way,¹¹ upon the first street north of the Capitol, opposite the eastern square. I have a whole house and got good rooms, though they are small for the business to be conducted in them.

Mr. Heebner was here today. . . . Heebner said that he wished to draw the money due to Rice billed to Heebner, for he had been paying out his own money at Lee and wished to get it back. He would come down early next week and get it out of the treasury notes.

* * *

[JAN. 16] I have received from the binder 4 volumes of photographs which are quite a large collection of views of the public buildings under my charge and of working drawings, plans, etc., of this building and of the aqueduct. There are now about 320 plates, so that the collection is large. It will make a durable memorial of my work.

[Printed material inserted.]¹²

¹⁰ A newspaper article based on the annual report by Meigs regarding progress on the Capitol extension.

¹¹ It is not clear what Meigs meant by "Carter's Way." His office was on A Street North. Perhaps someone named Carter owned one or more buildings there.

¹² A favorable article, from an unidentified newspaper, about the Capitol extension.

[JAN. 18] Mr. _____ sent for me today to make arrangements for his committee room. It seems that the Senate adopted today the plan of assignment by the committee.

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[JAN. 18 CONT.] Gouverneur Kemble of West Point called. He had been in the House and is much pleased with the success of the Hall.

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[JAN. 19] Tonight we went to the ball of Senator Douglas, The Little Giant. If he has lost popularity by his recent course upon the Kansas question, which I doubt, there was no appearance of it last night. His rooms in the new house were crowded. They are large but with low ceilings. The depth of the suite is 100 feet. They say 1,800 invitations were out. Certainly there was a great crowd.

Louisa went with me and looked quite as handsome as ever in a silk given to her last summer by her brother John, a "cumshaw" which he received for buying some other thing in China.

I am informed that by the day after tomorrow I shall be able to get the treasury notes for the requisitions which I have sent to the Treasury. The specie to meet my drafts for \$103,000 is here, and tomorrow I begin to pay off the workmen.

[JAN.] 20TH. Paid checks for the payrolls:

Cap. Ext.	\$32,067.11
Dome	3,255.09
Post Office	14,697.88
Aqueduct here in Georgetown	5,000.

The check for the payroll upon the line is not yet drawn. It will be about \$25,000.

I received today from Mr. Walter two letters, of which the following are copies. They explain themselves. At the matchless impudence of such schemes addressed to me, I confess that I am surprised. For though I knew him capable of any falseness, I did not suppose that he would make to me a claim to what he knows so well is mine, not his.

Washington, Jan. 19th, 1858

Captain M. C. Meigs, Sup. in Chg. Ext. U. S. Cap.

Dear Sir: I observe by a photographic copy of my design of the principal story of the north wing of the Capitol extension, sent to me today, that you have caused certain lettering to be put upon the drawing which implies that the revised plan was designed by you, which you well know was not the case; I also

find that you have caused similar lettering to be put on my designs for the alterations of the original plans. I therefore respectfully request to have the said lettering removed and the drawings returned to my office.

These drawings have already been photographed as originally lettered. It is therefore unnecessary to have further copies taken, and even though new negatives were required, it is highly improper before taking them to interpolate the drawings by additional lettering after they have been signed and approved, especially as the interpolations convey an idea which you know to be erroneous.

Very respectfully, etc.,
Thomas U. Walter,
Arch. Extension U. S. Capitol

Washington, D. C., Jan. 20th, [1858]

Capt. M. C. Meigs
Sup. in charge Ex. U. S. Cap.

Dear Sir:

I am surprised to find this morning that you have caused the negatives of photography plates of the revised plans of the Capitol extension, alluded to in my note of yesterday, to be destroyed. Your motive for doing so cannot be misunderstood; hence, any remarks upon the subject are unnecessary.

You will please stop all further proceeding in reference to the photography of these drawings and return them to my office, that I may have them restored to the condition they were in when approved by the President.

Very resp., etc., Thos. U. Walter, Arch. Exten. U. S. Capitol.

JAN. 21. I stayed at home today in order to answer at large the letters of Mr. Walter setting up this preposterous claim to the design for the alterations I made in his plans for the extension of the Capitol.

I was obliged to go into the matter with some words and more at length than I liked, because the whole thing depends upon a statement of our relative positions for the last 5 years, and all of this while he is well informed, and therefore there is no need for him of any answer. The record requires a full statement.

I wrote also a letter to Senator Jefferson Davis, enclosing to him a copy of the letters of Mr. Walter and of my reply and some copies of the plans of the Capitol extension as being built when I took charge

and as now being constructed. Some of this with the legend to which he objects upon them and some photographed before the legend was added by my orders.

I am not surprised at this move of Mr. Walter's, except in its gross impudence. While I know that he was speaking of this work to his friends as though it was his and under his sole control, I did not suppose that he would have the impudence—for I can call it by no other name—such gross assumption and falsehood, to make the claim to my face.

Davis, as Secretary of War, from whom we both derived our authority, can really state the case, and therefore to him I have addressed copies of the correspondence, with a request that he will inform the War Department and the President of the truth.

He would not be more surprised at the claim which August Schoenborn or Clement [L.] West might set up to the plans as his designs because he made copies of the work upon the original drawings in color, and repeating and multiplying parts of them under Mr. Walter's direction, than I am at his claim to designs with which he has had no other connection in their great features than by making the drawings under my direction, in obedience to my orders, in accordance with principles which I first announced, and which he did not and does not yet understand. Recommended by me to the Secretary and President, supported by my arguments, examined by a commission of scientific men appointed to test, by experiment and reason, the principles which I collected or discovered, defended for years during their construction by me against all assaults, the rooms finally completed by me, on my responsibility, in a style of architecture which I ordered, with his help as a draftsman only, in truth, though I have always given him the title of architect in order to give him as high a position as I could.

All this I have done against the advice of my friends who have warned me that he was a treacherous man and would supplant me whenever the opportunity arrived. I have been advised by all who knew him to let him go, that he was not to be trusted. I defended by saying that I knew his character, that he was not faithful to me nor true, and that I could not let any personal advantage or interest affect my action towards him.

We have been apparently friends, and he has always professed gratitude for my defense and protection of him; that against the wish of the department to remove him, expressed again and again, I have by earnest entreaty protected him. I expected that he would at some day make an effort to claim all the merit of the designs of the building,

but that I could trust to Providence to leave in my hands the means of detecting such treachery whenever it declared itself.

I suppose that it is best that it should come now, when he supposes that he could count upon the assistance of the Secretary of War, who I do not believe likes much one who has stood in the way of many attempts to dispose of work and profits and contracts of the aqueduct for the advantage of his personal friends. He has in this bold way attacked me. God defend the right.

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[JAN.] 22. I sent my answer to Mr. Walter to him today. I took a copy of it with a letter to Mr. Davis, calling upon him to bear me out in my assertion that I was really in charge of the work of the Capitol extension and that whatever was done there was upon my responsibility and authority. I took this letter to Professor Henry at the Smithsonian, as in it I referred to his and Professor Bache's report upon acoustics. I did not see Davis at his house. He had not returned, but I left the papers with a message that I hoped he would read them today. I found upon coming home that he had been to my house.

John Rodgers came in and said that he had seen again Mr. Mortimer,¹³ who told him that Mr. Boady [?] had told the Secretary that I had black Republican proclivities and also that I was not cleanhanded, that I was interested in the heating of the Capitol extension with these people Nason and Dodge;¹⁴ that the Secretary was very much enraged and said with an oath that he would thwart me and would insist upon this Robinson's¹⁵ having the work. This, too, after having at first been alarmed at the warning which he had received from some friend not to put his reputation in the pocket of Mr. Robinson. Mortimer said that in some way the women had been approached and that Mrs. Floyd¹⁶ had been made to believe that I was a bad man. This fellow Robinson is no doubt at the bottom of all this.

Mr. Mortimer, too, says that they will not attempt to remove me unless I disobey some order but that it is intended to worry me into resignation by demands for explanations and attacks encouraged by the influence of the Secretary and his underlings.

This no doubt will help to account for Walter's audacity. He thinks that my best card is to play upon the Secretary some of the Southern Members of the Senate or of Congress. Such men as Hunter. I doubt

¹³ Mr. Mortimer, who is not identified further, had visited Meigs on January 16 and 18 regarding contracts for the Post Office. He appeared to be trying to stir up trouble with the secretary of war.

¹⁴ Nason and Dodge of New York, the firm Joseph Nason was associated with, manufactured heating and plumbing equipment.

¹⁵ Charles Robinson was a dentist from Virginia. Secretary Floyd had ordered Meigs to give him the contract for heating the Post Office.

¹⁶ Sally B. Preston Floyd was the wife of the secretary of war.

whether Mr. Hunter would interfere with the Secretary, who does not belong to his wing of the party, though he is a friend of mine and said in debate that he would rather see stones of the Capitol crumble into dust than such injustice perpetrated as was intended by Ball's resolution removing me from the Capitol extension.

I think Davis will make a good fight for me and that if anything is done to injure me, I can count defenders enough in the Senate and House of Representatives. And I think that a call for my correspondence with the War Department and Engineer Department will be enough to punish the Secretary and set my right before the people.

But all this opens up to me a very tedious, tiresome prospect: to work in charge of immense sums of money and great responsibilities, with the opposition instead of the support of the department and Secretary, to whom I am immediately responsible; to have a dishonest man to receive and act upon all my recommendations; to endeavor to put upon me inefficient and dishonest agents, and to thwart me in all methods in his power. All this is not pleasant to look forward to.

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[Printed material inserted.]¹⁷

[JAN.] 23RD. I saw Mr. Davis today at the Military Committee room, where I found him with Mr. Iverson and Mrs. Davis. He said he had been, after getting my note yesterday, to the President, whom he found engaged in a state dinner; to Mr. Hunter's, who was out; to Mr. Pearce's, who had gone to Baltimore; and then to my house and found me out. This morning he called at the War Department and found that the Secretary had not got to his office.

We had a long talk over the matter, from the revelations made to John by Mr. Mortimer, though without _____. I read to him the late report I had made upon the _____ heating apparatus job and told him what I heard was said by the Secretary, with an oath; that he had thwarted me already in many things and would do so in others.

I told him how I had been twice with demands for reports, etc., interfered with in my employment of persons. Lost my best man, Bryan; had a valetudinarian in his place, etc., etc.

He asked what I wished done. I told him that the President and Secretary both should be made to know of this correspondence with Walter. That the Secretary should thus understand that he was not to displace me without some knowledge of it going to the President. That

¹⁷ An article from the New York *Daily Tribune* of about January 21, 1858, raising questions about Secretary Floyd's role in the sale of Fort Snelling in Minnesota.

I did not think he would act without a prospect of investigation by the President. That I feared only a sudden action upon his part might commit him, and this President, having to choose between us two, would of course choose his Secretary in preference to me. That Walter ought to be dismissed at once unless he made the most complete withdrawal of his claims. That if he was worried out, as I was told it was the intention to worry me, that then there ought to be added to the appropriations for the works provisos that they should be built by contract to the lowest bidders, with good security for each class of work or material supplied. That they should be required by law to build upon my plans and according to the designs made under my direction and signed by my hand. And that if I was removed in an improper way, that then I thought it would be well, if indeed it was not under any mode of removal, to transfer the works to the Interior Department.

He said if I was thus treated, they should not have money to carry on the works at all. That there would not be confidence in Congress to give them the money. That they must stop, and to this he would listen to no objection. That either the money should not be given or the work should be taken out of the hands of the administration entirely and done under a committee of Congress.

But he said he would see the President and talk with him about it—the Secretary, too—and that he should tell Mr. Buchanan that if this was done, he must look for and should have war. That if there was to be war, it should be a strong one. These were his last words.

I had been with him through the north wing, where he wished to show to Mrs. Davis the rooms which have been finished.

He asked me why I wished Mr. Hunter to see the correspondence, that he had no friendship with the Secretary of War; they belonged to different parties in Virginia. I told him that Mr. Hunter had always sustained me; and I wished him to see, if I was removed, what was the reason of it.

I think that there is good reason to believe that the Secretary is in a bad feeling toward me and that it is likely he may have said some of the things which I heard. He is moved by the last man who talks with him too much. When I am with him, he seems to agree with me and to be willing to take my view of the matters in debate. Except in the matter of employment of Mr. Crozet and dismissal of Bryan.

He was, they say, inclined to send for me and ask me what he had done amiss in the matter of Robinson; and then, upon some representation that I was inclined to be a black Republican, he changed his mind and swore that he would thwart me again, as he had before, and that Robinson should have the work.

Davis says he thinks he means to do right but acts too hastily.

I believe that I am well supplied with ammunition to force and make a very pretty fight. But the Secretary has the power in his hands to cut the knot by merely saying that he needs me elsewhere.

I have given orders to have my letters for the last month to and from the Secretary collected, so that I may have them at hand in case of any sudden action and be ready to have them put into the hands of a committee of Congress. If I go, they must be published in order to let the public see the reasons.

* * *

[JAN. 25] I had a visit this morning from Davis. He told me that he had gone to see the Secretary, having written him a letter, and that he did not find him in. He then went to the President and took to him the correspondence with Mr. Walter and my letter to him, saying that he handed them to the President, with an explanation that he had tried to see the Secretary and not finding him and thinking the matter required treatment at once, he had brought it to him.

He said the President seemed to be troubled about something else and asked him what was the matter here. He told him that Mr. Walter, the architect, had behaved in an insubordinate manner, and he thought he would see and understand this when he read the papers, and he would see again that he had acted in a way which might be against the public interests for him to be retained upon the work.

I told him of all the trouble I had with the Secretary, of the demands for explanations, for reports, of the reports that I had been removed, that I was on bad terms with the Secretary, of the reports that I was to be worried out by him and driven into resignation, etc.

All this he listened to with a frowning brow that showed how much it disgusted. I told him that I felt surprised that I was not indignant at such conduct, such intrigue against myself, but that in fact I felt as if I was fighting a battle and playing a game, and had no more anger against him and those who played upon him than I had against a mountain which I had to bore with a tunnel. That they were putting obstacles in my path which it was my business to remove. That I played out my game with the purpose of the success in which I hoped to end.

I told him, too, that I thought the Secretary was entirely without principle. When a man acts from principle, he has a fixed rule and is consistent. Truth is ever-ready and consistent with itself.

He sent me a note afterwards, saying that he had written to the Secretary of War and that he had not kept a copy, being busy, but that

if I wished a copy for my files, he had no doubt that I could procure a copy from the War Department. I do doubt it myself, however.¹⁸

* * *

[JAN.] 27TH. I called this morning to see Mr. Pearce of Maryland and found that he wished to consult with me about the price to be paid to Mr. [Healy] for some portraits of the Presidents and also as to the propriety of purchasing the portraits which are offered to them by someone from the pencil of Stuart.¹⁹ Stuart painted many copies of his presidential portraits in his old age and they are not very good; yet, as being contemporary, they are valuable, and I advised the purchase.

* * *

[JAN. 28] In the afternoon I signed many treasury notes and bills and have a large number to sign tomorrow. The Treasury here is empty and will not be able to pay all the workmen in specie at the end of the month.

JAN. 29. I went before the committee investigating the conduct and accounts of the late Clerk, General Cullom, of the House of Representatives today; but some witnesses from Philadelphia having come, they concluded to examine them first and deferred me until Monday next. They wish, I believe, to ascertain the price of the carpet which I had bargained for with Clagett and Dodson and which, upon the demand of the Clerk that it was his business to buy such things, I left to him to purchase and put down in the Hall of Reps.

* * *

[JAN. 30] I had a long talk with Drinkard, the chief clerk [at the War Department], about the effect of this proposed letting [of contracts for the aqueduct]. He seemed to be willing to listen to what I had to say. He spoke of the letter which I had written to Mr. Walter and which has been sent down to the War Department from the President, where Davis left it, but did not say anything of what it is intended to do with it.

I received from Mr. Walter today, in the evening, a reply to this letter, which is an assertion that he was never in the position of assistant to me; that he was always in full and independent charge of the architectural part of the works of the Capitol. It is a cool sort of a

¹⁸ For text of Jefferson Davis' letter, see Appendix, page 791.

¹⁹ Gilbert C. Stuart (1755–1828), the American painter, was known especially for his portraits of George Washington and other founding fathers. Several Stuart portraits of Washington hang in the Capitol.

letter. I do not know from it whether he believes it to be true or no. Certainly it is false from beginning to end.

I have given directions in regard to the architecture of the building, as well in the greater as in the minor details, and he has, without any objection, obeyed those orders. He has never refused to do whatever I ordered. Now, I do not believe that he would have taken this position had he not thought that he would have the help of the Secretary in sustaining him.

I must take some little time to consider how to meet his letter and must place it in the position of choosing which to retain, him or me. I can not certainly after, for 5 years, carrying out these great works for the credit of them, which is all that I get, admit that I have been or am now in the position of a mere assistant to Mr. Walter, who says that I was appointed for the purpose of relieving him from certain onerous duties such as disbursing, appointing officers, etc.

This letter declares that he does not see in the room of the House of Representatives anything which belongs to me except the gaudy coloring of the walls and niches. To this I object. He says all the rest is his.

* * *

[JAN. 30 CONT.] Walter was at the War Department today.

* * *

FEB. 1. I lost the morning in attendance upon the committee upon the accounts of General Cullom. They were engaged when I went in the committee room. I was not quite up to time myself. The examination of the witnesses took all the morning. I waited for them until noon and then was informed that they had adjourned until Thursday morning and that I would be expected at that time.

All sorts of rumors fly about. Mr. Denham came in to me this noon upon my reaching the office and asked whether I had heard anything from the Department. He said that it was reported that the case was settled and in my favor; that the Secretary had opened the question in the cabinet and that he had urged that I should be relieved, but the President had been firm and refused to give way. That the Secretary had even made it a point that either he or I must go. This came from Dr. Kennell, the brickmaker.

I suppose that there may be a grain of truth in the whole story, which is probably that my quarrel with Walter has been talked about in the streets and that it may have been spoken of by the Secretary.

Walter was at the Department on Saturday. This I have from Major Sibley,²⁰ who met him there and saw him in the room of the Secretary.

Denham says that he thinks from certain signs, which he did not name, that Mr. Walter expected it on Saturday. That he thinks he was making a report upon the subject to the Secretary of War.

I do not know what to believe, but I feel that there is some safety in the assurance of the President given to Mr. Davis that nothing should be done against me without his being seen again.

* * *

[FEB. 1 CONT.] By the way, Mr. Sibley told me that he met here today, and within a day or two, Marshall D. Bacon²¹ of Detroit, who wrote an article upon the Capitol, for which I furnished him with facilities. He says that Mr. Walter quarrelled with him for giving to me too much credit in this description. Now, I thought that he did not quite give me what belonged to me. But I told him, when he asked me about it, that he was as near the truth as I could expect.

* * *

FEB. 4TH. I went before the investigating committee in the case of General Cullom, late Clerk of the House of Representatives, today and was examined touching the purchase of the carpet for the House of Representatives.

I stated the facts, that I had made the bargain for the carpet at a certain sum per yard, laid down, except actually giving the order. The price was, I believe, \$1.75 per yard, laid down. That Cullom, just as I was about to give the order, came to me and claimed it as his business and right the carpeting of the Hall, and that I had yielded to him, telling him that if he thought the price I had determined to pay was reasonable, he should buy this carpet, as it was of a pattern which Mr. Walter and myself had selected as suitable. That after this I saw nothing more of the matter and had nothing more to do with it, except to urge upon Thompson, the upholsterer who did the work, as I understood, for Cullom, speed and energy in finishing it in time for the meeting of Congress. That I also wrote two letters to General Cullom, giving the price and name and other things which ought to be done in the way of finishing, etc.

* * *

²⁰This is probably Ebenezer Sproat Sibley, a maternal uncle of Kate Trowbridge Rodgers. According to the *Congressional Directory*, a "Major E.S. Sibley" was deputy quartermaster general, 1858-1864.

²¹Meigs referred to him as "M.J. Bacon" on May 8, 1856.

[FEB. 4 CONT.] All this occupies me so much that I have not been able to attend to Mr. Walter's letter and get the dispute between us settled.

* * *

[FEB.] 7TH. Sunday. The House of Representatives had a 19-hour session last night, adjourned at 6½ a.m. During the night they had a fight, Keitt of South Carolina attacking Mr. Grow of Pennsylvania with some opprobrious epithets—black Republican puppy. Grow knocked him down, they say in the Republican papers. About 20 Members were in the melee. It restored quiet in the Hall, which was very disorderly before.

[George Washington] Jones of Tennessee made a motion that when the House of Representatives adjourned, it should adjourn to meet in the old Hall. This is a curious example of what I have said would turn out. I have frequently, in speaking of the new Hall and its effect upon Congress, said that it would put an end to the influence which such men as Jones held over others by virtue of a powerful voice. Jones' voice, though harsh, in the old Hall could at any time attract the attention of the Speaker by its effect, for he could be heard distinctly whenever he spoke in any degree of voice in the Hall. Now he finds that he has not such great advantage over others and that, though he is a respectable man and a man of honest and _____, his great power is gone. The reign of lungs has given place to the reign of brains.

[Printed material inserted.]²²

Stephens²³ of Georgia has also had a great advantage taken from him. He is a man of good parts, a quick speaker, very ready in repartee and argument; but his great advantage has been a piercing voice which screamed through every noise and was distinctly heard in the old Hall. He can be heard here, but not so much better than others. With him, too, the voice has lost its preeminence and it is now a voice of matter, not of sound. He is not much satisfied with the new Hall.

Jones' motion was received, I am told by Mr. Taylor, who heard it, with shouts of derisive laughter.

²² An article from the Washington *Union* of February 7, 1858, discussing progress on the House wing of the Capitol and concluding: "The decorations of these rooms, so far as carried out by the officer of engineers who has had the entire control, is generally of the most ornate and expensive style. The architect of the Capitol extension, we have been informed, estimated that the floorings would cost about six cents a square foot. But imported encaustic tiles of elaborate patterns, have been substituted by the officer charged with construction at a cost of four dollars and eighty-seven cents a square foot; and in every room that has been furnished these tiles are entirely hidden from sight by the carpets. *Cui bono?*"

²³ Alexander H. Stephens (1812–1883), Whig then Democrat of Georgia, served in the House of Representatives, 1843–1859 and 1873–1882. During the Civil War, he served as vice president of the Confederacy.

* * *

[FEB.] 8TH. I wrote to the President a letter in regard to Mr. Walter, and also wrote one to Mr. Davis to be sent with the letter to the President. I requested Davis to hand or send my letter to the President to him in such manner as will be most likely to bring it to his early attention.

In writing to the President, I have taken the ground that Mr. Walter has misunderstood his position and that I cannot carry out the work successfully if any change is made in our relative positions such as to give to him an independent office and authority; that I have not worked for the sake of being considered a good stonemason and clerk of the works, to carry out designs for which I am not responsible, but to earn a good reputation for great works executed by great effort; that I should have no incentive to such exertion were my powers and position changed. Etc.

I believe that the President will sustain me.

I wrote also to the editor of the *Union* a letter in consequence of the paragraph upon the preceding page, which is false. The cost of common brick pavements such as the sidewalks of this city is about 6 cents per square foot. Mr. Walter could hardly have intended such for the Capitol extension.

Instead of tiles costing \$4.87, the most costly rooms cost \$1.98, while much of the floors cost 60 cents per square foot, the average being less than \$1.75, at which I estimated them in my estimate for finishing the work.

I also sent a notice to the *Globe* and *Star* asking them to publish this statement. I have asked the *Union* editor why the administration organ takes pleasure to publish articles intended to bring into disrepute the officer in charge of such great works, whose usefulness to the administration must depend entirely upon his reputation for integrity, skill and economy. And advised him, after applying such remedy to the evil already done as he can, [to] leave such attacks for the future to the *States* and *New York Tribune*.

Mr. Keitt, they say, made a handsome apology for his conduct in the House of Representatives on Friday night, his attack upon Mr. Grow. Said that he was drunk.

This affair has caused much excitement. I am told that the atmosphere of the House of Representatives remained pure and pleasant through the whole session of 19 hours.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]²⁴

[FEB.] 10TH. I wrote to the editor of the *Union*, Colonel William A. Harris, the other day to call his attention to the squibs which have lately appeared in the local matters column against me and my conduct of the Capitol. I supposed that he was not aware of what was being done. I thought that I signed my letter, which was marked "Private."

In this morning's paper I find a paragraph upon anonymous writers which comes, it seems to me, with bad grace from one who writes squibs without signing his name. I thought I had signed my letter to the editor, in which I called his attention to the squibs and explained the facts very much as I have done in the notice of the article in the *Globe*.

The answer surprises me. Can the *Union* have received its instructions from the Secretary of War? Is it the policy of the paper and of the administration to break me down by such attacks?

I must see whether by any accident I have failed to sign my letter. I did not intend it for publication, and I did not sign the article which I sent to the *Globe*. For I do not wish to enter into a conspiracy with the papers and with such a fellow as Ben [Perley Poore]. He is the author of the attacks.

I see a bill is introduced by Mr. Taylor²⁵ of New York to create a commission to finish the Capitol and its grounds. This move has been brought about by someone. Can it be the Secretary of War or is it Mr. Walter? Well, I do not know that it can do me any harm. I must, however, see the bill and endeavor to get it so shaped as to prevent its putting the matter into Mr. Walter's hands in such a way as to enable him to do me injustice.

* * *

[FEB. 10 CONT.] I see by a report of the proceeding in the *Globe* that the bill of Mr. Taylor of New York for creating a commission to build the Capitol and finish the grounds was, against his wishes, referred to the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds. That he said that the chairman of that committee told him he was entirely opposed to the whole thing and should report against it. He could not carry the point, which was to refer it to the Committee on Military Affairs.

* * *

²⁴ An excerpt from the *Washington Globe* of February 9, 1858, that is apparently Meigs' answer to the complaints in the *Union* regarding the cost of the encaustic floor tiles; also a clipping from the *Union* of February 10, 1858, complaining about anonymous writers.

²⁵ George Taylor (1820–1894), Democrat of New York, served in the House of Representatives, 1857–1859.

[FEB. 11] "Local" in the *Union* is out again with a squib against me.

[FEB.] 12. Mr. Briggs has gone to the north, having been broken down by hard work. He asked for a leave of absence and went off yesterday morning, to be gone until the 20th. He said that he had tried being sick to get some rest by staying at home, but that he is so near the Capitol that the workmen kept running to him and thus prevented his getting the rest necessary for recovery. He is a most indefatigable, excellent man, and an engineer with great reading and knowledge in matters connected with his own line of the profession.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]²⁶

[FEB. 12] I went today to the Treasury Department in order to get some \$20,000 in treasury notes, which were to have been ready for me, for the Post Office extension. I was told in the office that Mr. Clayton²⁷ had directed the issue to be suspended until they could see me.

I found Mr. Clayton, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, as rude in his manners as usual. He seems to have a notion that I have not been willing to hold the Treasury in _____ and complained that I would not pay the notes out with making them payable to order.

I explained that this was necessary for my own protection and for that of the creditor, as most of them went through the mails and as those which are paid here are paid to persons from whom it is proper that I should have some evidence of the receipt of the particular notes which I charge to them.

He has, I find, been telling Mr. Cobb that I depreciated their notes, etc.

I left him, as impracticable and unfit for his position, intending to see Mr. Cobb and represent to him the danger, both to me and the public funds, in keeping notes payable to bearer in my office, which is not fireproof or theft-proof, or of sending them through the mails.

Mr. Clayton said I ought to take the risk and afterwards that I ought to make the public creditors come here to get their money.

[FEB.] 13TH. Heebner is here. He says that Mr. Rice is much disappointed in something; he does not know what. That he told him

²⁶ Brief excerpts from the Washington *Union* of February 11, 1858, complaining about Meigs' response to the article on the cost of floor tiles; also an excerpt from the Congressional *Globe* of February 11, 1858, regarding the referral of Representative Taylor's bill to the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds.

²⁷ Philip Clayton was assistant secretary of the treasury in President Buchanan's administration.

he had seen a long letter from me, some 12 pages. This no doubt is my letter to Walter.

They do not expect to succeed. Rice does not trust Heebner about this matter. Heebner says that he had no difficulty in disposing of his notes, and I believe that I have had none in disposing of some \$180,000. Only one or two notes have been refused, and they have not come back to me.

* * *

[FEB. 13 CONT.] I saw Mr. Cobb today. He said that the difficulty was in the endorsement of a treasury note issued to John Smith, who made it payable to bearer; and this went to a western land office, and the land officer was responsible for the correctness of all the endorsements, while it was not possible that he should know anything about John Smith or his handwritten signature. I could not but acknowledge that this was a difficulty. But then there is the greater difficulty of sending these notes through the mails, through which I have sent some \$120,000 out of \$180,000 which I have expended.

Mr. Cobb said he saw the difficulties and wished to arrange the matter so as to be of the least inconvenience to the public and the officer and that he would decide upon Monday what he should do, preferring, if possible, to let me have specie, however, by draft of New York or elsewhere to giving me treasury notes to be made payable to order.

Mr. Heebner, who called to see me this morning, says that Mr. Rice is disappointed about something; that he had seen a long letter from me, no doubt my answer to Mr. Walter; that Rice put this notion of his appointment coming from the President into his head; that he had last spring, when he first thought of or heard of this, talked about it and sworn that he would see Walter have justice and that Captain Meigs should not hereafter take command of him, etc.

He says that Walter told him today that the Department said that he must stay. So I suppose that Mr. Walter has some assurance from the Secretary of support.

* * *

[FEB.] 15TH. I have a letter today from Mr. Newell of Albany. He was here to inquire of me of Governor Marcy's family. I believe he is a cousin of Mrs. Marcy. A man of intelligence and a traveler, one who took an interest in art. He proposes to put Crawford's sculpture in the middle pediment of the Capitol and to use Palmer's Landing of Pilgrims in the north pediment, and for one of the Landing at Jamestown put into the south and the _____, Arts, Commerce, Manufactures, Civilization of the Wilderness in the center as the crowning glory of America, with Liberty in the center.

I have written to him that I thought his idea a good one but that the prospect of art at the Capitol was not so good now as it had been; that I do not find myself so well supported and encouraged as I have been by the former Secretary and the President; that the speculators and intriguers seem to me to have gained strength in Washington; but that I finish the work upon which my interest and reputation were engaged—the acoustics, heating, ventilation, roofing, and the engineering and architectural problems of the Capitol extension; that to _____ the porticoes and finish the exterior does not present to me so much interest as to pay in reputation for the great labor yet to be gone through with, for which I have and can expect to receive no other compensation than that of reputation. And that unsupported by the same confidence and sympathy that I have had heretofore, I doubt whether I shall remain to the end.

* * *

[FEB. 15 CONT.] I found today a letter from the War Department referring to me a letter from Dr. Angelo [Tonesi],²⁸ who complains that he has been dismissed from his employment as a decorative painter at the Capitol and that he has not been able to get his pay. Also that he was dismissed from prejudice against his nationality.

I reported upon this ridiculous charge by telling his story.

He is a doctor and was employed at a time when we much needed painters, though not his business, and partly through charity, as he said he was in need. He was discharged lately because I directed the worst to be discharged, and he was among the 4 selected as the worst and most useless. He reminded me of others, too, that I had employed him through my pity for him. And now he accuses me because he has been, after months of good pay at the business which is not his own, discharged.

Mr. Groesbeck²⁹ of Ohio called with Mr. Mead,³⁰ a young lad who has made a piece of statuary which is in the Rotunda. I have not yet seen it, but I believe it is something showing a taste or inclination for sculpture with knowledge. He made a figure with snow last winter in New England which won the admiration of the neighbors, who immediately dubbed him an artist. He repeated it in marble, which was of course American, and it has been by admiring friends sent to the Rotunda of the Capitol.

²⁸ Angelo Tonesi worked as a decorative painter at the Capitol from June 1857 through January 31, 1858.

²⁹ William S. Groesbeck (1815–1897), Democrat of Ohio, served in the House of Representatives, 1857–1859.

³⁰ Larkin G. Mead (1835–1910) had been trained in the studio of American sculptor Henry Kirke Brown. His later statue of Ethan Allen was placed in National Statuary Hall in 1876.

Mr. Groesbeck came with him to see if I could give him anything to do. I told him that I could not, that I was not free to give commissions for sculpture to anybody, now that the Secretary of War did not sympathize with my feeling in regard to the decoration of the Capitol extension and that Congress must take the matter into their own hands.

* * *

FEB. 17. Heebner is here today. He says that Mr. Walter showed him his letter to me. That Rice is going to attack me when he sees me. Rice is here. He says, too, that Mr. Bigler says that he wishes to have the honor of reading my letter to Mr. Walter in the Senate and that he will call for the correspondence and have it printed.

Mr. Davis is sick, absent from the Senate.

I went this evening to show to Professor Bache the correspondence and the drawings which illustrate [the actual] changes in the designs. I found him in bed with a cold but able to see me and hear the whole affair. He says that in Philadelphia I can get any quantity of help to fight this battle by merely making it known that I need some. He promised to write to Judge Kane, who he says is ready and who will bring with him a host of others; that they would not believe that Mr. Walter could be so stupid as to take the ground he has taken.

As Davis is sick and absent from the Senate, I must endeavor to get Mr. Pearce ready to take my part should Senator Bigler undertake to say anything against me.

Mr. Winter, the contractor, today, a little drunk, said to Heebner that the Secretary had brought here a Mr. Hughes to be made disbursing agent for the Capitol extension but that he had been introduced to the magnates here and gone about among them for 5 days in such a state that he had to give it up. Can there be any truth in this?

His adopted daughter's husband is a Mr. Hughes. I sat by his side at dinner the other day, and I did not see in him anything that looked like this disposition to drink, though it might be some other Hughes of whom Winter speaks. I suppose that he must have had some ground for what he said.

Heebner says that Bigler is doing all that he can; that he read to the President Walter's letter to me; that he has been using these people to raise money, borrowing their names as endorsers or something of that kind.

Bache says that I ought to show the whole correspondence to Pearce, that perhaps Mr. Toombs³¹ may be of service to me, that he hates lying and chicanery of all kinds.

[FEB.] 18TH. I went this morning to call upon Mr. Davis, who has been for some days quite sick. I found that he had been worse than I supposed, for Mrs. Davis tells me that at one time she was quite alarmed about him.

I sent my name up; and after sitting for some time with Mrs. Davis and Colonel Andrus in the parlor, as Mrs. Davis said she believed Mr. Davis wished to see me, I was taken into his room.

He looked thin and withered by his sickness. He has suffered much anxiety about the Army increase bill, for which, as chairman of the Military Committee, he is responsible and for which he has been toiling and fought.

He said that he had taken my last letter to him, enclosing my letter to the President upon the subject of Mr. Walter's, to the President but had failed to see him and left it with a note endorsed upon the letter, saying to the President that he thought Mr. Walter's course required his removal, etc. So the President has the papers.

I told him that I understood Mr. Bigler intended to move for the correspondence and said he should have the honor of reading it in the Senate, etc.

Mr. Davis says that he supposes if the President does not intend to settle the matter at once, it is best that he should come to the Senate, as I cannot fight these people. "They take," he says, "an underhold, an unfair clutch."

I said to him that I thought of going to Mr. Pearce and showing him the correspondence, as I wished in his absence to have someone prepared to meet Bigler if he should make any move in the matter, and this he thought proper.

I wrote to my father, suggesting that he should speak to Judge Kane upon the subject, as this is the advice of Professor Bache.

* * *

FEB. 19TH. Mr. Fowler came into my office today in great glee, saying that he had seen Mr. Pearce of Maryland, of the Senate, and that he said he had seen the President and told him that he should not disturb me. That Mr. Pearce said he wished to see me and would read the

³¹ Robert Toombs (1810–1885), Whig then Democrat of Georgia, served in the House of Representatives, 1845–1853, and in the Senate, 1853–1861. During the Civil War, he served as secretary of state for the Confederacy and as a general in the Confederate army.

correspondence between myself and Walter with pleasure, wishing to know the case and be ready to act upon it.

I went in the evening, about 6 p.m., and saw Mr. Pearce, who received me kindly and said that he had been to see the President, who was disposed to be favorably disposed to me and his advice, feeling some thankfulness for his speech defending the policy of the administration upon the filibuster question. That after some other subjects had been disposed of, he had spoken to him of me; that I had been put into the place in consequence of the conduct of Walter having made some change necessary; that I had been there for several years, and he had been obliged, during the time the President had been in England, to look into the matter pretty thoroughly; and that he was satisfied that I had been a breakwater and prevented the success of the attacks upon the Treasury, which are always ready in case of great expenditures and nowhere more than in the case of the Capitol and water works. That I had treated Mr. Walter with great gentility and that he had repaid me like a viper.

He said the President told him he had a letter from Mr. Walter which was so egotistical that it had settled his opinion of him. Spoke favorably of me, but said that I had too much to do and that I had some difference with the Secretary of War in regard to the mode of conducting the water works; that I was opposed to the contract system of carrying on the work, which he had been advised was the best. Etc.

I explained the Coyle case, the difficulty in making contracts upon the lowest bids and their failure, etc.³²

I read to Mr. Pearce the correspondence between myself and Walter and the President and told him of the intrigues of Rice, Walter and Bigler and Bigler's expressed intention to call for these papers and have them printed and read in the Senate; that I did not desire this to be done, as it was not a subject of public interest, but that I wished, if it was done, that justice should be done to me and all the papers brought out.

Mr. Pearce will take care that all this is attended to.

FEB. 24TH. I left here on Saturday afternoon at 4:20 for Philadelphia to pay a visit to my parents, whom I had not seen for a year.

* * *

³²In January 1858 Secretary Floyd had ordered Meigs to purchase lumber and other such provisions for the aqueduct through the company Fitz and Coyle. Meigs was outraged, commenting: "He does not tell me upon what terms Mr. Coyle is to buy and sell, whether for a profit of so much percent for a commission and at his own pleasure or at a salary."

[FEB. 24 CONT.] The next day, the 22nd, I visited the works of Archer, Warner and Miskey. They are gas lighters and are making the bronze railing for the private stairs of the House of Representatives. They are sparing no pains to make it well and are indeed making a very beautiful piece of art work. They have bought an eagle in order to have a good model for the bird which is introduced; and, obtaining permission from the city authorities, they took a buck from the public square, boxed him up, and carried him into the 4th story of the workshop, where they kept him for 3 weeks, having a hard fight with him in order to get him up and down. For the serpents, they got a snake from the Academy of Science.

* * *

[FEB. 24 CONT.] After a pleasant visit, I left Philadelphia at 1 p.m. of Tuesday, the 23rd, and reached home at 7½ p.m., finding my children and Annie, who had been sick with colds, all better, all convalescent.

* * *

[FEB. 24 CONT.] Mr. Davis has been dangerously sick since I have been away. They were much alarmed about him. He is now said to be a little better. I do hope and trust that his life will be spared. He is a valuable man, has learned by experience to know that the interest of this country, both South and North, is union, and can do much towards softening the feeling which now looks towards disunion among Southern men.

* * *

[FEB.] 26TH. At the office. In the evening I went to General Totten's to see Mrs. [Thomas] Crawford, who is here upon her return from Richmond, where she has been to the celebration of the exposure of the statue of Washington. She looks better than when I saw her before and says that she hears from Rome that they are working up the doors.

[FEB.] 27TH. Saturday. I went to the office this morning afoot, stopping at Brady's gallery to see the painting which a Mr. Schlegel has made and wished me to look at. I met Mr. Brady, who asked for a sitting. He made a photograph which I saw in its unfinished state. He makes the best photographic portrait I have ever seen.

The club met at Bache's. On my way there, I stopped to see Mr. Pearce, who had sent word that he wished to see me. He wished to speak of the bill, a project of Mr. Taylor of Brooklyn, for a commission to finish the Capitol extension. Said he had some talk with him about it and thought that Mr. Walter was at the bottom of it; that he had asked Mr. Taylor what he proposed and did not find that he knew

very well what he wished. Asked whether the commission was to decide upon the decoration, scrolls and foliage, etc. He said yes, but Mr. Walter and Captain Meigs have been in the habit of deciding these things. He did not know, but that Mr. Walter should be on the commission.

Mr. Pearce said he told Mr. Taylor what his opinion was upon the Walter subject. That he had been treated by me not only with justice and with sympathy, with great generosity and that Mr. Walter had repaid me infamously.

I told him that I had written to Mr. Taylor to ask for a copy of his bill when printed and that I proposed to see him about it. That I thought I could get him to apply his art knowledge to some good effect, which I did not think could be done by his proposed commission.

* * *

[MARCH] 3. At the office. Mr. Rice called. He wished to have his account, as usual, paid upon the moment. This I could not do, for it had not been made correctly—3 blocks of stone which he had on order, which Mr. Heebner had selected to send to Philadelphia and had been paid for by the United States; and though we could let that go, I was not willing to pay any sum of money before I had the cost of this deducted from the bill. This had not been done in making out the voucher. He was evidently much disappointed and displeased, though he said nothing out of the way.

This is the first time I have seen him and spoke with him since I have been aware of his intrigue against me with Walter, and I felt somewhat indignant at his sight.

There is much smell in the south wing from the new refectory. The ventilating flow has not yet been opened from it. Hope to have it open tomorrow.

* * *

MARCH 6TH. At the office. Very busy all day.

* * *

[MARCH 6 CONT.] The weather has been very cold for some days, as low as 3 degrees last night. Strong, biting winds blowing all day. Yet the heating apparatus of the south wing has worked without the slightest difficulty. We have used about 3 to 4 tons of coal per day, burning it under 3 boilers. The building does not seem to be affected by the weather. The thick walls, once heated up to the proper temperature, take a long time to cool down again, and thus a cold snap for 5 or 6 days does not require much additional fire.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]³³

[MARCH 10] . . . I may do injustice to the Secretary of War, but I cannot help thinking that had I been a more ready tool to give jobs to his friends, I might have succeeded in obtaining this.

* * *

[Most of the entries omitted here relate to the aqueduct, which was consuming the bulk of Meigs' time and attention.]

MARCH 19. I spent the day at the Capitol, which brought me at once back into the struggles of the Walter affair.

* * *

[MARCH 19 CONT.] I saw Mr. Pearce, . . .

He spoke very strongly about the conduct of the Secretary, who he says is a fool; that his own party was beginning to say of him that he is a puffed-up fool.

He asked me about Walter, and I told him of his having disobeyed my orders to move into the office and gone up into the cockloft of the Capitol.³⁴

I afterwards called upon him at his house and told him that I was informed, after I had left him, that Mr. Walter had written to Philadelphia boastfully of his first act of insubordination and that he had a letter from the Secretary to the Speaker asking to have rooms for him—all this being done in order to trap me into ordering him again into my rooms, so that he might say I was flying into the face of the Secretary of War. That they had expected to have me out on the 4th of April but had now concluded to defer it till after the adjournment of Congress. This would enable them to get the appropriation without any debate upon this subject and leave Mr. Walter until the next session.

All this—or, rather, part of it—I learned from Heebner, who is here this evening.

I was also told that Rice is expected here in a day or two in order to settle with the Secretary of War the column question; that he says he has seen the Secretary and it is all fixed. Perhaps, for he has information from the Secretary through some friend. Also that the Secretary

³³ An unidentified newspaper clipping containing a list of the cadets appointed to West Point; Meigs' son John was not among them. Meigs blamed the secretary of war for making sure his son was not chosen.

³⁴ Walter had moved into vacant space on the third floor of the old part of the Capitol.

dictated the last letter which I have had from Mr. Walter, saying that he wished this reply to go upon the record. This must have been his letter in answer to mine upon the subject of sending out drawings with my name upon them.

Mr. Pearce is to see the President; says he will tell him that we cannot get along together and is ready to fight my battle strongly.

[MARCH] 20. This morning I find a letter from the Secretary approving my order from Miller and Coates, tiles for the attic floors, \$13,000. Here he has not made a job.

I find upon my table this morning a note from August Schoenborn, the first draftsman, in which he informs me, in answer to an order which I sent to him yesterday to bring the drawings of the dome which are ready for signature to my office, that Mr. Walter says they are not done and that he will attend to the matter at the proper time.

It seems that Mr. Walter, who has been away without reporting to me for several days, returned last night and has taken it upon himself to give to August these orders. I have written a reply to him, telling him that he has been insubordinate, etc.

Mr. Pearce had called to see the President on Saturday upon some of these matters. The President was denied to everybody, however, and he did not see him.

I have written to Mr. Walter, telling him that I see the impossibility of carrying on the business of the office while he continues to entertain the notion of his newly asserted independence and that I must report these acts of insubordination to the President, in whose hands the whole matter was placed some time since; that I have no doubt of the disposition of those to whom we are responsible to do right; and that believing I am in the right, I await patiently their action in the matter.

In the evening, Mr. Meigs of New York, Charles A. Meigs,³⁵ and his daughters called to take leave. They are going tomorrow afternoon.

I have been pleased with the renewal of my acquaintance with my cousin, whom I had not seen since he was a boy. He seems an energetic, intelligent man and has been successful. He is very decided in his advice to me to follow his example. He has made so great a success after being for years at work at a low salary that he thinks all others who have knowledge and experience could bring them to as good a market.

It is a great risk, however, to resign from the Army, a position to which one has been educated. Still, if I had a good position offered

³⁵Charles A. Meigs was a cousin of Montgomery Meigs. He and his daughters had been visiting in Washington since March 17.

to me upon a great public work, I should be very apt to look upon it with favor. I do not believe that the business of engineer can ever be at an end in this country. It is too rich, too enterprising, too energetic, and knowledge must always be in demand; for there is not a great deal of it in the world but, rather, ignorance too often gets into high places.

* * *

[MARCH] 22. I wrote today to the President of the United States a letter informing him of the manner in which Mr. Walter has lately been acting. In this I say that I do not see how it is possible for us to get together again and that I have before placed the whole matter in his hands and await his decision.

I heard tonight the debate on Kansas by Douglas,³⁶ who made his great effort. He had been sick for some 3 weeks, however, and spoke with effort and did not do himself justice. I did not think his speech a great one. The best speech which I have read upon the subject was Crittenden's, which is really a statesmanlike view of the subject and very eloquent.

I do not think that Douglas is very eloquent. He is an effective speaker because there is so much energy in his matter and manner. In this case, however, there was too much of himself, too much of his reading out of the party and his claim to be still in the party; too little of the great rights and the great outrages upon those rights involved in the Lecompton constitution and its formation.

* * *

[MARCH 24] Had a talk with Mr. [Edwin B.] Morgan of New York, who wishes to know whether there is any movement against me in the city at present. I told him of Walter's move.

* * *

[MARCH] 26TH. I had a visit this morning from Mr. William H. Winder of Philadelphia, who says that sometime since, his brother Charles had a conversation with the Secretary of War in which he told him that there was one man whom he intended to get rid of and that was Captain Meigs. Mr. Winder replied that if he did, he would never regret it but once, and that would be for the rest of his life; that he could not meet the speculators and contractors who would swarm about him

³⁶ President Buchanan submitted to Congress the Lecompton constitution, recommending the admission of Kansas to the Union as a slave state. Stephen Douglas, who had made public his opposition to the constitution in December 1857, was attempting to persuade the Senate to reject it, but the Senate on March 23 voted to admit Kansas under the Lecompton constitution. This, however, did not end the matter—see note 39 on page 608.

and that he would be torn to pieces by them; that no other man could defend him so well as I.

This is the first authentic statement I have had of his intentions in regard to me. I have had rumors, but this I believe. Mr. Winder thinks that he has given it up upon his brother's advice or the fear of the attacks which have since been made upon him. I do not. I believe that he is with Walter.

* * *

[The entries omitted here deal with the progress of the aqueduct. Meigs reported that, on bridges, culverts, and elsewhere along the route, he had inscriptions placed, saying: "Washington Aqueduct, Capt. M.C. Meigs, Chief Engineer, A.D. 1857."]

[MARCH 28] I have today a resolution of the Committee on Expenditures on Public Buildings, asking for a detailed report of the expenditures of the Capitol extension. Of this committee, Allison White³⁷ of Pennsylvania is president. He once bid for the aqueduct and wished to persuade me to give him a contract for the whole work.

[MARCH] 29TH. Mr. Entwistle,³⁸ engineer of the heating apparatus in the south wing, was shot on Saturday night in the street, near the corner of North A and First Street East, at the corner of the park. He was walking with a friend, Mr. Lewis, master armorer at the arsenal, when he noticed two men who suddenly approached, threw a stone at them, and then fired several shots, without a word being spoken. Mr. Lewis was shot in the thigh with one ball and fell, crying, "Murder!" Mr. Entwistle received two balls in the hip and then, turning as he fell, received one in the right breast which glanced around the body and was afterwards cut out of the back.

They lay for some 15 minutes before assistance came, the rowdies who had fired having run off. Both will recover, it is probable.

This attack was made without notice or quarrel. Entwistle had received sometime since a letter telling him that he had Know-Nothings employed under him at the Capitol and that if he did not turn them out, he would be noticed by the _____ or regulators.

Mr. Dunn had received a same or similar notice, and it is possible that those who made the attack may have been a part of this band of rowdies and may have taken Mr. Lewis for Mr. Dunn and attempted to murder both at once. A reward has been offered for the detection

³⁷ Allison White (1816–1886), Democrat of Pennsylvania, served in the House of Representatives, 1857–1859. He chaired the Committee on Expenditures on Public Buildings in the Thirty-fifth Congress (1857–1859).

³⁸ Isaac Entwistle was a machinist and steam engineer.

and conviction of the villains, but there is little chance of success. They heard no word spoken and could not in the dark know or see the faces.

I saw Mr. Pearce of Maryland today. He had sent a note to me to say that he had seen the President and wished to tell me the result. He saw him on Saturday. Told the President that the Secretary of War had appointed a defaulter to a place of importance upon the aqueduct. "I wish you would tell Governor Floyd." "No, I do not wish to speak to Mr. Floyd on the subject." He said the President said he would attend to it then and took down the names. Seemed to smell a rat and to begin to open his eyes.

He then told him that he did not think that Mr. Walter and myself could get along together, that he considered Mr. Walter to be in a state of rebellion. The President said he so considered him, also.

He did not press this matter further, thinking this was enough, as showing a proper disposition. . . .

* * *

[MARCH 29 CONT.] The President said that he was told I had too much to do. And he [Senator Pearce] replied that he would have said so sometime since, that I had more to do than any man could accomplish with an extraordinary constitution and uncommon business capacity; but that I had done it and now the Capitol was in a state not to require so much labor from me. That I could finish it with less attention than I had been obliged to give to it heretofore. That the waterworks was a great work in which I was particularly [interested] and that I was very desirous of finishing this, as I had begun it and indeed created it. That it was but justice that I should be allowed to finish it.

He said all that the President said was favorable to me.

Mr. [Jefferson] Davis is sick again today, suffering much pain. Mrs. Davis, too, is in bed.

* * *

APRIL 1ST. I spent the day at home, writing and making out prices for the contract of Provost and Winter. This is a severe and responsible labor. I had today two prices, more than 20 different items of work, which they have a right to do by their contract, but for which the contract contains no prices. The work thus priced today will cost many thousands of dollars.

I did not go to the House of Representatives as I desired, in order to see the vote taken upon the Kansas question. The papers say that the Hall was filled to overflowing. Every seat in the gallery and the doors thronged with an anxious crowd. The vote was 120 to 112 in

favor of the bill, of the Crittenden amendment as modified by Montgomery³⁹ of Pennsylvania, referring the constitution back to the people. This is a defeat of the administration, a worse one than they would have thought likely a few days ago.

It seems to me to be the proper mode of settling the difficulty. There is no doubt that the Lecompton constitution was obnoxious, as people thought it was tainted with fraud and that it ought not be forced upon the people.

I think, too, that the President has very improperly interfered with the action of Congress in the matter, having lately turned all the official influence in favor of this measure, turning out all whom he thought friendly to those who opposed the adoption of this constitution, proscribing with mercy. Too much interference with what is properly the business of Congress has, I think, caused a bitter feeling and led to the shameful defeats of the administration upon the Army bill and the Arizona Territory.

* * *

[APRIL] 2ND. I signed checks this morning for the payrolls of the

Capitol	\$24,600
Dome	2,420
Post Office extension	14,538

For the water works, they have not yet been presented to me.

* * *

[APRIL 2 CONT.] In the House of Representatives today, several persons spoke to me of the great success of the Hall in the trial of yesterday, when it was full.

Mr. Chaffee⁴⁰ came and said: "I wish to tell you of two or 3 things. I see that it is being noticed in the newspapers that no Member of Congress has died this session. For yesterday there were 233 Members in the seats in this Hall, a thing which perhaps never happened before. And I also wish to say that the galleries were crowded, every seat and standing place occupied, both in the galleries and upon the floor. The people stretched over to look over the heads of those in the doorways, even. And yet it was so still that I sat at my seat over in the corner and got down every name as the votes were taken during 3 calls of the ayes and noes and did not make one mistake. Now," he

³⁹ William Montgomery (1818–1870), Democrat of Pennsylvania, served in the House of Representatives, 1857–1861. The amendment required a popular vote in Kansas on the Lecompton constitution. Later that spring, both houses of Congress adopted legislation to submit the Lecompton constitution to a popular vote, and on August 2, the voters of Kansas overwhelmingly rejected the constitution. Kansas remained a territory until January 1861, when it entered the Union as a free state.

⁴⁰ Calvin C. Chaffee (1811–1896), American party then Republican of Massachusetts, served in the House of Representatives, 1855–1859.

said, "that settles the question. Nothing will ever be said against this Hall after this."

* * *

[APRIL 8] The Kansas bill was voted upon in the House of Representatives today. By a majority of 8, the House of Representatives adhered to its amendment, the Crittenden amendment, which the parties have said puts an end to the bill. But I see that now they talk of the Senate's receding and making some amendment to this amendment and asking for a committee of conference in which they hope to be successful in patching up a kind of compromise which will carry votes enough to put through the Lecompton constitution.

It has caused great talk for months, but I do not see that there is much excitement. The fact is that there is nothing in the matter, for the state will be a free state. In any case, the mistake seems to me to have been in the President attempting to influence Congress instead of leaving them to act as they thought right.

* * *

[APRIL] 12TH. The appropriation for the Capitol extension is almost entirely spent. I expected the sum appropriated last year to last until the new appropriation could be made. I find that it will not be enough to pay the rolls of the month of April, and I write today to the Secretary of War recommending that a sum be asked from Congress to meet a contingency.

* * *

[APRIL 12 CONT.] In the House of Representatives today there was a fight. A Mr. Helfer or Helper of North Carolina,⁴¹ who has written a book against slavery, which has caused some commotion in Congress, having been quoted by the solicitor of Massachusetts in the Senate, made an attack upon Mr. Burton Craige, who represents, I believe, the same district in North Carolina.

He did not make much by his motion, if the account given to me is correct. Craige, who is a man of some 6 feet 5 inches high and quite stout, was too much for his assailant, though he too was a large man of over 200 pounds. They were separated before any great damage was done, and a revolver and Bowie knife found upon him.

I had been sent for by Governor Winslow⁴² and Mr. Craige just before this happened and was going into the House of Representatives when the Members, who had adjourned, were coming out. I met Mr.

⁴¹ Hinton R. Helper, *The Impending Crisis of the South* (1857).

⁴² Warren Winslow (1810–1862), Democrat of North Carolina, served in the House of Representatives, 1855–1861. He had served briefly as acting governor of North Carolina.

Craige and asked him if he wished to see me. He returned with me for a moment and found Governor Winslow, who told me afterwards of the affair. He sent Craige away, as he was somewhat excited. I did not perceive it, however.

* * *

[APRIL] 17. I wrote today the report to the Secretary of War upon the column shafts of the Capitol and the refusal of Messrs. Rice, Baird and Heebner to furnish them according to the contract. I recommended that I be directed to order them from Heebner from Italy.

I have a letter from Mr. [Randolph] Rogers of Rome in which he sends me a proposal from Munich to make the bronze gates of Columbus for \$12,000. I have written to him to go ahead.

* * *

[APRIL] 18. Sunday. To church in the morning. We have taken a pew in Mr. Hale's Church of Epiphany.

* * *

[APRIL 19] I met Mr. Douglas [at a party]; told him that I was out of money for the Capitol extension. He said if I could get the letter from the Secretary in regard to it sent down the next morning, they would put it at once into the Deficiency Bill.

* * *

APRIL 20TH. I went to the President's levee tonight. I wore, for almost the first time, my uniform,⁴³ thinking that as it was the last levee, there would be a great crowd and that it was proper to mark it with more than usual respect. I was surprised, however, to find not a very large company and that I was among the very few persons in uniform. I took John with me and presented him to the President. The old gentleman received me very kindly and cordially.

I met the Secretary of War and told him that I had been trying to get some money from him for the Capitol and that unless I got it soon, I should be obliged to discharge my people.

I said, too, that Mr. Douglas had told me that while he was intending to attack the Deficiency Bill a little, he would go for this part of it and that thus I thought it might not be too inadvisable to put it into the bill, as I believed it would give it strength; though as I do not look upon this as a deficiency, I did not wish it to be in that bill.

⁴³Meigs had purchased a new uniform since the occasion in December 1855 when he refused an invitation from President Pierce because it specified to come in uniform and he had none.

He said the bill was already overloaded and he did not wish it to go into it, that it would be better to wait for a few days. He had already asked for so much, he did not wish to ask for more now.

* * *

[APRIL 20 CONT.] He seemed to be in a good humor, but he is one of the men who, I doubt not, can smile and smile and cut your throat. I have no confidence in him. I know that he does things which in my view of morality are dishonest, but I do not feel quite sure that he would do what he, himself, would think dishonest, whether he has a perverted moral sense or none at all.

* * *

[APRIL] 21ST. I wrote today a letter transmitting to the Secretary of War an answer to the resolution of the Committee on Expenditures on Public Buildings asking for a statement of the money expended upon the Capitol extension from the beginning of the work to the present time, and particularly the sums paid for each class of work and the names of the persons employed in the artistic or ornamental portion of the work.

All is upon 3 sheets of cap paper and gives all the information they ask for. But though it is made out as the result of 2 months' labor by 2 clerks, it gives information of no use to anybody, not even for the purpose for which Allison White, the chairman of this committee, wished it, to make it the foundation of some attack upon me.

What can he do with the fact that bricks cost so many dollars? Or that I have paid so many dollars to bricklayers? This is the result of all this labor. If the committee hoped or wished or expected to find extravagance, they should have come and looked at our books themselves.

The expenditure upon the Capitol extension from the beginning of the work, before I took charge of it, to the 31st of March past was \$4,238,883.66. Of this, I believe that I have spent about \$3,638,000. Add one million for the water works and 600,000 for the Post Office, and I have spent in the past 5 years about 5¼ millions of dollars. And I am now as poor as when I began, except in knowledge of the world of affairs and of mankind and perhaps in reputation. In this I have no doubt gained something.

* * *

[APRIL 22] I see that my friend Ben Perley Poore cannot content himself to leave me alone. He still gives me an attack of his malice now and then.

[Printed material inserted.]⁴⁴

* * *

[APRIL 23] John Lee was there [at a party]. He says that they have been reading my correspondence with the Secretary of War at the department, to their great entertainment. That the Secretary says he is a lawyer of some experience and has had to read a great many different hands, but that he thinks Captain Meigs' is the most difficult to read he has ever seen. "But he writes well, though; he writes well," he says. I am glad that he is willing to give me credit for something.

* * *

[APRIL] 24TH. Saturday. I went to the office for a time this afternoon. They have begun to put up the bronze railing in the north wing upon the private stairs. Not much progress made yet, the work being just begun. The principal stairs are nearly finished upon the east side of the building and are very beautiful.

Mr. Brumidi has begun to paint the Senate library ceiling. He has put in and nearly finished a group of geography, a very good group of figures. This is to the great dismay of Mr. Oertel, who has been so long preparing for the painting of this very ceiling and has spent so much time in making the drawings of the arms of the states for the ceiling of the House of Representatives that Brumidi seems at length to have got out of patience and taken up the matter. So that when Mr. Oertel the other day went to get the paints in order to begin his fresco, he found one of the panels nearly finished. He came to me in great trouble about it, and I told him to see Mr. Brumidi. He said he could not ask Mr. Brumidi to rub out what he had painted, and yet he did not like to lose the time and labor of the several months he had been studying this subject, etc. He could not but leave, for he has been very slow in his work and has lost by this slowness a good opportunity. I do not know what I shall do with him now.

* * *

[APRIL 25] I have a letter from Mrs. Crawford today. She informs me that the *Freedom* is shipped from Rome. Says that the two figures of *Justice* and *[History]*, for the front door, have not been put into marble yet. Asks if she may be allowed to have them done in Rome, as is intended. I intend to write to her that I prefer this arrangement if she will carry it out. She is advised that the doors can be modelled from sketches in small and properly finished.

⁴⁴ An article from an unidentified newspaper, probably the *Boston Journal* from April 1858, signed "Perley," that includes a brief complaint about the acoustics of the new House chamber. For text see Appendix, page 792.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]⁴⁵

[APRIL] 30TH. Friday. I was obliged tonight to order the discharge of the workmen upon the Capitol extension for want of money. The letter above, which I gave a sight of to the *Star*, will show the reasons for this step. The Secretary would not ask for money when I reported the state of the appropriations. He failed to do so, with so much in the Deficiency Bill and the attacks upon him in Congress in connection with it.

I told him that it would be given at once if asked for and that I could not ask, myself, before the department had acted. But it was of no use. He said after a few days he would attend to it.

* * *

MAY 5. I spent this day at the office. I had invited the doctors to visit and examine the heating and ventilating apparatus of the extension. A few of them came in the afternoon at 5 o'clock, and with Mr. Briggs I went over the south wing and showed them the arrangements.

I afterwards, the House of Representatives having adjourned, had the hall lighted up and made some experiments in sound, in it, in the presence of several of the visitors. They were much surprised and heard the speaker in the gallery in such low tones audible upon all parts of the floor.

I was introduced to all these gentlemen; and in meeting so large a party for the first time, I cannot recollect their names separately, except that of Dr. Watson of New York, of the New York Hospital. Those who came were men particularly interested in ventilation and appeared to be intelligent men.

* * *

[MAY 5] I spent some time in the House and Senate trying to get some arrangements for getting an appropriation. The Secretary has sent me word by the chief clerk that he would be satisfied to see the published arrangement made with a few of the foremen upon the extension extended to all the operatives. It is very uneasy, for Congress has great objections to the incurring of obligations in advance of the appropriation and is very jealous of such things as lately plagued this adminis-

⁴⁵ (1) An article from the *Washington Evening Star* of April 26, 1858, defending Meigs against complaints about the decorations of the Capitol extension and the fact he did not employ American artists. (2) An article from the *Washington Evening Star* of April 30, 1858, noting that work on the Capitol extension might have to be interrupted if additional funds were not appropriated. (3) An unidentified newspaper article that incorporates a note from Meigs, dated April 30, 1858, explaining that "The appropriation being exhausted it becomes necessary to suspend all operations on the Capitol Extension, and to discharge all hands."

tration for doing so in the Army. Now he flies right into the face of these debates. Had he sent down and asked for money, he would have had it long ago, and I should not have been obliged to discharge a man.

* * *

[MAY 6] I received today from the War Department a letter of Mr. John Rice in which he offers to furnish the columns for the Capitol extension for \$1,400 each, of Italian marble. This is curious, after the positive way in which he refused to have anything to do with them if of Italian and the bad humor into which he fell upon my insisting that I should get them.

He has, I suppose, quarreled with Heebner, who has offered to furnish them Italian at \$1,450 and wishes to cut him out. The letter is referred to me for report. I showed it today to Mr. [Daniel] Sickles, who called to know what had been done with Fabbriocott's offer of \$1,500.

* * *

[MAY 7] I see the *Express* abuses me in the Know-Nothing interest.

[Printed material inserted.]⁴⁶

[MAY 15] Augustus Rodgers⁴⁷ returned last night from California after 8 years' absence. We had the family here tonight to meet him. This prevented my going to the club.

* * *

[MAY 16] Mr. Oertel has published his letter to me. I find it in *The States*, with an article abusing me, as usual, by the local editor, Ben Perley Poore.

[MAY] 17TH. At the request of _____, I called at the Library of Congress this morning. He wished to ask my advice about giving some commissions to artists for the works for the Capitol. I advised him to give commissions to [sculptors] Palmer, Bartholomew, Ives and Brown. As for the painters, I do not know anyone except Leutze who is capable of making a good picture for the Capitol extension.

⁴⁶(1) An article from the *New York Express* of May 1, 1858, by its Washington correspondent "Americus," listing the names of the artists and decorative plasterers who were working on the Capitol and contending that "The above list of seventy-four names presents but twelve that can, by possibility, be pleaded as Americans." (2) A clipping from a newspaper that Meigs identified as the *Washington Union*, quoting Johannes Oertel's letter of resignation from work as an artist on the Capitol. He complained that Brumidi had "already appropriated to himself for decoration, ornamentation and fresco, nearly every available room in both wings of the Capitol extension."

⁴⁷ Augustus F. Rodgers (1829–1908) was Louisa Meigs' youngest brother.

I advised that they issue invitations for sketches and cartoons, offering a reward for the best designs, with promise of commissions if they proved worthy. The memorial of the artists was offered in the House of Representatives by Mr. [Humphrey] Marshall today. It was not received, objections being made.

* * *

[MAY 18] I then went up to the Capitol office, where I had a message from Mrs. McLean,⁴⁸ the wife of the judge. She desired to tell me, for my instruction, that the House of Representatives was in very bad taste, that it was vulgar, tawdry, gaudy, etc., etc. All this she said from friendship for me. That everybody said so, and she thought I ought to know it. She is certainly a plain-spoken lady, with little taste and less manners.

I thanked her for her kind intentions, but told her that I was a very obstinate man and adhered to my convictions, which were the result of some years of careful study; that if I was blown about by every wind of doctrine, I should not be able to get my train in order, etc. We parted good friends, though I told her I was not convinced.

The artists have presented a petition to the House of Representatives which was offered by Marshall of Kentucky. It was objected to. Will come up again on Monday.

I spent some time in the House of Representatives as the appropriation bill was under discussion.

[Printed material inserted.]⁴⁹

Had a long conversation with Mr. Orr the Speaker, who speaks in the highest terms of the success and comfort of the House of Representatives in ventilation, acoustics, health, and in all good qualities. So did Governor Winslow and several others to whom I spoke.

⁴⁸This is probably Sara Bella Garrard McLean, the second wife of John McLean (1785–1861), who was an associate justice of the Supreme Court, 1830–1861.

⁴⁹(1) An undated article from *The States* that complained about Meigs' oversight of artwork at the Capitol and included the full text of Oertel's resignation letter of April 27, 1858. The article urged Congress not to vote any more money for the Capitol until "the entire decoration is taken away from Meigs, Brumidi & Co., and placed in the hands of competent persons." (2) An article from the *New York Tribune* of May 17, 1858, complaining about the decoration of the Capitol. "The best artists in the country, with scarcely an exception, have offered their services and asked to be employed upon the Capitol. Without an exception, their applications have been rejected, and the work of decoration is going rapidly forward under the direction of an Italian whose reputation is little better than that of a successful scene painter, and who employs under him a crowd of sixty or seventy foreign painters, chiefly Italians and Frenchmen." The article continued, "The plain paint and whitewash of our fathers is more respectable and even more pleasant to look upon than these tasteless imitations of obsolete rubbish." While praising Meigs' work on the Hall of Representatives, the article blamed him for the art and contended that "the Capitol is in the hands of a crowd of inferior and needy foreigners. . . . If this is suffered to go on, the Capitol will be for ages the laughing-stock of the cultivated world. Congress can and should remedy the evil by appointing a connoisseur to superintend the decoration of the public buildings."

The Speaker gave me a warning that the Chief Clerk of the Clerk of the House of Representatives, Mr. [John F.] Carter, is one enemy. Talks of Mr. Walter, etc., of the cost of the furniture I have bought, etc., and is doing me damage.

I must place Mr. Orr upon the watch for him, for there is reason to believe that he is not doing as well as he might in his purchases. Why should a man from the Clerk go to Bembe and Kimbel and endeavor to get the sofas which they had designed upon cheaper terms than he had offered them to me, not as the Clerk but as one to buy them for the Clerk?

Kimbel refused to sell to anybody but the clerk of Captain Meigs, would not deal with go-betweens, and did not get the order. Someone else got the wretched things which are in the Hall.

Tomorrow I think the appropriation will come up.

* * *

[MAY 19] [During House debate on appropriations for the aqueduct and the Capitol] Marshall of Kentucky made a speech in favor of an amendment to require appointment by the President of a committee of artists. This I think failed. But the whole appropriation was stricken out, leaving the bill with no appropriation for the Capitol. This is not a matter of uneasiness. However, it will be put in when the vote is taken in the House. If not, the Senate will correct it.

* * *

[MAY] 20TH. Today they voted upon the appropriations for the aqueduct and the Capitol extension.

* * *

[MAY 20 CONT.] I have been so much engaged in the legislative halls talking, explaining and arguing upon the subject of these appropriations that I have not been able to write in this tome for some days, and this is written on Monday, the 24th.

The Capitol extension appropriation was amended by the addition of a proviso giving the superintendence of all the art works of the extension to a committee of artists to be selected by the President, to advise with the Library Committee, before any ornament could be put upon the walls of the corridors, passages, or into the niches. This is the result of the late agitation of Taylor of New York and of Dr. Stone, who calls himself a sculptor.

I have written an article to the *Intelligencer* giving the views which I have always expressed and held in regard to this matter. It is on the next pages.

I have sent it to some Members of the House and Senate, all of whom agree with me in its justice and propriety. Even Marshall of Kentucky, who made the motion which was carried, says that it is right in the main and that he will take care, if his amendment becomes law, that it shall not be interpreted as giving me a successor. I have, I think, however, put an end to its prospect of passing. The appropriation was stricken out after the amendment was made and must be put, if we get money for the Capitol at all, in the Senate. I have seen the committee members, some of them.

[Printed material inserted.]⁵⁰

* * *

[MAY] 22ND. Saturday. Spent in the Senate and House of Representatives at work for my appropriation of the Capitol extension and cut off Stanton's amendment to the waterworks. I think I have succeeded so far as the Senate is concerned.

I went in the evening to the club at Bache's. I find that most people whom I know have seen and read the article in the *Intelligencer*⁵¹ and approve it. Even Humphrey Marshall, himself, the mover of the amendment, says that he agrees in the main with it. Pleasant evening at the club.

[MAY] 23RD. Sunday. I went to church in the morning, partook of the Holy Communion. After dinner I went with Mr. Peale and John to walk in the country upon the Piney Branch. I collected some specimens for the aquarium. I found that I have not the strength for these walks which I should have. I seem to stiffen in my joints and legs. I am heavier than I used to be, for I weigh now 200 pounds. I do not think I am exactly a fat man, for 200 pounds with a height of 6 feet 1 inch is not a very stout figure. But I have not enough exercise of the body and have perhaps more for the mind than it is well for one to go through with.

⁵⁰ (1) Excerpts from the *Congressional Globe* of House proceedings of May 19, 1858, on appropriations for the aqueduct and the Capitol extension. (2) A letter to the editor of the *New York Tribune* objecting to having Meigs as an army officer overseeing construction on the Capitol. (3) An article from the *National Intelligencer* of May 21, 1858, explaining Meigs' goal regarding decoration of the Capitol. This is apparently the article written by Meigs referred to above. It stated that "the principal rooms are . . . being decorated, not by historical pictures, not by artists, but, under the direction of an artist, by art workmen, by ornamental or decorative painters, by house-painters, grainers, painters of ornamental marble, by scagliola workers, plasterers, gilders, etc. These are the trades and occupations filled at the Capitol, about whom so much has been said lately." The article concluded with the recommendation that the Library Committee solicit from artists designs for pictures, with the idea that commissions could be given to fill the spaces in the Capitol left for that purpose. (4) An undated article from the *New York Tribune* objecting to the classical subjects and style of the Capitol decorations.

⁵¹ See note number 50 (3) above.

[MAY] 24TH. In Congress I made the acquaintance of Mr. Taylor of New York, who claims to be the author of the proviso of Marshall in reference to artists. He thinks he is not influenced by any feeling towards me of anything but a desire for the good of art and artists. And he says that he is like a brother to Henry Brown, the sculptor, and that he thinks him at the head of American sculptors; that Brown had sent to me a design for a pediment which he thinks far superior to Crawford's and that I had not answered his letter offering it.

I told him I would not argue the merits of the two designs. I had admired the one and had not felt authorized to recommend the other to the Secretary of War, though I had submitted it to him for his decision, but that I had written a kind letter to Mr. Brown, doing what was very disagreeable—informing him that it was not thought expedient to adopt his design.

I wrote to several Senators and Members—among others, to Mr. Taylor—a letter perhaps as a better measurement than they had proposed, and indeed the best and for which I have always supported, that the amendment to the Civil Bill should be in this form, for the Capitol extension, \$1,000,000. To enable the Library Committee to contract with distinguished artists for historical paintings and sculpture for the niches and panels within the legislative halls and of the great stairways of the Capitol extension, \$50,000.

This took the attention of all to whom I sent it, I believe. Even Taylor said this was perfectly satisfactory to him, except that he wished still to put an end to the employment of foreign artists in the committee rooms. I had a long argument with him in which I weakened him but did not entirely overcome him. He is a workingman when he takes an idea into his head.

I believe that I shall beat him, however, in the end and get for the artists who do not deserve it at my hands \$50,000.

* * *

[MAY] 24TH.⁵² Wrote to several Senators and Members suggesting that the appropriation of 1,000,000 for the Capitol extension and of 50,000 for the purpose of enabling the Library Committee to contract with distinguished artists for historical paintings and sculpture for the panels and niches of the halls and stairways would satisfy all parties who were honest in the purchases and would not be capable of being used as a censure upon me.

⁵²Meigs apparently forgot that he already had an entry for May 24. (He had also put in a second entry for May 23, which is not included here since it simply repeated the information in that entry.)

I sent such letters to Senators Pearce, Cameron, Davis, Bayard, Seward, and Members Pettit,⁵³ Marshall, Taylor. I hope they will approve and that the Senate committee will adopt this, which is my policy from the beginning.

* * *

[MAY 24 CONT.] This led to other conversation, and he [the clerk of the House Committee on Commerce] said that he did not think I could trouble myself about the squibs of [*The States*] and of Barr [?]. That he had been at a dinner of the representatives of the press on the _____ of Mr. Bennett,⁵⁴ son of the editor of the *Herald*, who was here the other day, as a writer for the *Express*. That he had heard my case discussed; that Bennett spoke of the way in which his father regarded me; that Mr. Henry, private secretary to the President, said most emphatically though [*The States*] might talk, they could do nothing. His uncle, the President, had the highest regard for me and the most implicit confidence in my integrity and would trust, if need be, every dollar this government had to me. This produced some sensation and was repeated for the benefit of the *Herald*.

Henry also said that the Secretary of War shared this feeling.

[MAY] 25. Today I got the amendments of the Finance Committee to the bill in which the Capitol extension appropriation is to be inserted. They propose to give \$750,000, with the proviso that none of this money shall be expended upon the statues or pictures for the panels and niches of the House of Representatives and Senate chambers until the designs have first been submitted to and approved by the Library Committee. I hope to amend this to bring it still nearer to my own project.

I sent to Mr. Taylor today a copy of a letter which I addressed to Mr. H. K. Brown of 31st of March, in which I regretted to inform him that I have laid his design before the Secretary of War and that it has not been deemed advisable to execute it for the Capitol extension. This puts at end his opinion that I had not acknowledged its receipt.

I spent the greater part of the day in the Houses of Congress. Mr. Morgan of New York, a strong friend and admirer of Palmer's, says that it is all nonsense for Taylor to say that he is not moved by personal motives and that he has no prejudice against me; that he has heard him talk in a way that shows this not to be true; and that if I had given to Brown a commission for his pediment, I should have

⁵³ John U. Pettit (1820–1881), Republican of New York, served in the House of Representatives, 1855–1861.

⁵⁴ James Gordon Bennett (1795–1872) founded and published the New York *Herald*. The son was probably James Gordon Bennett (1841–1918), who later took over the *Herald* from his father.

had a strong friend in Taylor. That he is confident that he furnished the data for the *Tribune's* article;⁵⁵ that he has heard him several times during the session use the identical language, etc. The *Tribune's* correspondent, to whom I sent this article with a letter asking that it should be put before the readers of the *Tribune*, has not attended to it.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]⁵⁶

[MAY 26] At night I went to the birthnight ball of the British minister, Lord Napier. It was quite a brilliant assembly. The Queen⁵⁷ is 39 years old and has 9 children.

Met Mr. Douglas, who says he has laid the foundation for a vote for money for the Capitol extension and that he wishes me to consider myself instructed to put a gold dome upon the Capitol as soon as I get the money, and not to say a word about it until I get the money.

Saw Clayton, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury. He hates me for spending so much money. I congratulated him upon having, so far as the Senate could do, put in funds. "Yes, but we cannot keep the money? Why? You draw upon us so fast."

MAY 27. I spent the greater part of the day again in the halls of Congress.

Mr. Davis asked me whether I could undertake to direct the purchase of the furniture of the north wing. I told him that I was willing to do whatever Congress required of me and that if I was to purchase it, I ought to have the sole charge of it, as I could not be responsible for the purchases of the officers of Congress. Their mode of doing business is not mine, and if controlled by them, I should be liable to misrepresentation. There is much suspicion about all that is done by these

⁵⁵ See note number 50 (4) above.

⁵⁶ (1) A lengthy excerpt from the House proceedings of May 19, 1858, as reported in the *Daily Globe*, regarding the appropriations for the aqueduct and the Capitol. Included is the amendment offered by Rep. Humphrey Marshall, as follows: "Provided, that this appropriation shall not be expended, in whole or in part, upon the embellishment or decoration of the Capitol extension, either by painting or sculpture in the panels or niches of the Senate or House, or in the pediments of the porticoes, or in the finish of the halls, committee rooms, or passages, unless the designs for such embellishment and decoration shall have been first submitted to and accepted by a committee, to be selected by the President, composed of three distinguished artists, citizens of the United States, which committee shall be employed by the President for the purpose of examining and determining upon such designs as shall be adopted for the embellishment of the Capitol extension: And provided further, Said committee of artists shall act in collection with and subordinate to the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress, and shall not be authorized to conclude any contract for the execution of such design without the direction of said committee." (2) An excerpt from the House proceedings of May 20, 1858, as reported in the *Daily Globe*, including the vote to strike out the appropriation of \$1,000,000 for the Capitol extension.

⁵⁷ Queen Victoria (1819–1901).

people, particularly in the House. Old Mr. Dickins,⁵⁸ the Secretary of the Senate, is an honest man. The Senate employees generally have a better reputation than those of the House of Representatives. But I do not desire to be mixed up with either.

I told him of the statement made to me by the maker of the desks for the House of Representatives; that he was attacked by so many persons who told him that he had to pay them for getting him the order to make the desks; his asking me what it meant, and my answer that they were liars and scoundrels who wished to rob him and defeat me.

* * *

[MAY 27 CONT.] Taylor of Brooklyn is getting very mad about his project. He offered in the House today an amendment to the Army bill providing that no Army officer shall hereafter be detailed for civil duty except wherever provided by law. This was intended as a blow at me.

He thinks he has no feeling but only a desire for the good of American art. He told Mr. Morgan, however, today, after I left the Hall, that he had seen me very officious and that he had inquired and found I had no right in there, and if he saw me there again, he should move that I be expelled.

I have been admitted by the doorkeepers and by the Speaker on the ground that I built the Hall, which is still, so far as its lighting, heating and ventilation are concerned, under my direction and superintendence, and yet I have no formal acknowledgement of the right of entrance. And I suppose that I had better not subject myself to the chance of his being blackguard enough to make such a motion while I could not answer him and he would be technically and legally right.

In the evening I went to a party at Governor Seward's. Many gentlemen were there. I was introduced to some whom I had not before known. The Governor spoke to several in regard to my position at the Capitol, urging the propriety of my course and that I should be sustained. They all said they should support me. Though some of them were against the employment of officers of the Army upon civil works, they were willing to make me an exception.

* * *

[MAY] 28TH. The *Intelligencer* of this morning contains an answer by Dr. Horatio Stone to two articles in the same paper of the 21st and 24th, attributing them both to me. The first is by me, the 2nd is not.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Asbury Dickins (1780–1861) of North Carolina served as secretary of the Senate, 1836–1861.

⁵⁹ See note number 50 (3) for summary of article of May 21, 1858.

The Senate today debated the bill giving us \$750,000 for water. Mr. Davis tried to make it \$1,185,000, the balance of the estimate, and this was lost by a vote of 23 to 27.

General [Samuel] Houston made an attack upon the statues of Crawford and got well dressed for it by Davis, who made one of the most beautiful tributes to the skill and memory of Crawford that I have ever heard delivered.

The proviso in regard to the Committee on the Library was, I think, struck out, though the morning papers do not so report it. The \$50,000 for artists was also lost. The water works million passed without dispute, and the proviso of Mr. Stanton⁶⁰ was struck out.

Taylor is said to be very angry at his defeat and will fight the appropriation in the House of Representatives. The House of Representatives, by ayes and noes of 56 to 126, refused to agree to his amendment that no Army officer shall hereafter be detailed for civil duty except where directed by law. This vote, I was told by many Members who came into the Senate, was given out of direct compliment to me. Many of them said that upon the general principle, they were opposed to employing officers upon civil duty, but they were willing to make me an exception, and they thought this amendment of Taylor's was intended as an attack upon me and they therefore voted it out by more than $\frac{2}{3}$. This will not please him.

I was told, too, by Mr. Dodd of New York that in his part of the House of Representatives, it was said among the Republicans that if I was relieved, there would be more opportunity for Governor Floyd to take upon himself the direction of the works and they had no confidence in him and wished me to remain, as more to be trusted, and that I should think this a greater compliment.

The Senate did not get through the bill, and Mr. Seward says that he will try in the Senate, the votes above cited having been in Committee of the Whole, to get the appropriation increased to one million. I got him a list of the ayes and noes, some of which he thinks he can change.

* * *

[MAY 29] I had intended to have a bell put into one of the air ducts of the south wing in order to summon the Members from the committee rooms in case of their presence being desirable for a division. I had ordered this with that thought. I find by trying some experiments that not even a steam-whistle in the ducts can be heard in the committee rooms or even 50 feet from the source of the sound. The changes

⁶⁰ Benjamin Stanton (1809–1872), Whig then Republican of Ohio, served in the House of Representatives, 1851–1853 and 1855–1861.

in the size of the ducts and the curves, branches, etc., cause such an interference of the vibrations that the sound is completely destroyed.

* * *

[MAY] 31. Monday. At the office, I sent off a number of letters to contractors informing them of the awards made by the Secretary.

The clock has been set up in the House of Representatives, though without the eagle upon it. I am told that it looks well, though I have not yet seen it. I do not like to go there and meet the inquiries in regard to my head. [On May 29, on his way to the aqueduct, Meigs had an accident with his horse, and his right eyebrow was cut open.]

I see that Marshall's motion for a committee of 5 members of a select committee to consider the memorial of the artists of the United States was adopted today.

I have the vote upon the motion of Mr. Taylor to exclude officers from civil works. I place it here for the record.

[Printed material inserted.]⁶¹

JUNE 1ST. Colonel Scott⁶² came today to see me. He is very desirous of having some changes made in the plans for the House of Representatives. After a long and good-humored discussion, he left, telling me that he was of the same opinion as all whom he had heard speak of me, that I was an officer moved by a desire to do my duty but the most immovable, firmest man he had ever seen; that he had tried in various ways and had never succeeded in moving me a thousandth part of a hair.

* * *

[JUNE 1 CONT.] By the debates which are inserted here, it appears that the Senate has struck out all the provisos of the House of Representatives attached to the appropriations and that they have determined to give us \$800,000 and the balance of the 25,000, making about \$990,000 for the aqueduct, \$750,000 for the Capitol extension.

The House of Representatives has referred the artists' memorial to a select committee of Marshall and others. I fear they will accomplish nothing. They do not understand what they want, and the artists are

⁶¹(1) An undated article from the *Washington Union* reporting on the memorial by the National Artists' Association asking for an art commission to consider the subjects to be depicted in the Capitol. The article urged that no artist be placed on the commission to be appointed. (2) An excerpt from the proceedings of the House on May 31, 1858, adopting the resolution to establish a select committee to consider the petition. (3) An excerpt from the House proceedings announcing the appointment of the committee: Marshall of Kentucky, Keitt of South Carolina, Taylor of New York, [Edward J.] Morris of Pennsylvania, and [George H.] Pendleton of Ohio.

⁶²Colonel A.V. Scott owned land that Meigs needed as the site for a reservoir in Georgetown. Since Scott refused to sell the land, Meigs was starting condemnation proceedings.

too unwieldy a body, with no temper of discussion, full of jealousy against each other.

[Printed material inserted.]⁶³

* * *

[JUNE] 2ND. At the office. I found that the clock was making trouble yesterday, and I had to see the Speaker about it today.

Debate upon the Secretary of War. He escaped by laying the resolution upon the table by a majority of 5 only, $\frac{2}{3}$ of the Members only voting. A close shave, and it is said many Democrats voted against him. The majority, I think, believe him weak and unfit for his place but not intending to be dishonest.⁶⁴

I had a time with the clock in the House of Representatives. It stopped, and everybody was out of temper and out of time. I saw the Speaker and explained.

I then examined the clock, much abused by the rival clock-maker in town, Haven, I believe, by name. I think it is a beautiful piece of work, with mercurial pendulum, and that it will go for many years without any more complaint. It is not yet properly put up, however.

* * *

[JUNE 4] The vote the other day upon the Secretary of War was a narrow escape; only a majority of 5 to save him from a resolution of censure. His acts disapproved, the sale declared void, etc. I put here an epitome of the votes.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]⁶⁵

⁶³An excerpt from the *Daily Globe* with the Senate proceedings of May 28, 1858, considering the appropriations for the Capitol and the aqueduct. When the decorative painting was discussed, Senator Jefferson Davis explained that the Agriculture Committee room was "prepared as a specimen to be submitted to Congress, and they were called upon by the then Secretary of War, being myself, to see whether they would have the other rooms completed in the same style, and they were told that if so, and if they would have the building floored with encaustic tiling, an additional sum of money would be required." Davis noted that, while no formal vote had been taken, members had indicated that "they wanted the best materials and best style of workmanship and highest order of art introduced into the Capitol of the United States. It was under that view that the estimates were made for the appropriation passed." Davis continued to defend the decoration against other complaints, including a lengthy one by Senator Sam Houston, who ridiculed the sculptures for Crawford's pediment that he had seen in the sheds near the building.

⁶⁴Newspaper articles had been raising questions for months about certain sales and purchases of government land for forts since Secretary Floyd took office.

⁶⁵(1) Proceedings of the House on May 31, 1858, referring the artists' petition to the select committee. (2) House proceedings of June 1, 1858, regarding Secretary of War Floyd, stating that the sale of Fort Snelling in Minnesota in June 1857 "was without authority of law." The resolution failed by a vote of 81 yeas to 86 nays.

[JUNE 4 CONT.] The Senate has passed, at last, the bill for the service of the civil works, aqueduct and Capitol and Post Office, and it has gone to the House.

* * *

[JUNE 6] Dr. Blake came this evening to say to me that it was reported that Mr. [Charles] Thomas had given orders at the shop of the Capitol that no man should go to the election, upon pain of dismissal, that they must vote after 6 o'clock. He said that it had been proposed to go to the Secretary of War about it and he had promised to see me, as it was due to me, that the matter should be corrected through me if the report was true.

I promised to send up in the morning to correct it if it proved true; that if such an order had been given, it had been given without my knowledge and with a good intention by the foreman, Thomas, and from ignorance, not from the desire to interfere with the right of voting.

For my own part, I think that it is the duty of every citizen to vote; that to do this he must have time to visit the polls, and that as we are not the judges of who are citizens and who are not, we cannot properly refuse to any man the privilege of going if he desires it. Such an order I must issue in the morning.

I was told by Blake that the Committee of Ways and Means have agreed to the Capitol appropriation and have recommended a disagreement with the striking out of the proviso of the waterworks. I hope that the House will not agree with the committee in this last.

* * *

[JUNE 6 CONT.] The club last night met at the house of Mr. Trowbridge.⁶⁶ We had a pleasant meeting. Bache told me of the debate in the Senate upon the motion of Andy Johnson, Senator Johnson⁶⁷ of Tennessee, to strike out the Capitol extension and waterworks appropriations. They have not been published, but he got, upon the one, 6 to 33, and with the other vote, 4 to 43.

[JUNE] 7TH. This is the day of the election of mayor and city commissioners.

I went in the morning to the Engineer Department to see Wright before sending in to the Secretary of War the contracts for his approval.

⁶⁶ William P. Trowbridge (1828–1892) was a cousin of Kate Trowbridge Rodgers. An engineer and West Point graduate, he was working in the U.S. Coast Survey office in Washington in 1858.

⁶⁷ Andrew Johnson (1808–1875), Democrat of Tennessee, served in the House of Representatives, 1843–1853, and in the Senate, 1857–1862, and again in 1875. He was vice president of the U.S in 1865 and president, 1865–1869.

I met there Captain Woodbury, Engineers, my old classmate at West Point. I took him to the Capitol with me and showed him over the building and heating apparatus, etc. We went into the House of Representatives and sat there during the discussion upon the appropriations for the waterworks and for the Capitol extension.

Both appropriations passed, but the Committee on Ways and Means had recommended a disagreement to the amendment of the Senate in reference to the aqueduct contracts; and the House, with no discussion, formally agreed to their recommendation.

Upon the Capitol extension appropriation, Taylor of Brooklyn endeavored to engraft his proviso that none of the money should be spent in painting or decoration. He tried this 3 times in different forms, showed great temper and petulance and got voted down each time more strongly. He was not satisfied in the defeat by sound but called for division, and when beaten by division, which is taken by counting the persons who may stand up, he asked for teller and got a still stronger vote against him. The House saw his feeling and got out of patience with him.

He made a speech in which he denounced me for want of taste and cultivation, etc., as entirely unfit to take charge of the decoration of the Capitol, a very unfair and indeed abusive speech.

Someone from Georgia, I do not know who, got up to answer him, saying that Captain Meigs was denounced by parties here who were unable to use him and fought their _____ from the public crib, and that this was the true cause of these attacks upon me.

Maynard of Tennessee, who had spoken in favor of Taylor's amendment, indeed had offered it in a different shape for him after he had been beaten, rose and said that he made no attack upon me, considered me active, intelligent, etc., etc. He wanted only American artists employed.

Mr. Taylor afterwards succeeded in getting the floor and protested against being represented as attacking me, said that he thought me eminently fit for my place, deserving, etc., praising me for a few minutes highly, and then broke out into denunciation of my want of taste, etc., again, as bad as ever.

Poor man, he does not know that [Henry K.] Brown and his commissions as a sculptor are at the bottom of all his work, together with a desire to succeed in making himself a patron of art at the expense of the United States.

I thought we had the whole thing right when, after adopting all these propositions 3 times by, I think, 9 votings on Taylor's and Maynard's provisos, Humphrey Marshall got up, made a plausible speech about a commission of artists and the Library Committee, his

high respect for me and his freedom from any intention to make an attack upon me, he offered his old amendment, nearly if not precisely, and the House agreed to it.

* * *

[JUNE] 8TH. I spent the greater part of the day in drawing checks and in writing letters to Davis and to Mr. Pearce upon the provisos of the aqueduct and Capitol extension appropriations.

I much fear that this proviso will make a great delay in our work, perhaps make it necessary to alter the plans of the work, leaving out some things and changing the style or finish of others. . . .

* * *

[JUNE 8 CONT.] I went into the Senate and House in the afternoon. The day was hot, but the air was pure in the House of Representatives. At the time I was there, the gas lights were burning. There is much heat radiated through the glass by the great gas fire we have above the ceiling. It is the pleasantest light possible but it is costly, and the effect of the radiation is disagreeable.

* * *

[JUNE 9] I went to the Capitol, stayed a short time, gave some letters and information to several persons in regard to the effect of the provisos upon my appropriations.

* * *

[JUNE 9 CONT.] I went to the wedding of Tiny Croghan⁶⁸ with my brother-in-law, Augustus Rodgers. She is the daughter of Colonel Croghan,⁶⁹ the hero of Sandusky. They were married in church and left in the cars for the North, for a wedding tour. I then went back to the Capitol.

The day was very hot, and I found some complaint among the Members about the heat. Some asked if I could not give them some air, Maynard of Tennessee among others. I told him that the air was being changed by the fan once in every 6 minutes, which kept it fresh, and that the temperature, with the gas burning after a 10-hour session, was only one degree above that of the evening breeze outside.

They had the doors all open and the wind blew through the windows of the south lobbies and rooms into the Hall. I tried the effect of the radiant heat in gas above the ceiling, which had been burning for hours. The difference between a thermometer upon the desk in the

⁶⁸ Serena Livingston Croghan (?–1926).

⁶⁹ George Croghan (1791–1849) was awarded a Congressional Gold Medal for his actions in defense of Fort Stephenson in Ohio during the War of 1812.

middle of the Hall exposed to this radiation and one under the desk, protected from it, was only 2 degrees or 3 degrees. Yet this was sensible to the feeling.

During the day, the thermometer outside was at 87 degrees, the air entering, and the Hall was at 83 degrees or 84 degrees. At night, after the gas was lit for some time, I found the thermometers upon the wall inside at 82 degrees, the air entering at 81 degrees, and the thermometer in the window ledge on the south side of the building at 81 degrees.

The air remained perfectly pure and sweet, except in the gallery, where I could discern in some places the smell of tobacco upon the carpets, which have been down for some months.

The result is perfection; but the press—see the slip from the *Union*—seem to expect that the fan must make air cooler than it is when delivered to it. To cool down the air by ice would make a cellar atmosphere, unhealthy.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]⁷⁰

[JUNE 11] The House of Representatives sat for 14 hours, from 11 a.m. to 1 a.m., with a recess of 1 hour, about 5 to 6 p.m.

I caused a record of the thermometer to be kept in order to have it published. The difference between the floor and gallery was not above ½ degrees. The gas did not seem to increase the heat of the room, for the temperature steadily had decreased as the night grew cooler, after the lighting of the gas, until the adjournment at 1 a.m.

Thus, a 14-hour session, 7 of them by gaslight, with several hundred people in the chamber, many of them smoking, did not suffice to produce upon the room any sensible effect in temperature or in purity of atmosphere. In the middle of the day and early afternoon, the temperature of the Hall was below that outside. Merely because better shaded from the sun than the shady place outside in which the observed outside thermometer was placed.

The doors into the Hall and galleries were all open and gave every admission of the southern breeze, the windows in the lobbies being open. This was so much added to the artificial ventilation, the effect of which alone was to change all the air in 6 minutes.

The conference committee upon the Miscellaneous Bill reported in favor of striking out the proviso to the aqueduct appropriation. The art committee proviso to the Capitol extension appropriation was so

⁷⁰ An unidentified newspaper clipping with a comparison of temperatures inside and outside the House of Representatives on June 13, 1858.

modified as not to interfere with the finish of the building or of the works of Crawford and Rogers, though it will stop the remainder of the salary of Walker, who is painting the Battle of Chapultepec for the Military Committee room.

Upon the whole, I have had a good measure of success, having \$1,840,000 voted for my works and enough to finish the aqueduct in all essentials.

* * *

[JUNE 12] As the *Union* has published lately some articles and views of ventilation of the House, [Alfred] Rives has caused the record to be got and sent an article to the *Star* today. The record also was sent to the *Intelligencer* and *Union*. It appeared in the *Intelligencer* only.

[longhand transcription follows]

Reporters gallery, House of Representatives, June 12, Saturday

11 a.m.	79 degrees
12	79 degrees
1	79 degrees
3	79 degrees
8	76 degrees
9	77 degrees

June 14, Monday	
12 m.	71½ degrees

Congress adjourned at 6 p.m. today⁷¹ having sat some 2 months less than the [illegible word] 1st session of Congress for years, and having been in actual session some 50 hours more than in the longest session known and passed more bills and done more business than ever before. No deaths in the House members. Part of this is probably attributable to a pure atmosphere, a well lighted, ventilated, and arranged room and one in which all could hear and see.

[shorthand transcription resumes]

JUNE 14TH. Congress adjourned today at 6 p.m. They have passed the appropriation bill and done a vast amount of business.

I have for the water works about	\$990,000
Capitol extension	710,000
Post Office	140,000
	<hr/>
Total	\$1,840,000

⁷¹The House and Senate adjourned the first session of the Thirty-fifth Congress on June 14, 1858, but the Senate then convened in special session on June 15 and 16 to consider presidential nominations.

A pretty good sum to dispose of in one year. But the greater part of it will be gone by December. In addition to this, I have for the dome some \$500,000 on hand. Making 2,300,000 dollars available.

* * *

[JUNE] 15. I spent the greater part of the day at home, making up the prices of work for Provost and Winter.

* * *

[JUNE 15 CONT.] Upon returning home, I found a large cartoon by Leutze of the Battle of Braddock's Defeat, with a note from Commander _____ of the Navy, saying that it was received by the Ariel Steamer and that Mr. Leutze had requested him to present it with his compliments.

In his letter, he states that it is the study of a picture which he has painted to fill a commission from Cincinnati; and as he is about negotiating for the copyright, he takes the liberty of sending to me the cartoon. This seems a non sequitur. The connection between the negotiations for the copyright and the presentation of the cartoon I do not understand. I cannot accept such a present or, indeed, any other.

I went this evening to see Mr. Walker, who is hard at work upon the painting of the *Battle of Chapultepec*. I told him of the effect of the proviso to the appropriation bill in stopping all payments for painting and of course for his work; that I could pay him from the old appropriation up to the time the proviso passed—that is, till yesterday, but not beyond that time. He seemed much distressed but seemed to think he would be able to hang on and finish this picture.

* * *

[JUNE 16] Mr. Heebner came in just before I got home. He said that he had seen Mr. Walter today, who told him that I was to be relieved from both aqueduct and Capitol. That the Capitol extension was to be put into the hands of Captain Thomas J. Lee⁷² or of Colonel Jones. Who the latter is, I do not know. He came in while Heebner was in Walter's rooms. That Walter was to have full control and that these persons or one of them was to be disbursing agent.

I asked him whether Walter seemed to be in good spirits at this. He said no, very much down. He says he told him again that he had done a very wrong thing in attacking me and that Walter answered as he has done two or 3 times before, that he was forced into it, forced by John Rice and Bigler. That he seemed to be less angry in his feeling towards me as he had been before.

⁷²Thomas J. Lee was an engineer with the Topographical Bureau. In 1852 he had helped to review the foundations and other work on the Capitol.

I told Mr. Heebner that I did not believe a word of all this, but that if it should be true, I was prepared to leave my place.

In regard to the columns, Heebner says that he went to Rice's office to tell him of his offer for the Italian columns, and Rice told him not to make such an offer, that he should oppose the use of Italian out and out, and that he had a proposal in this which would be decided in a few days for columns from the Lee quarry in 4 pieces at 1,050 or \$1,150.

Heebner was so astonished at this, having known from me of my report upon John Rice's offer to furnish Italian columns in single blocks, sent to the Secretary and by him referred to me, that he did not venture to speak to me. To be deceived thus by his partner, he said he should go home and open a correspondence with him. He could not trust himself to talk with me after such a piece of treachery.

So there is a pretty piece of roguery and a very pretty quarrel.

[JUNE] 17. I spent this day at the office, at work. Signed contracts, gave instructions to contractors, etc.

I mentioned to Mr. Briggs that Mr. Walter said that I was to be removed and someone put as disbursing agent, with the authority over the work given to Mr. Walter again, but that I was told he was not in good spirits yet.

He said that Mr. Walter was not nearly so confident today as he had been yesterday about this and that for his part, he did not believe that any change would be made in my position unless it was determined upon at the next cabinet meeting; that he understood there had been some talk of such a thing.

I did not quite like Mr. Briggs' tone and manner in speaking of this. I believe that he has at bottom some feeling about military superintendence. He speaks sometimes of the civil bureaus, of the failure of Mr. Lewis to build up a civil lighthouse bureau when he had a good chance, etc. And today he seemed to have heard and know [more than] he was ready to speak of to me. He keeps himself clear of any expression of sympathy in the quarrel between Mr. Walter and myself. For this I cannot blame him, for he is in a subordinate position; and though he owes his place entirely to me, he does not choose nor do I desire him to become a partisan of mine, and I suppose he wishes to keep himself in condition to remain should I be removed.

I think Mr. Briggs is cool and self-careful, with much more caution than his wife, who seems a warm-hearted woman.

I had a talk with Mr. Fowler, who says that Mr. Walter does not express any angry feeling towards me; that he wishes he could easily make up his difference with me if I would withdraw my claim to be

the architect of this building and to have designed it; that he considers himself the architect and designer. Etc.

If all this be so, he has changed his note lately and I am much misinformed. I do suppose that he thinks himself very ill-used. And yet I am sure that he is false, treacherous, and that he has lied and slandered me and claimed what belongs to me and to me alone, as well as much that belongs to us together.

Mr. Fowler is going, he says, to spend a few days with Senator Pearce. He says that Pearce told him that there was much talk about his taking the place of Cobb as Secretary of the Treasury but that he had not heard of it except through rumor, so that there could have been no offer made to Mr. Pearce. There might have been some reason, however, for the rumor which was so prevalent.

What did Mr. Briggs know when he spoke of nothing being done against me unless it was done in the next cabinet meeting? He is not entirely frank.

Mr. Nason, he says, saw Mr. Seward and was advised by him to see Mr. Sickles. "Sickles," Briggs says, "you know is reported to be against Floyd." There is something in the wind.

Provost came in a great disturbance about some prices I had set for him. The price of the capital he thought very bad. Only \$700. He declared he had paid out \$722 for one of them.

I told him that I had got these at the Post Office for \$800 and the _____ had some of them, got them for really \$400, having the rest for _____ over the regular wages; and that I was sure that \$700 was a large cost for such caps. I could not undertake to pay the cost if they had so managed as to pay for them more than they were worth.

He objected also to the price for the arches over the insulated portion of the porticoes.

Between a dishonest, unfaithful Secretary upon whose support I cannot rely and these contractors, I feel almost ready to wish that I was relieved from all this labor and responsibility. However, bear on and leave the result to the Almighty, Who rules all things well.

[JUNE] 18TH. Mr. Walter, I am informed by Mr. Denham today, has said that he has written to the department that if I am not removed in a week, he will resign. Mr. Denham heard this in the office, though not from him. He met him afterwards in the street. As Denham came out of the Treasury, Mr. Walter was coming down from the direction of the War Department.

I went to see Mr. Davis and told him of this last move and that I could not of course know what the Secretary would do, but that if

the President chose to adopt that course, it would be perhaps the simplest resolution of the affair to let Mr. Walter resign; but that in that case the President should say something to him to prevent the stealing of the drawings which have been by me put into his charge and which he has taken up to the rooms in the old building which he occupies as his office.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]⁷³

[JUNE 20] The *Union*, I see by the above telegraph, denies the report which was prevalent that Mr. Walter had offered his resignation.⁷⁴ He will not resign.

[JUNE] 21ST. I took Henry⁷⁵ over the Capitol today. Showed him the workshops, the ventilating, the halls, corridors, etc. He was delighted, thought the work and the decoration beautiful. Says that I may _____ upon this the whole Yankee nation and that justice must be done to me in the end.

We met Mr. Davis in the new Senate Chamber. The Senator went with us over the building and was much pleased with the progress which he saw and which had been made since he was last in the building before he was taken sick.

Mr. Nason called this evening with Mr. Briggs. I gave him a letter to the Russian minister, as he thinks of going upon his invitation to St. Petersburg this fall. He has been consulted in regard to the heating of the government buildings and palaces in Russia. I also gave him a letter of introduction to Mr. [Joseph R.] Chandler, our minister to Naples.

* * *

[JUNE 22] Mr. Nason told me last night that he had called upon the President yesterday and explained to him his case and that he thought he was wrongfully treated by the Secretary of War,⁷⁶ gave to him his copy of my letter to the Secretary explaining the mode of heating and ventilating the Capitol extension and asking to be allowed to continue

⁷³House proceedings of June 7, 1858, from the *Daily Globe* of June 17, discussing an appropriation of \$750,000 for the Capitol extension, as described by Meigs on June 7.

⁷⁴Meigs inserted an undated clipping from the New York *Herald*, stating that Thomas Walter had sent his resignation to the president "to take effect in six days unless Captain Meigs be removed." The undated *Union* clipping, headed "A Correction," denied the report.

⁷⁵Meigs' brother Henry had arrived on June 19 for a visit. He lived in Columbus, Georgia, where, according to Meigs, he was "engaged in the business of manufacturing."

⁷⁶Secretary Floyd had ordered Meigs to give the heating and ventilating contract for the Post Office to another firm, even after Meigs explained that Nason and Dodge had the necessary skill and experience, having done similar work on the Capitol extension.

the same system at the Post Office, with the action of the Secretary thereon. Told the President how he came to be made the subject of a Senate resolution.⁷⁷ The President promised to read the paper and revise the case.

* * *

[JUNE 22 CONT.] I find that the time is coming when it will be necessary to have some resolution of the difficulty between Mr. Walter and myself. He has been talking in a manner which indicated the intention to retire unless I was removed. But he does not retire and I am not removed. He has had possession of the drawings of the work which are properly in my custody; and I cannot think I make demands upon him for parts of these drawings when he has denied my authority in calling upon him to bring them all to my office. I must see the Secretary of War upon this matter.

I spent some time today in looking over Gruner's *Ornamental Art* and other books of this caliber in the Library of Congress, and I raise from the examination of the books that the decoration of the Capitol will compare favorably with the best of the examples that are given. The Pompeian rooms are better than the examples from Pompeii in the book of _____, and the other styles are as well represented as in any of the plates given by any of these books.

* * *

[JUNE 24] The Secretary has sent word by Brand, the engineman whom he caused to be sent to Cabin John bridge [on the aqueduct] to take the place of Beatty, in order to gratify Beatty with a place at the Capitol, to Mr. Dunn, to come to see him tomorrow morning.⁷⁸

He told Brand that he made a mistake when he interfered with Captain Meigs' business. I wish he could come to that conclusion in all things and leave me to manage my business in my own way. He scarce ever touches it without doing some mischief, either by making some confusion or by doing some injustice. I fear now that he is about to do some wrong in order to repair a wrong to Brand.

* * *

[JUNE 26] I went today to see the President but found that he was lying down and was engaged with someone—I forget whom. I then called upon the Secretary of War and asked him whether he had yet examined the position of affairs between Mr. Walter and myself. The

⁷⁷ At Nason's urging, Senator Seward had introduced a resolution to require Floyd to produce all materials and correspondence related to heating and ventilating the Capitol and the Post Office.

⁷⁸ On May 14, Secretary Floyd had ordered Meigs to move Beatty to the Capitol and replace him on the aqueduct with Brand. Neither Brand nor Beatty identified further.

Secretary said he had not, that he had intended after the adjournment of Congress to take a week and go through the papers carefully and fairly.

Mr. Davis then gave him the history of the affair, telling him that I had protected Mr. Walter for years and that he had repaid me with the basest ingratitude. That he had served me with apparent faithfulness until a new administration came in and he had thought it a good time for an attack and then had been one of the bitterest of my assailants. The Secretary said he agreed that this presented a bad case for Mr. Walter, and Davis left him.

He says that when he spoke with the President about me before, the President spoke with some commendation of me, seemed to be really interested in me and my success.

Mr. Fowler today, of Janes and Beebe's firm, told me that he had, at the instance of Mr. Briggs, who asked him if it was not possible to reconcile the differences between Mr. Walter and myself, spoken to Mr. Walter, asked him what was the difficulty. And Mr. Walter said he had nothing against Captain Meigs, but that Captain Meigs claimed to be the architect of this building which he declared he was, himself, and that whenever Captain Meigs withdrew that claim, there would be no difficulty in our coming together. I told him that this would never be done.

* * *

[JUNE] 28TH. I went to the department today to get the contracts for the aqueduct approved. After waiting for some time at the Engineer Department and at the War Department, I met the Secretary upon the stairs of the latter as I was leaving. I told him I had called to get his formal approval of the contracts and went into his room with him.

Mr. Drinkard came in, being summoned, with the papers; and after the Secretary had signed his name upon the back, I told him I had much business to speak to him about, which I could not then, as many people were waiting for him, [detain] him. That Mr. Walter's position was one of them. That I had given to Mr. Walter an order which he had disobeyed, and that I could not give him another until this was obeyed. That I had directed Mr. Walter to bring the papers, drawings, etc., to my office in his charge, to rooms prepared for them in a [building] rented by authority of the Secretary of War for his office, and that he had not acknowledged my letter, had not informed me that he would or would not obey it, but had gone into the cockloft of the old Capitol building, having, I was informed, got from the Secretary a letter to the Speaker asking him to give him such rooms.

This he had not communicated to me, expecting and hoping perhaps that I would attempt to enforce my orders and thus bring about a colli-

sion between me and the Secretary of War. That I had not seen such a letter, had no official knowledge of it, but I was told it existed.

He did not acknowledge nor did he deny that he had given such a letter. He said, however, that he would study this question and decide it and that he intended to put it upon a more satisfactory basis and make a more satisfactory arrangement than had existed for some time; that it had been very disagreeable to him. I asked in what. He said that he had found a disposition to resist his wishes, that he had never had an order disobeyed, and that he had been told to give orders in order to have his views carried out.

I told him he did me injustice, that I had wished to carry out his views whenever I could properly do so; that when he gave an order, I obeyed it; when he advised or requested anything which I thought right, I did it; and when he expressed a desire to have something done which I thought wrong or injurious to him or the public service, I had expressed my views. In some cases he had yielded to this expression; in others, he had insisted, and his orders had been obeyed.

* * *

[JUNE 29] I had a call from Mr. Rutherford this evening, in which he was much out of temper and spoke to me in a manner which was very improper. He has the worst temper of any man I know and has not infrequently spoken to me in a style which would have caused a quick-tempered man to give him up.

He was offended at some order to put a rabbit in the edge of a stone for the looking-glass frame in the Senate Retiring Room. The order was written by Mr. Briggs, and he said it ought not be done to please Mr. Briggs, of whose authority he has always seemed jealous. I said no, too, because it was right that I order it.

He said he had spoken to Mr. Walter and represented to him that it was not worthwhile to spend the money upon it; that Mr. Walter agreed with him and he had then stopped it. One frame had 5 thus made. Etc.

I said well, I think it should be done for such and such reasons. He would not listen to the reasons but asked what had Mr. Briggs to do with it.

"He is my agent or assistant and is over the work."

"Is he over me?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, I do not wish to have anything more to do with the work." And he flung out of the office before a word could be said.

I felt somewhat provoked at first, but I am sorry for his temper, which is the cause of most of his misfortunes, together with some little

taste of grog which he takes at dinner. I have always found him more apt to be impertinent after dinner than before.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]⁷⁹

JULY 1. I received today from the Treasury a couple of drafts for the Capitol extension amounting to \$190,000. I drew checks at once upon these amount[ing] to \$50,000 for the Provost and Winter's work, \$24,000 for the payrolls of the Capitol. I paid out all together today about \$100,000. It would be quite convenient to receive the 5 percent commission which is given to architects for their work upon this.

I found upon my table a letter from Mr. Rutherford resigning his place as master of the marble work of the Capitol extension. I wrote to him a letter pointing out the wrong that he thus does to the work and to himself, reminding him that he promised me to keep a guard over his temper and that he had no right to take away from the work the knowledge and experience he had acquired during 5 years' employment for a slight cause.

I told him that I had more than once had occasion to see that he spoke to me in a manner and style which were not such as are due to me from him, but that I had passed them over because I thought more of my work than of the pleasure of myself or of those engaged upon it.

Mr. [Zephaniah] Jones has been talking with him and I presume has made him feel that he had done a foolish and unreasonable thing. I gave Jones my letter to read and to take with him.

Whether he will withdraw his resignation or no, I do not know. I expect to take Doherty if he retires.

* * *

[JULY] 2ND. It is very hot yet. Annie [Macomb] goes to Burner's [?], White Sulphur Springs [Virginia—now West Virginia], today. She took with her all her children and her nurse.

I stayed at home, having waked up early with a headache and feeling as if an exposure to the sun would bring on a bilious attack. I wrote many reports and letters and went to the War Department to offer my assistance in enabling the Secretary to decide properly the case of the marble columns for the Capitol extension, but he had gone to the cabinet. He had sent down for the contracts. He wishes to dispose of the case this week, Mr. Drinkard informed me.

⁷⁹An undated excerpt from Senate proceedings regarding choice of seats in the new Senate chamber.

* * *

[JULY 3] After visiting the site of the reservoir upon Lee's Hill, I went to the office and thence to the War Department, where I had to wait some hours before I could see the Secretary. I went in order to advise him in regard to the offers of Rice and Heebner for the columns of the porticoes of the Capitol extension.

I had understood that he sometimes asked where I was, as though he thought I did not come often enough to see him. And though I had an angry discussion with him the other day, I felt, myself, none of the anger which he showed and no resentment, so I went in order to offer my services and assistance and to show him, too, that I was able to meet him again with as much politeness and as cordially as before.

I found that Mr. Walter had been there just before I was. He approved of my order to Miller and Coates for the tile floors of the attic of the north wing of the Capitol extension, amounting to some \$14,000.

He received me politely, asked me to take a seat, and we discussed the matter in question. He said that he wished to save money and therefore was disposed to accept the offer of Rice to deliver the column shafts in 4 pieces, each at \$1,050. This is far higher than his first contract, which delivered the shafts in pieces not less than 4 feet long for \$1.98 per cubic foot.

Heebner's offer is for Italian marble monoliths at \$1,400, delivered at the Capitol grounds. Rice's offer for Italian is at \$1,400 on the dock.

I advised that they be informed that the first columns delivered in monoliths by either of them would be accepted at \$1,400 upon the Capitol grounds. The Secretary said he could save money—\$350 each shaft, \$35,000 in all.

I told him that the monoliths were much the most beautiful and suitable for the building, that Congress had expressly authorized the expense by a joint resolution, etc.

I had a curious discussion with him. Once before, he had declared his wish that the whole building was not made of granite, and he renewed this notion; said he wished he could build the columns of bricks, that he thought the proper building for the Capitol of the United States would be one of brick, with a room for the House of Representatives 100 feet by 60 feet, in which the Members should sit upon pine benches; much about the monuments of a free people being those of literature and great deeds, etc.

I suggested that literature and art went together in their progress and triumphs. In fact, he wished to say something disagreeable to me and abused the building as a piece of apery: It aped the Louvre, it aped St. Peter's, etc. So much nonsense I have not heard lately. I did

not much attempt to answer him, only so much as was necessary to prevent his thinking I was rudely sitting mute in contempt of his opinions and arguments. But what a man to have the control of a great building, a great monument of art and architecture. I do right not to consult him very often, if this is to be the advice I get.

He said that I had some correspondence with Mrs. Ritchie⁸⁰ about a commission for a painting for one of the panels in the House of Representatives, for some artist. I asked the name of the artist, having no remembrance of such a correspondence.

He had forgotten, but said that he saw that Congress had put some [restriction] upon the painting of the building and that he had given a commission to this artist for filling one of the panels and that it must be brought [?] in some way.

I asked the price. He said he had not fixed the price; the name of the artist, he had forgotten; the subject of the painting, he did not know.

I told him that if he gave an order to me to pay any account, it was sufficient for me and that I should pay it, the _____ being obliged to give me credit for any payment made by his order, and that though it might make some difficulty, still he had a right to give an order and Congress would be bound to pay for it when it was furnished.

But what an example of his style of doing the country's business! Mrs. Ritchie, formerly Miss Mowatt, the actress, asks him to give a commission to a painter, of whom he knows nothing, for one of the most important fields in the Capitol. And he gives to her the commission blindly, not knowing the price and the subject or enough of the artist to remember his name.

I could not bring him to a decision upon the matter of the columns. He said he would read the contracts carefully and decide it.

The payrolls have been settled. I paid off an immense number of large accounts today. They have accumulated during the last 3 months.

I paid to Janes, Beebe and Co., for iron work of ceilings, doors, etc., and putting them up, being the final payments upon a vast amount of work, \$40,000. To Rice and Heebner, contractors, for marble, \$33,000. To Provost, Winter and Co., this was paid yesterday, \$55,000 for working marble. And so to many others large sums.

I have already paid out the \$190,000 which I drew from the Treasury upon the 1st of the month. Our payroll, however, is much diminished, as the work is no longer so extensive as it has been upon the Capitol.

⁸⁰ Anna Cora Ogden Mowatt (1819–1870) was an actress and writer, who in 1854 married William F. Ritchie, the editor of the *Richmond Enquirer*.

And upon the waterworks, the new contractors having done little this month, our monthly expenditures are not so heavy as usual.

* * *

[JULY 6] Colonel Hickey, the Chief Clerk of the Senate, came to see me today in favor of Charles Frederick Anderson,⁸¹ an architect of New York, an Englishman or Irishman, who, when I was first put in charge of the Capitol extension, was much urged upon me by Colonel Hickey as the proper man to be employed as architect in place of Mr. Walter.

Anderson has discovered that there has been a disagreement between Mr. Walter and myself. He has come down to endeavor to profit by it. Has been to the Secretary, who, upon his telling him that he could prove that Mr. Walter was not the author of the plans of the Capitol extension and that he, himself, was the author of them as adopted, replied that if he would prove what he said, it would be a matter of only a moment to relieve Mr. Walter. He then, upon this encouragement, took his papers and plans in order to prove to the Secretary what he asserted and was informed by the Secretary that he had made up his mind, even granting that Mr. Anderson could prove all that he thought he could, not to interfere in the matter. This sudden change of mood surprised and balked Mr. Anderson.

His friend, Colonel Hickey, then made an excuse to go to the President and sound him upon the matter, a very delicate thing for him to do, he says. He introduced it by going and speaking to the President upon some of his military matters. He is colonel of the Volunteer Regiment of this city.

Bringing up the architecture of the extension, he told the President that he understood there was difficulty with Mr. Walter and myself. He thought the ventilation had been injured by Mr. Walter in the House of Representatives. Etc., etc.

The President told him that if Captain Meigs desired the assistance of Mr. Anderson in the ventilation or acoustics of the Senate Chamber, subjects in which Hickey told the President that Anderson was particularly well posted upon, there was no difficulty; that if I desired it, he could get it, etc.

I told the Colonel that he was not misinformed as to the fact of there being a disagreement between Mr. Walter and myself but that he was as to the cause, etc.

I gave him to understand that there was no place for Mr. Anderson. He would be a most disagreeable person to have anything to do with;

⁸¹ Charles Frederick Anderson was one of the architects who had competed in 1850 to design the Capitol extension.

one who, as architect, would think himself a Michelangelo and would be overbearing, troublesome, would want a servant at every door. This I did not tell the Colonel, however, of his friend. I gave him to understand that the drawings of the architecture were pretty much finished, that the plans for acoustics and ventilation were entirely finished, and the works almost done, and that they had been perfectly successful in the House of Representatives and I did not doubt would be so in the Senate Chamber.

* * *

[JULY 8] I was informed today by Mr. [Charles] Thomas that he had given orders, as I directed, that Beatty, the engineer sent to me by the Secretary of War, should share with Brand in driving the engine at night. Beatty replied that he was hired by the Secretary of War to run this engine by day and he should do it, that he had nothing to do with Captain Meigs, and that if interfered with, he would go straight to the Secretary and have it set right.

Thomas, not knowing what to do, as I was absent at the time yesterday, let him go on for the day and reported to me this morning.

I directed him to tell Beatty that he must obey my orders or leave the shop. And I wrote a report of the case to the Secretary, in which I gave him the facts and the reasons for such insolence. Attributed it to the man's knowledge of the favor in which he stood with the Secretary. I pointed out the inevitable consequences of such interference with my work in destroying discipline.

Beatty, when my order was given to him today, determined to work tonight but to go to the Secretary tomorrow.

[JULY 10] Mr. Heebner came today. He says that Mr. Rice is here, that Senator Bigler is also here, he thinks, upon the same errand—namely, to get the Secretary to take Rice's offer for the column shafts and to assist Walter in recovering the control of the Capitol extension.

He is very indignant about Rice and Bigler, says that it will take much longer to get the columns, will make difficulty in his quarry, etc. He spoke of Mr. Walter's desire to have the columns in several pieces. He said Rice outfoxed him about that. Seemed to have as little opinion of Mr. Walter's honesty as of any of the others.

I advised him to see the Secretary and tell his own story and to remember that the Secretary was to be considered as an honest man. He said that if he was honest, he must be very stupid and that in his country anyone would laugh who heard it said that the Secretary might be honest. The people would never give him credit for his honesty even if he possessed it.

He says that they keep pushing at the Secretary the fact that I had written to the President and thus make him angry at me. That this he hears from outside talk. And, moreover, that the President had said he would not sanction any step looking to my removal.

Heebner says that Rice and Bigler have been at the Secretary and President and that Mr. Walter has been up to the War Department for several days with a large bundle of drawings. I suppose they have my case up.

Mr. Heebner requested that as they have 4 vessels here with marble delayed in unloading by the difficulty in hauling away the marble from the dock, if I would allow our teams to assist. I gave orders for this purpose, charging the contractors for the actual cost of the hauling.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]⁸²

[JULY] 12TH. The Secretary, it seems, has left the city. Mr. Walter informed Mr. Heebner that the matter would be settled now in about 10 days, as soon as the Secretary comes back. I had been up on Saturday but could not see the Secretary.

Mr. Rice has gone back to Philadelphia, so the grand cabal has adjourned without having as yet done anything.

Bigler, the Senator, saw the President and probably saw the Secretary upon this subject. At least Heebner thinks he came here upon this business and is of the opinion that this was what he did.

Heebner, himself, is indignant at the conduct of Rice and says he will have to now send a copy of his letter to the Secretary, offering Italian marble and offering also American marble in 4 pieces for the shafts of the columns in his own name, without reference to Heebner, his partner in the contract. Heebner says that it would be a profitable job to get the shafts in 4 pieces from the American quarries generally; that they could get some from Fairmount, some from Pennsylvania, etc.; all kinds of colors, of qualities, the coarse crystal, the fine crystal of Baltimore, the variegated marble of Pennsylvania, the Potomac breccia, etc., etc. A pretty hodgepodge made for the benefit of Mr. Rice and not of the building.

It is getting to be disagreeable to have for my superior thus a man who thinks that if he dared, he would build the columns of the Capitol

⁸² (1) An article from the *Washington Union* of June 11, 1858—according to a handwritten notation by Meigs—describing progress on the Senate wing of the Capitol, with disparaging remarks about the “imported artists” who were decorating the walls and ceilings and “those expensive encaustic tiles” on the floors that were destined to be covered by carpet. (2) An excerpt from an unidentified newspaper article reporting that Secretary Floyd had left Washington for ten days and that Colonel Drinkard would be acting secretary during his absence.

of brick but who in fact only desires in his management of the building to make such arrangements as may be most disagreeable to me; who wishes to follow the advice and consult the wishes of Mr. Walter, a dishonest architect, and John Rice, a more dishonest contractor, and of Senator Bigler, a speculator, and one who is in the interest of this contractor. I do not think the Secretary cares for any more than to thwart me, and in this I trust yet to disappoint him.

* * *

[The entries omitted here dealt principally with the aqueduct.]

[JULY 30] Kate Rodgers arrived. She looks well and glad to get among the relations of her lost husband once more.

* * *

[AUG. 2] The payrolls for the last month are as follows:

Capitol extension	\$18,416
Dome	2,200
Post Office	11,258
Water works	8,000

The Secretary came back yesterday, I am informed.

The weather is very hot, and I am growing tired of this constant labor without any reward for it. I feel that I am not properly supported by the Secretary and that he desires to get rid of me.

I placed on Saturday, under the northeast corner pier of the north portico of the north wing of the Capitol extension, under the marble base of the pier, a plate of copper with the inscription below:

CAPT. MONTGOMERY C. MEIGS, U. S. ENGINEERS
 IN CHARGE OF
 U. S. CAPITOL EXTENSION, EXTENSION OF
 GENERAL POST OFFICE, NEW DOME OF
 THE CAPITOL, AND WASHINGTON AQUEDUCT
 A. D. 1858.

I have also caused this to be placed under some of the columns of the west front of the Post Office extension. Placed the plate in the base of a hollow cut to receive the tenon of the lower end of the shaft. I also this afternoon placed a similar inscribed plate in the base of two more piers on the north front of the Capitol extension.

I have ordered a set of plates to be prepared to carry this idea a little further, placing upon them the inscription "James Buchanan, President of the United States, and John B. Floyd, Secretary of War." The two plates will be put into the masonry together.

This cost little, the letters being stamped into the copper with pencils. They will be legible for many centuries, and if ever found upon the demolition of the building, will be of interest.

There is a well-preserved inscription upon the Roman bridge of [Alcántara] in Spain which records the date of building and the name of the builder. The inscription was cut in the year 103 A.D., 1755 years since. Will my copper plate or the inscriptions I am putting upon the bridges and other structures of the aqueduct be legible after the lapse of 1,800 years—that is, in the year 3658?

* * *

[AUG.] 5TH. Kate Rodgers, with my daughter Mary, left this morning for the Burners, White Sulphur Springs. I sent John with them as an escort, as they have to ride some 14 miles over a wild mountain road and might be left alone with the driver of the stage, which is not proper, but the expense is heavy and one that I hesitate to meet.

I feel discontented sometimes at being so cramped in my family affairs by this want of money. It is difficult to be sparing of money at home while commanding so much in my public business, to spend millions on the public hand and to be able to buy whatever is proper and desirable for the public works and to be obliged to count sixpence in the management of my family.

* * *

[AUG.] 7TH. I rode to the falls today with the Secretary of War, . . . We had a cool day for the season.

* * *

[AUG. 7 CONT.] I had intended to make use of this chance to talk with him about the Capitol extension and the trouble with Mr. Walter, but I felt as if he had gone with me to the aqueduct and I had no right to intrude upon him with disagreeable questions. So I deferred it until I can see him at the department.

By the way, I did not notice here that I had directed Mr. Schrag,⁸³ who has returned from Europe and who came the other day to report his return, to come to my office, where I had work for him.

He had been already mortgaged by Mr. Walter, Mr. Bryan told me, and was with him. I said, "Well, I prefer you to come here. I have work for you here." It was arranged that Mr. Bryan should inform him when he was ready for him.

The other day he sent word to him to come over, having been sick in the meantime and unable to attend to it. Mr. Schrag did not come.

⁸³ Philip Schrag had been a draftsman on the Capitol extension.

Mr. Bryan the next day sent again and went to see him. Mr. Schrag told him that Mr. Walter had gone away to Atlantic City the previous Friday and had made him promise before he left that he would not leave the office in his absence.

Mr. Bryan explained to him that he should obey my orders if he wished to be employed upon the Capitol. Mr. Schrag said he could not break his word to Mr. Walter but he did not wish to be put in such a situation, and he would not go to work at all.

I told Mr. Bryan that he might explain to him that he could not remain in the service if he did not obey my orders and that when he made such a promise to Mr. Walter, he chose to take him instead of me and must suffer the consequences.

Mr. Walter, it seems, is again absent without leave. Before the House of Representatives was finished, he never thought of leaving without first asking me whether he could be spared. Now he goes without giving me notice.

* * *

[On August 8, Meigs was traveling to Great Falls on a steam packet when he spotted a woman in the water who had fallen overboard from the boat. He leapt into the canal fully clothed and finally succeeded in rescuing her with the help of a passing fisherman. The incident was reported in the Star and other Washington newspapers.]

[Printed material inserted.]⁸⁴

[AUG. 21] My wife, with Loulie and Monty, went to [Brookeville, Maryland] last Tuesday. John has gone to visit his grandparents at Hammon[as]set;⁸⁵ Mary is at Burners Springs with her aunts; Mrs. Rodgers and Jerusha are at Sion Hill⁸⁶; and I have at length returned to the solitary house. *[Meigs had spent two weeks in Rockville, Maryland, attending a court case regarding condemnation of some property for the aqueduct.]*

* * *

⁸⁴ An article, apparently from the *Union*, describing progress on the Capitol extension, "notwithstanding the want of good feeling and co-operation which exists between Mr. Walter, the architect, and Captain Meigs, the superintendent of the Capitol extension." "In the north wing the Senate chamber is rapidly approaching completion, the brick flooring being laid, and the iron supports for the galleries nearly all in their places."

⁸⁵ Meigs' father had retired, and his parents had built a country house in Pennsylvania, which they called Hammonasset.

⁸⁶ Sion Hill near Havre de Grace, Maryland, had been the estate of Commodore John Rodgers and Minerva Denison Rodgers before they moved to Washington in 1815. At this time, it was owned by Minerva's eldest son, Robert S. Rodgers.

[AUG. 23] At the office of the Capitol, I had much business waiting for me. I went through the building and gave orders, etc. Signed various drawings.

I also directed Mr. Briggs to reply to a letter from Mr. Walter asking me to send to him, in order that he might see whether they are correct, all drawings made for works of which he is the architect, before putting them into the hands of the workmen; that he was employed by me and was under my direction, that he had no control over the drawings made in my office, under my direction.

Mr. Rutherford also showed me a letter he had received from Mr. Walter in which he enclosed a copy of a letter which he had addressed to the quarry, directing Mr. Heebner to make a change in the bills of stone for arcades. He requests Mr. Rutherford to make the same change in his copy of the bills.

I wrote to Mr. Walter, asking by what authority he undertook to send orders to the quarries, changing orders sent there by me, or to send orders to the foreman engaged by me and responsible to me.

Thompson, the [plumber], came to ask what he should do. Mr. Walter had been giving him some directions. I told him to obey my orders or I would get somebody who would, and that I should pay for nothing that I had not myself ordered; that if Mr. Walter chose to sneak about the building and give advice instead of communicating with me, I had no objection, but he must remember that he must do no work under his orders.

* * *

[AUG.] 25. Today I spent a good deal of time at the War Department but did not at length succeed in seeing the Secretary. He sent me his kind regards and a message that he would see me tomorrow at 11 a.m.

I had gone in order to show him Mr. Walter's letter in which he replies to my demand to know by what authority he assumes to give orders to the contractors for materials and to the foremen under my employment and direction; that he does so by virtue of his authority as vested in him by his appointment as architect; and that he requests that I will not interfere with the prompt execution of all orders to given by him.

I have drawn up a letter as the draft of what I think the Secretary ought to sign in order to settle this matter—a letter informing Mr. Walter that I have been, by orders of the late President and Secretary, put in full authority over the works of the Capitol extension and of all persons employed thereon. That this Secretary does not propose to

change the relations thus established and that he will be obliged to obey all orders that I may have given and may hereafter give.

I know that the Secretary has been displeased with me, but he ought to sign it or else at once relieve me, and I must take my chance. I have also from him today an order to dismiss Mr. McGee, one of the most attentive watchmen I have had. He has been at work for 5 years and more. McGee is a man of family, of good character, and it is wrong to dismiss him to poverty. He has a large family.

[Printed material inserted.]⁸⁷

The *Union* published the letter of Colonel Orr, Speaker, which I think must put an end to the charges that I have not succeeded in making a perfect hall for legislation.

This is the crowning testimony to the success of my great work, my bold undertaking, to do what no man had ever before done with such knowledge as to be able to repeat it with certainty of success, built a room which should be certain to be good in all acoustic properties.

[AUG.] 26TH. I had an interview with the Secretary of War today. I read to him the orders from the President and Secretary of War under which I had acted in the charge of the Capitol extension. I gave him some general account of the manner in which this authority had been recognized and obeyed by Mr. Walter as well as all others until the President and Secretary who gave the orders retired from office.

I then read to him Mr. Walter's letter of the 21st in which he informs me that he assumes to give orders to contractors and foremen by virtue of the authority vested in him as architect, thus for the first time assuming to have any authority independent of me in fact, though he had at the time of his outbreak last winter, in his letter, asserted that I had been placed at the work only to relieve him from certain onerous duties in connection with the disbursements and had asserted an independence. Now he asserts the right to give orders and control the work.

I then read to the Secretary a draft of a letter which I prepared as the most convenient way to give to him what I thought would be the proper mode of settling this matter, telling him that if he could sign it as it was, it would put an end to the trouble, but that it was of course in his hands to sign the letter or to reject entirely.

He heard me through with patience and attention and said that he had intended to take up this matter this week, but that he was to go to Old Point [Comfort], Fortress Monroe [in Hampton, Virginia], at

⁸⁷ A letter to the editor of the *Union* from Meigs, dated August 21, 1858, attaching a letter from Speaker Orr in which he praised the heating, ventilating, lighting, and acoustics of the House of Representatives chamber.

2 p.m. and he would promise me that upon his return next Tuesday, he would take it up, to the exclusion of all other business, and settle it upon a proper and permanent basis.

I regretted that he could not sign it at once; the public service was suffering; but of course I must submit. He then said there were some other matters of which he wished to speak.

I had told him of the bad conduct of Mr. Whitelocke,⁸⁸ whom I had appointed in place of Rissen. He said that he had felt that it looked strange that I should have removed a man of whom he had spoken to me favorably, without having consulted him, of my own motion. To which I replied that I had appointed Whitelocke without any direction or thought it necessary to trouble him with the affair.

I spoke of McGee's case, the watchman whom he ordered to be removed yesterday and who he said had been to see him and showed him a very good record as a Democrat. He had been told by Hill, whom I appointed in his place, that he was a Know-Nothing, and he had sent for Hill to explain.

* * *

[AUG. 26 CONT.] Then he took up the marble columns. Said that a letter from Mr. Rice had been referred to me a day before in regard to prices and he wished to settle the whole matter. I told him that I thought the proper mode was what I had recommended, to get them from Italy. He said that was settled, we would not go abroad for the columns.

After some discussion, he directed me to go to the quarries which might afford any promise to furnish the shafts and report to him as soon as possible the result. So I am to go on a wild goose chase among the quarries, about which I can learn nothing new, and leave my business here to take care of itself, to the great injury of those who depend upon me for payments, of this _____ he has been frightened by Bigler and Rice out of the purchase of the best and cheapest material for the building.

Unless the Lee quarry can give us the marble, I do not believe it can be had, of any material which will be sufficiently durable to be used with propriety in the porticoes. And thus, for a foolish dread of public opinion, we are to supply our great building.

* * *

[AUG.] 27TH. Making preparations for the journey to the marble quarries. I spent the day at the office finishing up the business.

⁸⁸On August 24 Meigs had received a letter from Secretary Floyd directing him to fire Mr. Rissen (not identified further) and replace him as inspector on the aqueduct with Mr. Whitelocke, whom Meigs had previously discharged as a clerk on the aqueduct because he was "idle, worthless, and false."

In the afternoon, I rode out to Brookeville to see my wife and children before going away for a long journey. Found Louisa, Monty and little Louisa all well and enjoying themselves in the country air, growing fat, with exercise aplenty.

* * *

[Meigs left on August 28, traveling first to Philadelphia, where he visited his parents.]

[AUG. 29] My son John, who is paying a visit there, is much liked by his relations.

[AUG.] 30TH. Monday. Visited some of the marble yards in Philadelphia. Examined some of the marble buildings, with a view to gaining some knowledge as to the effect of time and exposure upon the marbles used in Philadelphia.

At Struthers marble yard I found many specimens of marble. At Friedley's, they told me that the Hidner quarry was worked out and that little of that marble has now come to the city. It is about 14 miles from the city upon the Baron Hill Road, out on Ridge Road.

The best white marble, they said, came from Friedley's quarry in Manchester, Vermont. I found, however, as usual, that every quarryman thought his own quarry the best.

From the columns of the old United States Bank, now United States Custom House, I picked a piece as a specimen of Hidner's white marble after an exposure of some 30 years, easily detached with the fingers.

[AUG.] 31ST. I left this morning for New York. The visit home was pleasant, but still I do not enjoy this journey as, though I was traveling for pleasure, I constantly feel that I am going upon a false errand, that the Secretary sends me to look for quarries and make a report, without the intention to be guided by my advice unless it fits his desires; that he thinks more of the representations of the contractor Rice and the Senator who is in his toils, Bigler, than of the advice of the officer in charge of the work; that he does not appreciate and care for the beauty of the building; that, in short, he is like a bull in a china shop, constantly touching something with _____ or hoping to destroy some delicate organization, without knowing that he is doing any more harm than I _____. This keeps me anxious and prevents me from enjoying my mission.

I do not feel the same authority. I cannot do justice to the responsibility which surrounds me, as when, with a liberal and honest Secretary, such as Davis, I found it a pleasure to carry on these great

works and felt that I was of some use to the men under my direction and to the public which I served.

* * *

[AUG. 31 CONT.] I found it somewhat difficult to get a bed in New York. I had sent my baggage to the Metropolitan and got my supper there, but they said they had not a bed. Advised me to try the Astor Place Hotel, which I did, with no better success. At last I found a bedroom, the last one unoccupied in the—I forget its name, up Broadway.

The first is overflowing with people coming to see the celebration of the Atlantic telegraph, which takes place tomorrow.⁸⁹

SEPT. 1ST. I left New York in the morning by the New Haven line and reached Lee, Massachusetts, by way of Bridgeport [Connecticut], about 4 p.m., having been detained by the heating of a new axle box.

Here I met Mr. Heebner and visited his quarry. They have made a great excavation here since I was last at this place, but there is no chance of getting the column shafts in single blocks nor, I fear, of any large size in any reasonable time.

* * *

[SEPT.] 2ND. The next morning we rode over to West Stockbridge [Massachusetts], to the quarries of Firere and to some others. In the afternoon we rode up to Pittsfield and took the train upon the Western Railroad, reaching Albany that night.

* * *

[SEPT. 3] From Troy [New York], we were obliged to go to Rutland [Vermont], where I took the train upon the Western Vermont Railroad to Danby, the site of Mr. Symington's quarry. Here Mr. Symington has been spending money for some time, as he thinks he has almost found the proper bed of stone out of which to make his fortune. The strata are nearly horizontal but are not, I think, long enough and sound enough to afford much prospect of getting out in single blocks the shafts we want.

In this as in other quarries which I found afterwards, there is a vast quantity of rubbish to be got out of the way before the good marble can be lifted.

* * *

⁸⁹The trans-Atlantic cable was completed in 1858, and the first official message was sent in August of that year. In September, however, the cable stopped working; not until 1866 was a new cable successfully laid and functioning.

[SEPT. 4] At East Dorset, some 7 miles from Danby, Mr. Heebner and I separated, he to go home, I to visit the Friedley quarry in the mountain. What they called in Philadelphia the Manchester quarry.

I found, at a height of, I suppose, 800 feet above the valley, quite an extensive quarry. The beds of marble which they were working are at the bottom of a precipice of 70 or 80 feet in height. Some 16 feet of marble are worked and saved, as the slope seems to have been all worked out, for they are now undermining the precipice, blowing out the rubbish above the workable beds so as to get at them.

This stone seemed to be as good as any that I saw, and the quarryman informed me that the 3 lower beds which he was working out, some 6 feet in all in thickness, could be worked as one bed and raised and worked in solid blocks. If this be the case, the columns might be got here. But the expense of clearing off enough of the stone for the purpose of giving 100 shafts would be very great. Still, I believe that this is the best prospect that I found in my journey in any quarry now worked.

About Lee, there is a great abundance of marble like that we now use, magnesian limestone, but the chance of opening a quarry is that much money might be wasted before finding one suitable, while the first might be successful. The Dorset marble is of a proper carbonate of lime.

After visiting this quarry, I went back to Rutland, took a buggy, and rode over to the Rutland quarry. Got the cars at _____ Rutland and went on to Burlington the same afternoon.

At Rutland there has been a vast quantity of marble quarried since I was there some 5 years ago. The quarries are much like those I then saw. One of these has been pretty well filled up by a fall of the overlying rock. I remember that I said to the manager that he would have such an accident when I was there. He was cutting away, or had cut away, the _____, left it as in making the excavation to separate this overlying strata.

The quarries are now some 100 feet in depth and extend for ½ mile along the edge of the hill.

At the largest quarry, that of Samson and Sheldon, they have a steam hoisting machine, with one of the large derricks in common use here, working upon a single wire rope like that I use upon the dome and bridge. The mode of throwing it into gear was by a conical friction brake worked by a screw. It seemed to be under very good command and is a good brake.

One bed of this quarry, and I think the only one, is thick enough to give up [monolithic] columns. They could be got here, but for this

best bed of marble they have a ready sale for all that they can raise in blocks of metered size at \$5½ per cubic foot upon the spot.

All the stone in these quarries except the best strata are spotted with green in such regular parallel spots that they are entirely unfit for building.

* * *

SEPT. 15. I find that I shall not have time to complete the detail of this journey. I am now at Washington, so much engaged in my public business and in defending myself against the attacks of the Secretary of War and Mr. Walter that I must merely note that I visited Burlington [Vermont] and did not succeed in finding any good prospect for the supply of the marble columns for the Capitol.

I ran down to [Montpelier ?] to look at the Victory Bridge. I returned to Philadelphia and visited the quarries of Hidner at Baron Hill, Montgomery County, from which the columns of the United States Bank in Philadelphia were taken.

I reached home on the evening of the 10th. I found an accumulation of papers, and I worked the next day until 3 p.m., and then rode up to Brookeville to see my wife and children. I spent Sunday there, came back Monday morning, and attempted, amid many interruptions in my house, to write a report upon my marble search. I had not made much progress in it when I was told that the Secretary was asking why I did not come to see him.

I went there and found, it being 5 minutes past 3 p.m., that he had left the department. Called the next morning. Not there yet, and after waiting some time, the chief clerk, Drinkard, advised me to give it up and call the next day.

I found that Mr. Walter had been guilty of such acts of disobedience in my absence that it was necessary to write a letter to the Secretary, calling his attention to them. This I did, and [sent] it to the mail. It went to him today.

I also wrote a letter or a report upon Mr. Whitelocke's reply to my remonstrance against his employment. This letter, upon going today to the department to see the Secretary, Drinkard advised me to reconsider; that it would make my interview with the Secretary unpleasant, and I had at least better dispose of what I had in hand, of some importance, first. I took it, therefore, for the present, and will probably send it in at a later date.

Today I had a 2 hours talk with the Secretary. Much of it was, on his part, an angry one. I gave him an account of my visit to the quarries and of the result, and he determined that I should write an advertisement for column blocks either in single blocks or in several pieces,

to be of low [quality?] marble, rejecting absolutely my advice, repeated, to get [Italian].

We talked of Whitelocke's case, of Chandler's. He mentioned that Whitelocke was all right; that I believed him to be a rascal, while he perceived him to be honest. He thought I was deceived in Mr. Rives. I could see that he had been listening to Whitelocke's reports of privileged conversations which he had overheard.

Finally, we got to the case of Mr. Walter. He had my letter upon the table and intended to read it. We had a long discussion in which he said many things that were disagreeable enough, and finally intimated his intention to keep Mr. Walter in office to make designs which I was to execute.

I told him I had not held such a position heretofore and that I considered it one entirely unfit for an officer of Engineers to hold, one which it would be a degradation to impose upon me, an act of great injustice.

He said that he thought the skill and taste of Mr. Walter could not be spared, that he supposed I would not be ready to assume a sufficient skill as an architect to complete the building without him or someone in his place.

I told him that he was mistaken. I assumed to be able to complete it as well as Mr. Walter or any man living, that it was now mine, the exterior alone being Walter's, and that not entirely his; that the interior was my design, Mr. Walter having been the draftsman only, to execute such drawings as I directed; that the design and construction of the halls for legislation were entirely mine and to me alone was due the success of the building in its great object. That the reputation which I had thus won, Mr. Walter endeavored to rob me of, etc. That I was entirely unfitted to take the position he proposed, of a mere executive agent, a disbursing officer, to carry out the designs of Mr. Walter or any other architect. That I had made a reputation which neither Mr. Walter nor any other man could take from me.

I then told him something of the manner in which drawings were prepared, how Mr. Walter had obeyed my orders until he hoped for support from the Secretary of War, etc. I went over the whole ground and gave him distinctly to understand that I considered his proposition an outrage.

He said for the quarrel between Mr. Walter and myself, he cared nothing. That we might settle it or not; he would not interfere. I told him he interfered by supporting Mr. Walter. He said he should not give an explanation of his official acts to me, etc. I told him I did not expect or ask it. That I felt his acts and felt that some of them were to suffer official censure of my conduct, such as the appointment of

Mr. Whitelocke over my head. I told him I had no personal indignation in regard to it but that it was a censure which I had not deserved, and I must say so.

I saw John Lee [Meigs' neighbor who was judge advocate at the War Department] afterwards and told him of the interview. He said that I ought not to have any more verbal communication with him; that he took advantage of them to say things that he would not write, and that he thought I ought to demand Mr. Walter's removal. That this would compel him to [place] the matter before the President, and that though they might not grant his removal, they might, rather than relieve me, give Mr. Walter orders to obey me.

I believe that this is the best thing for me to do. I have written to Mr. Pearce of Maryland to give him an account of the matter and ask him to write to the President to urge his removal of Walter and support of me. I believe I shall have to write to Senator Davis.

[SEPT.] 16TH. I wrote today a letter to the Secretary of War, requesting him to lay it before the President as my request for the dismissal of Mr. Walter from his position as architect of the extension of the Capitol. In writing this letter, I gave a succinct recapitulation of the case between myself and Walter and repeating the disclaimer which I had before made in conversation with the Secretary of any intended disrespect to him in having written before to the President. Told him that I, in deference to his expressed opinions and feeling, addressed this matter to him, asking him to submit it to the President with such remarks as he might think proper.

I read this letter to Major Lee, who said that it was not, as he feared, too prolix.

I have lost, in some manner, my interest in this matter. It is a too oft told tale; I have written so much upon it. Yet I do not desire to be beaten by Walter and the speculators.

I heard today for the first time from the *Intelligencer* office, to which I had sent for a printed copy of the letter of Mr. Orr upon the success of the new Hall of Representatives, that Mr. Walter had printed a singular answer to it. I am promised a copy tomorrow.

I have also written a note to Mr. Pearce, Senator of Maryland, who is now at his home, Chestertown, Kent County, to enclose him a copy of this letter, which I can only consider as an appeal from the Secretary of War to the President. I hope that he will say something to the President in favor [of] this appeal.

Upon this move, upon the manner in which the President receives this letter, I think depends my position as connected with the Capitol. I have appealed from the Secretary, upon his having told me that he

proposed to keep Mr. Walter as designer and to call upon me to execute his designs, to the President. I told the Secretary yesterday that I considered the place he proposed for me a degradation.

I certainly would much prefer to leave the work to holding such a laborious position, after having lost all the incentive and exertion which I have heretofore had in the prospect of making a reputation out of it. As I am not paid in money, there is nothing for me to work for when my position is changed. To consent to what the Secretary seemed to wish would be to acknowledge that Walter was right and that I was willing to act as an assistant only, instead of as the author and creator of the whole structure.

[SEPT.] 17TH. I sent today to the post office a letter to the Secretary of War, asking the dismissal of Mr. Walter. I also wrote to my father, asking him to write to the President upon the subject to endeavor to support me.

Rode in the evening to the receiving reservoir, which is supposed to be finished. It was too late to examine it well.

* * *

[SEPT. 21] I found upon my table tonight a card from Colonel Robert Lee⁹⁰ of the cavalry. He asks to see me at the War Department tomorrow at 10 a.m.

John Lee called and told me that Robert Lee had been sent for by the Secretary and told him that he was in trouble about the dispute between me and Mr. Walter; that he was determined not to dismiss Mr. Walter, whose friends are his political friends, and that he wished to establish a board to determine and approve the designs and plans which might be sent to them by Mr. Walter and to direct me to execute them if approved; that he did not understand these things. Spoke very highly of me, regretted the difference, but could not remove Walter, etc.

Lee told him he did not see how such a board could work and that he did not desire to be upon it. The Secretary named Lee and Humphreys,⁹¹ Captain of Topogs. Did not know whom else to select.

John Lee told Robert Lee something of the matter in dispute and advised him to keep clear of such a board. Robert Lee came to see me, having told the Secretary he must see me before he could answer about the matter.

⁹⁰ Robert E. Lee (1807–1870) of Virginia began his military career as an engineer before transferring to the cavalry. At this time, he was on leave to settle the estate of his late father-in-law. Meigs had worked with Lee in 1837 in surveying the Mississippi River at St. Louis.

⁹¹ Andrew A. Humphreys (1810–1883) was a topographical engineer.

[SEPT.] 22ND. I saw Robert Lee today. He said that I ought to manage matters so as to get along with the Secretary, etc. I asked him to come to my house to hear a part of the correspondence in the case which I had, arising between Mr. Walter and myself, and then to judge whether I had not been patient and prudent.

He did not like to take up the time and thought that this was foreign to the matter which the Secretary had put upon him. He said that he should not accept the place if he could help it. He was a lieutenant colonel of Cavalry and now if on duty would have command of his regiment, and that his proper place, as soon as he could get through his private business and return to duty, was at the head of his regiment. He had requested Colonel Cooper⁹² to say so to the Secretary, and if that did not answer, to ask as a favor that he be excused from the service upon this board which the Secretary proposed. He said that he did not think the Secretary had a clear idea of what he intended this board to do.

After hearing the two letters which Mr. Walter has addressed to me, my reply, Mr. Davis' letter to me stating what he had written to the Secretary of War, and my two last letters to the Secretary, one of which takes an appeal from the Secretary to the President, he said that it had come to this: that the Secretary ought to relieve one of us from the Capitol. Certainly, that if I was in charge, Mr. Walter should be made to obey me.

After this, he left, but he still advised that I should not be troublesome or obstinate, etc. I saw, however, that he thought I was right in my position.

I took Drinkard, the chief clerk, up, meeting him as I was going to the department to see Lee. John Lee told me this evening that Drinkard had called him at the library and told him privately, taking him for this purpose into the Secretary's back room, that Meigs had written again to the Secretary a very strong letter in which he had given a recapitulation of the whole case, recited that I had been severely reproved for having before written to the President, again disclaimed any intended disrespect to the Secretary, and taking an appeal from the Secretary to the President. That it was a very strong letter and stated the position in a way that Mr. Walter could not stand and said he, the Secretary, does not know that I have read it. He keeps it to himself. He has no right to keep such letters from the public files. Do you not see? He said that the Secretary is trying to get out of this thing now by his board and sending for Colonel Lee. He will have to give up Walter.

⁹²Samuel Cooper (1798–1876) was adjutant-general of the army.

Lee told me that the Secretary was _____; that Walter's friends were his, too; that he was mistaken in supposing that they were many or strong; but that I had many and very strong ones who would defend me, do it strongly, such men as Davis and Pearce and Fitzpatrick,⁹³ etc.

In speaking of Colonel Lee, John Lee said that he had told him that the Secretary spoke very highly of Meigs. "Yes," said Drinkard, "he knew that he was speaking to a man who respected Meigs." This was a curious speech for the chief clerk, a confidential man, to make of his superior.

I have a letter from my brother John, who has shown my last letters to Mr. Ingersoll, who he says thinks my position a very difficult one and one requiring great circumspection. That he thought I probably had best leave it as it is, but that if the Secretary pressed the matter, I might perhaps send a copy of my letter to the President, making it as little as possible in the form of an appeal, and advising the Secretary that I had done so.

* * *

[SEPT.] 24TH. I see by a dispatch of the Baltimore *Sun* that Senator Pearce of Maryland, who has large control over the Capitol extension by law, is here at the request of the President. I suppose that my letter to him has brought him.

I saw Senator Pearce today. He had seen the President and told him that I had written a letter to the Secretary of War asking the dismissal of Mr. Walter. The President referred to my letter to him and said he knew of none since that. Mr. Pearce assured him that he had learned that I had written a letter lately and that it showed that Mr. Walter's conduct had come to such a head now that it could not be allowed to continue.

The President said that he had been told that I had too much to do, more than I could attend to, etc., and that he heard also some report that I was too strict and military in my administration. Mr. Pearce made the usual reply, that I had done already the greater part of what was to be done and that if I could carry the works this far, now that the plans were made and the works nearly finished, I ought to be able to complete them. And that he believed the complaints against me came from those in whose way I stood like a breakwater against their assaults upon the treasury.

He said the President said if it came before him officially, he would decide it justly, but that he thought that the President would prefer

⁹³ Benjamin Fitzpatrick (1802–1869), Democrat of Alabama, served in the Senate, 1848–1849, 1853–1855, and 1855–1861.

that it should not fall to his lead to decide it. He told him, however, they must come before him officially, that I had appealed from the Secretary to him and had addressed my letter to the Secretary, because he had found fault with me before that, writing to the President instead of to him.

He said that he thought the President seemed somehow to be rather _____ afraid of the Secretary of War. I had thought that the Secretary entertained a wholesome respect to the President, from what I had seen of his doing.

Mr. Pearce related the fact, which I knew to be true, that in some case of an appointment at Norfolk, an almost unanimous recommendation from the Virginia delegation was set aside, though the President offered to grant it, because the Secretary gave him his choice to take his man or part with the Secretary, and the President backed out. This is a curious piece of political history.

John Lee came in to see me this evening. He says that the Secretary spoke to him today and he gave him his opinion that Mr. Walter had accepted his position, of which he now complains, with gratitude for me and that he ought to be kept to it. That my friends were the friends of the Secretary and would act strongly if I was disturbed. That Mr. Walter had not strong friends.

The Secretary said he knew that politicians who came to him always wished to entrap him and that the only pleasant intercourse he had was that with the officers of the army, who came honestly to him and gave him their real opinions.

He spoke of his difficulties with me and Walter, spoke well of me, as usual, etc. Asked what was he to do. Must he decide whether the female figure was to have her backside draped or no?

Lee told him that in any case, if the dispute was heard, he would have to decide. But that his control, though nominally complete over those works about Congress, was not really such as he had over works at a distance if Congress saw them and would interfere, and that after he had decided to drape the female's backside, Congress might reverse his decision and that they would take the work away from him. He said he wished to God they would.

Lee tells me that Drinkard showed him today one of my earlier letters to the President in which I reported some of Walter's misconduct, upon which the President had written some such endorsement as this to the Secretary of War: "Is there any good reason why Captain Meigs should not continue to exercise the same control over the works as heretofore? Please return this letter to me. James Buchanan."

This was dated months since, and it seems the Secretary has not complied with the request. This looks like insubordination. Is not the President master of his own household?

Lee asked Drinkard why he had not sent this back. Drinkard shrugged his shoulders and said nothing. Drinkard seems anxious that I should be supported. He said to Lee, "Remember that you know nothing of that letter. I told you of it. And the Secretary does not send it out. He gives it and does not know that I read it."

John and Mary came home tonight. They look well and have had a glorious time, they say. My father writes from the country of them; says that John has won good opinions from them all and from the neighbors. Emily writes also in the same strain and thinks Mary is going to be a very handsome woman.

Mother's disease has developed itself into pneumonia, and Father writes that the disease is now cured but that she is very weak, and they are trying to get up her strength. Emily is with them. The rest are all well.

Lee says that the Secretary will not dismiss Walter, nor will he do anything that he can help to mortify him. He thinks that the Secretary has encouraged Walter into his present condition and that he feels that he cannot disrupt it, and that he feels more kindly to him than to me. He says, though, that he will not dismiss me; that Drinkard, himself, said that he cannot do that, but that he might degrade me. When Lee asked why, Drinkard said the administration could not remove me.

[SEPT.] 25TH. I went to the department this morning in order to see whether the Secretary had done anything with the drawing of the Vice President's chair and desk. I found that it had not been acted upon, and therefore I left the office. Getting a message that he desired to see me in the course of the day, I went back and sent the carriage away with John, to bring his mother and Monty and Loulie home on Monday.

I stayed at the War Department, writing in John Lee's room, until 4 p.m., when I was informed that the Secretary had just gone home.

Walking home with Drinkard, he said that he had told the Secretary after the others had left that I was there at his request, and the Secretary said, "My God, I can do nothing now. It is late." Drinkard told him that I had been waiting all day. He did not let me in because there were others there whom it was necessary for the Secretary to see.

* * *

[SEPT.] 27TH. My wife and Monty and Loulie came home this morning. They look well, having much enjoyed their stay in the country, and are no doubt much better fitted to go through the winter for the breath of fresh air they have thus had. John drove them in the wagon and feels his position sensibly [enhanced] by the trust thus reposed in him.

I received today a letter from Mr. Davis in reply to mine giving him an account of my conversation with the Secretary of War and asking him to write to the President and support me by such arguments as he might think proper. I copy it, as it is such a friendly letter from one high in the estimate of the country.

_____, Maine, September 24th, 1858.

My dear Captain:

I returned to this place this evening and found your letter giving an account of your interview with the Secretary of War. Expecting to leave here in a few days and to stop at Washington on my way home, I have thought it best not to write to the President but to have a free conversation with him when I reach Washington.

I hope it may prove effective and serve, by obtaining justice for you, to protect his administration from consequences he surely would avoid if they were foreseen.

As ever, truly your friend, Jeff Davis.

* * *

[SEPT. 27 CONT.] I have spent this day at home writing, making up prices for the work done in August by Provost, Winter and Co. under their contract but not priced in the contract. It relates principally to the Senate Retiring Room.

* * *

[SEPT. 29] I found upon my returning home the drawings of the Vice President's chair and desk which I had submitted to the Secretary with my letter of the 22nd of September. These drawings I sent back with another one prepared by Mr. Walter. A photograph of the one which I submitted is upon the pages of August 3rd. The other has not yet been copied by photograph.

I certainly think that Mr. Walter's is not so good as the one which I sent in. Mr. Walter's is a piece of pulpit furniture of no artistic merit in the design. The other is a work of art, not very high-class perhaps, but far superior in style to that by Mr. Walter and far above anything which Mr. Walter is capable of making.

Had the conditions been reversed and the drawings been sent in by Mr. Walter representing the design which I submitted and that

which Mr. Walter submitted been sent in by me, the decision, I cannot doubt, would have been different.

It is a part of the scheme which the Secretary is playing to mortify me and induce me to retire. Why he does not act himself to remove me, I do not know.

John Lee says that he said to Drinkard, chief clerk, who seems much disgusted of the Secretary's action in this matter, that he understood the Secretary was boss, meaning that he had influence [over] the President. Drinkard said it was not so, and if it was, he would remove Meigs at once.

Drinkard seems to take my treatment much to heart. He says that the Secretary ought to order me to destroy my drawing and [photograph]. I understand that he is of the opinion that the Secretary ought not to leave a record of what he has rejected for something so much inferior.

I hear nothing from the President or Secretary in regard to my appeal. I believe that he has not yet put it upon the record, and I suppose therefore that he has not yet submitted it to the President. I do not know how to get it before the President. If I write to him, the Secretary would say that he had not yet got all the information. The President knows that I have made the appeal. Senator Pearce told me.

John Lee tells me that the clerks at the War Department have been looking at the designs and that they are much indignant at the conduct of the Secretary in selecting what they say is a second-class country church pulpit. But what good does this do me? I know that I am right and that the Secretary is wrong and that he acts thus not from public duty but to gratify a private malice; to revenge himself for my having written a letter to the President and not having been a supple instrument in his hands for much that he desires to do, which I could not aid him in doing without a sacrifice of duty. He desires to drive me to leave a work from which he does not seem quite willing to relieve me himself. Why?

My letter to him is as follows:

Washington

27th September 1858

Honorable John B. Floyd

Secretary of War

Sir: I have the honor to submit the design for the desk of the Vice President, Secretary, clerks, and reporters of the Senate, which I had caused to be prepared and _____ in hand before my late visit to the quarries. The work has been arrested by your order until you could have the opportunity to examine

the design. If the design meets your approval, I respectfully represent that but little time remains to execute the work before the meeting of Congress and therefore request early action upon it.

I propose to execute it in carved mahogany. I find that a portion of the ornament had been modeled roughly; none of it finished, however. It promises well as modeled in the clay, and I believe that the whole work, if executed, will give satisfaction and be very appropriate.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

M. C. Meigs, Capt., in charge of Capitol extension.

The endorsement upon this is:

The design herein referred to is returned, accompanied by one that I have adopted in its stead.

War Department, 28th September 1858

John B. Floyd, Secretary of War.

Capt. Meigs

SEPT. 30TH. Today I have been hard at work writing in the office until this time, 3 p.m., somewhat interfered [with] by visits from people whom I was obliged to see upon business.

I have written reports and letters without number—among others, an answer to the plasterers, who, I see by the slips from the *Star*, have gone into print with their letter to me.

I have stated the case: their regular pay and higher rates than their trade receives in Philadelphia and New York, steady work, etc. They have a right to go to the best market for their labor but not to demand higher rates than the trade commands because I am in need of men to finish the Capitol extension before the meeting of Congress.

[Printed material inserted.]⁹⁴

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]⁹⁵

[OCT. 1] Here is the advertisement for the shafts, _____ it be effectual in procuring such blocks of marble as we need. But I doubt it.

⁹⁴An unidentified article reporting that the plasterers at the Capitol extension planned to go on strike. The text included a letter to Meigs from the plasterers requesting higher wages and threatening to strike if they were refused.

⁹⁵(1) An unidentified article stating that the new Senate chamber would be ready for occupancy when Congress convened. (2) An unidentified article about the plasterers' strike, printing Meigs' letter to the foreman, Zephaniah Jones, on the subject. Text of article 2 is in Appendix, page 792.

It is curious as showing the result of the attempts made by Rice and his coadjutors, Bigler and Florence, to induce an attack upon me. Rice's object was to secure the delivery of the shafts in many pieces at a profitable price to himself. His speculation therefore has failed, though he has left me in trouble with the architect and with the Secretary of War through his intrigues.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]⁹⁶

[OCT. 2] Mr. Brown, of the firm of Brown and Seusa [?], is making up an estimate for the plastering of the extension in order to take the place of the plasterers who have struck.

They came to see me today for a discussion of the matter. I gave them my views, and they left, I believe, thinking that they had not acted wisely, but without saying what they would do. A committee of 3 came to see me. They say that the fact that 2 men were paid \$2.50 a day had much to do with their feeling which produced the strike, though they did not speak of it in their letter.

The Secretary does not act or at least does not send to me his decision upon the matter between Mr. Walter and myself.

* * *

[OCT. 2 CONT.] *The Crayon* contains an article upon an art of the Capitol extension which is not quite fair. It is written by a painter, evidently. These painters think they are to take the place of the house painters and to paint the whole surfaces of all the interior, of the walls of the building, making thus of every room a picture shop, not a picture gallery.

* * *

[OCT.] 4TH. I had a long talk with Dr. Blake today. He told me of the report from Sandell [?]; that the Secretary had told him that he had the permission of the President to get me out, Sandell saying to Blake that I would be out in 30 days. Blake told him that it would not be so; that Old Buch, as he expressed it, was not going to let me be removed.

A Mr. Williams came to see me today. Said that he had been to the Secretary to speak to him in favor of Mr. Fowler of Janes, Beebe and Co. for a contract upon the dome. He said the Secretary told him

⁹⁶ (1) A request for proposals by Meigs, dated September 30, 1858, "for furnishing, on the grounds of the Extension of the Capitol, one hundred shafts for the columns of the exterior porticoes of that building." Proposals were to be accompanied by a specimen of the white marble offered. (2) An unidentified article reporting that the plasterers had gone on strike in support of their demand for a 50-cent-per-day increase in their wages.

that he had to be very careful about such things, as there were so many persons ready to find fault with all that he did, but that in this case there was no special need for care, that I was responsible and that I ought to be left to do as I thought right, etc., and that he should give me authority to make such contract as I thought proper.

We came home late. Mr. Rives rode with me and stopped to tea. John Lee called at the door and told me that he had seen an order prepared for the signature of the Secretary of War, from a pencil draft by the Secretary, in which I am directed to call upon Mr. Walter for his drawings and designs for buildings under my charge.

This reduces me to the position of assistant. He says that if I find any fault with that, I must report to him for his action. Drinkard says the Secretary is hell-bent upon this. I see that he is determined to put me into such a position that I shall refuse to accept it.

Well, I must wait for the order and then determine how to deal with it.

The plasterers have sent me an answer and have published it in the papers.

[Printed material inserted.]⁹⁷

[OCT.] 5TH. I have had a busy day. The plasterers and the Secretary of War seem to have combined to torment me. I have an order from the Secretary in reference to the Walter case. I find that it is not in the terms which have been reported to me by John Lee and by [Horatio] Wright [of the War Department] and others, who saw it as first pencilled by the Secretary. He has, upon reflection, softened it. It is intended to support Walter and to reduce me to the position of a mere assistant, to execute his designs, and it gives me the opportunity of strengthening my position, I believe. I copy it:

War Department, Washington, Oct. 4th, 1858

Sir: You are hereby directed to call upon the architect of the Capitol extension for any and all drawings necessary to carry on the building under your charge. If they are not promptly furnished, report the fact to the department.

⁹⁷ (1) An article from the *Baltimore Clipper* of October 5, 1858, discussing the plasterers' strike and complaining about the foreigners working on the Capitol extension. The plasterers complained that two German plasterers were receiving \$2.50 a day, while the American plasterers were receiving only \$2. (2) An unidentified article containing the response of the plasterers to Meigs' letter to Jones. They reiterated their demand for \$2.50 and added that if Jones planned to hire other plasterers, "we would suggest that Mr. Jones be candid enough to tell the men previous to engagement that there is a strike on the Capitol Extension." (3) A note to an unidentified newspaper from the two plasterers who made \$2.50 stating that they were highly qualified. (4) An article from an unidentified newspaper stating that 50 of the 60 plasterers who had struck had returned to work at their old wages.

If the plans and drawings are not such as meet your approbation, report the objection specifically to this department with your plan of alteration or modification.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

John B. Floyd
Secretary of War

Capt. M. C. Meigs
Engineer in charge
Capitol extension

Under this letter, I think I shall at once call upon Mr. Walter to send me at once all the drawings which he stole from my office, which he removed from it against my orders last January. And I shall take a little time to determine in what way I ought to get the evident notification of it which is to make me a mere _____ for Mr. Walter's designs, with the privilege of criticizing and submitting plans to be disapproved by Floyd.

Now, in strong contrast with this letter, here is one from the President, which was sent after me by express, upon the aqueduct, and got to me at tunnel number 4.

[Buchanan's letter asked to see Meigs immediately about the "Scotch pipe" matter. A contractor supplying pipe for the aqueduct had arranged to purchase the pipe he would provide from a manufacturer in Scotland. The Philadelphia newspapers complained bitterly about the U.S. government purchasing "Scotch pipe" when there were many competent manufacturers in the Pennsylvania-New Jersey area. Meigs had pointed out to the newspapers that, since the contractor had won the project by promising to provide the pipe by a certain date at a low price, he had the right to purchase pipes "wherever he can make the best bargain." The president, a Pennsylvanian, became upset over the controversy.]

[In the meantime, however, the contractor had asked to be released from the contract because he could not supply the pipe by the time specified. The president agreed to Meigs' proposal to divide the contract instead among a number of American suppliers in order to obtain the pipe quickly.]

* * *

[OCT.] 7TH. Wrote to Walter, calling upon him, under the order of the Secretary, of which I enclosed to him a copy, for all the drawings which he had taken out of my office and all others made since at the cost of the United States. I did not expect him to obey this order, but I gave it as the only one I could, under the Secretary's instructions, giving to them the meaning they bear, though, as I believe the Secretary is in Walter's interest, I do not think that this is the intention

he had in view. He wished probably to put me under Walter's direction, instead of putting Walter under mine.

* * *

[Meigs traveled to Pennsylvania and New Jersey, from October 9 to 13, visiting foundries that might manufacture pipe for the aqueduct.]

[OCT. 12] I went to [Archer], Warner, Miskey [and Co.], [in Philadelphia] to see what they have done with our railing for the stairs of the Capitol. They have made the greater part, I believe. Nearly the whole is cast, but not all finished yet. They promised that I shall have at least one of the stairs finished and set up before the meeting of Congress.

* * *

[OCT. 13] Reached home about 5½ p.m. All well.

I found a letter from Mr. Walter refusing to give up the drawings and saying that my demands upon him were not according to the instructions from the Secretary, which I had presented to him, and were contrary to the customs of his profession and the dignity of the office he held.

[OCT.] 21ST. I have been so busy with drawing the checks and attending to business which has accumulated during my absence that I have not been able until today to write up my diary.

* * *

[OCT. 21 CONT.] The Senate Hall is making good progress. I could easily get it finished if Mr. Walter had done his duty in preparing and delivering plans for the work, but there are some designs which I have no time to prepare, not having the drawings upon which they depend, for which I fear we will be late.

* * *

[OCT. 21 CONT.] The Secretary of War is still absent in Kentucky. Rumors of change are afloat. He is suspected of not being sound upon the Lecompton question. They say that Cass is getting too childish to be much longer entrusted with State Department, too. One rumor is that Holt,⁹⁸ Commissioner of Patents, will take the War Department. No change could well be for the worse.

⁹⁸Joseph Holt (1807–1894) of Kentucky was commissioner of patents, 1857–1859; postmaster general, 1859–1861; and secretary of war in 1861.

[Printed material inserted.]⁹⁹

[OCT.] 21ST. [cont.] I found in the new Senate Chamber today my friend Mr. Davis. I had not heard of his arrival in town and was surprised to see him. He looks better for his visit and residence during the summer in the [north]. He has been making speeches at various places—Portland, Bangor, Boston, New York, and in all seems to have succeeded in gaining the applause of all who have spoken of his sayings. All this has brought his name prominently before the public.

He asked me of my affairs, and I told him something of what I have had to contend with. He advised me to write to Senator Pearce to come on and help me, but I told him that I could not ask him to leave his home for me. I wrote, however, in the afternoon to Mr. Pearce, telling him that Mr. Davis was here and regretted that he had not his personal assistance in seeing and talking with the President, as he thought much more could be done by conversation than by correspondence.

I happened to be in the Senate Chamber when they were laying out the plan of the new Vice President's seat, and this gave me the opportunity to speak of the way in which I had been served in this matter. He seems very indignant and is, I fear, too much of a partisan to be as successful as if he was cooler upon the affair.

I read to him some of the late letters between me and the Secretary and Walter. He will speak plainly to the President.

The Secretary is still absent.

I took Mr. Davis home to his house and saw Mrs. Davis. She looks well, has enjoyed her journey.

At 6 p.m. I had the honor of dining with Louisa at the President's. It was a dinner to the heads of various bureaus, Mayors of Washington and Georgetown, etc. I sat between Blake, the Commissioner of Public Buildings, and Mr. [Thomas] Hendricks, the Commissioner of the Land Office.

The dinner was very handsome. We left the table about 8 p.m. Louisa looked very well, I think the handsomest woman in the room.

[Printed material inserted.]¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ "Special dispatches to the N.Y. *Tribune*" of October 8, 1858, containing a number of items related to Meigs' responsibilities, including: "The dome of the Capitol is at a stand still, Mr. Walters having refused to furnish plans if they are to be subjected to modifications by Capt. Meigs. It is understood that, of the powers that be, only the Secretary of War and the Attorney-General sympathize with Walters." [The "s" on Walter is in the original article.]

¹⁰⁰ An unidentified article on the new Senate chamber, stating, "In the Senate chamber the carpets are being put down and the desks varnished, and similar operations are going on in the hall of the House of Representatives." It added, however, "Capt. Meigs declines to furnish the hall from the appropriation for the Capitol extension; and as the Secretary of the Senate has no funds in his

[OCT.] 22ND. I went to see Mr. Davis today and read to him the letters to the Secretary of the 14th and 16th of September and his order to me, etc.

At the office, the usual business.

* * *

[OCT. 23] I have caused to be prepared a drawing for the bronze arms of the gallery seats in the Senate, which I fear that the Secretary will not sign, lest they may be not in accordance with the wishes of Mr. Walter.

* * *

[OCT.] 25TH. Monday. The Secretary of War returned on Saturday.

I sent in to him today a drawing of a design for the arms of the seats of the gallery in the Senate, to be in bronze, as in the gallery of the House of Representatives. I presume, judging from former experience, that he will submit this to Mr. Walter and adopt anything that he may recommend instead of it.

* * *

[OCT.] 27. I received this morning a letter from Senator Pearce, to whom I had written, by request of Mr. Davis, asking him, in his name, to come and help me with the certain affairs before the President.

Mr. Pearce writes that his professional engagements make it impossible for him to leave at this time, but that Mr. Davis may use his name and endorse his concurrence with him in anything he may choose to say about my affairs at the Capitol and the affairs of the coast survey.

I took the letter to Mr. Davis as soon as I could get through some writing which was necessary.

Sent in my report to the Secretary upon the receipt of the design for the Vice President's chair and desk, rejected by him for one of Mr. Walter's just before he went away, and also a report upon the refusal of Mr. Walter to deliver the drawings which I had called upon him for, in obedience to the orders of the Secretary dated the 4th of October.

I found Mr. Davis at home, and he gave me an account of an interview he had yesterday morning with the Secretary of War and one at night with the President. He held long and full conversations with each of them upon the affairs of the Capitol.

hands for that object, it cannot be furnished until after the assembling of Congress, and an appropriation being made for that specific purpose."

The Secretary said that he had great regard for my integrity, ability, etc., etc., but that I had been disagreeable in some things and that he would have removed me if he had anyone whom to put in my place. Davis told him that for the delivery of certain letters and papers to the President without his having seen them, he, Davis, was responsible; that he had called upon him and, failing to see him, had not been able to wait, gone to the President with them and left them there with a letter. This, the Secretary said, explained this matter, which he had not understood before. If he did not understand it, it was because he did not read my letters explaining it, for it has been fully explained; and I believe also that I have told him verbally the whole story.

He spoke also of my having given a letter to Mr. Nason, which he could not account for, that my answer was not so expressed as he expected from me in this. It was not clear.

I told Davis what this was and that it was not satisfactory, perhaps, but that it was explicit enough. I had said that I gave the letter to Mr. Nason because I thought it necessary for my own justification. And the Secretary had replied that his order to me was my justification, which I had not thought sufficient.

However, Mr. Davis said that he did not seem so much to be angry now about this as to have been angry and thought that if he could be got to act at all, he would finally act in the right direction.

[Davis] told him very plainly of his bad opinion of Mr. Walter and that I had, by too much forbearance and generosity to Mr. Walter, enabled him to make this attack upon me, as he would have removed him long since, had I not prevented it.

After leaving the Secretary, who said the whole matter had been a great nuisance to him and that he thought the whole Capitol extension a huge waste of money, and indulged in his usual tirade against it, Mr. Davis went to see the President in the evening.

He argued the case with him. The President, he says, spoke well of me, saying that he had come here with some prejudice against me, not being inclined to think that officers of the Army were well calculated to manage laborers and mechanics and contractors.

Davis said that without going into the general question, he did not see how this should apply to one who had been all his life in charge of workmen and contractors and had never had a military command in his life.

The President said that upon personal acquaintance, all these prejudices had passed away and he now thought very highly of me, that no one could question the ability or the integrity with which I manage my affairs.

“Well, in God’s name, Mr. President, what [more] can you ask for in a public officer than ability and integrity?”

The President said that was true, they were enough, but that some contractors of high caliber had complained and that some had approached him with the argument that there was a law requiring the stations of officers to be changed every 4 years.

Mr. Davis replied that the complaint of contractors who found themselves held to strict fulfillment of their contracts was natural and to be expected, and asked the President if he did not know that there was no law as he spoke of. He said he did, and that there was therefore nothing to this.

* * *

[OCT. 27 CONT.] The end of it was that the President was informed that Mr. Davis had a very bad opinion of Mr. Walter’s honesty and faithfulness and that he, himself, had a very great responsibility in connection with the extension of the Capitol. That he felt able to meet and [counter] the attacks which would be made upon him for this great expenditure, so long as the works were properly conducted. But that now and for months past, there had been insubordination and disorganization unchecked. That this was caused by the conduct of Mr. Walter. That there was delay and increased expenses resulting from the hostility of two men upon the work. One ought to go. That he would not pretend to judge for the President, but that he knew well which would be spared if he had any authority and which he thought ought to go.

He desired to see the administration in such a position that he could support it upon this as upon other questions, and he had stayed here several days in order to have an interview with the Secretary and with the President, to urge the proper settlement of this question, in which he considered that the attack of Mr. Walter, a spaniel, so long as he was in power, was an attack upon him as much as upon me.

He spoke strongly, and the President expressed kind feeling and regard for me; said that he had not been able to read the papers but he would do it now, at once, and would see me tomorrow—that is, today. He did not send for me, however, during the day.

I dined with Mr. Davis, as I was there when dinner was announced. We had a pleasant dinner. Mrs. Davis is a very agreeable woman of great sprightliness and wit, with much intelligence.

After dinner, I thanked him for the interest he had taken and bade him farewell. He is going tomorrow morning to pay a visit to his home in Mississippi. He thinks that the action of the President would be right if he can be induced to take it.

Spent the rest of the day at home, reading and working.

I sent in today the estimates for the public buildings for next year. For the Capitol extension, \$500,000; for the new dome, nothing, as we have nothing left; for the Post Office, \$150,000.

[OCT.] 28TH. I received today from the War Department the drawing of the plaster decoration for the ceiling of the corridor of the attic, south side of north wing, approved by the Secretary. Also some drawings of ventilating registers.

* * *

[OCT.] 30TH. I have this morning a letter from Archer, Warner and Miskey of Philadelphia with a printed invitation which they have been distributing for a view of a section of the bronze railing for the private stairs of the Capitol extension.¹⁰¹ They say that thousands called to see it on Thursday and that yesterday they expected a perfect jam. They sent me copies of 3 papers which have spoken of it with pride as a Philadelphia work. The notices are upon the opposite page.

Mr. Walter yesterday informed Mr. Magruder, whom he met upon his way to the office, that he was obliged to go to Philadelphia in consequence of a death in his family; his sister, I believe, though Mr. Magruder did not seem to have a very clear notion of what was said or meant. He first reported to Mr. Denham that Mr. Walter desired him to tell him that he was to be away. Mr. Denham expressed some surprise that he should send his message to him instead of to me, when Magruder thought it was to the office merely that the message was sent.

It may be that he is endeavoring to be able to say that he has not left his office without reporting to me and yet that he is not willing to report to me as formerly for permission to go. I hear nothing from the Secretary.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ See illustration on page 573.

¹⁰² (1) An article from the Philadelphia *North American* and *U.S. Gazette* of October 28, 1858 (according to Meigs), reporting that the bronze balustrade produced by Archer, Warner, Miskey and Co. for the Capitol was on display at their store. (2) A "Special dispatch to the N.Y. *Tribune*" dated October 29, 1858, stating that "Another effort is making to remove Captain Meigs. . . . With [him] out of the way, a wide field for speculation would [be] opened." (3) An article from the Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin* of October 28, 1858 (according to Meigs), praising the bronze railing at Archer, Warner, Miskey. ". . . we can imagine no bronze work more bold and beautiful in design or more elegant in execution than this remarkable railing. . . . It will be unique in the Capitol, and one of the most extraordinary curiosities of that palace of American art as well as of American legislation." For full text of article 3 see Appendix, page 794.

[OCT. 31] I received a day or two since letters from Edward Everett and Anson Burlingame introducing Mr. Henry Dexter¹⁰³ as a sculptor of skill and reputation. They both speak of him as one to whom commissions might properly be given.

I explained to him what was the condition of things here in consequence of the act of Taylor of Brooklyn and Marshall of Kentucky. He at once, like all the rest, aimed at a pediment and said he should go home and think about a design. I doubt, however, whether he ever comes to _____ of his argument. He did not strike me as a man of the education and particular talent for such a work.

* * *

[NOV. 2] My father and Mr. Miskey have sent me the paragraphs upon the opposite page. I am glad to see that they appreciate the work in Philadelphia. Mr. Miskey writes their store has been a "perfect jam"; that it is filled very early and morning to late night; and that on Saturday night hundreds of workmen, with their dinner pails on their arms, thronged the room, examining the work and talking about its difficulties of casting, etc. Some of them have evidently walked far to look at it.

[Printed material inserted.]¹⁰⁴

[NOV.] 3. I was called to see the President this morning. I hoped, when I got his message, that he perhaps wished to speak to me upon the subject of Mr. Walter, but he only desired to recommend to me Mr. Jacob M. Kautz¹⁰⁵ of Lancaster, a man of good character, reduced by the knavery of a partner, and for whom he desired to get employment during the winter.

Today I spent at home writing many letters, among others, one to the Secretary about the drawing to Mr. Walter and telling him that the delay in the drawing of the arms for the gallery seats, which I sent to him for approval upon the 25th of October, was a delay in finishing the Senate Chamber and that I was not responsible for this delay. I have done all that I can, in the circumstances of the case, with an insubordinate assistant who neglects his duty and is not compelled by the department to obey orders.

* * *

¹⁰³ Henry Dexter (1806–1876) of Boston was a sculptor of portrait busts. On this visit to Washington he sculpted a bust of President Buchanan.

¹⁰⁴ Two more articles from Philadelphia newspapers, praising the bronze railing.

¹⁰⁵ In May, Jacob M. Kautz of Lancaster had submitted a bid for pipe for the aqueduct, but his bid was too high to be considered, even though he showed Meigs a letter from the president recommending him.

[Printed material inserted.]¹⁰⁶

[NOV. 8] I have a letter from the War Department, referred to me, in which Mr. Walter demands of the Secretary to order me to pay Mr. Schrag, the draftsman whom I dismissed and whom he retained in defiance of me.

* * *

[NOV.] 9TH. I have this morning another shot from the War Department, a demand for all the payrolls of the Capitol extension from the beginning until the 31st of October.

What does the Secretary of War want with these papers? He also asks for the book of materials for the Capitol and dome. I believe also the payrolls for the dome are asked; the time rolls, too.

I begin to be worn out by this constant persecution.

* * *

[NOV.] 10TH. I am told that the Secretary asks for all the annual reports by the 15th at the latest. I endeavored, therefore, to write mine today.

At 1 p.m. I was interrupted by receiving a letter from the chief clerk, written by order of the Secretary of War, informing me that he desires a prompt compliance with that order. Now, he has no more right to the payrolls in my office, which are the duplicate copies, belonging to me personally and my only protection against the malice which might bring accusation against me, than he has to my watch. I have inquired, and I find this to be the opinion of everybody to whom I can go with confidence for advice. Yet, is it worthwhile to resist?

[NOV.] 11TH. To the Engineer Department to look over the lease to see whether there is anything which gives the right to the government to demand more than one copy of the vouchers from an officer.

* * *

[NOV. 11 CONT.] The Secretary, I am told, openly ridicules Cass and Brown¹⁰⁷ to all his colleagues in the cabinet—one, Secretary of State; the other, Postmaster General. Certainly this cannot continue long.

¹⁰⁶(1) Two more articles from Philadelphia newspapers, praising the bronze railing. One of November 4, 1858, from the *Evening Journal* concluded, "The thanks of the community are due also to Capt. Meigs for placing the work in the hands of Philadelphia artists." (2) A letter to the editor of the *New York Tribune* from Meigs, dated November 3, 1858, responding to an article that claimed that monolithic columns from Italy had been divided into pieces. He explained that proposals were only then being sought for the monolithic columns and that no columns had been received to date from any source.

¹⁰⁷Aaron V. Brown (1795–1859), Democrat of Tennessee, served in the House of Representatives, 1839–1845. He was postmaster general, 1857–1859.

I have been to the President's this morning in order to have a talk with him about these matters but did not find him at home.

3 p.m. At one o'clock I went again to see the President and got in. He said that he was sorry that I had called at that time, as it was the hour at which he saw everybody. Could I not put it off until another day and said this evening.

I showed him the letter of the chief clerk of the War Department, demanding promptly my payrolls for the expenditure of some 2 or 3 millions of dollars for the Capitol extension and dome. That had the request been made in a courteous and friendly manner, I should not have objected to it, but that it was a hostile demand made in a rude way for my private property and my only safeguard as the only evidence I could have of the honest expenditure of millions. That the Secretary had no more right to it than to my watch.

I had already furnished all that the department had a right to, the copies sent with my quarterly accounts, and now on file with the Treasury, to which the War Department transmitted them.

He asked what the Governor wished them for. I told him I did not know; I now think that the demand was an unfriendly one. That it was not for the purpose of making up his estimate, as the President suggested. That this was only one of a long series of acts of official discourtesy and hostility which showed me that I had been so unfortunate as to lose the confidence and regard of the Secretary of War. That I could not be useful to the country, to the administration, or to myself while this continued, and that I had appealed in writing through the Secretary to the President two months since and heard nothing of the appeal. That thus I was obliged to come directly to him.

I regretted to trouble him with it, but I had no other resource. He said it would give him much trouble, but that he would see Governor Floyd and have a full talk with him about the matter and would see me tomorrow evening at 7 o'clock. He said that I had many enemies, some of them in influential position.

I have written a letter to my father in which I have detailed more fully this conversation. It is in my private letter book.

I went this evening to see John Lee. He says that Drinkard is very positive that the Secretary is not boss, as they say in this part of the country, and that his _____ is that he is not the master of the President. That he says if he had the power, he would have removed me long ago. That he would not now leave me in place a day, if he could help it. That he was obliged by the President to send to New York orders to Governors Island to allow the soldiers to vote, though he had declared that he would not do so. He would not help Sickles,

a man whom he had denounced as a felon for calumniating him as a coward for denying it when charged with it by him.

Drinkard says that he is so little independent of his place and so anxious to retain it that he would do anything _____ personal except degradation and disgrace in order to retain it. I hope that this is so, for I believe that he hates me and that the President is on the other side, if he dared to meet the Secretary.

Lee thinks that I will beat them. He told Drinkard today that he had no right to send me an order to deliver my payrolls, for they were my private property. This surprised Drinkard, who thought the vouchers were the property of his office.

I have written out tonight my report upon the aqueduct.

Drinkard seems to be anxious lest the Secretary should get into some scrape by his treatment of me. He says that the Secretary seems to have determined to put me into the position that Mr. Walter assigns, that of a disbursing agent to execute Mr. Walter's designs, and he speaks bitterly of this as an outrage.

Lee told him that it did not seem to suit the character generally attributed by Floyd's friends to him that of a bold man, open in his acts. That he was apparently endeavoring to put official slights and injuries upon me. That for himself, he would either treat Captain Meigs with official respect or remove him.

The matter draws towards an end. God will defend the right. I thought I saw in the President today a desire to get rid, if possible, of a disagreeable subject. He does not wish to contend with his Secretary, but he has the matter now brought before him and must decide it.

[NOV.] 12TH. This morning the Secretary of War writes to me that he will dispense with the payrolls for the present, saying that they are near at hand and that those I have may be important to me.

I sent him the time rolls and books of materials this afternoon, with a letter written in an angry tone, I believe, but still one that was within the limits of official respect, in which I spoke of the peremptory style of his letter to me and the fact that the papers he demanded were my property and that he had no right to ask for them. Etc.

I may well say here that seeing the President this evening, I find the case somewhat changed. And Drinkard, the chief clerk, sent back to me, by the hands of John Lee the next morning, this letter, with the information that the Secretary was sick in bed and had not seen it, and that he wished to give to me the opportunity to consider it, as it would tend to widen the breach between me and the Secretary. I rewrote the letter, saying the same things but in a less angry style.

I went in the evening to the President's and had a long talk with him. He received me with kindness and consideration, said that he was very desirous of getting Floyd and myself to work together in peace; thought that if we had only started right, we would have done so, etc.

He gave me the opportunity to state my whole case to him and argue the fact which he had indicated: that I had many enemies, some of them in high position, etc. To which I replied by naming Bigler, the Senator, and Tom Florence as the only men in position in the Congress who were enemies, and showing that they were moved by John Rice, the contractor, etc. All of which he knew.

I have written an account of this interview to my father, and it is in my private letter book. I cannot now go over it again.

The end was that the President said he had read the papers I had submitted by the hands of Mr. Davis, the correspondence between myself and Walter last winter, and that the President told me I might consider that as settled; that the papers, which he had read with great care and attention, had convinced him that Mr. Walter's claims were ridiculous, absurd, and could not be sustained; that I was the head and chief of my works, etc.

His difficulty seemed to be to get Floyd to support me without disputing with him. And he said we were both men of great resolution, disliking to give up our own opinions, and desiring each to have his own way, etc. That he wished to so manage as to make us work together, etc.

I see that he believes that I am strong, and his feeling and interests are with me. He thinks I am strong in the Senate and Congress and that it is for the good of his administration that I should finish my works. He said that it was better for all parties that I should, and promised to endeavor to bring this all about, the only trouble being evidently the position of Floyd.

I may consider, then, that I have the President on my side. With prudence, I think I should succeed in beating this combination of Walter and Floyd.

[NOV.] 13TH. Saturday. Wrote another letter to Secretary Floyd upon the payroll question, having, at the advice of Lee and Drinkard, concluded that a letter in better temper would be quite as dignified and as effective and might do good instead of harm.

* * *

[NOV.] 15TH. At home, writing reports. I wrote the report for the Capitol extension and began that for the dome. In both of these I was

somewhat at a loss to know how to treat the matter between myself and Mr. Walter. His _____ has delayed both works, the dome more than the Capitol extension; but it is his fault that the Senate Chamber is not ready for use at the time of the meeting of Congress, as I had promised to expect. I have, in the report for the Capitol, referred to this as delay resulting from causes which it is not necessary to detail here but which have been beyond my control.

I have been quite under the weather today with a bad sore throat.

[NOV.] 16TH. Wrote the report for the dome and Post Office extension.

I received a note today from the chief clerk of the War Department informing me that the Secretary is now ready for the reports and will be pleased to have them as soon as may suit my convenience. I replied that I hoped to send them in the morning. That last year they were dated the 30th of November, but that I had two of them in the hands of copying clerks and the other would be ready for them in an hour.

In the dome report, I found that I had so little work to report that it was necessary to make some reference to the case, and I therefore touched it as little as possible, saying that I should be pleased to be able to report a greater progress, but that the studies of the designs had been much delayed by the want of cordiality between myself and the architect associated with me. That I thought he mistook his duties and his relations to the work and to myself, and that being a matter which could be settled by the department alone, I had referred it to the Secretary.

The general summary of the expenditures of the year into the 30th of September last may be stated as follows:

[longhand transcription follows:]

Cap. Ext. spent in 12 mos.	\$1,130,910.26
Dome	119,450.43
Post Office	330,530.08
Aqueduct	1,147,972.36
Fort Madison	9,902.20
Total	<hr/> \$2,738,765.33

a good deal of work for one year.

The balances available 30th Sept. were

Cap. Ext.	\$343,276.78
Post Office	77,759.00
Dome	482,743.49
Aqueduct	642,132.45
Fort Madison	10,507.05
Total available	<hr/> 1,556,418.77

[shorthand transcription resumes]

I have got from the office one copy each of the annual reports and have written a letter to go in the morning to the War Department transmitting them, and hope to send the triplicate copy in the course of the day.

* * *

[Nov. 19] I saw Wright this morning, having gone to see the President, who was engaged. I left at the President's a note from Mr. Pearce of Maryland, advising him to dismiss Mr. Walter. I had gone there to give this to the President and also to see him to renew the application for my son, John Rodgers Meigs, for appointment at West Point.

I am surprised, on reading over the names that are attached to this application, to know that it was unsuccessful. Certainly no name sent in with as many high and influential names attached to the application as John's: Governor Wise, Senator Davis, Senator Pearce, _____, Douglas, Mason, Brown, etc. The best men in the Senate and many Representatives.

I believe that someone must have been ready at the critical time to advise against him, and that must have been the Secretary of War.

Mordecai's son went, and he had not much, if any, political influence. At least, so I am told by Myers,¹⁰⁸ who is a nephew of Mordecai's.

I had a visit from Heebner, who says that there is good sleighing [?] at Lee. He says that Rice is down upon this administration, says it is going to the devil, etc. That Florence is thinking of backing out from his hostility to me. That Colwell really, with his partners, was engaged in the publication of the letters abusing me on the Scotch pipe question.

He saw the Secretary of War and the President one year before about the columns. He says that the President would not take it up at all but referred him to the Secretary of War, and he told him that he had already seen that gentleman. That the President said they had determined not to go abroad for the shafts unless it was unavoidable.

Heebner says that the shafts cannot be got in this country under 4 years, while he would undertake them from Italy in 2.

He says that the demand for my papers must have been with a view to an attack upon me, which he has heard something of, that it is concocted both in New York and Philadelphia. That they have come to the conclusion that nothing can be effected against me by the old party and are endeavoring to get up a new one. That Bigler and Rice and Florence assert that the Secretary of War told them or their friends

¹⁰⁸Myers was a young engineer whom Meigs placed in charge of pipe work for the aqueduct.

distinctly that I should be removed in 3 days after Congress adjourned. That Floyd told them that he had told the President if he would let him manage it, he will make it all right, but the President did not let him have his way. Now, by Heebner's account, someone is right, either these people or the Secretary.

Heebner says that the Secretary spoke well of me to him; told him, when he said that he wished his rights to be protected under his contract, that he had a very good man in me and would see that no injustice was done.

* * *

[NOV. 19 CONT.] Heebner tells me he can import bathing tubs of marble for \$80. They ask \$300 here.

I tried to see the President today about John and did not succeed.

* * *

[NOV. 20] Wishing to see the President, to make a personal application for the appointment to West Point of my son John, I called again this evening with my wife. We found Miss Lane in the parlor, and the President did not make his appearance.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]¹⁰⁹

[NOV. 23] I have not been well lately. I have felt discouraged. The continual torment from the action and inaction of the Secretary of War and the President deprived me of the interest with which I have heretofore carried on the work and met the great labor which it involves. Now, except to finish the aqueduct, I see no great object in longer striving.

I cut the paragraph from the *Sun* just now. It is fitting to my case. A strong will is a good thing, but an object must be seen, and I begin to see no end to the labor and no reward at the end of it. Yet, this is selfish. For though I get little gratitude for it, I do much good to the poor by my just administration of these works and monies. Though able now to do less than before and not able to prevent some injustice, yet I still have much in my power.

To do my duty and leave the result to God has been my rule throughout, and I hope yet to be able to continue this. But the zest of pleasure is gone.

¹⁰⁹ An inspirational piece from the Baltimore *Sun* of November 23, 1858, that concluded: "Never despair. Forward. Ay! always forward!"

I looked over the letters in regard to the heating and ventilation of the extension and Post Office yesterday and directed what should be sent in answer to the resolution of the Senate. I know what the resolution wants, but this it does not do to assume, and I have to send a great amount of papers.

The sun shines again today, after a rainy day and night. Thus may it be with my affairs. The dark clouds of discouragement will, I trust, pass away.

* * *

[NOV. 23 CONT.] Noticing a reference in Fergusson's *Handbook of Architecture*¹¹⁰ to a book and monograph of St. Sophia, published at Berlin in 1854, I have ordered it. I have been looking over a set of picturesque plates of the building by the French architect, report of building in 1847.

[NOV.] 24TH. I went to the White House today to apply to the President for the appointment of my son John as a cadet. I applied last year, without success, and this year I wished to make the application in person.

The President received me with others, and when I spoke of this, he put on a hard face which belongs to a man worried by the request for what he thinks difficult to grant. He looked just as I feel when a man with many recommendations comes to me to ask for a place as clerk. He was evidently bored. Took my letter and said I might leave it. I must get someone to urge it personally.

* * *

[NOV. 26] I had a long talk with Lee this evening. He says that the Secretary is evidently determined to support Walter. That he has received a letter from Mr. Faulkner asking that Walter may be sent to Harpers Ferry to advise upon the new building to be made there. That the Secretary has spoken of Walter in the most disrespectful terms to some, styling him a hare, who could not venture to claim his own designs until he had the support of others. Etc.

I have answered the letter of Walter to the Secretary, styling me the disbursing agent of the Capitol, etc., and sent the Secretary a copy of the letter of the Secretary of the Interior under which Walter turned over to me the drawings upon my first taking charge.

I also tell him that I have a list of some hundred drawings signed by Walter as those turned over to me, many of which are among those

¹¹⁰James Fergusson, *The Illustrated Handbook of Architecture: being a concise and popular account of the different styles of Architecture prevailing in all ages and all countries*. 2 vols. (London: J. Murray, 1855).

he took in my absence from my office and now declines to return, upon the plea that it is not in accordance with the dignity of his office!

I also again called his attention to the letter and appeals which I made to him on the 16th of September, of which I have as yet no acknowledgement even, still less, any action.

[NOV.] 27. Saturday. I spent the morning at home, writing out reports, etc.

In the afternoon I went to the office and to the Capitol extension. The work is being advanced, but we will not be ready for the Senate upon its coming here.

I have sent to the Secretary a reply to the letter of Mr. Walter demanding that I be ordered to pay persons, his messenger and Mr. Schrag, draftsman, whom I had discharged. I sent with this letter a copy of the order from the Secretary of the Interior, McClelland, to turn over to me his drawings with other papers of the Capitol extension upon my taking charge of the work in 1853.

* * *

[DEC.] 4TH. At the office today, I opened the bids for the column shafts for the Capitol which have been so long advertised. We had 6 bids. Some bid for the shafts both in pieces and in monoliths. The price varied for monoliths and for the shafts in pieces from \$3,200 down; and \$450 I think was the lowest price, unless some of the bids for the marble by the cubic foot may be lower when they come to be calculated.

Rice and Heebner put in a protest against the whole proceeding, claiming that they had the contract already and that it had not been annulled.

Mr. Heebner came in the morning to see me and told me that Owen Jones¹¹¹ was to be here and wished to see me. That he said he had nothing else to do and would enter into this contest. That Heebner had explained to him the circumstances of the Scotch pipe contract, about which [he] had been very much enraged. Rice, it seems, feels that his intrigue about the columns has failed. Curses Floyd, who he says has lied to him, having promised that he would decide the contract immediately after getting his bid for the columns in pieces. This it proved that he could not do, and the result was this advertisement.

Rice now says the administration is going to the devil. The *Pennsylvanian* is about to be sold. Heebner thinks Rice is trying to cheat him out of his share, some \$3,700, in it. He means to enlist Robert

¹¹¹Owen Jones (1819–1878), Democrat of Pennsylvania, served in the House of Representatives, 1857–1859.

Tyler¹¹² in the endeavor to have his share and to beat Rice and Walter in this contract.

He says that Walter showed to them, Provost being present, a letter from the Secretary of War, a copy of one which I received at Rockville. In this letter, the Secretary directs something as follows:

Captain M. C. Meigs will pay Schrag and Donohoe, draftsman and messenger in the offices of Thomas U. Walter, the wages due to them according to the report which may be made by Mr. Walter.

He thus dodges the decision of the question submitted to him by my letters and leaving this still undecided and orders me to do what he thinks will be disagreeable to me. Walter showed this, saying that this was one point gained. Heebner advised him to give this matter up, that he had injured himself by his course towards me, and that Rice had hurt himself by sending a set of riffs to the War Department and President. That they were both better off before they attacked me and that I would beat them both yet, and they had better retire from the field.

Rice, he says, told him to suggest to me that by-gones should be by-gones and that Mr. Walter should go back to things as they were a year ago.

I told Heebner that I was quite willing that by-gones should be by-gones, provided Mr. Walter would retire [to] a place which I had always claimed that he held and which he, himself, quietly held before he made his attack; but that he had behaved in a base way, and that I despise him and must always despise him. But I had no desire to quarrel with him and was willing that he should do his duty and obey my orders, but that I did not think he could do that now. If he chose to do so, I should have no objection.

Heebner told me much about the maneuvers of Bigler and others. Says that Cameron acted against Bigler; they hate each other; that Bigler begins to talk as if he was disgusted with the administration, which he thinks shows that he has lost the confidence of the President. That Walter thinks he has gained a point in this late letter of the Secretary but also seems discouraged and out of spirits. That he and Provost and Rice, together with the editor Harris of the *Union*, drew up a long protest against the letting of the columns, which they tried to get him to sign but which he refused to sign. That he does not see what Walter had to do with drawing up Rice's papers. That when he said he intended to protest that his contract was not annulled, Walter replied that Floyd would annul it, and he told him that was just what he wanted.

¹¹²Robert Tyler (1816–1877) was the son of former President John Tyler. He was a lawyer in Philadelphia and an influential political supporter of President Buchanan.

There is general suspicion and intrigue going on. I wish I was out of the whole. Heebner seems anxious that I should stay. He says Rice was saying that a year ago their contract was working well, and replied that he had only himself to thank for the change.

The fact is that if they had not got Floyd to interfere, or rather if they had made me the offer for Italian columns earlier, I should have given them the order. We would have had some of them here by this time, for this was before Floyd interfered with me and directed that I should make no contract exceeding \$2,000 without consulting him.

I had a long talk with Heebner, who has directed the marble blocks which have been saved at the Carrara quarries so long for the purpose of being cut up into these shafts, to be held a little longer _____. He will be obliged to pay the interest upon the value. The proprietors had determined to cut them up.

* * *

[DEC. 6] A letter from the Secretary of War's chief clerk, asking whether I had received the bids for the columns and what I had done with them. I replied that I had opened them and read them in the presence of bidders and had ordered certain calculations to be made upon them in order to enable the department to compare them. This answer I send in tomorrow morning.

* * *

[DEC. 9] I then went to the office and read a large mail which had accumulated. Sent letters to the bidders [responding to] the advertisement for marble column shafts, telling them that I found some of the bids for the shafts by the cubic foot, but that I should make the comparison of bids at the net contracts of the finished shafts, asking whether they would abide the result of this comparison. I believe that their estimates must have been various, but I can make only one standard.

* * *

[DEC.] 11TH. At the Capitol today. I saw some of my friends in Congress: Chaffee, Horton¹¹³ of Ohio, Morgan of New York, Craige of North Carolina, and others. Mr. Russell¹¹⁴ of New York called, too.

I met in the Rotunda Mr. William Rice, editor of the *Pennsylvanian*, who says that he is ruined. The defeat of the President's party in Philadelphia has lost him \$50,000 of patronage, and Wendell¹¹⁵ has cheated him out of the profits of the Post Office blank printing. He forswears

¹¹³Valentine B. Horton (1802–1888), Republican of Ohio, served in the House of Representatives, 1855–1859 and 1861–1863.

¹¹⁴William F. Russell (1812–1896), Democrat of New York, served in the House of Representatives, 1857–1859.

¹¹⁵Wendell was a printer in Philadelphia.

politics. Pours out his troubles to me, not remembering apparently that he has been intriguing against me for months and that I know it. He says that his brother, John Rice, says now that the columns have been advertised, he believes Captain Meigs is a better friend to him than those who have been advising him lately.

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[Printed material inserted.]¹¹⁶

[DEC. 16] Owen Jones also I met in the House. He spoke of the columns, in which matter he is for Heebner's proposition. Thinks that Rice and others are engaged in an attack upon me and are a corrupt set. Says that he will see the President.

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[DEC. 16 CONT.] The Committee on Public Buildings of the Senate sent for me. They discussed the question of going into the new hall. I told them that I could have my part ready by the end of the Christmas holidays but that they must let me know at once whether I was to buy carpets, etc., or no.

Afterwards I had a talk with Davis and Pearce. Both are warm friends. Davis said that he went to see the President soon after he got back here. Asked him whether anything had been done in his absence in my case. The President, said Davis, urged it. The President said that there was courtesy due from the President to his Secretary, that Floyd seemed to have some feeling upon the subject. He urged Davis to go and see Floyd and believed that if he would say to him what he now said to the President, Floyd would act.

Davis told him he had before said the same things to the Secretary, that he had not spoken so plainly to the President before, but he had to Floyd, and that he could not go to him and repeat.

The President said that Floyd's feeling seemed to have undergone a change lately.

What does this mean? Has he really got disgusted with Walter? Is he over his anger and is he deceiving the President?

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[DEC.] 18TH. Saturday. I got this morning a letter from the Secretary asking why I did not send in the bids for the column shafts. I answered that I had only this morning received the last answer to my letter of

¹¹⁶An article from an unidentified newspaper, praising the new House chamber and pointing out that it was far more conducive to the efficient conduct of business than the old one.

inquiry addressed to all the bidders, asking if they understood the rule of measurement, and I sent in the afternoon my report for the bids.

I advised the rejection of the whole of them as not likely to give us the means of finishing the building in the next 4 years and the acceptance of the bid of the contractors to furnish the shafts from Italy, and at their contract price.

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[DEC.] 20TH. Monday. At the office. I went also to the Senate Chamber to endeavor to get from the Committee on Public Buildings a decision as to whether I should buy the carpets for the Senate Chamber and make ready to admit them to the new hall after the holidays or no. A meeting of the committee was appointed for tomorrow, when I am to have an answer.

I went to the carpet store to see what I could get and make arrangements to be supplied as soon as possible.

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[DEC.] 21ST. I went before the Committee on Public Buildings, and it was decided to get the Chamber ready. The committee would report a resolution to move in after the holidays—that is, upon the 4th of January.

I sent off, to select a carpet, Mr. [Dodson]¹¹⁷, who went to New York by the afternoon train to buy it and the cloth and damask for the fitting of the seats. Everything, I am assured, can be ready by this date.

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[DEC. 21 CONT.] I have engaged an upholsterer and got some materials to work. . . .

Mr. Heebner today told me that he had seen Walter, who said that he was going up to the War Department about the columns. He said that the President was stubborn and that he would not let Floyd do anything to me.

The report upon the bids seems to make a disturbance. Bigler, the Senator, has been telegraphing to Rice to come at once. He has been at the War Department, has tried to get Owen Jones to go and advocate the American marble in pieces. Was much taken aback when I told him that I had recommended the acceptance of the bid of Rice and Heebner for Italian columns. Said that Rice opposed Italians. Did not seem to know that he had made a bid to supply this material.

¹¹⁷James Dodson of Clagett and Dodson, the carpet company Meigs had dealt with for the House chamber.

He told me that he merely asked whether the bids had been sent in at the request of a friend, Mr. Rice of Philadelphia. But he telegraphed him to come and wrote also and made himself very busy today about it. Heebner says there is to be great intrigue and work about this.

Witte,¹¹⁸ who denounced me in Philadelphia in a public meeting about the Scotch pipe contract and who is said to have had an interest with Rice in that contract, was at the War Department yesterday about this. The Secretary, though, swears that he will have columns in pieces if he has to get them in 20 pieces.

Owen Jones, in the meantime, in the interests of Heebner, with Keitt, the chairman of the House Committee on Public Buildings, who says that he will see Mr. Davis and oppose the pieces. In all this, I do not take part. I have made my report, and they may fight it out.

Wendell, the printer, they say, told the Secretary that he was afraid of me and that he would do in the end whatever Captain Meigs told him to. This is a strange speech. No one could report it but Wendell, himself, and I think no one else could manufacture it out of whole cloth. But he may have said something intended to make the Secretary angry and jealous of me. He is too much disposed to think that I seek to thwart him.

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[Printed material inserted.]¹¹⁹

[DEC. 22] The Senate today resolved to move into the new Chamber on 4th January and adjourned over. Many Senators came into the new hall, in which I had established my seat in order to see to the work and workmen.

I had the room lighted up at night. The lighter color of the walls makes the light even more effective than in the Reps hall, and it is very difficult to believe that the light is not the light of day.

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[DEC.] 23RD. The Senate resolved today to move upon the 4th of January, after the return from the holiday recess.

I had many visitors while at work in the hall, in the morning and after the adjournment of the Senate, from Senators. I had taken my

¹¹⁸William H. Witte (1817–1876), Democrat of Pennsylvania, had served in the House of Representatives, 1853–1855.

¹¹⁹An undated excerpt from Senate proceedings, discussing the resolution reported from the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds that directed the new chamber to be ready for occupancy by the Senate on January 4, 1859.

desk into the hall in order to drive the workmen. The carpenters are still at work but will be through tomorrow morning.

I have sent Mr. [Dodson] to New York to get the stuffs for the upholstery and am very busy with the work. All will be ready, however, at the time appointed.

I am to meet the committee of arrangement and make proper arrangement of the seats and other things.

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DEC. 24. Colonel deRussy¹²⁰ has taken charge of the Engineer Department under orders from the Secretary of War. Colonel Thayer, rather than take charge and come to Washington, having asked for leave of absence until June, the time when General Totten will return to this country.

I called today at the office to pay my respects to him. Afterwards spent the rest of the day with the committee of arrangements for the new Chamber. Davis is chairman. Mr. Kennedy¹²¹ of Maryland and Mr. Collamer of Vermont are the other members.

We arranged the seats in 3 rows, making as little change as possible in the places of the Senators, who now sit in 4 rows. The carpets and other stuffs are nearly all here, and the workers are busy.

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[DEC. 25] We had been to church in the morning, and I had gone up to see how my people were getting on with the new Senate Chamber. I found them putting down carpets in the galleries and lining the backs of the seats with cotton flannel before putting on the damask.

I spent last evening with Mr. Davis, who had some other mode of arranging the seats which he had not thought of when we were with the committee in the morning. This also I promised to have put upon the plan.

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[DEC.] 27TH. At the Capitol all day. Met the committee on arrangements. They decided upon the arrangement of seats. The carpet is being made. The backs of the seats in the galleries are nearly all finished. The work is going on at a rate which seems to indicate that all will be ready in time.

I saw the judges of the Supreme Court today looking at the new Senate Chamber and the rooms adjoining. They wish to retain their

¹²⁰Rene E. deRussy was a colonel in the army engineers. He served as acting chief engineer until General Totten's return.

¹²¹Anthony Kennedy (1810–1892), American party then Unionist of Maryland, served in the Senate, 1857–1863.

present room as a library when they move up into the Senate Chamber.

I ordered \$9,300 of gas fixtures today, on condition that the order should not be beyond the amount of \$2,000 unless approved by the Secretary of War. And I wrote to him, stating the reasons for giving the order before I had time to consult him, and asking his approval.

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[DEC.] 29TH. The work of the Senate is going on rapidly. We will be ready in time, with no difficulty. I am besieged, however, with applications for furniture and gas for other parts of the building.

I had a long interview with the Supreme Court today. They wish to retain all the room they can keep or get.

Met with Mr. Collamer about the room and its arrangements.

I had also a talk with Mr. Davis about the column shafts and the contracts and intrigues.

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[DEC. 30] I saw the Vice President and Mr. Collamer today. They are well pleased with the work. The Vice President has been induced to give up the idea of putting a carpet upon the floor of his room, and this I hope will be followed by all the committees and officers of the Senate. It is too bad to have the beautiful tile floors, in patterns carefully designed for this building, covered with carpets. Rugs could be laid down in the middle of the rooms if needed.

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