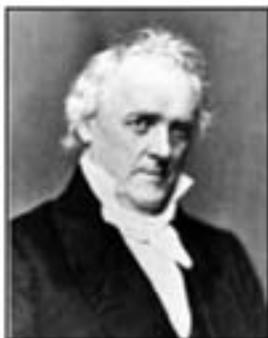

CHAPTER 5—1857



James Buchanan
Library of Congress



Inaugural platform on east front and crowd at President Buchanan's Inauguration, 1857 *Architect of the Capitol*



John B. Floyd, 1858
Library of Congress



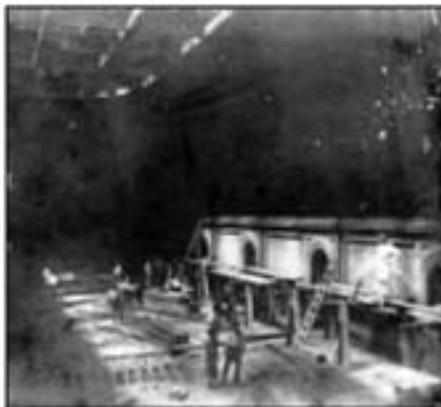
Erastus Dow Palmer's model of his proposed design for the House pediment
Architect of the Capitol



Progress on dome, showing iron columns
cantilevered beyond Rotunda walls, 1857
Architect of the Capitol



East front of House wing under construction,
January 1857 *Architect of the Capitol*



Construction in House of Representatives
chamber, 1857 *Architect of the Capitol*

CHAPTER 5—1857

1ST JAN. A melancholy New Year's Day. Ann was borne from the hearse to the grave by two of her own brothers and two of John's, Harry and Charles Ingersoll¹ and Emlen² and myself. I find my brother with more resignation than I had hoped to see. . . .

* * *

[JAN. 1 CONT.] I went in the afternoon, at 5½ p.m. to New York, reaching there at 10 p.m. I took lodgings, as usual, at the Metropolitan.

[JAN.] 2ND. I went to see a piece of sculpture by Mr. Vandevelde,³ who desires to undertake some of Crawford's statues. It is at Goupils.⁴ I was not much pleased with the design, though the work is well cut.

I called upon Janes and Beebe and went with them to the foundry and saw the work now doing for the gallery fronts and for the cornice of the dome. Upon arrival of the next load of castings, already shipped from New York, they will come on and put up the gallery fronts of the House of Representatives.

I went to the Palmer Gallery of Marbles. They are exhibited in the room formerly occupied by the Duesseldorf Collection in the Church of the Divine Unity. They are very beautiful. The artists criticize Mr. Palmer's anatomy in the figure of the Indian girl,⁵ but it is a very beautiful figure. Most of his works on exhibition are busts and _____ figures in medallions. They show great power of expression and great skill in manipulation. The working of the hair and of the flesh is beautiful. The hair he treats in a way I have never seen before, and most successfully. The bust of *Resignation* is a triumph of expression.

I think that he shows a talent such as I have seen no evidence of before. I hope that he may determine to make a design for the Capitol. I sent lately to Mr. Seward, Senator from New York, the drawings of the space to be filled in the tympanum for Palmer.

¹ Harry Ingersoll and Charles Ingersoll were sons of Charles J. Ingersoll (1782–1862) of Philadelphia, a lawyer who had served in the House of Representatives, 1813–1815, and 1841–1849.

² Samuel Emlen Meigs (1828–1917) was Meigs' brother.

³ Petro Vandevelde was a New York sculptor. One sculpture by him, *Slave in Revolt*, was exhibited in 1850 and may have been the one seen by Meigs.

⁴ Goupil and Co. of New York were print sellers and importers.

⁵ Palmer's sculpture, *Indian Girl*, is owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

I went to the Duesseldorf as usual to refresh my eye with some really good pictures.

I called upon Mr. Durand,⁶ the editor of *The Crayon*, to ask about Mr. Oertel,⁷ of whom he had written to me as a good draftsman and one that would be able to enlarge Mr. Darley's drawings and put them into color. I found him a modest, young-looking man, a German by birth and education. A fine draftsman. And from what I saw of the works in his studio, in which there were none of much importance, an artist of feeling and taste and education much greater than any that I have yet met with, except Brumidi—and I think that he has a more refined taste than Brumidi and that his drawings, which are more careful, are still more correct than Brumidi's. He draws the figure remarkably well. I invited him to write to me upon what terms he would come to Washington to work upon our decorations, telling him what a chance he would have for display of his imagination and taste. He will probably come. He is not making much in New York.

I went also with Oddie,⁸ my cousin-in-law, whom I met in the store of Williams and Stevens, to see Mr. McNevin,⁹ who is a fine sketcher. He made many of the sketches for the *Illustrated London News* which were engraved during the Crimean War. His sketches are very rough but full of spirit and fire—the best ideas that I have seen for battle scenes, being made the day after the battles by one who actually saw battles he painted. Oddie wished me to engage him, but I feared that he may, like [George] West, be only a sketcher. Oddie said that he would engage him to make a study of a battle scene from American history and send it to me for examination.

* * *

[Meigs returned to Philadelphia on the evening of January 2 and went to visit his family again. His recently widowed brother John had decided not to accept Meigs' invitation to come to Washington for a few days. Meigs reached Washington on the afternoon of January 3.]

[JAN.] 5TH. Monday. I went to the office and read and did business as usual. Not having written my journal at home, I cannot record the particular affairs which engaged my attention. I went through the shops of the machine department, attended to my correspondence, etc.

⁶John Durand was the son of American painter Asher Brown Durand (1796–1886). He edited *The Crayon*, an art magazine in New York.

⁷Johannes A. Oertel (1823–1909) was a German-born painter who worked on the Capitol. He designed the seals for the stained glass in the skylight of the House chamber.

⁸According to an earlier entry by Meigs, not included here, his cousin-in-law Oddie was the son of Walter M. Oddie of New York, who is listed as a portrait painter in *Rode's New York City Business Directory, 1854–1855*.

⁹John McNevin, a historical painter and illustrator of books, later worked for *Harper's Weekly*.

* * *

[JAN. 6] Yesterday Mr. Brady¹⁰ brought me the letters between H[orace] Vernet, the painter, and Mr. Mason in reference to the paintings for the main stairs of the extension. Vernet says that he is old and is now engaged in painting the Malakov¹¹ for the emperor and that this will be finished in 18 months. After that time he will paint for the United States a battle piece from the Revolution. He does not like the Yorktown because it is a night attack and would be too cramped. He declines giving a price, but he will visit the United States in his two months' vacation during the next summer or spring, if his expenses are paid, and will leave the pay for the painting to be fixed by the government after it is finished.

I today returned the correspondence to Mr. Pearce and advised that the order be given and that \$1,000 be sent to Mr. Mason to pay his expenses, as Mason says that \$1,000 will be as much as they would amount to; that an appropriation be asked like the last year's of \$20,000 for works of art, and that of this a part be devoted to the Vernet painting.

He seemed to think this would be the proper plan and agreed with me that \$10,000 was too little for such a picture, as we have given for Mr. Powell's¹² *DeSoto*, so much smaller, \$12,000, and that the United States ought to pay for this painting as much as the French nation pays for the Malakov, which is of the same size, being about 30 feet long. All this I believe will be done. It will, if the committee will agree with Mr. Pearce.

I also advised him and Mr. Seward and some other Senator to get an appropriation of \$200,000 to have the portrait of Washington copied in the mosaic at Rome, so as to give us an unfading portrait of the deliverer [?]. They thought this good, too, and it will be done, I doubt not. I sent to Mr. Pearce, at his request, some information about the cost of art works in the British Parliament Houses.

JAN. 7TH. I saw Mr. Tyson today and advised him to assist in getting a copy of the portrait of Washington made in mosaic. This will be done, I think. He sent in for an appropriation for \$20,000 more for

¹⁰The references to "Mr. Brady" and "Mr. Mason" here are unclear. Senator Pearce was authorized by the Library Committee to correspond with Vernet. Perhaps he sent his letter through John Y. Mason (1799–1859), who was the United States ambassador in Paris where Vernet lived. "Mr. Brady" could be Mathew B. Brady (c. 1823–1896), the noted American photographer, who photographed Meigs in 1858 after he had established a studio in Washington. It is not at all clear, however, why he would be an intermediary in the correspondence with Vernet.

¹¹Horace Vernet painted battles of the Crimean War in 1855. Malakov was a redoubt taken by the French, leading to the Russian surrender at the end of the war.

¹²William Henry Powell (1823–1874) was an American artist who painted *Discovery of the Mississippi by DeSoto* for the Capitol Rotunda. His 1873 painting *The Battle of Lake Erie* hangs in the Senate wing of the Capitol.

works of art for the extension; regretted that he had not been advised of it before, that he might get the Committee of Ways and Means to put it into the regular bill. I think this will be got and that out of it the copy of Washington will be made.

Mr. Wood brought to me today some copies of the photographs he has made of the Indian chief, hunter and family. They are good, though not so beautiful in finish as those sent from Rome of the other figures of this pediment.

* * *

[JAN. 7 CONT.] I received from McAllister and Brothers an invoice of drawing instruments today. These are cheap and good. This supplies Mr. Sonnemann, who lost his in the fire in my office. They belong to the dome.

* * *

[JAN. 7 CONT.] Mr. Temple and his wife and sister were at the office today. They say that Mr. Ives,¹³ the sculptor, is here, having come to look for a government commission. I saw in New York one of his works, a *Flora* in marble, tolerably well done I thought; about as good as the *Sabrina* of English sculpture which is so much copied.

I paid Provost and Winter's bill today. It amounted to only about \$10,000, much less than usual. They have done little work of that kind which is priced. Some work upon the stairs, polished Tennessee marble, has been done, but for this there is as yet no price fixed.

* * *

[JAN. 8] At the office I had a visit from Mr. Campbell of Pennsylvania and 4 or 5 of his friends from Pennsylvania who are here as members of the old soldiers convention. They seemed pleased with the beauty of what they saw, and I sent a messenger with them to show them the works of art in the north wing and in the studio.

I do not doubt that Campbell will make out of his defense of me some capital with these men, who are substantial-looking yeomen.

* * *

[JAN.] 9TH. I spent the greater part of the day in discussing with Nason and Briggs the details of our ventilating ducts under the floor of the House of Representatives and into the galleries. We also determined to have the engine built at once for the greater fan, and we settled the plan of construction of the fans that are to be principally of cast

¹³Chauncey B. Ives (1810–1894) was an American sculptor who worked in Rome. His sculptures of Roger Sherman and Jonathan Trumbull are in the Capitol's Statuary Hall collection.

iron. One boiler will also be put in hand as soon as the working plans can be prepared.

The trials of the fan at Winder's building do not give as good results as we hoped to get from the new fan, but I think there was some mistake in the experiments. Mr. Nason and Mr. Briggs today or yesterday made a trial for the dew point in Winder's building and found it at 20 degrees. This was the temperature at the doors. So that the steam which was allowed to escape into the cold air ducts had just saturated the air at its cold temperature, making, at 70 degrees, the temperature of the rooms a sirocco; and this was just what I had told him he would get until he made provision for supplying moisture in the shape of steam or in some other shape to the warm air as it escaped from the coils after being heated. This they will have to do.

* * *

[JAN. 9 CONT.] I paid off a great many bills today after the discussion was over and Nason had taken his departure.

* * *

[JAN. 9 CONT.] I have tonight put into my reports and answers to resolutions of Congress some of the photographs, so as to make an illustrated volume.

The thermometer has been as low as 6 degrees yesterday morning and 8 degrees this morning.

[JAN.] 10TH. Saturday. I went with Macomb to the Navy Yard this morning and looked through the shops there. I wished to see whether we could get the rim of our fan turned upon the horizontal lathe. I think I could manage a ring of 14 feet diameter by attaching it to the bed plate and putting a movable tool upon the face plate. I saw nothing there that was new or interesting to me that I have not seen before. We have the means in our own shop of turning a rim of about 9 feet diameter.

* * *

[JAN. 10 CONT.] I wrote today a letter to Mr. Durand, the editor of *The Crayon*, the art paper of New York, sending to him copies of parts of Crawford's and Rogers' letters describing their works. I sent to him at the same time some photographs of parts of the statues.

* * *

[JAN. 12] I reported to the Secretary of War that room number 23¹⁴ is painted and decorated and that number 22 is in a condition to be used, though not yet painted.

I informed the Speaker that I had made this report, as I received from him yesterday a note telling me that some Members on the Democratic side of the House of Representatives complained that there were rooms which ought to be given to committees which they could not get. There are no other rooms in the south wing which could be made ready during this session.

* * *

[JAN.] 13TH. I found upon my table this morning Mr. Healy's¹⁵ card. He is a portrait painter. He has a great reputation in Paris and this country as a painter of men. With women he is not so successful. He has in the Rotunda a painting of Franklin before Louis XVI. I do not much like the picture. It is wanting in beauty, which is an unpardonable fault. He painted the Daniel Webster Replying to Hayne, which is in Faneuil Hall, Boston. This is a large picture, but dark and disagreeable in color. I must call to see him at Willard's, where his card places him.

* * *

[JAN. 13 CONT.] I went after tea to Thompson's to see some trials of gas apparatus which he has made for the House of Representatives. The carrier worked well, though the tube used is not quite large enough to supply the jets. I directed a change to be made in the arrangement of the jets so that they should cross each other and thus light each other with a smaller number in the inch. I think that about 30 jets in each square will give light enough, but this can only be determined by trial. This would make for the whole hall about 1,350 jets, which would burn 8,100 feet of gas per hour, or in about 10 hours sitting, the 81,000 feet cost \$340. The gas company say that the supply for the whole building will be so great that they cannot undertake to make the gas holders for it.

* * *

[JAN. 14] I had several visits in the course of the morning. Mr. Pearce came in with his daughter and some lady. I took them over the building and to the studio. Then [Edward] Dodd, the Chairman of the Dis-

¹⁴ Now Room H-128.

¹⁵ George P.A. Healy (1813-1894) was an American portrait painter. When Healy was working on his noted painting *Webster's Reply to Hayne*, painted from 1848-1851, he was allowed to use the Senate chamber to do the individual portraits included in the large painting.

trict Committee, and Matteson,¹⁶ both of New York. They went to look at the ceiling of the House of Representatives, and Matteson asked with some interest how I was going to get air into the room. When I told him, he said that was the best way in the world. They had at the asylum in Utica such an arrangement, and it was to see whether I had taken this that he asked the question. He says that at Utica they have 500 patients and perfectly pure air. I told him that I always tried to get the best men in the United States to help in these things and that I had Nason, the man who put up the Utica works, with me.

Banks came in afterwards. He had with him several ladies who, with intelligence of the New England women, much admired what they saw. I read to them the description given by Crawford of his pediment design. We had some talk about the abuse I got in Congress, and Banks said that they must grumble a little, that thus they get their elections, but that after being thus elected, they voted the appropriations; that they liked my works, though they grumble a little before their constituents.

Mr. Pearce tells me that Powell, the painter of the *DeSoto*, has written to Mr. Pugh¹⁷ a letter taking to task their employing Vernet to paint a picture, saying that he cannot paint and that he is ready to do some work for the United States and that the work should be given only to American artists; that they are capable of doing it and are ready for it. This letter was given by Mr. Pugh to General Cass, who is a member of the Library Committee, and the General read it in committee and expressed himself as very indignant, spoke more strongly than he had ever heard him before. The General knows the reputation of Vernet. They say that Powell had one commission from the government and got a higher price than any painter ever did before to paint a picture which, to say the least, is very severely criticized. And now he objects to an artist far above him in reputation and skill getting a commission. He has had his share and did not earn it.

Healy, who is here, upon hearing that Vernet had this commission, expressed himself as satisfied; said that he was at the head of a school in Europe, and as good a school as had ever existed. He is trying to get a commission for his painting of Franklin and will probably do more for his prospects by talking in this way than he would have done by taking Powell's course, who will never get a farthing from this committee.

Casali brought to me today some bronze which he had cast with a composition which I gave him—90 copper, 10 tin, 2 zinc. He says

¹⁶ Orsamus B. Matteson (1805–1889), Whig then Republican of New York, served in the House of Representatives, 1849–1851, 1853–1857, and 1857–1859. He chaired the District of Columbia Committee in the Thirty-fourth Congress (1855–1857).

¹⁷ George E. Pugh (1822–1876), Democrat of Ohio, served in the Senate, 1855–1861.

it is hard but runs well and is of good color. I find a good article in _____ upon the bronze used in ancient and modern times.

* * *

JAN. 16. I was confined to my bed from chill and influenza, with fever and sore throat. It is very common at this time in the city. I signed many bills and checks today.

[JAN.] 17TH. Not yet able to be out, but I have attended to much business in the house.

The Chairman of the investigating committee of charges of corruption against Members of the House of Representatives requests me to prevent the employment of laborers in the immediate neighborhood of the room occupied by the committee. I have given orders to carry out his desires during the hours that the committee is in session.

I wrote to my father today, asking him to send me some money if he has any to spare.

A letter from J. A. Oertel, painter in New York, whom I had asked to come here to help me with the decoration of the building. He says he can come for \$2,000 per annum or, what is the same, \$6 per diem, including Sundays. I have engaged him upon these terms. He is particularly valuable as a good draftsman, his skill in the human figure being greater than that of any other artist with whom I am acquainted in this country.

* * *

[JAN. 20] I walked to the Capitol yesterday for the first time since my attack of influenza but I could not stay long, as I found my throat getting sore again. I paid Heebner some money he was waiting for. He is stopped by the storm. [A blizzard and extremely low temperatures had blocked transportation from New England to Washington.]

* * *

[JAN. 20 CONT.] Here we have had a temperature of minus 2½ degrees. At my house in the daytime, I have noticed it as low as 4 degrees. Yesterday it was 14 degrees, I am told by the children.

[JAN.] 21ST. I found upon my table a card from Healy, the portrait painter, today, and went to see him at the room of the Committee on Naval Affairs. He is here, he says, to endeavor to get the Committee on the Library to give him an order for his picture of Franklin before King Louis XVI of France. The picture is not, I think, a very good one, yet he says that he got for it a medal at the French exhibition of 1855.

He speaks of the painting being given to Vernet with apparent satisfaction. Says that he is glad to see at last the habit of giving these orders to those who execute them.

I found that Mr. Kennett of St. Louis had been to see me about his painter, Leon D. Pomerade. I went into the House of Representatives to see him, and at his request wrote a letter in which I told Mr. Pomerade what Mr. Kennett had said in his favor and that he must give me his price before I could make any engagement with him. This I had done before and got no answer, but his friends are applying to Kennett in order to get his influence instead of sending me his terms at once.

I saw Douglas of the Senate, Chairman of the Committee on Territories. He wished to know what room I had designed for his committee in the north wing, saying pleasantly that his committee was one that did a vast deal of work and that he was a short-legged man and did not want to have to go up stairs. I promised to consult the drawing and let him know. I find that we have given him a room in the lower story, one that I think will suit him.

Brumidi came to see me today to ask me to have the ceiling of the antechamber begun, decorations begun upon the ceiling itself, saying that some of the work ought to be modelled upon the ceiling. He says that the people say that [Ernest] Thomas, who is the director of all this work, cannot model it all, is no artist, and that he has deceived me; but that it will be easy to tell him to do a piece of the work, and if he does not know how, we shall then know it.

I have directed him to have this work begun and advised him to do a piece himself, thus to prove that he has the knowledge and ability, telling him in my note that there is an impression against him and that I wish him to put it down by modelling a piece himself.

Brumidi also shows me his work and asks for an advance of pay, as he is very much occupied and thinks he ought to have better reward for it. I believe he is not unreasonable in his request.

Since the storm, we have the mail from Baltimore, trains having got through with great difficulty and delay, but the mail from New York is of Saturday's date. No travel yet between Philadelphia and Baltimore, none to Alexandria.

* * *

[JAN. 22] The House of Representatives is working upon its investigation of the charges of corruption made by the *New York Times* and

has the correspondent, Mr. Simonton,¹⁸ in custody for contempt. There is much dispute about the power of imprisonment, but a very strong vote ordered him into the custody of the Sergeant at Arms. If they would order him confined in the cellars of the building, it would soon bring him to reason, but to put him into a committee room and give him plenty of champagne and turkey will probably be an imprisonment which he will stand for the rest of the session. This is the time to which their power is limited by the general opinion of the House of Representatives as expressed in the debate of yesterday.

He says that he cannot violate the confidence of those who made propositions to him and that he had inadvertently promised that he would not disclose their names. They have introduced a bill to provide penalties for those who refuse to answer questions of a committee of the House. A Member proposed that the [roll] should be called and the Members asked by the Speaker, by name, whether they would release the man from any obligation he had entered into. This was not put to the vote when they adjourned.

* * *

[JAN. 23] I got at the War Department today the answer of the Secretary of War to the resolutions of Mr. Valk¹⁹ asking for the authority to employ a military engineer upon public buildings. The Secretary tells the House of Representatives that the law of 1806 expressly recognizes the right of the President to employ an officer of the Corps of Engineers upon any duty out of the line of his immediate military duty by prohibiting any other person to so detach him, and that few things would seem to be less comfortable [?] than the right of the government to employ in its service officers specially trained at its expense to conduct great works.

At the Capitol, I found the Senate busy discussing the bill for compelling testimony before committees of Congress.²⁰ It was passed after a long debate in which some grave defects were shown up. For instance, as the bill stands, if a man can, after committing a grave crime, be examined before a committee of the House of Representatives or Senate and in his evidence can declare the crime, he is by the bill for-

¹⁸James W. Simonton, the *New York Times* correspondent, had written that many House members would gain financially from their votes on a western railroad bill, but he refused to reveal his sources to the investigating committee.

¹⁹William W. Valk (1806–1879), American party of New York, served in the House of Representatives, 1855–1857.

²⁰In 1821 the Supreme Court had ruled that Congress had the power to compel testimony but that imprisonment for contempt must end with the adjournment of Congress. The 1857 law made contempt of Congress a criminal offense and set a specific range of fines and imprisonment to punish those found in contempt.

ever safe from indictment on prosecution for that crime thus made known in this evidence.

It was strongly urged by [John P.] Hale and Pugh that the bill was hastily framed and was thus defective, but the desire to punish the audacious slander which has been published was too strong to allow of any delay, and they passed the bill with only 3 dissenting voices.

I saw Mr. Pearce, who asked me to go to the studio with Mr. Stone and look at his statue of Hancock, of which he has made a statuette about 4 feet in height, I believe. He wishes me to advise him as to its merits. I do not like this duty, but I must go, I suppose, though I am not invited, at least by the artist. Mr. Pearce says that Tyson and some other member of the committee have been and are delighted with it.

* * *

[JAN. 24] I spent the day in the office, except that I went in the morning to see the studio of Dr. Stone and his model of Hancock.²¹ He has made him naked in order to study the anatomy first and afterwards to put upon him the clothes. I think he has a rather good figure but has no great beauty. He is the most self-conceited man I ever saw. Showed me a bust in plaster of Justice Nelson and told me that the artists tell him it is the best model from nature they have ever seen. He has a small statue of a man in Quaker clothes which he calls the *Revolutionary Man*, the type of America. It has under one arm a bundle of papers and the other rests upon a plow. This he told me he wished Congress to adopt.²² He also informed me that he had taken it on to New York for the artists to see and that they were fascinated with it. What kind of fascination it could be, I do not know. There is nothing in the figure to make it as good as 20 bronze statues which we can buy in the French bronze shops.

I received from my father today a gift of \$200, which comes very acceptably, as I have not had the means of paying some of my bills at the end of the year.

* * *

[JAN. 26] I reported today room number 11, north wing of the extension, as ready for occupation. I sent a note to Mr. Brown of Mississippi to tell him that it was reported, as he had requested me to do, as his room of the Committee of the District was a very unfavorable one.

²¹ Stone's statue of John Hancock (clothed) was completed in 1861 and is on display in the Capitol Rotunda.

²² This model has been preserved by the architect of the Capitol.

I had a note shortly afterwards from the President of the Senate, Mr. Mason,²³ asking me to meet him tomorrow morning at the Vice President's room in the Capitol to look at the plans of the committee rooms.

* * *

[JAN. 26 CONT.] I went this evening to Thompson's to see the new gas arrangement which he has made. The carrier did not work well to-night. The pressure of the gas in the street mains was not enough. I tried it and found that we had only $\frac{6}{10}$ of an inch pressure instead of $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches to $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches, the proper pressure. Thompson said that during the day, while the full pressure was on, the carrier flashed its light along the pipe. It will work well, I have no doubt. John Rodgers went with me to see it.

* * *

[JAN.] 27. I met Mr. Mason, the Vice President, this morning by appointment, and we went over the basement of the north wing of the Capitol to look at the rooms. He was satisfied to keep the room which I had assigned to his Committee on Foreign Relations.

He promised to get an appropriation for furnishing the building as completed and to have it placed under my direction. Mr. Bayard also came to see me and spoke of the grading of the grounds about the Capitol. I advised him to see Mr. Coyle, whose studies of the grades had made him better prepared for this matter than I was. I told him that I thought the masonry, the steps and such things would be left under my direction but that I thought the grading and filling had better be done by the Commissioner of Public Buildings. He asked me to prepare a plan of the grounds and hand it to him before the end of the session. This I promised to do.

* * *

JAN. 28TH. I went this morning to the shop of Mr. Thompson to see the trials with better pressure upon the gas pipes of the carrier and jets for the House of Representatives. They worked perfectly, the flame running round the square like a train of gunpowder. The jets for the permanent lighting of the ceiling caught at once.

I directed Mr. Thompson to try with the trial meter the consumption of gas by the carrier and by the permanent jets. He is to report this to me.

²³ Senator James M. Mason of Virginia was actually the president pro tempore of the Senate, a post to which he was elected on January 26, 1857. In that role, like Jesse Bright before him, he carried out many of the duties of the vice-presidency, which had been vacant since the death of William R. King in 1853.

I then went up to the room of the District Committee, where I found Mr. Dodd, the chairman. . . .

I had not been long in the office before Mr. [Israel] Washburn of Maine with a friend, a former Representative from that state, General Moor,²⁴ came in to see the building. As Washburn seemed to wish to look at it with some understanding, I went with them and took them over the whole building and through the sculptors' shops and to the machine shop, where we have now in the lathe a shaft of a column for the Post Office 21 feet in length and 2 feet 6 inches diameter. He was much interested in the whole and particularly struck with the process of turning this huge piece of marble.

He said that he intended to give me a blast for not finishing the building more rapidly. I told him that no building of the same size had ever been built so rapidly as this and that I ought to have praise for my speed instead of rebuke for the slowness with which we got on. I showed him what I had of work prepared for the gallery fronts of the House of Representatives and promised that I would get him in the hall by next winter. He seemed to take great interest in what he saw but did not promise to let me alone. Drove home through the snow in the sleigh.

* * *

[JAN. 28 CONT.] I found the gas lighted in the old House of Representatives this morning before noon, before the House met _____.

* * *

[JAN. 30] I had a visit also from the sculptor H. Dmochowski (H[enry] Dmochowski Saunders). He brought me a letter from Henry D. Gilpin²⁵ of Philadelphia. I had seen him before with letters from Mr. Kitt of Philadelphia. He wished some work, which I could not give him. He asked whether I had not some statues for the pediment, saying that he would be glad to take one of them as it would enable him to show what he could do. I told him to see the photograph of The Hunter, The Indian, and The Family and make an offer for them. He is not one of the men who pleases me by his address, which is too servile.

In order to turn the surface of the column shaft true, I have ordered a template made, to be placed in the back of the foundation plate of the rest, so as to raise the end and thus throw the tool back at every point of the shaft enough to form a curve. Thus: [Sketch]. Placing a

²⁴No one named Moor or Moore had served as a representative from Maine, but Wyman B.S. Moor (1811–1869) served briefly as an appointed senator from January to June 1848. The honorary title "General" may have come from his four years as attorney general of Maine.

²⁵Henry D. Gilpin (1801–1860) of Philadelphia was a lawyer who had served as attorney general of the United States, 1840–1841.

bar of iron on the right curve at (a) will do this and enable us to turn the surface of the column with the true curve, without the marks which must be left when changing the tool by hand feed.

* * *

[JAN. 30 CONT.] Warner, of the firm of Gage, Warner and Whitney, who made the large lathe, was here today. He wished to make for me a bed plate for the spliner which he has shipped, and wished also to sell me a medium sized lathe which he has in the Crystal Palace, saying that it was a very good lathe, a fine piece of workmanship, and that he would like to have it here as an advertisement, that it was a good place to advertise tools.

He was much pleased to see the marble column in the lathe and suggested the use of the template. He says that he uses them in turning off the surfaces of large pulleys of 2 feet _____ which have to be made with a curve in order to keep the belt from running off. I have directed the template to be made and used.

The Secretary of War, Mr. Davis, came to look at the works. I was glad to see him and to find him willing to devote some time to going over the work. We went to the ceiling of both rooms, to the machine shop to see a column turned, to the committee rooms which are being opened, to the photography rooms, to the bronze works, and over the works generally. He seemed pleased and interested in what he saw, and I was gratified by the visit. His wife is recovering her strength slowly. He says the physicians tell him that she is now out of danger.

* * *

[JAN. 31] I looked at the column being turned today and directed that the template should be made of wood, hard pine, 3 inches wide, with a bar of iron $\frac{1}{4}$ inch by $1\frac{1}{4}$ upon the top of it for the slide to run smoothly upon. This will be much easier brought to the shape of the curve needed, and the iron bar will keep it from any _____.

* * *

[JAN. 31 CONT.] I have a letter from Oertel asking my advice about establishing himself here with his family. I have inquired and find that the price of board is about \$40 per month.

I have been discussing with Casali, my bronze founder, the making of the colossal statue of America²⁶ for the dome. He thinks that it could be made cheaper, lighter and quite as well of beaten metal. In this way the colossal figure of San Carlo Borromeo on the Isola Bella

²⁶Meigs had apparently forgotten that Crawford's figure represented Liberty or Freedom.

is made. That is 40 or 50 feet high. The bronze is in thin sheets supported by a carcass of iron bars.

I should prefer casting the figure in one piece if we had the fixtures. Ames of Chicopee offers to do it for the cost, keeping an account of the time of the men. I would like to do it here and let the whole works be seen by Members of Congress, but the cost of the cranes and the furnace is an obstacle. The Secretary favors this last mode, however.

* * *

[FEB. 1] The papers say that Mr. Crawford is suffering from an illness which leaves little hope of his recovery. He has submitted to a very severe operation upon what was supposed to be a tumor over the eye, but it has proved to be a malignant cancer. They say that he can hardly live long and that he will leave unfinished the great works for the Capitol and for the Virginia Washington monument.

I read this with great regret. He will leave behind him an imperishable monument in the sculpture of the pediment of the Capitol, of which he has completed the models. Of the door, he has finished, I believe, small models. He informed me that some of his panels were nearly ready for casting. Of the figures for the top of the door, he has two models finished and is getting the marble. The statue for the dome was to be finished in plaster in 60 days from the date of his last letter. A set of masks for the Post Office delivery keystones and for the doors of the House of Representatives are not yet made in clay, even. This will be a great loss for art in this country.

FEB. 2ND. I signed this morning checks for the amount of the payrolls for the past month as follows:

Capitol extension	\$17,273.)	
Post Office extension	7,100.)	
Dome	811.)	26,184, payrolls
Aqueduct, existing liabilities	1,000.)	

A pretty large sum to be spent upon mechanics and labor.

Louisa went this morning to Philadelphia with Raymond Rodgers.²⁷ She pays a visit to my sister Emily.²⁸ She has not been there before for two full years, and I believe it is even a longer time since she paid a visit to them.

* * *

²⁷C. Raymond P. Rodgers (1819–1892) was a cousin of Louisa Meigs.

²⁸Emily Meigs Biddle (1824–1905) was the widow of Jonathan Williams Biddle.

[FEB. 2 CONT.] I directed rollers to be put up under the middle of the column shaft of marble, with india rubber springs under the bed plate of the rollers, to take the weight of the column so as to prevent all danger of its breaking with the vibration and heavy weight of the stone. These rollers to be made of wood. By screwing them up till the pressure is taken by them and the springs properly compressed, we can take upon them the whole and any part of the weight of the column, the elasticity of the springs making up for any irregularity in the cylinder of the part turned for the roller to rub against. I think this will remove the only danger which I have apprehended.

* * *

[FEB. 2 CONT.] Studying metal statues. I have several examples of beaten work in statues, some by Benvenuto Cellini. There is one 64 feet high on Isola Bella, the San Carlo Borromeo.

FEB. 3RD. I wrote to Mr. Hendley S. Bennett of Mississippi giving him some information upon the aqueduct which he had asked for. I went to take it to him in the House of Representatives when, to my great surprise, I was stopped by the Assistant Doorkeeper, who had received strict orders from the Doorkeeper, Captain Darling,²⁹ to admit no one not entitled under the rules. This order was given because Members complained and threatened to offer a resolution against him if they found anyone upon the floor not entitled to enter. I went for him, for a Member of Congress, at his request, and urged my business of a public nature; but under the rules, I had no right to enter, and it was evident that he had no right to permit me. I therefore left, in disgust. I have so much of importance with the House that I ought to have admittance if anyone should.

* * *

[FEB.] 4TH. I spent the morning at home studying the reports and fixing prices of work done by Provost, Winter and Co., the marble work contractors of the Capitol, for work which is not priced in their contract. The work is principally this time the polished marble of Tennessee for the stairways. I find that it does not cost as much as the price at which it was offered in serpentine by the Boston crew.³⁰ For instance, a newel was offered by them at \$285. I find that \$170 will be a fair profit.

I went to the War Department and spoke with the Secretary about the casting of the great statue of America, and he likes the project of doing it here. I requested him, if proper, to give orders for the trans-

²⁹ Captain Nathan Darling was the House doorkeeper.

³⁰ Boston Verd Antique Marble Company.

mission to Washington of bronze captured guns, enough to cast it from, thus making of it a trophy. This he promised to speak to the President upon, as he did not know whether it would get his approbation. He, himself, approved it, if the law would allow it. I think it will be the best possible application of the trophies.

[FEB.] 5TH. I finished the prices of Provost, Winter and Co. and wrote a letter to the measurer, Mr. Harkness, giving him the proper instructions.

I then went to the office and saw Mr. [Samuel] Crocker, of Crocker Brothers and Co.,³¹ of Taunton, Mass. He said he had come to see me, having done a magnificent piece of work for me and wishing to see what I said of it. I told him I felt he had done so well that I had not seen such a lot of cold-rolled copper as he had delivered. I took him up to look at the roof. He was much pleased.

* * *

[FEB.] 6TH. Visit from Professor Pierce to the Capitol extension this morning. I showed him the photographs, and he agreed with me that Crawford had by these works made a step in advance of Powers and now stood at the head of American sculptors. He said, as he left the office, that he was glad to have seen me again and glad that I had been put in charge of this great building.

Mr. Banks, the Speaker, came in. I had met Burlingame and Mr. Hall³² of the House just before and requested Burlingame to speak to Banks upon the subject of my admission to the House of Representatives; that it was very inconvenient to be excluded, and that I ought to be considered as in some measure an officer of the House of Representatives; that I ought at least, as I was building them a new one, to have the most perfect facilities for studying the old one and its defects. To this he agreed and promised to see if he could manage to give the order for my admission.

* * *

[FEB. 6] I went this afternoon to the levee of the President, the first time I have been this winter. There was a crowd, but not one of the violent ones which I have seen there.

I asked the President if the Secretary had spoken to him about the use of captured guns for the America of the dome. He said he had, but he thought it would be necessary to get some resolution of Con-

³¹ Crocker Brothers and Co. provided copper for the roof of the Capitol.

³² Although two Halls were serving in the Thirty-fourth Congress, the reference is probably to Robert B. Hall (1812–1868) of Massachusetts, who served 1855–1859, since he was with Burlingame of Massachusetts and both belonged to the American party.

gress for the purpose. He thought there was difficulty in the way but he, himself, was favorable to it. I told him I thought I could get that done and, if he said so, would go to work upon it. He wished me to see the Secretary first.

* * *

[FEB. 6 CONT.] I went to see Butti's capitals today. He has made very fine models. He seems to have a just idea of the importance of a work of this kind, saying that if well executed, they will be models for future time and it will be remembered who directed such works, and it will be said that they are well done.

FEB. 7TH. I went to pay my respects to Mrs. Douglas,³³ the new married and happy bride of the Senator. She does the honors of her new station with grace and dignity. She is a woman of great beauty. Dresses well, has a well-furnished parlor, though Mr. Douglas' house does not admit of much size to his parlor. He has some good pictures which were bought by Francis J. Grund [?], who intended to bring them home; but having determined to remain in Europe, he offered them to Mr. Douglas, who bought them. They are much better selected than those generally brought home by Americans.

I met Annie and Jerusha with Macomb and John Rodgers at the Douglasses, and they went to look over the works of the extension.

We found the column in the lathe working well. I have got the roller under the middle to take up one-half of the weight nearly, so as to relieve the mandrel and the poppet head of the greater part of the strain. The template at the back to cause the tool to follow the true curve of _____ works well. I have no doubt that we will be able to turn the column and make a truer curve than it would be possible to make by hand. I am most pleased with the working of this contrivance. The stone cutters will continue to come to see it, but I do not think they will longer say that it will not succeed.

The day is a very damp one, and the walls of the Capitol yesterday and today have been dripping with moisture.

I have looked at the sketch by Mr. McNevin of the Battle of Monmouth. It is full of spirit and energy, but I do not like the drawing. I fear that he would be careless in his drawing. Some of the figures in the sketch are not well drawn. I must look at it again and write to him to know upon what terms he would be willing to put it upon paper.

I sent to the Secretary this morning a letter with some photographs, saying to him that I thought they would be interesting as memorials

³³ Adele Cutts Douglas (1835-1899) married Stephen A. Douglas on November 20, 1856.

of the connection he had with this, one of the great buildings of the world, and that everyone who had any influential connection with it would hereafter look back to it with pride and satisfaction. They would be valuable to his descendants. He sends me tonight an answer which is so well done and so gratifying that I must copy it here for preservation:

Washington, February 7, 1857

Captain M. C. Meigs

Dear Sir:

Accept my thanks for the photographs that you sent me yesterday. You are not mistaken in supposing that they would be of interest to me. When hereafter I shall revert to my connection with the great building from which they are taken, I shall not fail to remember that whatever the pride and satisfaction I may feel in consequence of that connection will be mainly attributable to your having been put in charge of them immediately after they were placed under my general direction. I hope the country will appreciate your services as fully as I do and that your good reputation may outlast your durable structures.

Very truly yours,

Jefferson Davis.

* * *

[FEB. 8] I have a long letter from Leutze, the painter, upon decoration of the extension. He sends me 3 or 4 photographs from his pictures: Milton and Cromwell. Washington at Monmouth. The last evening of Charles II at Whitehall. Washington Crossing the Delaware.

They have much merit and he is a good painter, though not so good as I could wish. His plan is to make a scheme or program of a series of paintings to be followed out in the progress of the decoration. His scheme is well enough, but I do not think that much can be done by it. The only way in which any good painting will be got into the Capitol is by giving from time to time commissions to artists, leaving them to select their own subjects to be provided by the directors, whoever they may be, whether the Superintendent, the Committee on the Library, or any body of men chosen by Congress.

I must write to him. I should like to see him employed, but I think that he would ask such prices as would make it quite out of my power to use him. He lives in Europe but he calls himself an American painter, and this is convenient. It loses him in European commissions and gets him some from this side of the Atlantic, but I do not see the pro-

priety of his claim of American feeling when he deserts the country he professes to be proud of.

* * *

[FEB.] 10TH. Senator Pearce wished me to see him in the committee room of the Library Committee upon some subjects connected with their work. They have written and offered to [Alexander] Galt a commission at \$800 for the bust of a chief justice; I forget which.³⁴ They wrote to Mr. [Horatio] Stone that they will give him \$5,500 for a statue of John Hancock to be of the height of 7 feet, to be dressed in the costume of the age in which he lived.³⁵ He read me the letters and wished me to tell him what I thought of the bust of [Tadeusz] Kosciuszko,³⁶ which Mr. Saunders [Henry Dmochowski Saunders], the Pole, has for sale to them. I told him that I did not wish to speak of it but that I would not buy it myself if I were to be the person deciding upon my own responsibility. We went to look at it and then went over the building then through the shops. He is a very remarkable man. Wishes to do right and has taste of his own.

* * *

[FEB. 10 CONT.] I saw Mr. Seward in the Senate, and at his request went to his house at night to a _____ party to meet Mr. Edwin White³⁷ and Mr. Ives. The former is a painter who has spent some 4 years in foreign study and has now a commission from the State of Maryland to paint for the Capitol, at Annapolis, the Resignation of Washington's Commission. They appropriated for it, I believe, \$3,000. He says that the committee have promised to give him, if their influence will get it, 5 or 6,000 more. I think they are paying dear for their whistle. He is not capable of painting a picture worth so much money. And this paying of such high prices by states and governments is destroying the favor for art among the people.

Mr. [Chauncey] Ives is a sculptor and is now making a bust of Governor Seward for subscribers. The Senator is much pleased with it, though not yet finished. I learned from Ives that Crawford, before he was obliged to give up work, had finished the model of the America for the dome in large. I have been studying bronze casting for this work.

* * *

³⁴ Galt's 1858 bust of Chief Justice John Rutledge is in the old Supreme Court chamber.

³⁵ This is the sculpture that Meigs viewed in process on January 24. (See note 21 on page 473.)

³⁶ The bust of Tadeusz Kosciuszko (1746-1817) by Saunders is in the Senate East Vestibule.

³⁷ Edwin White (1817-1877) was an American painter who specialized in genre and historical scenes and portraits.

[FEB. 11] I was for some time in the machine shop today. Champion neglects his duty in the smith shop. He is more interested in the machinery than in the forging and he spends his time in the machine shop entirely. I have never, on going there, found him in the smith shop. I have never been pleased with the way in which business is there done. Today, Mr. Denmead,³⁸ complaining of the way in which Champion interfered with the workmen under his special direction, told me some things that I must attend to. If he does not do better, I must take the machine shop from him entirely and leave him to the smith shop; yet he makes his reports well and accurately, and I should not like to deprive him of this post.

Studying bronze casting. I am getting some information which will enable me to cast a statue well, I think.

[FEB.] 12TH. I directed Mr. Talcott today to talk to Mr. Champion about the manner in which the work of the smith shop is carried on. I do not believe that he properly attends to his duty there, and I intend, if I find cause for the same fault again, to confine him to his authority about the smith shop alone.

I settled today the manner of making the connections to the gas pipes for the lighting of the ceiling of the House of Representatives. I find that some of the rosettes which cover the intersections of the beams of the ceiling are water-soaked. I have directed that these, which are made of carton paper, should be removed and zinc castings substituted. The snow which has drifted into the roof has settled down, and melting has soaked them so that they do not recover their solidity.

Talking with Mr. Briggs about ventilation. He has found a German book which is a compilation and contains much that he has been drawing for me from old authorities upon fans and ventilation. He will look over it with Mr. Camerhoover.

I am invited by the Committee upon Inauguration Ceremonies to meet them tomorrow morning to talk about the platform for the eastern portico. I do not think that the ceremony gains anything by this temporary wooden platform but that the President should be inaugurated upon something more solid and lasting than a temporary built platform. I shall say so, too, if I have the chance.

Sent to the Secretary today the report of time made by Provost and Winter's teams in hauling marble since I have been in charge of the Capitol extension. The committee asks only for the report of time, not for my opinion upon the claim they make, though they know that I have refused to pay it as not being properly payable under the contract.

³⁸ William Denmead was foreman of machinists at the Capitol.

I told the Secretary the other day about it and that I should send in only what they asked, as they know that I must have reasons for refusing. However, as he sent the letter asking for this statement to me for a report, I thought it my duty in reporting to say that I sent only what the committee asked, as they had not asked for any opinion upon the subject of the claim, which was an appeal from the decisions already made. If with this hint they do not ask for more, they are not discharging their duty to the United States.

I ordered the commencement of the platform for the marble in the square, so as to save it from the injury to which it would be liable in the crowd which will be present at the inauguration.³⁹ It will cost about 1,200 or 1,300 dollars, but the materials will be of value after they have served this purpose. And as the work is not more than \$500, this is the cheapest way in which the arrangement can be made. To move the marble is not the business of the contractors, and if done, the United States would finally be obliged to pay for it. So that I think upon the whole that this is the best thing I can have done.

I have inserted here the drawing of the Indian chief, a photograph of Crawford's fine statue from the cast which is the original model. It is now in our studio. I believe that it is the finest statue yet made by an American. I hope that they will order it copied in bronze. A copy should be placed where it can be seen nearer than upon the pediment.

I wrote to Mr. Pearce, as Chairman of the Library Committee, asking him to get his committee to authorize him to introduce a joint resolution authorizing the President to use for the founder of the great statue of America such bronze captured guns as he may designate for that purpose. All nations have used such trophies in making national statues, and this, which is to be the crowning glory of the dome, the great central point of the Republic, ought to be made of some such materials for the sake of preserving them and of giving to it the greater interest.

* * *

[FEB. 12 CONT.] On the opposite page is Crawford's Indian Family for the pediment. He has not in this made any approach even to the Indian character. I regret this much, for in such a work the characteristics of the race should be carefully preserved. The group is _____, but it is a white mother with her child.

FEB. 13. I met the committee on arrangements for the inauguration this morning, and it was determined that the best thing to be done was for me to put the platform as I had ordered over the marble upon

³⁹Meigs was referring to the blocks of marble stored on the east plaza.

the eastern front. They propose also to have a covered way from the north gate to the foot of the Senate staircase and the platform upon the eastern steps. This I advised to be done by Dr. Blake, under the direction of the [Committee on] Public Buildings.

* * *

[FEB.] 14TH. Saturday. Judge Kane, whom I saw last night at the President's, came to see me at the office today. I went round with him and showed what we had done in the decoration of the extension. He expressed great pleasure at what he saw, said that he had no idea that anything like so much was in progress. I gave him some photographs of the statues and views of the building which he seemed to admire. He said they would lay them upon the table of the [Philosophical] Society at its next meeting.

* * *

[FEB. 16] We have begun to build the platform for the inauguration.

Thomas [Allen] met with an accident with the buggy today which has broken it pretty much to pieces. The bolt which connected the head with the tongue broke and let the tongue fall, and the horses ran away. They ran around the Capitol yard two or 3 times, and at last the reins broke and they got away from him, throwing him out.

I have ordered a derrick put up to handle the brackets and other iron work for the dome. The putting up of 4 brackets in the yard cost, I think, some \$20. It took so many men to handle them and pile them up in a proper place. By putting up a derrick, I shall be able to do the same work in a few minutes with a couple of men.

* * *

[FEB.] 17. The last or finishing cut is now being made upon the column shaft in the large lathe. It has been 28 days in the lathe and will take a full month before it is entirely finished. At \$3 per day, this will come to \$90, which is much less than it could be cut for by hand. However, there are some expenses in hauling it to the shop, though I do not know that they are greater than to haul it to the marble shop.

I wrote my monthly reports this morning, taking them and some letters which had stood for some time. The whole morning at home. At the office I am so much interrupted that I have not been able to write them there.

I answered Mr. Leutze's letter today. I sent to him some photographs of the Capitol.

Wrote to Roebling for the time in which he can deliver wire ropes for the derrick which I am about to put up at the shop to handle the casting for the dome.

Mr. Wood has been trying some photography process of great speed for the purpose of taking a view of the inauguration. He made a view of the front of the Capitol in which the figures are, many of them, quite distinct. This was taken upon collodion and the men thus taken are those who happened to stand nearly quite still for a moment. It took about 4 seconds.

* * *

[FEB. 17 CONT.] Mr. Ives came to see me this evening. I showed him some photographs of his works. He has made several statues. Seems to look upon his brother artists with critical eyes.

Speaks of Crawford's works as being rapidly executed. Says that Powers never took an ounce of marble off his figure of America. Thinks that the United States ought to pay for statues about double of the private person's pay. Says that he makes a statue for an individual for \$2,000. He has a statue of Ruth which is not life size for which he gets \$1,000, and he has made 7 copies of it. In this way he says the artist is paid for his model.

* * *

[FEB. 18] Mr. Ives calling, I had to show him the works of art. Barnard also came to see the statues and the turning of the column shaft.

* * *

FEB. 19. The investigating committee reported today. They charge Messrs. Gilbert,⁴⁰ Matteson and Edwards⁴¹ of New York and Mr. William Welch⁴² of Connecticut with being engaged in corrupt combinations for the purpose of passing bills through Congress and reporting resolutions expelling from the House of Representatives.

There ensued a very excited debate upon this report in which Mr. Grow of Pennsylvania, Mr. Bennett⁴³ of New York and others strove to prevent the reception of the report. But the House insisted upon its being read, and it was ordered to be printed and made the order of the day for next Wednesday.

The persons implicated are all members of the Republican Party. It is said that they have tried to get hold of Horace Greeley, to whom some of the witnesses have testified that \$1,000 was paid. But he is

⁴⁰William A. Gilbert (1815–1875), Whig of New York, served in the House of Representatives, 1855–1857.

⁴¹Francis S. Edwards (1817–1899), American party of New York, served in the House of Representatives, 1855–1857.

⁴²William W. Welch (1818–1892), American party of Connecticut, served in the House of Representatives, 1855–1857.

⁴³Henry Bennett (1808–1868), Whig then Republican of New York, served in the House of Representatives, 1849–1859.

in the northwest, lecturing. However, this is not yet, so far as I know, proved upon him. The report of the committee will be looked for with great interest; and I believe, from what I could hear last night, that the men who have by special _____ tried to defeat the action of the committee will be ruined by it before the country. The accused are ruined, of course.

* * *

[FEB. 19 CONT.] Mr. Briggs met me and reported upon the weight of the gas leader⁴⁴ needed for the supply of the extension, the means of balancing, etc. Its construction also came into consideration. He also made a report upon the quantity of air needed to supply the proper ventilation of the gas lights of the ceiling of the House of Representatives. It is about 53,000 cubic feet per minute, including the gasses produced by the lights themselves.

The shaft of the column in the lathe is at length entirely turned, the tenons upon the ends alone remaining to be turned.

I have a petition from the plasterers of the city to appoint Flaherty a master plasterer upon the Capitol. They recommend him highly. I do not have confidence in him. He came to the Capitol upon terms agreed upon with Mr. Jones and then denied having made any such agreement. He declared he would not work for such pay, \$2.50 per day, but upon being told he could leave if dissatisfied, he stayed. He is a skillful plasterer for plain work and can no doubt put up other work, but he is no decorator, cannot model, has no knowledge of taste. And I have no belief in him.

Heebner is here. We are nearly out of marble. Winter reports that he has only 6 blocks of marble on hand. I told Winter that I could not believe that there was no marble on hand, while I saw so great a quantity of Italian marble on the ground only waiting to be worked. I have determined to advertise for hand sawyers.

* * *

[FEB.] 20TH. I stayed at home till nearly 12 o'clock this morning in order to look over the fair copies of my monthly reports for the month of January, which I have not been able to attend to before.

I then went up to the machine shop and there saw the column shaft which is quite finished, except on turning of the tenons upon it. It is a beautiful piece of work, and I suppose that the stone cutters will now acknowledge that it can be done in a lathe.

⁴⁴The gas pipe.

We make good progress with the turning of the bases. The last one, which is 4 feet and in which I have caused a mortise to be turned, took 6 days. This is an improvement.

Heebner was at the shop when I went in. He is much delighted at my successful experiment. Hopes that I will put it in the exhibition of the institute. He wants it to go in just as it is now, with the tool marks upon it. They show that it is cut much more smoothly and accurately than it is done by hand.

I took to Mr. Pearce the photographs of Ives' work and, by his desire, left them in the room of the Library Committee, where he told me I would find some cartoons by Powers. Powers seems to have excited his indignation by his letter about the employment of Vernet, and he wished me to look at these cartoons apparently as being examples of bad drawing or design. I found, however, upon asking in the library that they had just been taken out of the room.

* * *

[FEB. 20 CONT.] Mr. Wood has completed some very good photographs, one of the entrance to the marble shop upon the south of the Capitol, with the two horses in the _____ cart. Very good. One of the library portico of the old building with the west front of the north wing. Also exquisite.

The platform for the inauguration makes good progress. Dr. Blake, the Commissioner of Public Buildings, insists upon having the musicians upon the middle of the platform. I told him today that this was the very best place and should be reserved for the people and not given to the hired musicians. However, he did not agree with me.

Provost and Winter informed me yesterday that they had only 6 blocks of stone in hand, and I have advertised for more sawyers. We have a large quantity of Italian marble which, if he would take up and saw, we could at once supply them with work upon. But they have the same difficulty that I have in getting people able to saw it.

* * *

[FEB. 20 CONT.] I have told Mr. Walter to prepare a design for the walk from the gate upon the avenue to the entrance of the Capitol. By making plenty of steps and a balustrade with pedestals for statues, this may be made as splendid as the Scala de Gigante. It is several hundred feet, and the ascent is 80 feet or nearly that. Using granite for the steps, we would have a durable and magnificent work. If this is adopted and I build it, I think I will have the Indian chief of Crawford electrotyped in copper by covering the plaster with copper and set it upon one of the pedestals.

* * *

[FEB. 20 CONT.] I read in the library from the Musee [?] a part of an article upon bronze which is quite complete upon the history of bronze statues. It is long, and I had not time to read it through.

[FEB.] 21. I ordered today another sliding rest for the large lathe for turning the columns. The length of the work is sufficient to enable us to use two rests and carriages, at the same time working over the two halves of the shaft. As each of these will keep two tools going, I hope that we will be able to turn a column shaft, after a little more experience, in 7 days instead of something over 30, which this one has taken, including the making of all the fixtures to be used with the lathe in hanging it.

* * *

[FEB. 21 CONT.] Mr. Oertel arrived. I gave him some directions as to his work. He is first to make drawings of the arms of the states to be painted on glass. These are for the ceiling of the House of Representatives.

I also gave him the design for the ceiling for the library of the Senate.⁴⁵ This I wish him to study: the compositions for the groups of history, legislation, etc. I hope to make this a beautiful room.

Mr. Powell came also and requested me to go with him to see his sketches, which are in the room of the Committee on Elections. I took him over the building with Oertel and went with him also to look at the sketches. He had one of Perry on Lake Erie. He draws with some skill, but his action is theatrical. He expressed a desire to make paintings for some of the walls. I told him to submit to me his terms and I would consider them.

I explained to him some of my views in relation to the cost of such works and the difficulty I had to contend with in regard to them.

I had also a visit from Mr. Pomerade of St. Louis, who came in announcing that he understood from my letter that I did not intend to give him a job but that Mr. Kennett of Missouri had written to him and told him to come on. He said that he had seen the picture in the Agricultural Room and that he could paint better; that he did not know what I did not like about his drawing sent as a sketch of the ceiling of the Variety. I replied that I had plainly expressed my opinion in regard to that drawing and that I wished to see a better one from him before giving him anything to do.

I showed him a sketch by Brumidi for the library ceiling of the Senate, which he said was evidently done with much time and pains and

⁴⁵Now designated Room S-211, the Lyndon B. Johnson Room.

that it was copied from engravings. He also said the *Cincinnatus*⁴⁶ was copied from a painting in Florence. He had often seen it. I begged leave to differ from him in these things; and while talking with him, Brumidi came in with a German who is a scagliola maker. I engaged the German, after some discussion, at \$3 per day. He wanted \$4, which I refused to pay.

Pomerade, finding me talking with Brumidi, whose name I spoke so that he could hear it, left, saying he would come in again. He asked the price I paid. I told him from \$1.62⁴⁷ to \$8 per day, according to the skill, industry and ability of the painter.

He is not a young-looking man, and I find him one who does not by his appearance or conversation make a good impression upon me. His attempts to decry the works of others and deny their originality, and to praise his own, do not incline me to look upon him with favorable eyes.

He said he did not like to make sketches but designed his works as he went on, painting one figure and then another. This haphazard way of doing work may answer for the west, but in the Capitol I must know what is to be put upon a room before it begins.

* * *

[FEB. 21 CONT.] The club met at Professor Henry's tonight at his rooms in the Smithsonian Institute. Dr. Reid of Edinburgh being present, we had much talk about ventilation and sound. [Meigs had attended lectures given by Dr. David B. Reid on February 16 and 18, 1857.]

* * *

[On February 22 Meigs traveled to Philadelphia. After visiting his family and paying visits to the Academy of the Fine Arts and the Academy of Music, he returned to Washington on February 23 with his wife and the two youngest children, who had been visiting his sister Emily.]

[FEB. 23] After getting some tea, I went to the Smithsonian to hear Dr. Reid's lecture. He lectured upon lighting public rooms and upon ventilation, giving his experiment of the shadow of a candle and gaslight.

[FEB.] 24TH. I had a visit this morning, before I was out of bed, from Mr. Kennett of Missouri, with Mr. Pomerade of St. Louis. He is desirous of painting a room in the Capitol, and I told him, after much dis-

⁴⁶ *Calling of Cincinnatus from the Plow* was Brumidi's sample fresco in what is now Room H-144. Meigs described the process of the painting in many entries during December 1854 and January-March 1855.

⁴⁷ This figure seems strange since the painters were paid in even dollar amounts, but Meigs wrote the number out in numerals.

cussion, that he must make a design and send it to me; that if his price was such as I thought his work was worth, I would employ him.

At the office I found that the President had been there and left a note from Mr. Everett, stating that I had said that if Mr. Powers would offer to make his statue of America colossal, the President would make a contract with him to the extent of the appropriation (\$25,000). The President endorsed upon it that he did not understand it and asked me to explain.

I went to the reception and told him that I had not said so but would bring to him my note to Mrs. [T.J.] Page, from which I supposed they intended to quote. I found afterwards that I had said something like it but with such qualifications that I had forgotten it. I had said that if Mr. Powers were to offer to make the America of colossal size, of such size as to put him to an expense in making it which would evidently make \$25,000 a reasonable price, I believed it would be accepted. I read this and the rest of my letter to Mrs. Page to the President in the evening when I went to see him, and he said I had said nothing but what I had a right to and that he had himself in his letters said even more; that he wished me to keep these notes carefully, as there might be an attempt made to misrepresent him, and there seemed to be a disposition to make someone appear to have said or promised something which was not quite right.

He asked for a copy of part of the note to Mrs. Page, which he said he would send to Mr. Everett.

Mr. Morgan⁴⁸ of New York called this morning with Mr. Palmer, the sculptor. Mr. Morgan left the office before I got to it but I found Mr. Palmer there. I had a long talk with him in which I explained to him what I had done in reference to his own case and to that of Mr. Crawford, read to him Mr. Crawford's letter in which he named the terms upon which he would make the pediment. Palmer said that he had received drawings of the pediment plans in an irregular way and that he had supposed he was invited to a competition. But after a good deal of talk about the style of the work, in which he showed a disposition to criticize the work as being the product of many hands and that he could not think in such a work of allowing anybody to touch it save himself, thus indicating his intention, very bold and _____, to cut all the stone with his own hands, he wound up saying that \$20,000, Crawford's price, would not be any inducement to him to undertake so extensive a work. I suppose, therefore, that he will do nothing.

⁴⁸Edwin B. Morgan (1806–1881), Whig of New York, served in the House of Representatives, 1853–1859.

Our conversation touched upon many things—his own success in art, the manner of doing great works.

What an idea—that no one must touch his model but himself. Would Phidias have been known now as the author of 300 statues had he made nothing by any hands but his own? I might just as well determine that I would build the Capitol and water works with my own hands only and that I would delay them till I could cut all the stone and lay all the bricks with my hands.

I showed Mr. Pomerade a room, the Speaker's room, and told him to send me a design for it. He has gone back to St. Louis.

* * *

[FEB. 25] I had a long talk with Mr. Ives today and went with him to the library to get the photographs which he had left with me for the Library Committee to look at. Mr. Pearce is sick and has not been to the committee room for some time. I requested Mr. Hinman,⁴⁹ one of the librarians, to send the drawings down to him at his house.

I was informed today by Mr. Sonnemann that the cornice upon the top of the Rotunda is in a dangerous state, and upon examining it, I find that it is so badly constructed, the blocks of stone not being balanced, that it is really separated slightly. How it has stood so long I do not know. It is a great mistake. I ought to have discovered it long ago. Those in charge of the work should have found it out. I have directed that with all possible speed the back of the cornice shall be [lined] with brick so as to make it safe. But I feel uneasy about it and shall do so until it is finished.

* * *

FEB. 26. I went to see the bust of Mr. Seward by Ives, which is finished in clay, today. It is a striking likeness, though I do not see in it very great force or genius. Yet it is well-modelled.

* * *

[FEB. 26 CONT.] I adopted the design for the glass for the skylight of the House of Representatives today by Brumidi. Mr. Oertel brought in yesterday some sketches for the ceiling of the library of the Senate. He wanted to leave out all the decoration and substitute figures of large size. He made them too large for the room, and I believe that I satisfied him of that fact. We will preserve the decorations.

I sent to the mechanics exhibition today the column shaft of the marble turned in the lathe. It is well done.

⁴⁹C.W. Hinman was an assistant librarian.

The House of Representatives passed today in a hurry, almost without debate, the appropriation bills and sent them to the Senate. This was done in order to get at the investigating committee's report. The Ways and Means Committee had adopted many amendments which were embraced in a substitute which they directed Mr. Campbell of Ohio, their chairman, to offer. But this was ruled out of order, and the bills passed as they were first ordered by the committee. Thus, all these amendments must be considered in the Senate.

FEB. 27. The House of Representatives having passed the appropriation bills without discussion yesterday and without allowing any amendments, they are passed in the shape in which they were first reported by the Committee on Ways and Means, thus throwing out all the work which has been done by the different standing committees during the session.

I went to the room of the Committee on Ways and Means. From the clerk, Mr. [R. Cochran], I got a copy of the bill as it had passed the House of Representatives. I found that there were included in it \$900,000 for the Capitol extension and \$200,000 for the Post Office extension. So that these two appropriations are safe. The aqueduct and the dome are left out.

I then went to the [Senate] District Committee room and saw the clerk, to whom I gave a statement of the case and put into his hands a copy of the proper amendment to be offered for the water works, asking him to lay that before Governor Brown of Mississippi, who is chairman of the committee. He promised to do so.

In the Senate, I saw many Senators who promised to vote for it; and Bayard, Chairman of the Public Buildings Committee, with Pratt, promised to get the majority of the committee to adopt both appropriations—\$1,000,000 for the water works and \$500,000 for the dome. They said that they would get a majority. Bayard tried to get Hunter to take it up in the Finance Committee, but he said that he would prefer to have it done by the Public Buildings, though he would vote for the water works. He seemed to be opposed to the dome, however.

* * *

[FEB. 27 CONT.] I received my pay accounts for February today. They amount to \$160 and some cents. The back pay since the 1st of July is \$140, and the back raise under the law of the 20th of February is \$193 and some cents. This gives me \$493.00, quite a lot at this time. The law gives us \$20 additional upon our pay and 30 cents each for our _____ instead of 20 cents, the price heretofore, making an increase of about \$500 per year.

* * *

MARCH 2ND. Monday. I spent the day in the House of Representatives and Senate, attending to the appropriations for the water works and dome. Neither of these has been put into the appropriation bill by the Committee of Ways and Means of the House of Representatives, and thus they have [not] been provided for. The Committee of Public Buildings, of which Bayard is chairman, have agreed to adopt for these works my estimate of \$1,000,000 for the aqueduct and \$500,000 for the dome for the year's services, and Bayard is to offer the amendments when the time comes.

The session continued till 3 a.m., and I spent the day in the two houses, arguing, suggesting, persuading, informing. A hard day's work from which I returned home in the early morning, quite tired.

[MARCH] 3RD. The appropriation for the water works was moved by Bayard, who said a few words in favor and explanation of it. Mr. Wilson⁵⁰ of Massachusetts, after Bayard was through, rose and said that he had heretofore opposed this work and still thought it was begun upon a little too extravagant a scale but that it must be finished; the plan was adopted and would be finished at some time; that he had made much inquiry and given the subject much reflection and had at length come to the conclusion that it was right to vote for it, and he should do so henceforth.

No other speeches were made, and Wade⁵¹ of Ohio called the ayes and noes. They were 40 ayes to 6 noes. So that we go strong to the House of Representatives.

The dome appropriation, moved by Mr. Bayard, \$500,000, passed without a dissenting voice. I thanked Mr. Wilson for this change of opinion and this support, telling him that I took it as a compliment to myself, for I believed that it was the confidence he had felt in me since we had become acquainted that induced the change and therefore I was proud of it.

I then went over to the House of Representatives and told my friends what had been done in the Senate, set them to work for the safety of the appropriation when it came down to the House of Representatives.

In this work I was engaged, with prospects of success, till the recess was taken about 3½ a.m. Harris of Maryland told me that he had done his best to kill the work for last year, he would say frankly, but that he now would oppose it no longer.

⁵⁰ Henry Wilson (1812–1875), coalition candidate then Republican of Massachusetts, served in the Senate, 1855–1873. He was vice president of the United States, 1873–1875.

⁵¹ Benjamin F. Wade (1800–1878), Whig then Republican of Ohio, served in the Senate, 1851–1869.

Others to whom I was introduced promised me their support, with a strong conviction which I have been supported by, indeed throughout this struggle, that the appropriation for the aqueduct was safe and that for the dome I feared no opposition.

* * *

[MARCH 4] I slept till 9 a.m., nearly the time of reassembling of Congress, and I reached the Capitol about 10 a.m. Found that the bill, which had last night been referred to a conference committee, had been reported with a recommendation to agree to the aqueduct and that they would then in the House of Representatives vote upon this report. It passed a few minutes after I reached there, by a majority of 20.

I have received many congratulations since from Senators and Representatives and citizens. Many of them are kind enough to say that it is my exertions and the confidence the two houses have in my character and management that have at length gained this great success. There can hereafter be no difficulty about the appropriation for the aqueduct. This million will do much with the work, and no Ways and Means can hereafter stultify itself and the House of Representatives it represents by pretending that there is no law authorizing the aqueduct. \$1,000,000 may well complete the work so as to bring the water into the town.

The appropriations made for my works are as follows:

		Balance
Capitol extension	\$ 900,000	\$ 409,000
New dome of the Capitol	500,000	140,000
Post Office extension	200,000	292,000
Aqueduct	1,000,000	226,000
Fort Madison	20,000	—
	\$2,620,000	\$1,067,000

I have on hand for the various works now about \$1,067,000. Makes about \$3,687,000.

Being in the Senate at the time of the adjournment, I stayed to see the inauguration ceremonies. I had a good view of the multitude upon the platform in the eastern square from the window of the Senate Chamber. I suppose there were from 20 to 25,000 people present. I had a stage erected to take a photograph from. I believe we have succeeded in getting a pretty good view of the ceremony.⁵²

⁵² See illustration on page 461.

I wrote last evening a note to Mr. Pierce upon his retiring from his office, in which I tried to express to him my feelings of gratitude for the kindness and confidence with which he has sustained me.

* * *

MARCH 6TH. I went, before going to the office this morning, to call upon Mr. Pierce to offer him in person my thanks for the kindness and courtesy and confidence which I have received from him during the period of our official connection.

* * *

[MARCH 6 CONT.] I had a pleasant visit. He had received my letter of thanks, which I feared had miscarried, and he said he was glad to receive it.

* * *

[MARCH 6 CONT.] In the evening I went to the levee of the President.⁵³ Before I got within reach of Mr. Buchanan, he left the room, having, I suppose, become tired out by the shaking of hands for 2 hours. I heard him say that it was past the hour and he must go. I shook hands with General Cass⁵⁴ and congratulated him. He says that at his time of life he must have his family with him and that he would therefore send for them, going home for a short time in a month or two. This, he says, is for him a great experiment and it had given him anxious thoughts.

* * *

[MARCH 7] At night we had a meeting of the club at Mr. Peale's, a pretty full meeting, and a pleasant one. We discussed the poisoning of the people at the National Hotel, which still continues. Heebner came in yesterday to the office, saying that he had stopped at the hotel for a short time to see some friend and had drunk several glasses of water the day before; that at night he was seized with the worst attack of diarrhea he had ever had and was going to run away from it. There seems to be little doubt, therefore, that the water is in fault. Yet there has been no analysis which gives any clue to the cause.⁵⁵

⁵³James Buchanan (1791–1868), Democrat of Pennsylvania, served in the House of Representatives, 1821–1831, and in the Senate, 1834–1845. He was secretary of state, 1845–1849, and held diplomatic posts before becoming president of the United States, 1857–1861.

⁵⁴Lewis Cass (see note 184 on page 182) had been appointed secretary of state in the Buchanan administration.

⁵⁵Guests and workers at Washington's National Hotel contracted a mysterious intestinal illness in February and March 1857. Historians now believe it may have been caused by sewage that backed up when pipes froze in the cold of January. (Kenneth M. Stamp, *America in 1857: A Nation on the Brink* (New York, 1990), p. 60.)

At the department, where I went to see whether there was to be any visit or ceremony to the new Secretary and President today, I was informed that there would be none and that it would not take place till Monday. . . .

By the way, I have since heard that the visit did take place about ½ hour after the Adjutant General had given me this information, and thus I was absent at the time.

* * *

[On March 8 Meigs included in the journal his response to a letter from his father expressing concern about the heavy responsibility of overseeing his various projects. Meigs reassured the older man that his head had not been turned by kind words from members of Congress. He explained that his chief concern had been to be able to complete the aqueduct and bring pure water to Washington. Securing the appropriation for that project he considered to be his greatest success. Of the Capitol extension, he wrote: "I am not insensible to the honor of directing such a work as the Capitol. My constructive facility is gratified in mastering its difficulties, in contriving the many machines and processes there used. My taste is gratified in the works of art, and my heart and conscience in the knowledge that, through me, much good flows to the laborer and to the artist and that to each and all is secured justice and courtesy." He believed, however, that the aqueduct would represent his most valuable legacy.]

[MARCH] 9TH. Monday. I went to see the Secretary of War. He was at the President's house, and I did not succeed.

* * *

[Now that the aqueduct appropriation had passed, Meigs was principally occupied during the next few months with restarting the work on the aqueduct. In this period, the journal makes only scattered references to the Capitol construction.]

[MARCH 11] I went yesterday and today to the Secretary's office but did not find him at home. He goes at 10 a.m. to the President's, to the cabinet meetings. I must go earlier tomorrow morning.

* * *

MARCH 12. I saw the Secretary⁵⁶ this morning, after several days' search for him. He was on the wing for the cabinet meeting when I was admitted to his presence.

He is a fine-looking man of large size, with an intelligent face, but I do not see in him, in this hasty interview, the marked individuality

⁵⁶John B. Floyd (1806–1863) a former governor of Virginia, was secretary of war in the Buchanan administration, 1857–1860. During the Civil War, he served in the Confederate army, 1861–1863.

of character which Davis has. I hope that I may find him as much disposed to put confidence in me as I did Davis. If not, my work will not be so pleasant as it has been heretofore.

* * *

[MARCH 12 CONT.] At the Capitol, I had a visit from Mr. Wilson, the Senator from Massachusetts. He went over the building, seeming particularly taken with the turning of the marble column and with the statue of the Indian chief by Crawford.

* * *

[MARCH] 14TH. I had a busy day. Mr. [Briggs], with Freeman and Thompson, the plumber, called to see about gas meters and gas holders. They wished me to undertake the erection of a gas holder for the Capitol. We will need a supply of gas for one night session which may reach a consumption as high as 400,000 cubic feet. This is double the quantity which they make at their works for the use of the whole city at present.

For this reason, it is necessary to build a new holder capable of holding in store about 350,000 cubic feet. The quantity used by the Capitol is generally small, but for two or 3 nights, they may use this enormous amount of 400,000 feet. Thus, without some special store, the present gas company cannot supply them.

I do not think I have the right, however, to make a provision of this kind. They may manage to get along for one session with the present storage by being economical with their gas. The great consumption supposes all the lights in the building to go the night, for 17 hours.

I went to see the studio of Mr. Rinehart,⁵⁷ a young sculptor from Baltimore. He has a good bas relief, about 3 feet by 2, of catching wild horses which shows talent and skill. His bust of Senator Benjamin does not strike me as being very good.

I told him he might make a sketch for the fountain at the Post Office delivery and also for the mantel for the Retiring Room of the House of Representatives.

* * *

[MARCH 17] Returned to the office [from visiting the aqueduct construction at Little Falls] about ½ p.m. Found several people waiting for me.

⁵⁷William H. Rinehart (1825–1874) was an American sculptor who worked in Italy. He ultimately completed the bronze doors for the Capitol that had been begun by Thomas Crawford.

Mr. Walter came in a high state of excitement. He had found a great mistake in the arches of the attic lobby on the north side of the south wing. Two of the arches were made elliptical, thus throwing them out of level with the others which are semicircular. The fault is with Forbes,⁵⁸ the carpenter. The drawings furnished were right. I ordered them taken down and corrected.

We are lucky not to have any more mistakes of the kind in such a complicated system of arches. This was revealed upon taking down the centers, which are just being removed. The arches have been finished for more than a year, and the roof is over them.

* * *

[MARCH 18] I wrote tonight my monthly reports. Our expenditures in the month have not been large, only about \$50,000 all together.

[MARCH] 19TH. The Vice President, Mr. Breckinridge,⁵⁹ sent for me today to see about the plan of the north wing and his room in that plan. He wished to have a small room adjoining, made to serve as a place for his secretary and documents.

I told him that this room was devoted to the refreshment room for Senators and that no other could be so well arranged for this purpose. He recognized the propriety of the arrangement as proposed and said that a room upstairs would do as well for his secretary and documents.

* * *

[MARCH 24] I found upon my table at the office at the Capitol the following letter, which gave me much gratification and which I copy here for my children, who I trust will look upon it as a testimony from the late chief magistrate of our country which is worth much to them as it is to me.

Washington, March 24th, 1857

My dear sir:

I called here this morning to bid you goodbye and to express my appreciation of your personal kindness and friendship. It would be subrogation to speak of the great services you have rendered to the government as the superintendent of this building and other important works in this District. You will in the end receive your best reward for all your faithful and valuable labors in the thanks and applause of your countrymen.

⁵⁸ John Forbes was a carpenter on the Capitol extension.

⁵⁹ John C. Breckinridge (1821–1875), Democrat of Kentucky, served in the House of Representatives, 1851–1855. He was vice president of the United States, 1857–1861, and served in the Senate from March to December 1861, when he was expelled for accepting a commission as general in the Confederate army.

We expect to leave for Philadelphia tomorrow, and I may not see you again. Will you present the kindest regards of Mrs. Pierce and myself to Mrs. Meigs?

Very truly, your friend,

Franklin Pierce.

Captain M. C. Meigs

Washington, D. C.

* * *

[MARCH] 27TH. We cast a bronze figure today about 3 feet in height. It was cast in the plaster and brickdust mold. This had been cooked and baked in the shop in an envelope of sheet iron till it was perfectly dry. Then buried in a hole dug in the floor of the foundry and sand carefully rammed around it, so as to make it very firm and secure.

160 pounds of bronze, of copper $\frac{8}{10}$, tin $\frac{1}{10}$, with an addition of zinc $\frac{1}{50}$. The weight of the statue and its jets, as shown by the wax used in the model, was to be 110 pounds.

The model was melted in 3 chambers in the small furnace in the bronze foundry, which is blown by a tube from the fan at the smith shop. It took about 2 hours to melt the metal.

The casting was perfectly successful, and when the mold was broken after dinner, the casting having been made at 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ a.m., the figure came out with no apparent defects.

* * *

APRIL 1. April first. My pay this month, under the new pay bill, is \$170.20; fuel and quarters, \$44.74; total, \$214.94. And we will feel this as a considerable relief to our wants.

* * *

[APRIL 1 CONT.] The payrolls paid today for the Capitol amount

to	\$19,646.15
New dome	1,170.82
Post Office	8,943.44
	<hr/>
	\$29,760.41

The aqueduct is not yet ready to pay.

* * *

[APRIL 3] I had some conversation with Nason and Briggs. They now propose to take off the T branches of the coils already set and replace

them with a new kind of branch with a valve in each section of pipe. This affords the means of passing a current of steam through only 1 or every alternate section in a coil and gives a much better power of regulating the heat than the common mode. These branches have been invented and introduced since we got the others. Of course, it being an evident improvement, I ordered it done.

* * *

AP. 6TH. I stayed at home this morning to settle the price of some 17 different pieces of work for the contractors.

Mr. Harkness had reported to me that the stairs were not included in the contract price of 60 cents per square foot for steps, 70 cents per running foot for nosing, and 22 cents per running foot for _____. I took a different view of the matter, however, and have so advised him, or if not included, I must fix under the contract the price at the same rates.

There are many other works: the ceilings of the stairways, the cornices, the columns and bays of the Senate Retiring Room,⁶⁰ all of which work is polished Italian marble. For this and many others, I set the prices today. It took me all the morning.

* * *

[APRIL 6 CONT.] I have a letter from a Mr. Barthrup, who writes to the President complaining that I will not remove this watchman Smith, a violent Know-Nothing, as he tells the President. This is referred to the Secretary of War and by him to me. I wrote a hasty answer and sent it to be copied. Weightman, after I had signed the rough, asked me to look over it again. He said that he thought it was not written with my usual prudence, that it showed annoyance. I opened the letter and read it over again and struck out all that he thought had this look. It was written in a hurry, with more important work waiting after it. I believe that now it is all right.

In the evening, at the office, I wrote a report upon Provost and Winter's claim for extra hauling.

* * *

[APRIL 7] Mr. Nason, with Briggs, spent some time with me this evening. We went over the subject of steam engines for the ventilation. We also took up the subject of downward ventilation in the House of Representatives. There seem to be practical difficulties in carrying out this plan, and I think that I shall be obliged to give it up. The current of air from the top downwards is not rapid enough in any

⁶⁰The Senate Retiring Room, S-215, is commonly known as the Marble Room.

supply that we could think of giving to prevent the rising of the heated air from the body and breath which would thus be met and mingled with the fresh air. While if the air is supplied from below, the fresh air takes at once the place of the air already vitiated.

The great objections to a downward ventilation are the removing at once of dust through the floor instead of raising it to be breathed and the removing in the same manner of the smell of tobacco, which in any American Congress will be exhaled by the carpets. These are important objections but are not vital. A sufficient supply of air from any quarter will in a short time remove the dust which may be raised by the shuffling of feet upon the carpet.

I found upon experimenting in Philadelphia through the current of air from a large gas chandelier in a music hall that we could not perceive any difference between the sound of voice when speaking through this current and to one side of it. There is no doubt a different effect produced by the air thus rarefied, but it is not in this case sufficient to make a perceptible difference.

[APRIL 9] Mr. Heebner is here. He is very indignant about something between him and Mr. Roberts, Rutherford's assistant. He says that he is not fit for his place and that he is not capable of keeping an account of the stone, etc. The fact is that he has fallen upon a large mass of stone which he had expected to turn out very white and beautiful but that it is full of red streaks which are great defects and indeed entirely unfit for the purpose of the buildings which are exposed to sight.

He has sent a cargo of it by way of trial, and finding that it has not passed, he is cross. I am sorry that the quarry turns out thus. It would be much pleasanter and much more profitable for him to have the whole quarry of beautiful white marble. Now he must get out this stone and send it to some other place for sale. We cannot take it. This will probably delay some of our work. For the stone is too great in quantity and too valuable to be blasted into fragments. Some few blocks were passed, though not such as they ought to be for the purpose.

* * *

[APRIL 10] I had a talk with Heebner today. He is in better spirits and better temper than he was yesterday. He says that he must get up the mass of streaked marble and sell it for what it will bring in New York; but that in doing this, he can get out much stone for us of similar size, but that he will not send us caps for the columns till August. This will be a pretty bad thing. It will delay the work and perhaps throw out the men who have now learned the art of carving capitals.

* * *

[APRIL 12] Mr. Palmer the sculptor, sends a sketch for the pediment of the other wing. I have not studied it yet. It does not strike me as forcible as Crawford's, but I must look into it with care. He makes exquisite work.

* * *

[APRIL 13] I received from Baltimore a load of the paper for drawing, packed in the process of manufacture. Sent one roll to Mr. Walter, one to Mr. Bryan, and kept one for myself.

I read over the letters of Palmer and an article in an Albany paper upon his design. I do not like the composition of the group. But I think, from what I have seen of his works, that he would make the work a great one in detail, if not in the whole. He would make the single photograph so good. He says nothing about his price.

* * *

[APRIL 14] Two men came into the office today to notify me, as they said, from courtesy that they were about to apply for the appointment of one of them as master blacksmith upon the Capitol extension. They did not ask my influence, as they understood that I would not exert any influence in such an affair.

I told them that is mistaken, that I employed my agents, for whom I was responsible, and that I would oppose the discharge of anyone with whom I was satisfied and his replacing by one whom I did not know; that I understood they did not ask to come in by my influence but in opposition to me, and that I would oppose them.

I wrote to the Secretary of War on this subject and also to Mr. [Howell] Cobb⁶¹ [secretary of the treasury] to ask him to speak to the Secretary, whom I do not know, to tell him something of the results of the decisions which have passed in Congress upon the subject of this public building and not to act in such matter without first hearing from me and understanding the system upon which I have conducted the building and works under my charge, to the satisfaction of Congress and the administration and the people employed.

* * *

[APRIL 15] Mr. Newell called to ask me what I thought of the design of Palmer for the pediment of the Capitol. I told him I had not yet sufficiently considered it but that I should write in a few days to Mr. Palmer. He had a copy of it in his pocket, for it seems that he is send-

⁶¹ See note 25 on page 366.

ing it to all the world and the papers are publishing descriptions of it and praising it with the usual want of discrimination. I think he has shown talent enough to make it pretty sure that he would make a good thing of it, but he sadly wants improvement now.

* * *

[APRIL 16] Mr. Charles J. Ingersoll⁶² was at the office today. I went with him over as much of the work as he could look at. He is not strong and is very old. Yet with his age he is a vigorous man yet. He says that he would not be surprised if Mr. Buchanan was to turn me out of my employment as he had been so long used to providing for politicians and the temptation is so great, with the immense disbursements which I have to take care of. So many men would think they could make good picking out of them. He says that we are living under a despotism, that Buchanan turns men out of office for the sake of turning them out merely. He can call it nothing but a despotism, and he intends to tell him so.

* * *

[APRIL] 18TH. I spent the day at the office, where I was kept very hard at work. I wrote a report to the Secretary of War upon the petition of the painters at the Capitol who have asked an increase of pay from the Secretary of War. They have tried me and then tried the House of Representatives. The committee of the House of Representatives reported against them after consulting me.

I sent to the Secretary a list of the number of painters and the rates of pay, by which it appears that we have 81 painters, of whom 45 receive the sum of \$1.75 per day, while the others have from \$5 to \$2. This shows that the trade has its prices and that it is to those only who have not excelled that we pay the minimum wages of \$1.75. This is enough, for I have many applications for employment at these rates, more than I can employ.

* * *

[APRIL 19] I received a letter from Mr. Palmer. He gives the price for which he would be willing to make the models for the pediment. He names \$25,000, saying that the difference in cost of making them here and in Italy will more than cover the difference in price between his own and Crawford's work. He says he is willing to improve the design and has already thought of some changes which would be improvements. I think he is reasonable in his estimate and will so write to him.

⁶²Charles J. Ingersoll (1782–1862) of Philadelphia was a lawyer who had served in the House of Representatives, 1813–1815 and 1841–1849. He was the father-in-law of Meigs' brother John.

* * *

[APRIL] 25TH. I went today to try to see the Secretary of War, whom I have seen but for one minute since he came into office. I found that he had gone to the cabinet. I left a card for him and went to the Engineer Department. General Totten said he had just written a note to me and had it brought in and gave it to me. I have copied it here.

Captain Meigs, etc., etc.

April 25/57

My dear Captain:

I think you ought to see the Secretary of War and let him know you personally. Hence the within note. He is struck with the great amount under your direction, and I want him to feel from personal knowledge the confidence that such knowledge cannot fail to impart.

Truly yours, J. G. T.

Then enclosed the following:

Honorable John B. Floyd

Etc., etc.

Washington, April 25th, 1857

Dear sir:

I take leave to introduce Captain Meigs of the Corps of Engineers, the officer who has charge, under the immediate direction of the Secretary of War, of the Capitol extension and Post Office and, under this office, of the water supply of this city.

The important official relations under which, in reference particularly to some of the above operations, he stands to the Secretary of War will probably lead you to desire to see him personally, and to that end I give him this note.

I have already stated to you my opinion as to his high qualifications and merits.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

Jos. G. Totten

The General said that he had seen the Secretary that morning and had talked with him about the business of the office, that the conversation led to speaking of me. The Secretary is troubled at the immense expenditures of the government. He said, "What is the cause of it? The pay of the soldiers is not too high. You officers do not get too

much. I wish you got more. The provisions are not too costly. The clothing is not more than is suitable and proper. Where does the money go? Why cannot I know something about this and understand it?"

The General told him that he would best learn from the officers who had charge of the different departments; that the transportation was the great source of expense; that it was in the hands of officers and men of ability and experience, men who understood their business; that Jesup⁶³ was a man of particularly high ability and could tell him all about it.

He then said that the expenditures for the city are so great. "Who is in charge of the Capitol extension and water works? Is Captain Meigs one of your officers of the Topographical Corps?" The General then told him that he might set his mind at rest as to my character and ability and gave him, I suppose, some very kind words for me. Told him that he ought to see me and know me personally.

He then wrote the letter, upon his return to the office, which I have copied above. He thinks that someone has been talking to the Secretary about me and my occupations.

I took the note, and in the evening I tried, by the General's advice, to see the Secretary at his house. He was not in. He goes to the cabinet every day at 11 a.m. and stays till 4 p.m. The business of the department suffers while these cabinet ministers are settling the appointments of tidewaiters.⁶⁴

I find that he has not read the reports which I have made upon reference to me. There is a great accumulation of papers upon his table which he will not get through without a great effort.

* * *

[APRIL 25 CONT.] Mr. James Buchanan Henry,⁶⁵ the private secretary of the President, came to the Capitol today and sent in to say that he was there and would like to see me. I went to see him and made his acquaintance. Told him that I had hoped the President would honor me by an inspection of the works under my charge and his.

He is a young man, seems to be of good manners. His eyes are inflamed as though he had late sittings. He says that the pressure upon the President and all in the White House has been terrible. I said that I had not troubled the President, not having business with him to give me a right to take up his time, but I hoped in time to have the honor of seeing him and showing him what I was doing. He said the Presi-

⁶³ Major General Thomas S. Jesup (1788–1860) was quartermaster general, 1818–1860.

⁶⁴ A tidewaiter is a customs official who boards ships and watches the landing of goods.

⁶⁵ James Buchanan Henry, Buchanan's private secretary, 1857–1861, was a lawyer and a nephew of the president.

dent had been ill for several weeks with this National Hotel disease, but that was now fortunately all over.

* * *

29TH AP. I saw the Secretary of War today. He was about to go to the cabinet, but I had some 10 minutes' talk with him. [*Meigs and Secretary Floyd discussed several individuals who had applied for the position of physician to the aqueduct workers.*]

* * *

[APRIL] 30TH. I signed my accounts for fuel and quarters today.

They amount to	44.58
This, with my pay, which is	165.50

makes for my living for the month	\$210.08

I have spent in wages alone for Uncle Sam during the month some \$40,000, which at 1 percent for the disbursement would be \$400, leaving nothing for the labor and responsibility of such great constructions as I have devised and am making all the time.

* * *

MAY 2ND. This is my wedding day. I have been married 16 years. I have reason to be thankful to God, for He enabled me to secure as the companion of my life so good and pure and true a woman as my dear Louisa. We have lived together for 16 years with increased trust and affection.

Our children are good and promising. Two of them have left us for a life in which they will be safe from all dangers and harms. They are to us regrets now tempered by time, and they are to us links which unite us with that Heaven in which they dwell.

* * *

MAY 4TH. I called today upon President Buchanan. After waiting for 2 hours, I got in with a number of others, all brought in together to get rid of them. I was introduced to the President by Professor Henry of the Smithsonian, who was kind enough to name me to the President as one of the best men in the country.

I told him that I had abstained from troubling him by forcing myself into his presence while his time was so much taken up as I had no matter of business requiring his decision which would justify me in intruding upon him. That I had done so till I feared that I might be accused to him of being neglectful. That I now came to say that I was in such a position of official relation as made it proper that I should

have the honor of his personal acquaintance, and that I wished to have the opportunity to talk with him generally upon the conduct of the Capitol extension, etc., works for which he was in a particular manner responsible and which had been committed to the President by Congress and delegated partly to the Secretary of War by the President, and by the Secretary placed in my hands.

He said that he was here for the purpose of attending to such public duties and that he would at any time be at my command for such a purpose; that if the Secretary of War indicated a time to meet with me to bring all the laws in reference to the Capitol extension, he would give us the interview on any day except a cabinet day.

I left him in a few minutes, as there were many waiting to see him.

* * *

[The process of restarting the aqueduct construction continued. On May 7 Meigs opened bids and read them aloud publicly in the presence of potential contractors. On May 19 he sent the information on the bids, together with his calculations, to Secretary Floyd. The secretary said he would take the matter up in a cabinet meeting, where the decision was made to give the contracts to the lowest bidders.]

[MAY 20] I received today from the Secretary an order endorsed upon my report upon the claim of Provost, Winter and Co. for hauling, directing me to pay to them one-half the estimated cost of the hauling of marble done by them. This decision of his I think is against right, not justified by the contract or by precedents which have been cited to him by their attorneys. I shall pay it under his decision, of course. He is responsible for that, not I.

* * *

[MAY 20 CONT.] We are making good progress with the iron work of the House of Representatives. Have the stairs up to the level of the principal story.

[MAY] 21. I paid today to Provost, Winter and Co. a little over \$6,000, being the sum allotted by the Secretary of War as extra hauling. This sum is a windfall to them. I also directed a bill to be made out of the hauling done by them since this one just paid. This bill is intended to submit to the Secretary of War, to ask his decision as to the mode of settling these accounts hereafter.

* * *

[MAY 21 CONT.] I received today a note from the War Department asking me to send up to the White House the papers relating to the bids

for the aqueduct. These are the rolls of calculations which I had given to the Secretary and which he has tried two or 3 times and returned. I suppose that Mr. Buchanan and he have today settled the matter.

* * *

[Meanwhile, rumours persisted that the aqueduct contracts would be awarded by political influence rather than low bids. At the president's request, Meigs went to see Buchanan on May 23 to explain to him the bid calculations.]

MAY 25. Mr. Champion (Samuel Champion),⁶⁶ master blacksmith of the Capitol extension for the past 5 or 6 years, ever since I have been in charge of it, died this morning of an acute pneumonia or some such attack. He has been with me from the beginning of my connection with this work. He was a good mechanic, an honest man. He was one of the very few who passed through the scandals of the [Samuel] Strong administration of the Capitol extension⁶⁷ and kept their reputation such that I was induced to retain them.

He fell into the delusion of Know-Nothingism, and this gave me much trouble by giving occasion to the rank Democrats to say that I kept in office Know-Nothings and that he used his influence to help his party. This he always assured me he did not do; and believing him to be too honest a man to lie and break his faith with me, I kept him in, though I had sometimes much trouble to do so against the strong efforts made of the Secretary and President to turn him out. It is only a few weeks since an attempt of the kind was made against him. This last attempt was assisted by Mr. Lenox.

I regret his death, as I lose a good workman and his family a support.

* * *

MAY 25 [CONT.] I have appointed Mr. [William R.] Tait, the master smith of the Post Office, who was for some time master smith of the aqueduct and who has been with me for some 3 or 4 years, in the place of Champion, to the Capitol extension shops.

* * *

[On May 26 the press obtained and published the names of the low bidders who would receive the contracts for the aqueduct.]

⁶⁶Meigs' parentheses.

⁶⁷Samuel Strong was superintendent of construction for the Capitol extension, 1851-1853. See Introduction, page xxix.

[MAY 26] Went to Champion's funeral. He had a large company of his brother workmen. He had no priest at his burying, but one of the workmen read some of the passages of the Scripture. It seems that they have been getting up a new sect.

He was always a queer man, running mad upon mesmerism and Know-Nothingism and such things. Though he was a good workman and an honest man.

Henry May⁶⁸ came to recommend someone from Baltimore for his place. He says a very good man. I told him I had already filled it with Tait, whom he said he had known for years.

He says that in Baltimore they say that Denmead [the foreman of machinists] is a worse proscriber than they have accused Champion of being; that he is very cunning and keeps close, but that he has written to Baltimore asking for men and saying that none but Know-Nothings should be taken into the shop.

I told him I could hardly believe this but that if he would get me the letter or proof that such a letter was written, I would at once dismiss him.

Wrote out the contracts and sent them by mail to the various parties at a distance. Those in the neighborhood I requested to come to the office to execute the contracts and bonds.

Received a note from the Secretary requesting me to appoint [James T. Boisseau] blacksmith in the place of Champion. I had feared something of this kind and had already filled the place.

As for [Boisseau], he is the man who tried to get Champion removed to make room for himself. I have no confidence in any person who, being a mechanic, endeavors to remove another upon political charges in order to make room for himself and to get pay for his _____.

* * *

[MAY 29] Signed a vast number of drawings for the dome today. This dome must receive my more particular attention shortly or we will be out of work upon it. I have directed that Mr. Fowler be advised to begin the putting up of the interior cornices of this dome, which he has made, and with iron that is in the crypt.

* * *

[MAY 30] Received from Mr. Rogers a photograph of some of the panels of the door. The subject is Columbus in chains. He has treated it quite well but not, I think, with very great success. It will be a good specimen of what the arts are at this date. But I trust that a few years

⁶⁸ Henry May (1816–1866), Democrat then Unionist of Maryland, served in the House of Representatives, 1853–1855 and 1861–1863.

will show such an improvement [as] will make this work seem insignificant.

He, himself, seems quite satisfied with his success. He tells me that I may put this panel beside any one of the Ghiberti gate and he will not fear the comparison. This, he says, I may think vanity. To him it appears only common sense. He is not willing to allow that an American in the 19th century cannot do as well as a Florentine of any time.

What nonsense and what vanity! He would not certainly say that I could do as well as Ghiberti and the best of the sculptors of the Augustine Age or Italian art. Then he means only that there must be some one of the 24 millions of Americans who is able to do as well as Ghiberti, and he is that one!

This is the fatal error of our artists. They think because they belong to a great, vigorous nation, they must be able to surpass the highest efforts of older centuries.

They do not study. Rogers is industrious. I believe he has talent. But the time will come, if he lives long, when he will look back to this senseless boast and the work he now thinks so fine as one of which he will be rather ashamed. For I presume that with industry he will continue so to improve that this will be to him no better than it is to me.

* * *

JUNE 1ST. I spent the morning at home making up the prices of much work done by the contractors for marble work. This took me till noon. I then went downtown to the Capitol and on my way voted. There was no crowd about the polls of the 2nd Ward, and I lost only a moment in voting.

[Later in the day, however, there was a riot at the polls, with "Plug Uglies" from Baltimore attacking voters. The marines were called out, and one marine and several citizens were killed before order was restored.]

* * *

[JUNE 3] I signed today a drawing of the boilers for the extension. They are tubular boilers.

A photograph by Mr. Wood of the sketch for iron pipes has just been finished. It is the best copy of a line drawing he has made yet and is as good as a fine lithograph. It gives the dimensions of the parts of all pipes by a sketch, so as to agree with the formula which I have adopted for them.

JUNE 4TH. I signed today many papers and some drawings; the drawing of the engine for the ventilation, among others.

Gave orders about the conduct of the smith shop. I am told that some of the men there employed have been seen engaged with late riots.

* * *

[JUNE] 5TH. I received this morning from the Secretary of War an order to prepare an estimate of the cost of the aqueduct comparing contract work with day's work. Etc., etc. This is the result of some work from the disappointed bidders.

* * *

[Secretary Floyd said the contracts for the aqueduct that had not been executed in time by the bidders should be let again. Meigs feared that this would open up the political jockeying once more; he felt strongly that Floyd would have been far better off letting Meigs deal with the entire process, so that the secretary could have remained above the fray. He did not, however, voice his objections to Floyd.]

[JUNE 8 CONT.] The Secretary said that he intended to order me to remove certain Know-Nothings—Mr. Smith, the watchman, among others. Rather, I think he is the only one upon whom this dreadful exercise of authority can be exerted.

I told him Smith's history and that I could not, as he readily acknowledged, remove him under the circumstances. But he said he would have a Know-Nothing removed if he would not change his ways. I told him I did not know, but Smith might have been frightened and have changed by this time, that I had never spoken to him about his politics.

I told him that it did not become me and my position as an officer of the Army to enter upon such a crusade, but that I was of course under his orders. He had the right and the power, and I was ready to obey his orders; that if he gave me such, this removed from me the responsibility and he took it. He said he intended to take it and would bear all the opprobrium which he might meet from it. I said I did not think he would have much; that it might be expected from him and proper for him to do so, not proper for me.

* * *

[JUNE 10] Mr. Briggs came in this evening to see me about some business. Mr. Nason also arrived. He came, and I had some talk with him. He will make a proposal for the engines. The drawings of these are

finished and photographed. The boiler drawings are also finished, and the photography is the best copy of a line drawing I have ever seen.

* * *

[JUNE 12] Mr. Nason is here. We had a talk about boilers this morning and engines. He is disposed to make a bid for the boilers and engines. He thinks they cannot be done in less than 3 months. I told him that I wished them finished sooner.

Gave orders for the steps of the eastern porticoes, also for the columns, bases and pedestals of the porticoes of the corridors looking west. These should be set as the walls go up.

* * *

[Meigs became increasingly frustrated as the secretary and the president required him to again advertise and seek new bids for the aqueduct contracts that had not been executed in time, rather than to simply move to the next lowest bidders. He feared that much of the construction season would be wasted. In the meantime, a Pennsylvania-based consortium wrote a highly improper proposal, urging Meigs to give them a contract for the entire aqueduct project to be carried out under his direction. The group added that Meigs could name anyone he wished to have a part in the contract. On June 13 Meigs sent a copy of the letter to General Totten, who advised him to let the president see the letter. Several days later, Buchanan responded by reiterating that contracts would go to the lowest bidders.]

[JUNE 15] The ceiling of the House of Representatives is in such a state that a good part of the scaffolding is down, and more of it will be taken down within a few days. We have begun to back up the iron gallery fronts with brick, and the laying of the ceiling plaster of the rooms under the galleries is about to commence.

* * *

[On June 18 Meigs saw the president and urged awarding the remaining aqueduct contracts to the next lowest bidder. He asked the president to speak to Secretary Floyd.]

[JUNE] 21ST. Sunday. We had for a few minutes today, about 3 p.m., the most violent hailstorm I ever saw. The hailstones were as large as birds' eggs. Many of them were 1½ to 1¾ inches in diameter, shaped like eggs. [Sketch]

Like pigeons' eggs. They broke all the glass they touched in skylights and greenhouses. Many of the panes of glass upon the Capitol extension are broken. These are ⅜ inch thick and strong enough to bear the weight of a man. Yet they gave way to these hailstones.

* * *

[JUNE 22] I went after dinner to the Capitol. I find that we have lost in the shops of the United States about 2,300 panes of glass; and in the shops of Provost, Winter and Co., they say that they have lost some 8,000 panes. 35 of the large sheets of glass in the House of Representatives skylight are broken or cracked. In the Senate, 11 are cracked. The Philadelphia glass did not stand as well as the New York rough plate.

Mr. Briggs reports that he found a hailstone $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches diameter and spherical in shape. This would weigh about $\frac{1}{10}$ of a pound. Many of them were $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches, and the greater part of them of the size and shape like those which fell about my house in H Street, like eggs. I found one of $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches long by $1\frac{3}{4}$ in the other dimensions, which are the largest. It seemed to have been made by the aggregation of several others.

In some cases, he said he thought they had the size of the palm of his hand, then broke asunder in striking the ground. Chickens exposed were killed immediately. Cows and cattle ran about as if mad. Indeed, such stones as fell about the Capitol Hill would have been dangerous to a man.

* * *

[Meigs spent June 23 to 27 on a trip to provide advice to engineers working on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. He also visited Harpers Ferry and some bridges in the vicinity.]

[JULY 1] Mr. Magruder [paymaster for the Capitol and the aqueduct] today, in coming from the Treasury, lost a bag of gold containing \$500. He is responsible for it and will make it good.

I am queasy and unsettled with this doubt as to the result of all my labor. I have for 4 years, the best years of my life, given, for a small compensation, of my time, my attention, and such knowledge as I have been able to attain to, and such talents as God has given me, to the service of these great works. I feel now as though I had over me a Secretary of War in whom I can place no confidence, powerful enemies, powerful as being friends of the President and of influence in politics.

The Senate and House are absent, among whom I could find supporters, and I am alone to resist this combination with a new administration who do not know me and who are greedy of power and patronage to use for their own selfish purposes.

I do not fear the result, being willing to leave all in the hands of that God Who protects those who act honestly.

* * *

8TH JULY. I am surprised to see how long it is since I wrote in my journal.

* * *

[JULY 13] I have been so incessantly occupied for the last week with the attack of the contractor party upon me and with business that I have not been able at night to write in my journal. I have not felt the power to do so, tired and restless at night after the work and labor of the day.

I lost a man on Saturday, a great loss to my work. Casali, Federico Casali, the bronze artist, is dead. He died on Saturday about 12 or 1 o'clock, suddenly, though he had been sick for a week or more with a bilious attack, from which no danger was apprehended by his doctor or his friends. He was seized with a convulsion and died in 20 minutes.

I know of no man who can take his place in our bronze works. He was an artist as well as a workman, and I could leave, as I did, everything in the shop to his direction with confidence in his honesty, integrity and skill.

The Treasury Department has issued regulations about checks which put upon me a great responsibility and risk. They forbid the drawing of checks to order. How am I to send about the large sums of money which I have to pay in checks to bearer, as they require? This I must endeavor to get changed.

* * *

[JULY 13 CONT.] The scaffolds in the House of Representatives and Senate have been cleared away. The rooms now show their size and proportions and the beauty of their molded iron ceilings. The promise for sound is very good.

* * *

[At the request of Secretary Floyd, Meigs and his assistants spent several days preparing an estimate of the cost of building each portion of the aqueduct. He estimated the total cost at \$2.3 million.]

[JULY 18] I made Joseph Lassalle⁶⁹ the foreman of the bronze shop today in place of poor Casali, who is dead. I gave him \$5, not so much as Casali, who was an artist of greater skill and taste than this one.

⁶⁹Joseph Lassalle was an artist working in bronze. His bronze version of Vincenti's Besheekee, produced in 1858, is in the House wing of the Capitol.

But I think it likely that this man may prove a good manager, with knowledge sufficient to finish the work in hand.

Bowdie Baudin,⁷⁰ from Archer, Warner, Miskey and Co.,⁷¹ of Philadelphia, came the other day and brought with him a photograph of dancers as specimens of his work to present to me. He was taken aback when I refused them, telling him that I never took a present of the value of one sou. He wished to have the direction of the bronze shop, still keeping his engagement with his employers in Philadelphia. This I have declined, but I showed him the drawing of the stair railing bronze and told him I would send it to him for an estimate.

* * *

[Even though the following section deals with the aqueduct, it is included as background on Meigs' relationship with Secretary Floyd.]

[JULY 22] I made to the Secretary this afternoon my report upon the cost of the work done upon the aqueduct, with estimate of the work still to be done. This has taken 7 weeks of labor.

I told the Secretary that I did not entirely understand his latest demands but that I had given rather more information than he asked for [rather] than risk giving less than he wished to have.

After reading my letter to him transmitting the report and explaining for a moment the details of the estimate, he began to talk about the whole affair. He said that I had not honored him with a call till he had been here a month; that I had not explained to him the policy which I pursued upon the work; that he had been signing my requisitions for \$150,000 a month knowing nothing of what I was doing with it; and that he had only done so because he felt that the money was being trusted to the honor of a solicitor; that had it not been for that, he would have stopped the whole thing long before.

I explained to him that I had called to see him at the first moment that I had been enabled to gain admission on account of the throng of persons waiting upon him; that I had made repeated attempts to do so, etc. Reminded him of the time when at length I had succeeded in seeing him.

As for his complaint that I had not explained to him the policy of the work, I had not known in what respect he had wished to have information. I had taken him up over the line as far as he could go upon the first opportunity and had talked with him that whole evening, then frankly and fully had a very satisfactory conversation.

⁷⁰Edmond Baudin sculpted the bronze railings for two staircases in the House wing and two in the Senate wing. Based on a design by Brumidi, they are now called the Brumidi Staircases.

⁷¹Archer, Warner, Miskey and Co. was the Philadelphia bronze foundry that cast the railings for the members' private staircases.

He said that it was perfectly satisfactory to him, but that was all he had ever known of the work; that he would have received me to the exclusion of others, except government ministers, had I sent him word that I wished a private interview with him, at any time. Etc.

After a long talk, he expressed himself satisfied with the policy which he said he now understood. By the way, it was before I had any chance to explain it to him.

We had, upon the whole, a trial of skill in which he gave at length his sanction to all that I have been working for so long a time. Approved of my bringing the contractors up to the terms of their contract, of giving the work to next lowest bidders in the case of the pipe contract, which carries the principal.

If he will only hold to the opinions he expressed at the end of our talk, I have now all the authority I desire to push the work, which he says he wishes I would pursue so as to spend all our money by the time Congress comes together. I shall at once set in, going with a rush.

* * *

[JULY 23] Mrs. Meigs and the children went this morning to the Warren Springs.⁷² Monty had gone with his grandmother some two or 3 days since. So that this morning Louisa, John, Mary, Louie and the maid, Biddy, went off. We rose at 4 a.m. to get ready. I hope they may all return in the fall with renewed strength and health from this pleasant visit to the mountains of Virginia.

[JULY] 24TH. At the office today. I took my dinner for the first time under the new arrangement with Mr. Briggs. It gives me much more time for my work, as it enables me to be at the office till dark, without injuring my health by the long fast.

[Miss] Lane⁷³ paid us a visit. I was at dinner when she arrived and found that she with Dr. Black and her friends had gone to the north wing. I followed them and was able to do the honors of part of the House.

She is a fine-looking girl, though not beautiful. Good manners. Seems intelligent, not so much as Miss Knower, who used to come to talk about art with me.

[JULY] 25. Saturday. Mr. Nason came back today. He has been to the asylum at [Staunton], Virginia. They wish him to fit up a warming

⁷²This may be a mistranscription of Warm Springs, which is in Bath County, Virginia, in the mountains west of Charlottesville. *Webster's New Geographical Dictionary* lists no Warren Springs in any state.

⁷³Harriet Lane was President Buchanan's niece and White House hostess.

and ventilating apparatus there. He complains bitterly of the limestone water which has affected him. He says they have at Staunton a saturated solution.

* * *

[JULY] 27TH. The Secretary went with me today to the Capitol and went all over the building and the shops. He seemed to be pleased and gratified with what he saw and was very pleasant and agreeable. I gave to him a set of photographs of the works, and upon parting with me at the department, he told me to go on with the aqueduct and not to trouble myself about offering contracts which had failed to be signed to other bidders but to hire men to do the work myself.

I have apparently gained the whole of the battle. I hope that I may be able now to act in a wise and vigorous manner so that I may make up for the time which has been lost.

* * *

[JULY 27 CONT.] Baudin, the bronze founder, was at the office, but I was engaged with the Secretary and could not see him. . . .

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]⁷⁴

[JULY] 29TH. At the office today. Mr. Briggs asked permission to be absent for a couple of weeks. He said that he did not well see how he could be spared, but it would be still more difficult to leave after a short time, and he felt that his health made it necessary for him to go away for a short time.

Mr. Nason, who left today, told me of Mr. Briggs' headaches, etc., and that he thought it would be better to let him go for a time and recuperate than to keep him at work till he got sick. He leaves, therefore, tomorrow morning.

* * *

AUG. 3RD. I have been so busy and so much tired when I came home at night for the last few days that I have not written my journal. I regret this and must be more careful in the future, as I find that in the great variety of work and the facts which come before me every day, I can not recall after a few days the exact nature of each day's business.

The *Tribune* correspondent has announced in the paper of the 30th or 31st that there is some doubt about Hughes succeeding Meigs in

⁷⁴A note from the New York *Tribune*, dated July 30, 1857, stating: "There is some doubt of the appointment of Col. Hughes as successor to Meigs as superintendent of the Capitol extension."

the Capitol and that he was offered the place, but not being in need of government patronage, he had declined it. That he is now talked of for the post of Commissioner of Patents, a place which is vacant by the resignation of [Charles] Mason. Mason has had much trouble and has at last left the office. As for me, I have no notice from the department of any intended change, and I do not believe that they intend any.

I should be much hurt by being deprived of the control of the Capitol work, which I have carried through great difficulties to its present state and which I can now finish with less labor than I have been obliged to give to it heretofore.

I wish to have the honor of completing it and in a successful manner. Yet, to be relieved would relieve me from much labor in which I have for 4 years been wearing out my life and strength and for a small pecuniary compensation.

I look, however, for higher rewards than a present pay of money. I look for the honor of doing great works, my great responsibilities, faithfully. I look for the pleasure of doing _____ in my day and generation, of leaving behind me a good reputation to my children, of being named hereafter as the builder and creator of the Washington aqueduct. I look for the reward in Heaven of those who have done good on Earth.

[Printed material inserted.]⁷⁵

* * *

AUG. 6TH. I have a letter from my father today. He says there is a plot to give the Capitol to Colonel Hughes,⁷⁶ who is an anti-Buchanan Democrat. He says he knows more of the matter than he can tell me. He says that it is not yet settled, and desires to know what the party would gain by such a move. He says that Hughes is risky to the party, and the idea is to quiet him.

I think I must write to Mr. Davis.⁷⁷ I do not think the party is to be benefitted by any such measures; yet I believe that I ought not trouble Davis with these things. He stood by me when he was here, and I have no right to call upon him to do more.

* * *

⁷⁵ An unidentified newspaper article answering the Baltimore *American* of July 20, which had said Meigs was "transferred" to the aqueduct. The article pointed out that Meigs had been in charge of the aqueduct all along and was still in charge of the Capitol extension.

⁷⁶ George W. Hughes (1806–1870) was an engineer, who in 1857 was quartermaster general of Maryland. He later represented Maryland as a Democrat in the House of Representatives, 1859–1861.

⁷⁷ Jefferson Davis had been sworn in as a U.S. senator on March 4, 1857.

[AUG. 6 CONT.] The break in the canal [from a recent flood] will in some degree interfere with our masonry at the Capitol, as we receive our building stone from the canal. . . .

* * *

[AUG. 12] I received today from Bembe and Kimbel⁷⁸ of New York a letter with a bill for two chairs and two desks which they say have been sent for inspection. They ask a less price than that I have agreed to pay to [Doe], Hazelton and Co.⁷⁹ of Boston for the desks of which they brought me specimens. I am surprised at the price they charge being so low. But I have not yet seen the chairs.

* * *

AUG. 14TH. Mr. [Rufus] Peckham came this evening to see me, as he said, in behalf of Palmer, the sculptor. He brought with him a Mr. Olcott⁸⁰ of Albany, a banker, I believe, who is a great admirer of Palmer. I told him, after a pleasant conversation, that I thought the best thing they could do to advance Palmer's interests was to go to see the President and Secretary and to convince them that Palmer was a man much esteemed and admired by artists and by men of taste and standing. They determined to go today.

Mr. Peckham said a word for me in some of the controversies which I used to have with Stanton and his party, and I thanked him for it tonight.

* * *

[AUG. 14 CONT.] The desk and chairs by Bembe and Kimbel have arrived. The chairs are better than the Boston chairs, the desks not so good. All are cheaper.

* * *

[AUG.] 15TH. Saturday. At the office. Mr. Briggs has returned. Dined with me.

* * *

[AUG.] 17TH. Mr. Peckham came again to see me. He said that he had seen, with Mr. Olcott, the Secretary and President and that the President said he would be ready to decide in an hour after the matter was laid before him and he was informed by what law he had authority to decide any matters of statutory. He seemed to be pleased with

⁷⁸ Bembe and Kimbel of New York was a furniture manufacturer that made half of the chairs for the House of Representatives.

⁷⁹ Doe, Hazelton Co. of Boston was a furniture manufacturer that made the desks for the House chamber.

⁸⁰ Thomas W. Olcott was a banker in Albany, New York.

the subject, said they were men of _____ and proper representatives of the people.

The Secretary was more inclined to some other subject. He thought something relating to our escape into freedom, that this was too much of a sectional subject, not enough national.

* * *

AUG. 18TH. I was summoned today to see the Secretary of War, who desired to see me before he went to the cabinet upon the subject of Palmer's marbles. I went to the War Department. He wishes me to make out for him some statement showing the right of the President to decide upon such a question. He said that he would this week bring the matter up before the President.

* * *

AUG. 19. At the office. Mr. Kimbel of Bembe and Kimbel is here to make a bargain for the chairs for the House of Representatives. He will, I fear, not be able to make them in time. I shall probably give to him a small portion only of the number required.

Mr. Walter is going away for a few days at the end of this week. He looks ill and worn out.

* * *

[AUG.] 20TH. The common office daily duty.

We have begun to lay the wooden floor in the House of Representatives.

The report to the Secretary upon the laws relating to the Capitol extension and the powers of the President in regard thereto was sent in today.

Mr. [J.A. Bartruff] was appointed today watchman. He seemed to be under great obligation to me for the appointment, but I think if he is good for much, he will soon grow tired of the work of watching the blocks of marble to prevent the little boys from breaking off the corners. Yet, somebody must do it, and I suppose he may be as well fit for such occupation as anyone.

Dr. Blake came to see me and urged upon me the propriety of going more to see the Secretary and cultivate his friendship. I told him I had been once to his house and that I had intended to go to the country to call upon him but that I really had so little time.

He said that he had been talking with him about me. The Secretary thought that I ought to dismiss the Know-Nothing Smith from his place as watchman, that I was not in charge of the Capitol as an officer of the Army but as a civilian, and that I ought therefore to act as a

civilian and a partisan. Blake told him that he had heard me speak of this matter and that I would obey any order, and if he would send me the order to dismiss the man, I would do it without any trouble, but that I thought I ought not to take such a thing upon me. The Secretary would like me to do his dirty work.

He professed a good feeling towards me and wished to be upon good terms with me, thought well of my ability and knowledge, etc.

Blake says that Mr. Henry, the private secretary of the President, is quite a friend to me, thinks of me as a Pennsylvanian, etc.

* * *

AUG. 21ST. A letter from Louisa. She writes in good spirits. Sends me the bill for the family board in the country for the month of August. It amounts to \$121.31, pretty stiff for my purse. I sent her a check to pay it off. This has been a pleasant day, quite cool.

I looked over a quantity of drawings for the dome and approved some, made some changes in others. I heard today of a man who will probably be of service to me in the work of the dome, a Mr. Thomas⁸¹ of Boston. I think I must write to him to come and see us. He is known to Mr. Briggs; speaks highly of him.

Mr. Walter has not been able to get ready to go off tomorrow, but will leave in a day or two for a few days' recreation.

I do not do as much work in the evening as I could wish. I find that after a day's work in this hot weather, I do not feel like working at night.

[AUG.] 22ND. I ordered Gagliardi to stop cutting a block of marble for the Hunter which he had got possession of without my knowledge. He made a great outcry, shed tears, complained of the mortification which he would have in being obliged to stop what he had begun. Wanted to leave the work at once and be paid. I told him that he could be paid only as his work progressed, that he could not quit a work for which he had contracted with us in this summary manner. He proposed to do the pointing of the figure to the satisfaction of anyone whom I might give the finish to for a thousand dollars. I told him that I would look at the marble and consider this proposition if I found it good.

* * *

AUG. 24TH. I went to the War Department today. The Secretary has not yet attended to the Palmer designs but said that he would do it today or tomorrow. I do not think that he will, however.

⁸¹ Charles F. Thomas was an engineer who served as chief machinist for the dome.

* * *

[AUG. 24 CONT.] I found Annie [Rodgers Macomb]⁸² at home tonight. She has come down to shop. Reports Louisa is better than she was, improved in health and appearance. Her headaches not so frequent. Very chilly at the springs, and everybody suffering from colds. She brought our little Monty with her. He has scratched his bites and scratches till his arms are a mass of sores.

* * *

AUG. 26. I found today that the work in the House of Representatives was not going on as it should and was told that the reason was that Mr. Coyle⁸³ did not send up enough lumber. I sent a note to him and afterwards sent down Mr. Briggs to see him and make such arrangements as would enable us to work the lumber by hand if he was not going to deliver it as he should do. He promised everything. Says that tomorrow we shall receive enough to keep us going and that he will put his whole force upon it.

This lumber was ordered months since but has not been sent because they did not think we would need it yet. Thus, by not obeying orders are we delayed.

Mr. Phelps of Missouri came to see me in favor of Mr. Griffiths, who is so desirous of being made a watchman. I told Phelps how the case stood, the resignation of his place of watchman upon the Capitol in consequence of a drunken frolic and the attempt to make an arrangement to lend money to Ball and thus induce him to resign in his favor, etc. He agreed with me that I ought not to appoint him.

* * *

[AUG.] 27TH. Today I went to the mill of Mr. Coyle to see about the delivery of the lumber for the floor of the House of Representatives. It is not yet coming as fast as it should. The day has been rainy.

Still, we are making progress. Many people returning from the springs and watering places come into the hall, and all, I believe, go away well pleased with what they see.

I made a bargain with Mr. Hammitt⁸⁴ of Philadelphia for one-half of the chairs for the House of Representatives at \$75 each, delivered. I have telegraphed to Bembe and Kimbel of New York that they might make the other half at \$70 each, not including the packing. This makes

⁸²She was apparently staying with the Meigs family while her husband, Captain John Macomb, was stationed in Santa Fe.

⁸³L. Coyle was with the hardware company Campbell and Coyle, which also had a sawmill and was a vendor of lumber and other materials and supplies.

⁸⁴John T. Hammitt was with the Hammitt Desk Manufacturing Co. of Philadelphia, which provided 131 oak armchairs for the House of Representatives.

Clerks, draftsmen, messengers	1,193.12
Total	28,006.31

This does not include Mr. Briggs and some others who are in the rolls of the contractors, for instance, and does not include a man employed by Provost, Winter and Co., whose roll would probably amount to 15 or \$1,600 more.

New dome	\$ 128.33
Blacksmiths	72.84
Finishers	470.00
Clerks, messengers, draftsmen	517.00
	\$1,188.17

Post Office payroll:

Draftsmen, etc.	\$ 301.70
Clerks, watchmen, etc.	698.18
Blacksmiths	959.45
Granite cutters	2,021.75
[not transcribed]	607.12
[not transcribed]	3,857.78
[not transcribed]	415.
Laborers	2,445.94
Teamsters	219.57
	\$11,306.49 ⁸⁷

This is a total of \$40,400.48 besides the contractors' rolls and the rolls of the aqueduct, which will make some \$30,000 more.

* * *

[SEPT. 2] Mr. Bartholomew⁸⁸ of Rome, the sculptor, came today with Mr. Bartlett of Hayward and Bartlett. He brought his portfolio of photographs and a drawing of his Eve which is just finished. It seems to be a good figure, yet upon the whole I was not much impressed with the sketches I saw. Some of the bas reliefs are poor. The figures of some of the Eves—there are 8 upon the pedestal—are very vulgar; others are good. I thought I recognized too much likeness to Flaxman.⁸⁹ Pale with fear and sickening with the sight, they dragged the unwilling horses to the fight, and another figure from the *Odyssey*, also by Flaxman, in another of the bas reliefs.

Still, though I do not see great genius, I do see skill and knowledge and industry. I suppose that I shall see him again and that he will

⁸⁷ As transcribed, this column actually adds to \$11,526.49, but the numbers written in longhand are sometimes difficult to decipher.

⁸⁸ Edward S. Bartholomew (1822–1858) was an American sculptor who worked in Rome.

⁸⁹ John Flaxman (1755–1826) was an English sculptor and draftsman who drew scenes from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

want a commission for some of the bas reliefs in the building. Of those upon the stairways, he might take one.

Rinehart brought his two figures, the Indian captive and the white frontiersman, today that are for the mantel of the House of Representatives retiring rooms.⁹⁰ They are very good figures. I think when cast in bronze, they will do him credit and give satisfaction.

I wrote today to Fabbriocoty,⁹¹ the importers of marble in New York, to ask at what price they would undertake to import the columns for the exterior porticoes of the Capitol. 100 in number, 262 cubic feet in each.

Rice, Baird and Heebner have undertaken to deny that they have any contract to supply the columns in courses, saying that the old contract is annulled. They cannot supply them in the single blocks and in blocks of $\frac{2}{3}$ the height as they agreed to; and I think that I shall perhaps therefore be able to import them from Italy at less cost, at their expense, as they have undertaken to do what I think is a very dishonest thing—trying to get a price not justified by their contract or the circumstances of the case.

* * *

[SEPT. 5] I went this evening to see Mr. [Randolph] Rogers, the sculptor. He has brought his wife here.⁹² She is pretty and agreeable in her manners. Mrs. Gibson, the mother of the bride, is with them. She is a fine-looking old lady of Virginia, with a great idea of the greatness of the state and the importance of its adherents. I fear that if she lives with Mr. Rogers, who is of a poor family from Michigan and who has been guilty of the bad manners of supporting a poor mother by industry, she will crush and oppress him.

The work in the House of Representatives goes on with rapidity. The plasterers sent a committee of one to me today to remonstrate against my giving to two of their number \$2.50 per day. This increase has been looked upon by them as a great outrage upon their dignity. Such folly is almost incredible.

I explained to the committee of one, who was the writer of the memorial and the getter-up, I think it likely, of the whole affair, that I give these wages because one of the two could earn in another part of the building \$2.50 as a worker in [scagliola] and that I did not think it right to just keep him at work as a plasterer for a less rate than I could pay him elsewhere; and that his foreman saying that he could not spare him from the plaster, I told him then to keep him and pay

⁹⁰The figures of the Indian and the pioneer that Rinehart originally intended for the mantel were used for the clock for the House chamber.

⁹¹Otto Fabbriocoty of New York was a marble importer.

⁹²Randolph Rogers married Rosa Gibson of Richmond in 1857.

him the same wages, as he was a most useful hand. That the other was put upon the same rate because the foreman, Flaherty, said that he was one as good and did the same work and they were most useful in the shop.

As for all the others, they got the usual wages and had no right to complain at the better luck of a fellow workman. They ought to be pleased and thank me for having thus given a lift to a fellow.

He said he did not think I could keep the men if I left it so, and I told him that if they should do so foolish a thing as a strike and leave the work because one had good wages, they would do themselves great injustice and I should get others at once in their places; that I could get others, if not here, in Philadelphia or Boston.

He left unconvinced and will not, I fear, be able to give a proper account of the interview to his comrades.

Mr. Walter does not like the statues of [caryatids] made by Mr. Rinehart. Says they are nothing but nature. Now, they might be nature idealized with advantage, but if they are really true to nature, they are not bad.

I think they are the best things we have had after Mr. Crawford's statues and that they show good promise of future excellence in the young man, who has faithfully labored upon them. Mr. Wood has made excellent photographs of them.

Letters from Louisa and Annie. They are all well and enjoy themselves at the springs. I will probably have the pleasure of my wife's company again about the 17th, when her month is out.

* * *

[SEPT. 5 CONT.] The boilers for the extension are making proper progress. The engines are nearly done. The drawing of the fans is nearly ready for work upon it. The floor of the House of Representatives is down, except a small portion. We have begun to plaster the gallery fronts, and the painters are at work upon the iron work of these fronts and steps of the galleries, and the seats are begun. In short, the whole looks as though it would be ready long before the time required. The chairs and desks are in progress in New York, Boston and Philadelphia.

* * *

[SEPT.] 7TH. At the office. The President sent for me this morning, . . .

* * *

[SEPT. 7 CONT.] We spoke of the designs of Palmer for the pediment. He said he had talked with him, but he was not disposed to do any-

thing without the Secretary of War, I think. The Secretary had come back this morning, earlier than he was expected.

Our interview was a pleasant one. He promised me to come to visit the Capitol soon.

* * *

[SEPT.] 9TH. Mr. Heebner was at the office today. He is not much pleased with the course taken by Mr. Rice about the columns. Mr. Fabbricotty was here today to see me about the supplies of these columns from Italy. He will write to his correspondents to ascertain at what price they can be delivered.

[longhand transcription follows:]

Copy of letter from Hon. Jeff. Davis endorsed [?] to me
Brierfield Mi.

Aug. 23, 1857

Hon. J.B. Floyd, Sec. of War

Dr Sir.

I have heard that it is urged upon you to relieve Capt. Meigs of the charge of the construction of the Capitol Extension and without knowing what reason is alleged my own experience readily supports that it is either the movement of persons wanting contracts or of some [individual?] wanting employment. Whether it is these or other motives, I am quite sure that the manner in which the work has been conducted furnishes sufficient evidence of the capacity, zeal and integrity of the officer in charge. When the work was transferred to the War Dept. I instituted careful inquiry to find a candidate competent by elementary preparation and practical application to carry on the magnificent project and who to these qualifications would add the moral attributes which would silence such complaints as had arisen both in regard to the purchase and the use of material. Good advice and good fortune led me to select Capt. Meigs, an officer with whom I had no previous acquaintance and instead of the labor and vexation I had anticipated when the work was placed under my general supervision I have only to remember it as a most gratifying connection. Full of resources, above personal jealousy, calm, energetic, obliging, firm, discreet, just, patient to hear and willing to instruct, he soon overcame the prejudice against a military superintendent and acquired the confidence and the good will of the artists and workmen under his charge. The last proof of this was a voluntary tribute paid

by them in answer to a memorial asking that the public works under his direction should be transferred to contractors.

The work has now progressed so far toward completion that I doubt not a man with a small part of his scientific attainments, architectural knowledge and mechanical skill could successfully complete it, but I am sure you will not fail to [revert?] to the condition of the work when he received it and at what risk he undertook to preserve what had been done by expedients which would give the requisite strength and save the expense of reconstruction, not to mention that all this labor and vast disbursements have been encountered [?] without pay or allowances beyond those to which he was entitled by his commission in the army, and that unless he shall be permitted to conclude the work he will lose the honor due to the constructor if successful, and thus be stripped of the incentive which was all he had to sustain his years of toil of study and of care. If the new "House" for "Representatives" should fulfil the expectations it will be a great triumph for American science and probably contribute much to the transaction of business.

The responsibility would be removed by a change of the constructing engineer and neither Capt. Meigs or his advisers would probably feel that it would have failed to succeed if left in his charge until completion.

I have volunteered these remarks not fearing to be misunderstood and feeling that if rejected they would not be considered objectionable or at least be pardoned on account of my former connection and continued interest in the great national work of which I have written.

Very respectfully and truly yours,

signed Jefferson Davis

[shorthand transcription resumes]

SEPT. 10TH. The former letter is one of which any officer may well be proud. I have sent the original to my father, for it will give pleasure to him. When returned, I think I shall send it to Governor Floyd. There is no knowing what he may do. I do not think that at present he has any desire to rid himself of my services.

Mr. Rice is here today; Mr. Heebner, also. Rice complains of a letter which I sent to him asking him to put a stop to his practice of sending to Mr. Walter and the clerks in my office telegraphic dispatches to inquire about the payment of money upon his cargoes of marble.

He sends them and then gets, by Mr. Walter's means, the bills made out hurriedly and causes great risk with mistakes. Mr. Walter and Mr. Denham are not infrequently in collision about it, and I told him that it was injurious to me, as the clerks in the telegraph office must think that I was very careless in my duty to require this push by telegraph to galvanize me into doing my duty. He took it in high dudgeon.

I spoke also about his attempt to get a higher price for the column blocks in 4-foot lengths, having failed to supply them under the new contract, the supplemental contract, in monoliths. He wishes now to say that the old one is null and that he must have \$3.75 per cubic foot for the blocks.

I told him that if the old one is null, we will return to the new and I will withdraw all orders not according to the new. The new he must fill in.

He had taken, to Mr. Heebner's great disgust, the affair out of his hands, and today he said he would prefer putting it back there.

Tonight I studied and determined upon a plan of shades or blinds for the roof of the House of Representatives and Senate, to keep out the direct rays of the sun.

* * *

[SEPT. 12] The work upon the House of Representatives is going on well.

* * *

[SEPT. 14] To Rice and Heebner I must write to make arrangements consequent upon their refusing to supply the column shafts of the porticoes of the Capitol in blocks of 4 feet lengths. I must tell them that if they insist, I shall call upon them to fulfill the contract in monolithic shafts, a thing impossible for them, and yet one which they pretend to wish.

* * *

[SEPT. 19] [William] Cullom, Clerk of the House of Representatives, called to see me today; and after looking over the progress of the work, he said he had not believed that I would be able to get the hall ready before, but that now he did believe it, and he thought that he ought to lay down the carpets. I told him that I thought it was not a House until turned over to the legislature and that I ought to get it ready and turn it over at the proper time; that I had selected a carpet, etc.

He seemed to feel the matter an invasion of his privileges and patronage. Talked of patronage. Said he had been a good friend to me in the House when I needed friends, etc., etc., and gave me to understand that he would be, such was his nature, under the necessity of

taking a hostile attitude unless I left it to him to make all the proper arrangements for finishing the House of Representatives.

I told him I had not the least intention or desire to interfere with his proper sphere, that I had no patronage of which he spoke and no perquisites except the pay of a Captain of Engineers.

He had used both these words, saying that I had as much power and patronage as most men, and he did not wish to interfere with my perquisites.

I laughed and told him that I had no patronage. I hired people to do the work; and if I they did not do it, I turned them off. I had no perquisites.

Well, he said I had about as many irons in the fire as any man could keep hot, etc. I told him it was not so great an affair as to trouble me to buy a carpet, that I had already got the price and the sample and had determined to buy it; but that if he had an appropriation as he assured me he had and would undertake to have it down by the first of December and to do it as I thought it ought to be done, I had not the least objection to his paying out of his appropriation for the carpet and thus saving to my appropriation the \$1,600 or \$1,800 which the carpet would cost. That if he had such an appropriation, there was no necessity for my paying for the carpet and he was welcome to it. That I had already ordered the desks and chairs, which I considered fixtures, and that I supposed he would not object to that.

He said there would be some little other things—spittoons, etc.—which he would get. I told him I did not desire to interfere with his prerogative, etc., and we parted good friends.

He is a fool, though, and I fear a dishonest man. For when Mr. [Dodson],⁹³ of Clagett and Dodson,⁹⁴ came to see me about his offer for carpet and I told him that I had turned the matter over to the Clerk and thought it his business, he at once said that he supposed he wished to make something out of the job, and that he had once before bought a carpet for the House of Representatives from him and, he was informed, had charged a higher price to the House of Representatives. This may be all a lie, however, to increase the price; may have been only a fair price for the labor of fitting and laying it down.

I gave to Dodson a letter to Cullom, telling him that I had selected a carpet which Mr. Dodson promised to lay down for \$1.75 a foot and nailed down, and that I particularly requested that he, if he thought the price reasonable, buy this carpet, as it had been selected by Mr. Walter and myself as suitable for the other decorations of the Hall.

⁹³James Dodson was with Clagett and Dodson.

⁹⁴Clagett and Dodson was a carpet company in Washington that provided carpet for the House and Senate chambers.

What I did not like to see in Cullom was his strong desire to buy this carpet and his saying that if I did not like him to do it, he would be obliged to change from an attitude of friendship to one of hostility during this time.

Now, if he has really spoken for me in the struggles of the House of Representatives heretofore, his reasons ought to have been that he believed me to be a faithful and efficient servant of the government; and no question of a carpet or an infringement upon his prerogative ought to lead him to speak against me hereafter.

All this shows that he is a man moved by personal motives and not by public duty. Indeed, it amounted to an acknowledgement that this was the case. His whole talk was an offer of support if I gave up to him the carpet question and a declaration of war if I did not.

For his war I cared not, and for his support I would not move far, though it is better to have a man, even if you do not trust him much, for you than against you. But I desire only to have a carpet laid down in time, and he will do it and save the cost of the appropriation for the building. I have left it to him to do. I regret to see such a man in so responsible an office.

A fellow was with him who is, I believe, his agent in buying furniture, a mean, sneaking-looking villain who they say is an agent to help the gentleman [?] and himself to more money than properly belongs to them in this business of furnishing the committee rooms.

I hope that his public reputation does him injustice, but I fear that it is too true.

I took him into one of his own rooms and showed him that they were not furnishing for the _____; told him I wished he would consult me about the style of furniture. It ought to be good and heavy, not such stuff as he had put into the Agriculture room; that I feared he had been cheated by someone in that furniture, particularly in looking-glass.

He said that the Committee on Accounts had refused to allow the furniture which I had got designs for and had ordered him to buy a certain list which he had followed. This did not make it necessary for him to put it into the hands of a scoundrel and get a false _____ plate instead of a good French plate mirror.

I think that I have so tied up the carpet that there can be no cheating without its being found out. If there is, it is not my failure.

* * *

[SEPT. 21] Mr. Rice came this evening. Says that the money market in Philadelphia is in a dreadful condition, that he needs money and has come to get some stone which has been suspended as too small

relocated in smaller _____, that he may get 4 or \$5,000. He wants to use this money in his affairs in Philadelphia. It will not go to the contract work at the quarry. He talked a little about the columns, said that Heebner would answer me later.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]⁹⁵

[SEPT. 25] Heebner was here. He will send stone more rapidly than he has. Says that Flatner and Smith, the great [?] paper makers, having failed, there will be great distress among the workmen; says he will take some of them to work in his quarry to make _____ for the next season's work; that he will be able thus to do a good charity and then to make advance with the work also.

* * *

SEPT. 28TH. I spent this day at home writing out reports upon the different works for the month of August which have been left, because of constant occupation, unwritten till this time. I also settled some prices for the work of Provost, Winter and Co. They are desirous of getting their money now, as the banks are not able to lend.

* * *

1ST OCT. The payroll for the

Capitol was about	\$31,000
For dome	2,000
Post Office	12,000
Aqueduct. I have not yet.	
Provost and Winter's estimate	19,000

Over \$60,000 of wages I pay.

* * *

[OCT.] 3RD. Spent the day at the office, where I found myself much occupied with the various duties which require attention.

I ordered iron beams from the Phoenixville company.⁹⁶ They make 9 inch I beams of better shape than Cooper and Hewitt's. They sell about the same price and are able to make them longer. We use vast quantities of these beams in the great buildings now being put up all over the country by the government. They will also be extensively used by merchants in the erection of stores and warehouses in the great commercial cities. They make a building fireproof while making

⁹⁵ An undated article from the *Baltimore Sun*, reporting on bank suspensions in Philadelphia.

⁹⁶ Phoenix Iron Co. of Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, provided beams for the dome.

the walls so heavy and extensive as they must be in order to arch the floors from the walls.

The Post Office extension is built in this manner. In the corridors of the Capitol extension, I propose to use them for two of the ceilings. The wings themselves were already designed and begun when I took charge of them.

* * *

[OCT.] 9TH. I signed today a great number of drawings for the dome, which increases the construction which has been determined upon in the last two months. These drawings will enable me to send to the founder a large quantity of work.

* * *

[OCT. 9 CONT.] I also went to see the drawings of Mr. James Walker,⁹⁷ an artist, who has brought some sketches in oil for me to look at.

He was in the city of Mexico at the time of the invasion by our army, and being expelled, he ran the gauntlet between the two armies, joined ours at Pueblo, and went with them into the city, seeing himself all the battles.

He had some instruction as a painter in the city, in which he had been living from the time he was 9 years old. He has since continued his studies, and the sketches which he showed to me show a great skill and knowledge of these subjects, which too few men who have the talent to paint them have the chance of acquiring. I think they are as full of life and knowledge as any battle pieces I have ever seen.

I have engaged him to enter the service to paint the battle of Chapultepec for the room of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, to be finished by the meeting of Congress, at \$10 per day. I hope great things from him.

* * *

[OCT. 10] Anderson came in the evening and negotiated for some iron orders. He says that he finds that I am getting to be too close a businessman, that I am closer for the United States than he ever was for himself. I told him that money is worth more than it used to be and iron should go down.

[Printed material inserted.]⁹⁸

⁹⁷James Walker (1819–1889) painted the *Battle of Chapultepec* in 1855. It is on loan from the U.S. Senate Commission on Art to the History Museums Division of the U.S. Marine Corps and on display in the United States Marine Corps Museum.

⁹⁸Unidentified newspaper reports from October 13, 1857, describing the financial crisis in which banks in New York and elsewhere on the east coast suspended payment.

[OCT.] 14TH. I took my payrolls to the Secretary this morning. He said he would read them. I opened them to show him how they were made out. He did not seem to take much interest in this. He cares, I think, little for the way in which the money is spent. What he is looking after is a political course of those to whom it is paid.

I left them with him, telling him that to me they were \$60,000 and that therefore they had to be taken good care of. As he seemed to wish to have copies of them, I, after getting to the office, employed a new clerk to make these copies. It will take about a week, if not longer, to make them correct.

I suppose that the fact is the Secretary intends to put the payrolls in the hands of some member of the party here to see whether I employ men who belong to the Know-Nothings. I hope he will have a good time in such a nasty business. It is really too small for a Secretary.

* * *

[OCT. 16] Annie came home today with Jerusha and her two children, Gus and Minnie. Monty⁹⁹ came two or 3 days since with Mrs. Rodgers and Kate.¹⁰⁰ So that now we are all at home again.¹⁰¹

* * *

[OCT.] 18TH. I have today from the Secretary a letter saying that he desires that Mr. Benton should be dismissed from his position upon the aqueduct and that Mr. Chandler should be appointed in his place. This is the result of his reading of my payrolls. He has had some member of the Jackson Democratic Association with him, I suppose, to look over the names and tell him who is a Know-Nothing. It is certainly a small business for a cabinet minister to pursue these studies.

* * *

[OCT. 21] . . . Mr. Palmer, the Albany sculptor, came. He had come to see about his pediment designs and brought with him the models. I took him to see the Secretary, who had gone to New York. We then went to see the President, who saw us but said he had an important treaty to dispose of and could not talk long with us.

I told him Mr. Palmer's object and that he had his models with him, and I wished to know whether I should have them set up at the Capitol or at the White House for his inspection. He said the White House, but that he would look at them as soon as the Secretary came back from New York, which would be early next week.

⁹⁹ Augustus C. Macomb (1854–1932), Minerva H.R. Macomb (1856–1898), and Montgomery M. Macomb (1852–1924).

¹⁰⁰ Kate Trowbridge Rodgers was visiting the Meigs family for the summer.

¹⁰¹ Meigs' wife and children had returned in mid-September.

I then took Palmer over the building and shops. He grew in enthusiasm as he saw and understood more and seemed to be determined to leave no effort untried to get his design adopted.

* * *

[OCT. 22] I have written to the Phoenix Iron Company to ask at what price they will roll the iron.

I have engaged Mr. [Charles] Thomas, a mechanical engineer, to take charge of operations in material, under my directions. He is the designer of the Mason locomotive.¹⁰² A finished workman, draftsman and mechanical engineer, I understand. I am to pay him \$5 per day.

* * *

[OCT. 22 CONT.] Rented a house in the street north of the Capitol square for an office. The rooms in which I have been with our draftsmen are now assigned for the use of Congress. I am to pay \$500 per year and have the privilege of keeping the house for 5 years. It is a very large old house, with many rooms, and will suit well, except that it is not fireproof.

Mr. Walter moves in at once. I shall not go just yet.

[OCT.] 24TH. I have received Mr. Palmer's Pilgrims. They are better in the model than in the little ambrotype he sent to us. It is now being photographed.

I put the roof in the hands of the draftsman today.

Mr. Thomas, a mechanical engineer of large experience, has been engaged upon the Capitol and the other public works in my charge. He is to take charge of the metal and iron work and shops generally. He looks like a right sort of man for the place.

We are now turning the ends of the columns, or rather of the _____ of the dome, as the spliner does not do the work as fast as we receive it.

I have also written to Poole and Hunt to turn off as many as they can with their lathe. One group of 4 has been set up.

[OCT.] 26TH. Saturday. At the office. The photograph of Mr. Palmer's model for the pediment is finished and is a very beautiful photograph.¹⁰³ I wish I could say that I was quite as well satisfied with the design itself as with the drawing we have made of it. I took it home. Showed it after the club to some of the members; and I think

¹⁰² The William Mason locomotive was built by the William Mason Locomotive Works in Taunton, Massachusetts, in 1856. It is now in the B & O Railroad Museum in Baltimore, Maryland.

¹⁰³ See illustration on page 462.

the verdict is that though it is beautiful, it does not equal Mr. Crawford's.

The work of the House of Representatives goes on vigorously.

I gave orders in relation to our machinery which will, I think, give us a better progress with our work upon the dome.

The first pier of the dome wall is up—that is, the skeleton of it. One column is in place. They look well.

[Printed material inserted.]¹⁰⁴

* * *

[OCT.] 28TH. At the office.

The Secretary is still absent.

I had a visit from Mr. Palmer. One photograph of his design has been finished, an oblique view. We have been very skillful with these drawings.

The death of Mr. Crawford is announced. He died upon the 10th of this month, a release from much suffering. He leaves in the works for the pediment and dome an imperishable monument.

[OCT.] 29TH. This morning a letter from Mr. Cass, Secretary of State. He sends a set of rough drawings from Mr. Jones,¹⁰⁵ an artist in whom he expresses interest. I remember Jones, who made a bust, and a very good one, of the General some 15 years ago in Detroit. I suppose he wishes to make something for the Capitol.

Mr. Walker called yesterday. He has done nothing as yet for his painting.

* * *

[OCT.] 30TH. Signed pay accounts and fuel and quarters for October. Pay, \$168.50; fuel and quarters, \$46; total, \$214.50.

I have spent, I suppose, about \$200,000 for Uncle Sam in the month, directed the labor of some 3,000 persons.

* * *

[OCT. 30 CONT.] At the office. Mr. Palmer called to see whether I had yet made arrangements for the Secretary and President to see his model. The Secretary returned today, but I have not seen him.

Mr. Heebner is here. Came to make arrangements for the delivery of the column shafts. I think we will succeed in getting them from

¹⁰⁴An undated article from the *Baltimore Sun*, reporting the death of Thomas Crawford in London on October 10, 1857.

¹⁰⁵The reference may be to Anthony W. Jones of New York, who was active from 1818 to 1861. He exhibited a bust of General James Tallmadge at the 1844 Fair of the American Institute.

Italy. He is disposed to get them, but he says Mr. Rice does not like it. Rice is to be here tomorrow.

* * *

[OCT.] 31ST. I went to the department with Mr. Palmer today to make an appointment for the President and Secretary to see his model, but the Secretary had not returned from the north.

Dined at Mr. Briggs'. The club met at my house in the evening. We had a pleasant meeting.

Have 6 columns of the dome set.

* * *

[NOV.] 2ND. Today I went with Mr. Palmer to see the Secretary, who has returned from New York at last. He promised to see the President and appoint a time to look at the model of the pediment. I received in the evening from him a note saying that he would with the President visit the Capitol for the purpose at 2 p.m. on Wednesday.

* * *

[NOV. 2 CONT.] Mr. Palmer called in the evening to know the time of the meeting at the Capitol. He stayed some time, and I showed him some photographs. He is very free in his criticisms upon the works of Crawford and Rogers. If his long ears could hear the remarks made by others upon his, it might be of service.

* * *

[NOV. 4] p.m. The Secretary and President called today at 2½ p. m. to see the model of Palmer's Pilgrims. They looked at it for a long time but did not communicate to me their intention in regard to it.

The President, after looking at it for some time, said that it pleased him better as he studied it more; that it had not impressed him very favorably when he first looked at it; that he was no judge of such things, etc.

I said what I could for it, telling him that it was a sketch only; that it would be much improved, I had no doubt, in executions in large; that Mr. Palmer was a better master of the language of the chisel than of the tongue. For Palmer's explanations of his work are not very poetical.

The Secretary said little about it, except that to him it seemed to be a copy of Crawford's.

I think it likely, however, it will be adopted. I do not think we are likely to do better—at least not in any reasonable time.

I had one of the iron columns for the dome [peristyle] slung, to be hoisted up in the presence of the President. He said that he liked to

see great mechanical operations performed. It went up with such ease that it looked like a matter of little importance.

We visited also the House of Representatives, which is progressing finally.

As I parted with them at the west front of the Capitol—for they had discharged their carriage and walked home—I took advantage of the President's being engaged for a minute with Mr. Palmer, to say to the Secretary that Mr. Bryan [the assistant on the aqueduct], I understood, had been to see him and that I feared from the account of the interview which I had that he might have said something to displease him; that I requested that he would not act in his case until I had the opportunity of being heard about it; that I was confident that he had not intended to say anything that would be unpleasant. He promised to hear me before acting.

Provost has entered a formal complaint against Mr. Rutherford [superintendent of marble work] for operations of tyranny and malignity. He showed me some work which Rutherford had condemned and which he tried with me as to a level line, etc. It seemed to me in all these points perfectly set. I told him to make his complaint in writing, that I could then act upon it, give Rutherford a chance to be heard, that I would endeavor to do justice; that I should much regret to lose Mr. Rutherford, but that I would not let that stand in the way if he could show that he was guilty of injustice to the contractors.

* * *

[Nov. 6] I went to the department today and waited a long time to see the Secretary.

Mr. Rice, of Rice, Baird and Heebner, has sent me a proposition to furnish the column [shafts] in single blocks for \$1,700, etc., etc. His contract requires him to furnish them thus for \$1,400. I propose to send to Italy for them and charge him with the additional cost, but I did not like to do this without first seeing the Secretary. I therefore brought this up, as he asked whether he could not substitute granite for the marble.

I told him it would not have a good effect upon this marble building, with marble walls, to use granite columns and cornices. It would be rather dirty-colored.

He said he did not mean to do this, but could I not reface the walls also with granite? I told him that Congress would never consent to it, but that it could be done, except for this difficulty: at an increase of 5 or 6 years' time in completing the building and some 2 millions of dollars in the cost.

What an absurdity! What folly! And what could have led him to make such a foolish proposition, the desire to use the Richmond granite quarries? Anything, if he could only get the money to go to Richmond.

* * *

[Secretary Floyd was furious when he learned that a contractor on the aqueduct had hired the Know-Nothing, Mr. Benton, whom he had ordered fired from the government payroll. William Bryan, Meigs' chief assistant on the aqueduct, had recommended that the contractor hire Benton, assuming that Floyd only objected to his employment by the government, not by a private contractor. When Bryan told Floyd this, the secretary of war decreed that he, too, must be replaced. Meigs' protests that Bryan was an extremely valuable employee had no effect on the secretary.]

[NOV. 6 CONT.] It is a great loss and a gross outrage. Floyd is a man of no principle.

* * *

[NOV. 9] I wrote the monthly reports today. They took me all morning. I also wrote a report to the Secretary upon the estimates for the next year for the public buildings.

I have asked for the Capitol \$1,000,000; for the dome, nothing, as I have enough for the next year's work on hand. For the aqueduct, I asked the Engineer Department some days since for \$1,000,000; for Fort Madison, \$20,000.

I hope that I may get all these appropriations made and that I may manage to get through the present months without coming to any open rupture with the Secretary. He will find his hands full to defend his official acts, I think, after the meeting of Congress. But then I may hope that he does not have time to interfere in my business. All that he touches he injures.

Messrs. Archer and Co. have brought on a panel of the bronze railing for the private stairs. It is a most beautiful work. The figures are well, quite well enough for decoration, and the scroll work is the finest I have ever seen. Such a railing certainly is not to be found this side of Rome, if there.

* * *

[NOV.] 11TH. I signed a large number of drawings for the dome and some for the ventilation and heating apparatus. Mr. Nason is here. The fan room of the north wing had been drawn, and I signed and approved the drawings. The detailed drawings of the fans for both north and south wings were also ready for signature.

I signed also a very large number of drawings which relate to the skin of the dome. These give the construction of the outer and inner surfaces of the drum of the dome—that is, the wall inside of the peristyle. I have ordered them sent to Janes and Beebe for their estimate of what they can be made for.

The skeleton of this work is being cast by Poole and Hunt of Baltimore. We have 9 columns up and a large number of pillars of the piers [?].

Mr. [Baudin] with two of the firm for which he works are here. They have two specimens of the railing in bronze for the private stairs. These railings are very beautiful. If they finish the work as they have begun it, they will do a piece of work which will be of credit to them and to the United States.

Mr. Heebner, too, is here. He thinks the proposition of his partner, Rice, is absurd, as I do, and stands ready himself to take the job of finishing the columns in single blocks at once if I will give him the order; but having referred the matter to the Secretary of War, I cannot give it until he makes his decision.

* * *

[NOV. 12] Wright,¹⁰⁶ whom I met at the house [where Meigs paid a brief visit], asked me to send in my annual report, as he said they were waiting for it.

I came home, took the carriage, rode to the Capitol, brought with me Mr. Moore,¹⁰⁷ and set to work to write up the report. It took all afternoon to write it and get it copied into a fair hand by him. He is a beautiful penman. He had also the monthly reports nearly ready for signature. Some of them were quite ready.

* * *

[NOV. 13] At the office, very busy. Heebner is here. [Baker], of the gas-fitters of Philadelphia, Cornelius and Baker. I have set him to looking over the building and make an estimate for gas fixtures.

* * *

[NOV. 13 CONT.] Mr. Sertell¹⁰⁸ called with Mr. Schlegel.¹⁰⁹ The latter is a painter of his acquaintance. He brought some portraits which are very fine—fancy-dress uniform. He had also some sketches which

¹⁰⁶Horatio G. Wright (1820–1899), a captain in the Corps of Engineers, was assistant to General Totten, the chief engineer.

¹⁰⁷Mr. Moore was apparently a clerk on the Capitol extension.

¹⁰⁸This is possibly a lithographer named Henry R. Serrell, who worked in New York.

¹⁰⁹Fridolin Schlegel was a painter who lived in New York from 1853 to 1861.

were very bad. I do not think much can be done with him upon the Capitol.

* * *

[NOV. 14] At the Capitol, I heard from Mr. Fowler that Mr. Janes had found two good horses, and I requested him to write to him and send for both.

I spent the afternoon at the office. I investigated the charge against one of the overseers of having been guilty of indecent conduct at the extension; and being satisfied that he had not proved guilty and was perhaps innocent, I directed him to return to duty. The poor man nearly fainted away in my office when I told him that I must wait until I could see the chief of the Capitol police before I could decide his case.

It was then dark, and Captain Dunnington had gone home. I sent him down to his house in the carriage, for he said he was not able to walk; and I went as soon as I got through my papers to see Dunnington at his house. After conversing with him, I was satisfied that what he had against him was not sufficiently well-founded to give good grounds for fastening upon a man such a foul charge; and I drove down to his house and left a note directing him to return to duty.

[NOV.] 15TH. I have this morning a letter from Palmer, the artist. He says that he had a letter from the Department of War telling him that his model had been the subject of a cabinet consultation and that it was determined to examine the laws carefully and that if there was anything clearly given for purchasing ornaments, nothing would be done until after the meeting of Congress. He asks, under these circumstances, that I should pay him for the model, the expense of which has been great to him, that it has prevented his making a statue which would have been a profit to him of \$2,000, etc. He asks \$1,000, which I expect to pay. Poor fellow. He is much disappointed. Thanks me for the kindness which he received from me and still seems to hope for success.

I fear that this cabinet will do little for him. Is he a Democrat? This perhaps has not been made plain to Floyd.

I have also a letter from Floyd, the Secretary, in which he orders me to make a Capitol report of all supplies purchased during the quarter, of all contracts made, the orders given for such, and with an estimate of all such intended for the succeeding quarter. And that I shall consult with him, either in writing or verbally, before giving any orders for supplies I conveyed in the estimate thus given, before making any contracts, etc.

If his order is obeyed literally, it will be to make him the actual superintendent of the Capitol, etc., and of all my works. And he will be able to do nothing else. Indeed, I do not believe that he will be able to read all I shall have to send to him.

He wishes to know where these things are all bought, names and residences of the parties.

Here is the rub. He wants to see that Virginia gets a share of all this proportionate to her greed. He wants to know what good things are about, in order that he may direct them into the pockets of good Democrats and especially those of good friends of Governor Floyd.

I do begin to believe that General Totten is right to say he has no principle at all. And yet he is wrong, that he certainly has the five principles—namely, the five barley loaves, if not the two small fishes.¹¹⁰

Can this thing go on long? He puts me entirely into his power. If I am to wait, and it takes generals 3 hours to see him, before I order anything, I must be reduced to entire inefficiency. If I go without doing first what he wants, as is practicable, I will be obliged to do so many things without his orders, and indeed contrary to these last orders, that I will always be subject to censure for disobedience. I will try to hold on till Congress comes back.

* * *

[Nov. 16] I went to the Secretary today to talk with him about the execution of the circular requiring reports and estimates of supplies and purchases. I told him that I wished to make these reports in the way most agreeable to him but that if I took the circular literally, I should be tied fast, that I could not do business, and that he could not read or attend to what would come before him in reference to my works; that I supposed what he wished reported was only what would give him a general view of my operations. He agreed to this.

Then, in regard to consulting him before making contracts or giving orders for supplies or services, I said that I could not go to my office as it stood and order the least thing. I forget what I used as an illustration, but I believe it was a keg of nails. That I supposed he did not wish this, for I would not be able to give the time to it and I could not accomplish anything if I was to do this. I gave a great many orders daily, etc.

He said, "Well, most of your orders are below a thousand dollars, are they not?" I said, "Yes. But still many are above. For instance,

¹¹⁰The reference is to John 6:9: "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?"

I order a cargo of cement. This costs about \$1,500. You do not wish to hear of that?

He said, "No. Say \$2,000, then." I said yes, I thought I could consult him about orders of over \$2,000. And he agreed that should be the limit.

So it is understood that I am to give no order for supplies or services which will exceed two thousand dollars without first consulting with the Secretary. This is much better than the order as it is really given, but it still hampers me a good deal.

I made upon the back of the circular a memorandum of this conversation in order that if any question comes up, I may have a record of it. I could not ask that this be given in writing, and yet it ought to be thus given, as it is in fact taking the bones out of the order.

Mr. Nason is still here. Mr. Briggs says that they have started the arrangement for the Senate coil and that they get everything in beautifully, that it will be a much more advantageous arrangement than we have in the south wing.

Mr. Murray of Murray and Hazlehurst¹¹¹ is here. He asked for some money, and I paid him all his boilers came to, except about \$500. This will be enough to cover all expenses of placing in the forms, of making good any defects that may show themselves in proving by steam.

His boilers are 14½ cents per pound. Ellis paid for his 12¼. I suppose that Ellis scarcely gets his money back. I have paid him for 3 boilers, leaving the rest till they are proved.

Palmer, the artist, writes me to ask to be paid for the model of design he has prepared for the Capitol, \$1,000. He says he has a letter from Drinkard,¹¹² chief clerk of the War Department, informing him that the Secretary directs him to be informed that his affair was on the 6th of November the subject of cabinet consultation and that it was determined to scrutinize the laws carefully; and if no specific authority was found for purchase of ornaments—if indeed the law considered this work as ornamentation—nothing could be done before the meeting of Congress. This, Palmer says, he supposed to be the end of the affair so far as he is concerned, and he asks that he may be paid. I shall send him the money he asks for.

He says that he found at his friend Mr. Olcott's a copy of the photograph of his pediment nicely mounted and framed and that he was more pleased than disappointed at finding the wind taken out of his sails in that manner upon his arrival with his copies. He says he has had much pleasure in showing and explaining to friends since his re-

¹¹¹ Murray and Hazlehurst of Baltimore manufactured boilers.

¹¹² William R. Drinkard was Secretary Floyd's chief clerk at the War Department. In 1859, he served as acting secretary in Floyd's absence.

turn the photographs of the works of the Capitol which I gave him and that they expressed their admiration for the ability shown in this great work. Thanks me for the kind interest which I have shown in his work.

* * *

[After insisting that Meigs' principal assistant on the aqueduct, William Bryan, be replaced, Secretary Floyd refused to accept either of Meigs' two choices to fill the position. Instead, he sent a Virginian, Colonel Claude Crozet (1790–1864), the former state engineer of Virginia.]

[NOV. 19] I have ordered night force to be put upon the boiler work for the south wing. It alone is backward.

Mr. Rice is here today. He wishes to make some arrangement by which he can get 30 or \$40,000 more for the columns for the Capitol than his contract gives. I told him that I had nothing to say but that he must fulfill his contract. He concluded that not much was to be made by talking with me and said that he would see Mr. Heebner and talk with him.

[NOV.] 20TH. We froze hard last night. I am told by Saxton that the temperature went down to 17 degrees. The ground is frozen and formed to some $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 inch in thickness. The mortar curdled upon the Capitol extension; and in the country, where it is colder than in town, the masonry must have been stopped by the freezing of the mortar. I suppose that this will prevent our putting in the foundations of the Cabin John Bridge this fall.

At the Capitol, everything is being pushed. Carelessness on the part of Mr. Doan, the foreman of Nason and Dodge, left the coil of pipes full of water. He had orders to empty them, and instead of doing so has neglected it. About \$100 damage was done by part of the great coil for the House of Representatives freezing up.

It is troublesome beyond the mere cost of repairs, as at this time we need every man to push forward new work, while this [forces] us to repair old work which was once finished.

[NOV.] 21ST. I met Mr. Janes and Mr. Fowler today. They came on to look at the drawings of the dome and get some information in regard to that before making their bid. Mr. Janes says that he thinks the horses he has bought are both good ones. He thinks they will be here by Monday. One costs \$200, the larger and better; the other, which is a better gaited horse, but not so strong, \$225. He thinks I will be able to drive them together.

I told Mr. Janes that I was [not?] in such authority now as I have had heretofore, that I must now, before making arrangements for large orders of works, consult with the Secretary of War. They say that they will make a proposition at such rates as will enable them to do the work well, but if they cannot get it at these rates, they do not desire to have it.

I fear the Secretary will compel me to advertise. This would bring in competition from those who do not know the difficulty of doing such work and I fear would lead to the same kind of trouble which I have upon the aqueduct with contractors.

Mr. Baker, for Cornelius and Baker, sent me in an estimate for supplying the wings with gas fixtures. I was to see him at [the] office between 4 and 5 p.m. in regard to it, but an order from the Secretary of War made it necessary to go to the Department, and I am now writing at home while dinner is being set.

* * *

[NOV. 21 CONT.] Mr. Baker is here. Gave me an estimate for the gas fixtures of the extension.

* * *

[NOV. 23] All the desks arrived today. One which I looked at is beautiful, well made.

* * *

[NOV. 25] John Rodgers was married today to Miss Annie Hodge,¹¹³ daughter of the Mr. Hodge¹¹⁴ who was Assistant Secretary of the Treasury under Fillmore. She is not pretty, but she is a good woman, a good daughter, neighbor and friend, a member of the Presbyterian Church, which she now leaves for that of her husband, the Episcopal.

John is one of the finest fellows alive, a brave, true, hardy, honest, generous man. He conducted the surveying squadron through the Pacific Islands and into the Arctic Sea after Commander Ringgold¹¹⁵ was displaced for sickness.

* * *

[NOV. 26] I was told on Monday that a body of men calling themselves regulators were coming to demand from me the dismissal of all the Know-Nothings upon the works under my charge, with a threat that

¹¹³ Ann E. Hodge (1823-?).

¹¹⁴ William L. Hodge was assistant secretary of the treasury in the Fillmore administration.

¹¹⁵ Cadwalader Ringgold (1802-1867) was a naval officer who led the surveying and exploring expedition to the North Pacific until he became ill. Commodore Matthew C. Perry then replaced him with John Rodgers.

if I did not dismiss them, they would take it in hand themselves. I paid no attention to this, except to inquire who they were.

They are, I am told, the same men or the same party of men who the other day attacked a house on English Hill and shot an Irishman, and the same who made an attack upon some persons at the station yard of Cassidy, near the railroad.

Today I heard that they were prowling round the smith shop at the Capitol and that the men were uneasy about them, fearing they might come at night and shoot into the windows. Mulloy, who is a watchman there and a magistrate, says that they do prowl about there and that he thinks in time they will make some kind of an attack upon the shops; that they are a set of ruffians of no particular party who say that they have been proscribed in Baltimore, and they will drive off all the Know-Nothings here and have work themselves.

Mulloy says they are a party which has been associated together under the name of The States _____. This company disbanded lately, but it seems the name remains. Some 20 of them have, in consequence of the late murders and riots, been arrested and either lodged in jail or put under bail, to answer at their next examination. But this seems to have left some 90 others at large.

It is a bad state of affairs when men working in government shops fear to come to their work at night lest they should be molested by such rowdies.

* * *

[Nov. 27] Saveretti [?], the plasterer, has, in repairing the plaster where cut for putting up gallery doors of the House of Representatives, done more injury than good; and I fear that it will be impossible to get the walls painted in time, from the work he has stupidly cut out and replaced by fresh mortar.

* * *

[Nov. 28] The glass for the ceiling of the House of Representatives has not come, and I fear that we are to have a delay from the want of this. All other things seem to be going on well and look like being ready by the first Monday of December.

* * *

[Nov. 30] In consequence of fears by the workmen and foremen in the machine shop and smith shop of the expectation that they would be attacked by a gang of rowdies, the same who have lately committed the outrages upon the house on English Hill, where they murdered a man named Murphy, and the attack upon Cassidy's stone yard, where there was a good deal of firing in open day, I went down to

the shop myself tonight and stayed there till 10 p.m., when it closed. All was perfectly quiet.

It seems by Mr. Dade's¹¹⁶ report that a party had called upon him and demanded that all Know-Nothings should be removed and they should be employed in their place. They said that they had been driven out of Baltimore by the Know-Nothings and they must have work here. He told them that he did not know that Know-Nothings were employed. They said they would give him a list of names. He replied that he did not have authority to dismiss men for such a cause.

They asked where I was and said they would see Captain Meigs, and if he would not turn them out, they would bring up the boys and do it themselves.

They called also upon Mr. Dunn¹¹⁷ the other day and required him to dismiss all Know-Nothings. And it was said that some of them were going through that part of the extension and looking for certain men whom they intended to drive off.

I do not like to take any precaution out of the usual way for these threats, which are probably only made with a view to alarm the men. They have not seen me yet, but I spent Monday evening in the shop in order to give confidence to the men there employed.

We tried the lighting of the Hall of Reps this evening. The carrier [?] tubes worked well, and the effect was very brilliant. I fear a little, however, that when the ground or figured glass is in the ceiling, it will diminish the light too much. There are 1,200 burners (about) in the apparatus above the skylight, and as no glass is between them and the floor, the effect is very brilliant. However, we will have above a good reflecting surface in the galvanized iron blinds which are about to be placed under the upper glass and exterior skylights.

* * *

[DEC. 2] Tonight I had the House of Representatives lighted up for a public view. It was, I am told, very successful. I was too tired to go myself.

[Printed material inserted.]¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶Mr. Dade was a supervisor on the aqueduct.

¹¹⁷Edward Dunn was an engineer at the Capitol.

¹¹⁸(1) An unidentified newspaper article reporting on the lighting in the House chamber. "We understand that this method of lighting is due to the original conception of Capt. M.C. Meigs, in charge of the Capitol Extension." (2) An undated article from the *Washington Union*, stating: "The effect of the hall when thus lighted up by gas is even more gorgeous and dazzling than when seen by daylight." (3) An undated article from the *Washington Star* reporting on the lighting of the House. The event started with the visitors in darkness, and then the gas was lighted. An excerpt from the article that describes the lighting system in detail is in Appendix, page 787. (4) A letter to the *Boston Journal* of November 25, 1857, from Ben Perley Poore, complaining that the "fair proportions" of the original Bulfinch and Latrobe Capitol were being destroyed by construction of the extension.

* * *

DEC. 3RD. Today I spent much time in superintending the work in the House of Representatives and in the boiler vaults. Most things are drawing to a close.

I find, as I expected, much difference of opinion in regard to the style of decoration. There is no arguing upon matters of taste. And I was told by Mr. Clingman that he did not like the colors yellow and red and thought that there was too much gilding and bright color in the fronts of the galleries. He did not object so much to the ceiling because that was out of sight.

He said that he thought the House would order the room repainted before they took possession of it. He did hear many Members say that they thought it ought to be painted over again.

I told him that I hoped before they did this, they would at least give the room a month's trial. It was new to most of them, for they have never had the opportunity to see such a magnificent specimen of decoration. There is nothing like it in this country, and the eye requires to be educated upon it. That I thought it very beautiful and had at work in directing it the two most competent men probably in the United States. But he thought it entirely too bright.

I begged him at least to let any committee that might be appointed to it to determine before anything was done in what colors it should be painted.

I should like to see a committee of country gentlemen undertake to paint or to make a design or schedule for painting this room.

I stayed till about 7 p.m. at the office and walked home. . . .

[DEC.] 4TH. I spent the day in the House of Representatives and in the boiler vaults. We are putting down the desks, fitting them to their places in the floor. Putting in the glass of the ceiling plan, most of it, as little of the colored glass has yet arrived. Making the last connections in the boiler vaults and putting up the pumps.

DEC. 5. Today I spent in the Hall of Reps, principally superintending the work of its completion. The carpets were all laid down upon the floor, the desks numbered and placed in position by 11 at night, when I left it. The [fly] doors for the gallery fronts and for the galleries are not quite upholstered. They are to be done by tomorrow and will all be in place by Monday noon.

He noted that the new dome would cost more than \$1 million. The decorations, he complained, were "designed and executed by a troop of Germans and Italians who had only been accustomed to decorate coffee-houses and dance-halls at home."

In the boiler vaults, the time of lighting the fires is deferred again till 10 a.m. tomorrow. There was some difficulty in the connections, some leaks in the water supply, etc., and the men were exhausted by long and continued and hard work, day and night, for a week past. Mr. Briggs, himself, is worn out and had to go home with a violent headache, having at last got everything together so that it could be put up without him.

I had a chair placed about 9¾ p.m. in the Speaker's place in the Hall and wrote the first paper which has been [composed] at that desk to my father. I told him of the completion, which I was then watching, of the great Hall of the Representatives of our nation, of the long labor, supported by trust in Providence, which was now terminating in the completion of this great work; that having this done, there was little left at the Capitol to make me desire to continue labors so heavy, so ill-rewarded in money and ease, if not in reputation.

* * *

DEC. 6TH. Today I went up to the Capitol to see the lighting of the fires in the boilers of the heating apparatus of the south wing of the extension. I intended, if I found that it could be safely deferred until tomorrow, to have the actual lighting put off, so as not to do any unnecessary work upon Sunday. But I found that it was absolutely necessary to try them now, in order to get the steam pumps to work, for if we waited till night, in the darkness we should be able to accomplish nothing.

We had trouble enough to make the chimney draw the right way. Mr. Briggs, though he has had so much experience in such matters, did not make sufficient preparation to establish an upward current in the flues before lighting the fires under the boilers, which are connected to the vertical flue by long, horizontal flues. At first, the carbonic acid gas poured out of the opening at the bottom of the chimney, so as to extinguish the fire, which we attempted to light there to remedy the defect. At length, however, by lighting a fire upon a few boards at the top of the chimney, we succeeded in establishing the proper direction of current, and then the draft was very strong.

We got steam upon the smaller coils under the committee rooms, and about 8 p.m. we got the steam upon the great coils of the House of Representatives. At 9 I left there to come home, after a hard and constructive day's work.

I placed the supernumerary desks in the Hall of Representatives about the sides of the room, so that they could be used for the representatives of the press. Many Members desire to get these gentlemen out of the room or off the floor of the Hall. But this is for them to

do, not for me, and I have placed the desks for their use, if Congress sees fit to permit it.

DEC. 7TH. I reported today to the Secretary of War that the new Representative chamber was finished and ready to be turned over to the House whenever they were ready to take possession of it. I made this official report in writing and delivered it in person, advising that it be communicated to the Speaker as soon as elected, and that he be informed that whenever the House of Representatives was ready to occupy the room, it would be placed at their disposal.

I wrote also a letter to the President, in which I told him that I had just written this official report and that I could not deny myself the pleasure, upon finishing this great work, of communicating it to him accordingly.

[Printed material inserted.]¹¹⁹

I saw a number of Members and Senators in the new Hall today.

Mr. Seward called to see me at my office. I met him afterwards in the Hall. He was with Hamlin¹²⁰ of Maine and with Simon Cameron¹²¹ of Pennsylvania. Hamlin asked me whether it was not overdone. I told him that I thought not and that after his eye was a little accustomed to it, he would not think so himself. I spoke of the difficulties of getting so great a work finished by the appointed date and the manner in which we had to work for the last few days. Cameron said that I had done myself infinite honor by the whole thing.

Davis¹²² of Mass., Zollicoffer of Tennessee and his colleague Maynard¹²³ both seemed much pleased.

Mr. [Jefferson] Davis, the late Secretary, called to see me at my office. I was then out of the room. He was much pleased to hear that the heating apparatus was in good action. We got the work fairly going today. The chimneys draw well.

After dark, I found the Hall empty and took the first opportunity I had since it was carpeted and furnished to try the effect of the voice in it. My own voice is not strong or very distinct.

I took my position at the Speaker's desk, sent Mr. Moore up into the gallery, Mr. Briggs to the furthest part of the floor. I then read

¹¹⁹An unidentified article, signed only "M," defending the decoration of the House chamber.

¹²⁰Hannibal Hamlin (1809–1891), Democrat then Republican of Maine, served in the House of Representatives, 1843–1847, and in the Senate 1848–1857, 1857–1861, and 1869–1881. He was vice president of the United States, 1861–1865.

¹²¹Simon Cameron (1799–1889), Democrat then Republican of Pennsylvania, served in the Senate, 1845–1849, 1857–1861, and 1867–1877. He was secretary of war, 1861–1862.

¹²²Timothy Davis (1821–1888), American party then Republican of Massachusetts, served in the House of Representatives, 1855–1859.

¹²³Horace Maynard (1814–1882), American party then Opposition then Republican of Tennessee, served in the House of Representatives, 1857–1863, and 1866–1875.

from a book and tried various positions about the floor. Mr. Moore tried speaking and hearing in different parts of the galleries. And we found that from any part of the room to any other part of it there was no difficulty in being heard distinctly, even in the empty room. When filled with a _____ audience, there will be still less reverberation. There is, of course, some in the empty room, as there will be in a full one, but it is not enough to be troublesome, and it does not take much voices to fill the Hall.

After tea, I went around to call upon Mr. and Mrs. Davis. He seemed glad to see me, rejoiced in the success of the room and in my having it ready to report today. Said he had seen in the papers that I had been removed and that the room would not be ready before the spring and feared that it might be true.

Mrs. Davis, too, said she had seen such an article and had a pang from it. I told him I expected an attack from Bigler¹²⁴ and gave him some little information about the intrigues of the past season. I also gave him a copy of the print of the Capitol of December 5th.

From there I went to call upon Seward, whom I found at home, and had a long talk with him about the works and Palmer's design, etc. He promised to go to the aqueduct with me on Friday if the Senate did not sit. I shall feel sure of help from him.

Then to General Totten's. They are well there.

The House elected Orr of South Carolina Speaker. Cluskey¹²⁵ was elected Postmaster. The first is a friend of mine; the second, an enemy. He did not get a contract upon the aqueduct for pipes and has sworn enmity for that.

* * *

[DEC. 8] Tried again tonight the effect of sound in the Hall. With only two persons in the room, it was perfect. I must get some few persons—Bache, Henry, Davis and others—to come down some evening and try the effect. Our heating apparatus is doing well.

* * *

[DEC.] 9TH. I arose early this morning and wrote out a few notes which I wish to read to any persons I may get to try the sound in the new Hall tonight. I plan to have Bache, Henry, Davis, Pearce and perhaps some others.

I received today the following letter from the department:

¹²⁴William Bigler (1814–1880), Democrat of Pennsylvania, served in the Senate, 1856–1861.

¹²⁵Michael W. Cluskey was House postmaster in the Thirty-fifth Congress (1857–1859). He was also associated with C.B. Cluskey and Co., which was low bidder on pipes for the aqueduct. When he failed to sign the contract by the deadline, Meigs awarded the contract to the next lowest bidder.

[longhand transcription follows]

War Dept.

Wash. Dec. 4, 1857

Capt. M.C. Meigs

Capitol Extension Superintendent

The vastly increased expenditure upon the Capitol Extension beyond the original estimate, and the large sums you ask for the future require that for the purpose of ensuring the greatest possible economy on the work hereafter to be done upon the public buildings under your charge you observe the following order:

No contract or order for any work upon the buildings under your charge is hereafter to be made for any alteration or work upon any plan differing from the original plan adopted, nor is any change in the original plan to be made except upon a distinct proposition for such change of plan, concurred in and approved by the architect and authorized by the Department.

Very respectfully your [obedient servant]

John B. Floyd

Secretary of War

I wrote a letter in answer to this which will be found copied farther on. [It is not in the diary.]

I invited Bache, Henry, Senators Davis and Pearce and Seward to come to a private trial in the new Hall this evening. We tried the voices in all parts, and I read to them a few notes upon military superintendence which I had prepared for the occasion. We tried the lighting. Captain Umbrins and Rogers were there. The result was a perfect success. I could talk in a low voice with Henry, from corner to corner of the gallery, 164 feet distant, and I found that all in the gallery could hear what we said, all on the floor could hear, and we could hear all that was said upon the floor. In fact, there seems to be no place from which, as Davis required in his instructions to me upon putting me in charge of this work, the voices could not be easily made [out?] of people in all parts of the room.

I asked Davis if he was satisfied. "Perfectly. It is a great success, a solution of the problem. We had no right to expect such perfect success."

Of Bache: "Are you satisfied with the result of the application of the principles and plans I had referred to you and which you recommended?"

"Wonderful, wonderful! A perfect success."

So said they all.

I have written to my father a letter upon the result of this trial and the exhibition to them of the heating apparatus, to which I must refer now for details. It is in the private letter book.

[DEC.] 10TH. Today was spent in writing and in visiting, calling upon the ladies of the Secretaries, who today had their first receptions.

I went in the evening for a moment to the Capitol, signed some letters. Mrs. Meigs at dusk sang a verse or two in the new Hall. The effect of her magnificent and rich voice in this great chamber was beautiful. She says it is perfectly easy to sing in. The voice fills without effort the whole space, and there is no fatigue and no returning and no going away. The sound is sustained.

[DEC.] 11TH. I had many visitors today. The House of Representatives had adjourned over till Monday, and many Members came into the extension and into the office. They drew for seats the other day, and the great majority of seats in the old House of Representatives are bad. I have now a strong party desirous to change and move into the other but will not be frightened off by the timidity of those who fear that the House of Representatives is damp.

The Senate, too, held a caucus for the purpose of determining their committees; and after it was over, Mr. Davis came in with Bright, Mason, Hunter and Clay of Alabama and others. They tried the Hall, and having come in just at the bell ring for one o'clock, there was much noise. Part of it I stopped by sending round to the workmen to stop all hammers.

They went down into the cellars and saw the boilers. Hunter reminded Davis of his having asked him some years since, telling him that they were equally responsible for this extension, if there was to be any failure in the sound, heating and ventilation, and that Davis had assured him that there would be none.

He still seemed a little uneasy about the ventilation, however, and I told him that I could see that Mr. Walter had been telling him that the downward ventilation was against nature, etc.; that Mr. Walter was not a man of science and that he spoke without understanding when he said this. I gave him some examples of its use and said: "Now, you have trusted me in the far more difficult task of making the first room for speaking and hearing ever constructed upon principle and I have, you say, solved that great problem. I think I have now a right to your confidence as to the other, far simpler one."

* * *

[DEC. 12] . . . I received a message that the Special Committee of the House of Representatives was waiting for me at the extension of the Capitol.

I took a carriage and rode to the Capitol, where I found the committee sitting in some of the chairs of the new Hall and admiring the room. They said they had come in with the idea to think the room must be too damp and that it would not do to come into it for some time.

I explained the matter to them, showed them how dry the air was by the hygrometer, etc. After some admiration, some experiments upon sound, with the usual result, they concluded to recommend that the House of Representatives should move in upon Wednesday morning. They asked me to draw up a report for them. This I promised to do.

They asked to see the Hall lighted up, and I requested them to come in at 6 p.m., when I should be ready to light the gas for them. They evidently enjoyed the sight much, said the light was perfect, nothing more could be desired. Kept the light burning for some hour or two, by which time quite a large assembly had collected. Many experiments were tried upon the acoustics of the hall, and everyone seemed to be satisfied.

* * *

[DEC.] 13TH. Today the Hall was used publicly for the first time, the Reverend Dr. Cummins¹²⁶ preaching in it at my request. They had a large audience, some 2,000.

[Miss] Lane and the private secretary of the President were there, though the President, himself, did not come as I had hoped. Secretary Thompson¹²⁷ of the Interior with his family were there. I sent a note to Lord Napier,¹²⁸ as I did not see him in the Hall. Sir William Gore Asley was there. _____, Hamlin, Hale and Wilson and many other Senators and many Representatives were present.

The sermon was one inspired by the occasion of Hand of God in the History of Samca[?]. It was eloquent in parts, very fine. Delivered with much emphasis and action, with a fine voice.

Much curiosity and comparing of notes after it was over. "Did you hear?" "Perfectly," was always the answer. "Every word, whether high or low." Many said they had taken different positions, had gone

¹²⁶George D. Cummins (1822–1876) was rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in Washington, 1855–1858.

¹²⁷Jacob Thompson (1810–1885), Democrat of Mississippi, was secretary of the interior, 1857–1861. He had served in the House of Representatives, 1839–1851. During the Civil War, he served as inspector general in the Confederate army.

¹²⁸Sir Francis Napier was the ambassador of England.

to the furthest parts of the galleries or floor. All gave the same result—perfect distinctness and free hearing. The doctor said that it was very remarkable to speak in.

This is the first trial in a full room. It seemed to me to make little, if any, difference in the sound.

After it was over, I met [Timothy] Davis and [Anson] Burlingame of Massachusetts. "This will settle it, Captain. They will come in now. I have one of the best seats in the old House, and I go for coming in here, and I do not know what seat I could prefer here to any other."

They spoke of it much, praised the room a perfect success.

_____ with others introduced to me Carter, the correspondent of the *Tribune*. Told him he ought to write an article doing justice to me and to the qualities of the Hall. He promised to do so, and I have tonight written to him a letter giving him the references to the documents which describe the Capitol extension.

[DEC.] 14TH. I wrote last night a letter to Mr. Carter, reporter of the *Tribune* in which I gave him reference to the different documents to make an article upon the new extension of the Capitol and the new Hall of Representatives. I also collected today some photographs of the work and the plans for him. He has sent a telegraphic dispatch to the paper, which is upon this page. The title _____.

The Select Committee reported today and, the ayes and noes being called by a vote of some $\frac{2}{3}$, determined the House of Representatives to move in on Wednesday noon. All congratulated me upon my great success, which astonishes them, for no one believed such perfection possible.

Called today upon Mr. Orr, Speaker, and asked what arrangements I should make for him.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]¹²⁹

[DEC. 14 CONT.] I passed Clingman today with Ben [Perley Poore],¹³⁰ who has been making himself ridiculous by his attacks upon the new Hall. He was saying, "Did you see the present arrangements downstairs, the meanest, worst," etc., etc. Poor Poore, he sees the Members

¹²⁹(1) Articles from the New York *Tribune* of December 13 and 15, 1857 praising the new Hall of the House. Text of December 15 article is in Appendix, page 789. (2) Proceedings of the House from the *Congressional Globe*, giving portions of the debate on whether to move to the new chamber.

¹³⁰Benjamin Perley Poore (1820–1887) at this time was Washington correspondent for the Boston *Journal* and other papers. He later served as a clerk for the Senate and edited the official *Congressional Directory*, while also continuing to work as a journalist. (See also note 118 on pages 548–49.)

shrinking from the noisy babble of ignorance. I wrote tonight to Macomb.

[Printed material inserted.]¹³¹

The vote upon Mr. Warren's¹³² resolution to move into the New Hall upon Wednesday was 149 to 64 by ayes and noes.

[DEC.] 15TH. I wrote today to Davis to ask him to assist me in showing to the President and Secretary of War that I was in the confidence of Congress and of the Committees of Public Building and District of Columbia.

Busy today instructing the Speaker, the Doorkeeper and officers of the House of Representatives in the use of the new Hall, into which they remove tomorrow at noon. Clearing away the scaffolds, etc. Making up a covered _____ passage from new to old Hall upon the 2nd story.

* * *

[DEC. 15 CONT.?] The committee upon the new Hall have made a report which is identical with the draft I gave them. They have not dotted an i or crossed a t. Here it is:

[Printed material inserted.]¹³³

I wrote a letter to Davis asking him to get the Members of the Committee on Public Building, as members thereof, to write for me a letter to the President expressing their confidence in my conduct of my work for the past 4 years.

[Printed material inserted.]¹³⁴

[DEC.] 18TH. The first meeting of Congress in the new Hall took place upon Wednesday, the 16th of December. There was far less trouble and complaint than I expected. A large company was present at the opening of the Hall, filling the galleries, though not enough to crowd them. Some Members complained of drafts, and we had two or 3 mes-

¹³¹ An undated excerpt from the *Congressional Globe* containing the report of the committee appointed to examine the new House chamber. Excerpts from the text appear in Appendix, page 787.

¹³² Edward A. Warren (1818–1875), Democrat of Arkansas, served in the House of Representatives, 1853–1855, and 1857–1859.

¹³³ (1) The report of the special committee. (2) A brief article indicating that some House employees objected to moving to the new chamber because of the volume of documents that would need to be transferred. (3) An excerpt from the *Congressional Globe*, giving the House vote to move to the new chamber.

¹³⁴ (1) Articles from Philadelphia newspapers reporting on the planned move of the House to its new quarters. (2) A letter from Meigs to the *National Intelligencer* explaining the method of igniting the gas lights for the House chamber. (3) A mostly favorable article from the Washington *Evening Star* of December 17, 1857, about the new chamber.

sages to increase or diminish the heat. Mr. Davidson¹³⁵ and Mr. Garnett¹³⁶ seemed particularly out of sorts. But upon the whole, I had less dissatisfied people than I expected.

It is no easy thing to warm 241 gentlemen so that each thinks himself just right, especially when they have been told that the Hall is damp and new, etc.

There was much disorder, so much talking. I told some of them that we needed only one thing of acoustics now, which was a strainer which would strain out the buzz of conversation and let through the speech which we desired to hear, but that as this could not be made, we must have either the restraint of good manners or make the Speaker act as the restrainer.

Since this they have met daily; Thursday, however, for a short time only. I had put up some double _____ doors in the meantime, which cut off the lobbies and galleries more completely than before, and there was no complaint.

Today they sat for some hours, and I had not a single complaint or message to change the heat. Many came to me and said that they were changing their opinions; they found the new Hall growing more beautiful as they studied it more. And it was very comfortable. One or two said they could smell the fresh air, which they never did in the old one. They had no headaches.

Reverend Johnson came in and was loud in his admiration. Even Mr. Clingman came to say that it was improving in his eyes, also.

* * *

[Dec. 18 cont.] I wrote tonight an article for the *Scientific American* about the new Hall.

[DEC.] 19TH. The House of Representatives met again today, and I had not a single complaint as to the room, either too hot or too cold. I believe that in a short time all will be quite satisfied. There has been much less dissatisfaction than I expected.

Mr. Shaw¹³⁷ of the *Herald* told me today that the articles in the paper against the Hall and me were by Evans and that I perhaps knew that there was here a party from Philadelphia who were working against me, that he was in their interest. I said I knew of the party, knew

¹³⁵ Thomas G. Davidson (1805–1883), Democrat of Louisiana, served in the House of Representatives, 1855–1861.

¹³⁶ Muscoe R.H. Garnett (1821–1864), Democrat of Virginia, served in the House of Representatives, 1856–1861. He served in the Confederate congress, 1862–1864.

¹³⁷ W.B. Shaw was a reporter for the New York *Herald*.

their names, and that I was prepared to beat them. He said if I was forewarned, that was all, that he could only say this much.

So here is a reason that they say so little about this great work in architecture.

I met the Committee of Rules and Accommodations to be provided in the new Hall, today in the Speaker's room. Mr. Walter was present.

The subject of ventilation came up; and as some questions were asked me which I thought came from the prompting of Mr. Walter, I took occasion to say that I was more convinced by the experience of the use of the new Hall for a few days of the great importance of carrying out fully my plan of ventilation downwards.

They asked if this had not been tried in the House of Commons and failed. I told them that all things had been tried there and failed, and explained the system of quackery which had there been practiced.

I gave a lecture upon ventilation and said that some persons who had not scientific knowledge enough to understand the matter had expressed themselves against it, giving as a reason for its not being proper that it was against nature for hot air to go downwards and showing myself the manner in which the gasses from the furnaces of a steam engine go up and down and in any direction the builder chooses to direct.

I did this to let Mr. Walter see that I was aware of his conduct. This called him out. He said that he had never agreed with me as to the ventilation and, after expressing his opinion upon the subject, asked me if I did not so understand. I told him yes, that I believed he had never agreed with me, and was much tempted to say that as he had nothing to do with it, it was entirely uncalled for in him, my assistant, to express his opinion to the committee. He was not responsible and had nothing to do with it. They dropped it, and the question of reports, desks of pages, etc., came up.

I am to meet them on Monday, and they propose to visit the cellars and the apparatus.

I had a talk also with Nason and found that he was not quite disposed to leave me a part of the design for the heating and ventilation of this building which belongs to me. He thought that he had devised the fan, etc., while I know that at the first meeting we had upon this subject, I took pains to hand him a sketch of the fan which I proposed, and which I believe is almost this one, not proved to be so good; that he found at Taunton that his fan, built upon this plan, gave near 10 times the effective work with the same power as the one at Utica, the best he had built before he came to me and got the result of my experiments upon fans—carried on, it is true, by Briggs, but instituted and directed and paid for by me. Upon this I must set him right.

He said that he could afford to give up the credit for the Capitol as he had done so much elsewhere. He forgets that all he has done best has been done upon information gained by his agents, acting under my direction, carrying out experiments devised by me and paid for by me.

His Utica fan is 14 feet by 8 [Sketch]. The one gives about 40,000 feet per minute and is of immense size and of little efficiency, wastes its power, gives perhaps no more than 15 percent. The other is compact, gives 100,000 feet per minute, is beautiful, and gives about 65 percent of the power of the engine effective.

All this is mine, and I have the documents to show it. It is a well-established principle that the engineer who takes the responsibility of ordering a particular work, though he may not work out with his own hands its details, is entitled to the credit—always, of course, in any publication giving, if he is honest and generous, to all those whose labor may have been useful in arranging and devising the details, the full share of the credit which belongs to them. This is all that I get for my work, and I am jealous of it.

[DEC.] 20TH. Sunday. I went to services in the new Hall by Mr. Sunderland.¹³⁸ He has not a clear voice and was not therefore heard throughout distinctly, but when he spoke in a moderate tone, I could in the distant corner hear every word.

I met here, after services, Messrs. Nason and Woolworth¹³⁹ and got into a discussion about the heating and ventilation. I learned from Mr. Woolworth that Mr. Walter was very violent after he left the committee yesterday, that he declared this pertinacity in adhering to the downward system of ventilation would not be believed, that he would resign if it was attempted to be carried out, that he would have nothing more to do with the building and would not be responsible for it, etc.

Mr. Woolworth said he had a certain influence and we must always work against prejudice, etc.; that he thought it would be better to perfect our upward system, which was not now working well, and give up the other, as he talked very largely in regard to these things and made the Members believe that he knew something about them.

I told him that I had been working against prejudice ever since I began; that Mr. Walter had not been consulted in the smallest matters in regard to our heating and ventilation; that he was not responsible for any of it and had not the right to claim the credit of any of it; that if he proposed to resign, he was welcome to do so and that it was perhaps well that he had thus distinctly washed his hands of the

¹³⁸Byron Sunderland, D.D., a Presbyterian minister, was chaplain of the Senate, 1861–1864, and 1873–1879.

¹³⁹Mr. Woolworth of Boston worked with Joseph Nason on heating and ventilation systems.

ventilation, as it would be put carefully upon the record before the committee tomorrow, and that thus I should have witnesses to detect his falsehood when he came, upon its success, to claim a share of the credit which did not belong to him.

I find, on referring to my journal today, that Mr. Stanton of [Kentucky] stated two years ago that Mr. Walter had been before the committee and had then told them that he did not agree in my opinions upon ventilation and that he had persuaded me to make the arrangement such that we could use either system.

Now, here was an inaccurate statement, for I never consulted him about this matter but had promised to ease the scruples felt by Henry and Bache, that I would make this arrangement.

I have always so intended, and the passages are arranged with that view. It will be carried out shortly.

I must call the attention of the committee and country to this subject, as witness.

I met Mr. Rogers today. He, I thought, had gone to Italy before this. He says that his statue of John Adams has been at sea in the same vessel as Mr. Powers' *Webster*¹⁴⁰ for 106 days, and he is waiting for its arrival.

I showed him some of the effects in the new Hall. He had with him his wife and two gentlemen. They were as much surprised as most people are with its success.

* * *

[DEC.] 21ST. Before the Committee on Offices and Accommodation. I went with them over the part of the building about the Hall and advised with them as to the disposition of the doorkeepers. I was requested by them to write out a sketch of a report for their consideration.

Mr. Underwood¹⁴¹ of [Kentucky], who is a man of observation and sense, went with me after the House of Representatives adjourned to look at the heating apparatus. He was much impressed with the skill and study displayed in its consideration. Said that it would be a monument to me and that he would insist upon the committee all coming downstairs and looking at it.

I spent the rest of the day in writing out the report.

I am in trouble at not finding a couple of sketches which I made when I first was at work upon the fans for the extension ventilation.

¹⁴⁰Hiram Powers' statue of Daniel Webster was placed in front of the State House in Boston in 1859.

¹⁴¹Warner L. Underwood (1808–1872), American party of Kentucky, served in the House of Representatives, 1855–1859.

I remember distinctly that I made the sketches and carried them to the meeting with Nason and Briggs so that there might be no question at any future time as to my having made the designs. I cannot find them. I thought they were filed in my case or given at the time into the hands of Mr. Briggs, but they are not, he says, in his hands. I fear they have been mislaid by some of my assistants.

[DEC.] 22ND. I gave to Mr. Faulkner a sketch for a report for his special committee. I handed to Mr. Goode of Virginia, the Chairman of the Committee on the District of Columbia, my letter. Mr. Davis and the Senate committees have his signature.

Discussed with Nason the mode of making coils of pipe for heating purposes. Very busy all day.

Ordered up the fly doors of the vestibules. Sent a letter to the *Intelligencer*, *Star* and *Union* in reference to the articles in the *Union* upon the acoustics in the House of Representatives.¹⁴²

[Printed material inserted.]¹⁴³

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]¹⁴⁴

[DEC. 23] I showed these letters [from the War Department regarding the aqueduct] to Secretary Davis today and asked his advice in regard to my mode of action. I showed him also that Mr. Walter was at work with the Philadelphia clique, and I showed him proof that he was in secret communication with the Secretary of War.

I had directed Mr. Wood [the photographer] not to let the drawings of the original designs for the extension go out of his hands without orders from me. He writes to me that he found that Mr. Walter had got one from his clerk, Mr. Moore, and that he said, when asked, that he thought it was at the War Department and that he would send for it and did not wish Captain Meigs to know of it. This is too bad.

* * *

¹⁴² Some newspaper reporters, banished by the House from the floor to the gallery in the new chamber, made a point of stating in their dispatches when they were unable to hear what a speaker was saying. The reporters for the *Congressional Globe*, however, continued to have space on the floor.

¹⁴³ An article from the *Washington Globe*, praising the acoustics in the new hall—both on the floor and in the galleries—and publishing a letter from Meigs answering criticisms of the acoustics in the *Washington Union*.

¹⁴⁴ (1) An excerpt from the *Congressional Globe*, containing Senate proceedings authorizing the Committee on Public Buildings to prepare a plan for assigning rooms in the Capitol extension. (2) An article from the *New York Tribune* complaining about the lack of daylight and fresh air in the new Hall of the House.

[DEC. 23 CONT.] The House of Representatives adopted today the report of the Select Committee on Rules, and thus have ordered the correspondents of the press to keep to the galleries.

I have no doubt there will be a shout of rage and disappointment.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]¹⁴⁵

[Printed material inserted.]¹⁴⁶

[longhand transcription follows—a notation on the above clipping]

[DEC. 23 CONT.] Death of the Lobby one good result of the arrangement of the New Hall and one for which I have deserved well of this country. [Previously, former members and reporters mingled on the House floor, lobbying members even while the House was in session.]

[shorthand transcription resumes]

This was not wrought without a civil struggle in votes, points of order, etc., which I have not inserted.

* * *

[DEC. 24] I signed my drawings of the extension for the desks of reporters, etc.

I saw Mr. Walter. He had been out, and when I was in his office, he was expected. I had no doubt at once, by instinct, that he had been to the War Department.

He came in after a time with a pack of reports under his arm, with paper marks. No doubt he had been to talk over his grievances with the Secretary of War.

We spoke of the work and some changes in the registers of the Senate and House of Representatives. I took him over to see what was needed in the House of Representatives, and we there met the Speaker.

Settled with him the assignment of the gallery and arrangement for doors, etc. Said nothing of his attempts to supplant me.

Mr. Denham asked me if I had taken a system which in any respect resembled his. I told him that Mr. Walter proposed the use of a fan and hot water pipes; that this was as old as 20 years and that I had proposed the same, and that there was nothing original in this in either

¹⁴⁵ (1) Excerpt from *Congressional Globe* of House proceedings requesting improved accommodations for the press in the gallery. (2) Two negative articles about the new House chamber from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. (3) Excerpt from *Congressional Globe* with House proceedings regulating who could be admitted to the floor and the galleries.

¹⁴⁶ An excerpt from the *Congressional Globe* containing House proceedings that curtailed privileges of the floor and assigned space in the galleries to foreign ministers and others who had been allowed access to the floor in the old House chamber.

of us, any more than in the use of marble and brick in the walls. That I proposed to make a downward ventilation, which was not original, either. That then Mr. Walter objected. But there could be no accusation that I had taken his influence and assumed his merit.

He said he had heard that I had taken Mr. Walter's ideas on this subject and assumed all the credit which belonged to him, and he believed from what he saw that Mr. Walter expected to be placed in full authority.

I wrote tonight to Davis of Mississippi, telling him that I thought from certain indications that Mr. Walter expected to be placed in full authority, either with or without reason, I did not know. That he had been legislated out of such authority, and I did not see how he could be restored without legislation. That I supposed it could hardly be expected of me to remain in the position of assistant to Mr. Walter.

I have put upon the preceding pages some of the unfavorable criticisms which have appeared upon the new Hall as well as some of those which are in its favor.

I told Speaker Orr today that the papers were, some of them, down upon it. He said there could be no comparison between the two Halls in the [ease of] speaking or of hearing. He was surprised that anyone should think of making any. I asked him to give me his opinion in writing upon this matter, and he promised to do so.

* * *

[DEC. 25] I have letters from Mr. William H. Winder¹⁴⁷ of Philadelphia detailing the scheme of Rice, Walter and Bigler to turn me out of my place and get Walter restored to his authority. I have little doubt that Walter has joined them.

* * *

[DEC.] 26TH. I had another letter this morning from Mr. Winder in which he goes further into the plot against me. Says that he understands that Mr. Bigler of the Senate, from Pennsylvania, is to take the matter in hand. He thinks that Bigler would not do anything wrong but that he is probably persuaded that it is only to exchange a man who is not of any particular devotion to the party for one who is more likely to be useful to it, and to take the work from the hands of an officer and give it to a civilian.

I believe that Bigler is a tool in the hands of John Rice and his brother, William,¹⁴⁸ and that he so feels it; and I have written a letter to the Secretary of War, giving my views of the case. This letter I may

¹⁴⁷William H. Winder of Philadelphia manufactured graphite paint for the dome.

¹⁴⁸William Rice, brother of John Rice of Rice, Baird and Heebner, was editor of the *Pennsylvanian*.

as well put on record here for the reading of my children, should this _____ succeed.

December 25th, 1857

Hon. J. B. Floyd

Dear Sir:

From various confidential sources and from my own observation, I have reason to believe that the following statement is probably true.

It is partly extracted from a confidential communication which the author informs me is meant to enable me to defend myself, while he wishes to remain unknown. He was informed a few days since that Mr. Walter was preparing a report in which I am to be attacked, among other things, that I claimed the dome as my work, merely saying that I was assisted by my subordinates, Mr. Walter claiming for himself the whole merit of the whole work on design. This he conceives to be of little importance, even if it be his, as I am said to acknowledge aid from my subordinates.

But he says Mr. Walter has long groaned in anguish at his humiliating position, it being generally supposed that a superior was placed there to guard against misconduct on his part in contracts and supervision. He has not until now felt himself strong enough to initiate offensive _____, although trains have been, as he has heard constantly, late for explanations at propitious moments, and Mr. Walter feels this to be particularly so, that those do who use him.

The defection of [Forney]¹⁴⁹ has suddenly given importance to the *Pennsylvanian* whose proprietor, William Rice, is brother to John Rice, the contractor with the government for marble. This just-named gentleman who, after years of opposition in politics, was wise enough lately to come over [to] the winning side and join his brother's party, having capacity, ingenuity, nerve and tact to render him a formidable man by his superior will, has long covered Mr. Walter and is his protector and friend.

The Rices have very lately . . . Mr. Rice, by his extensive contracts, has influence with many people in different parts of the country, and the *Pennsylvanian* influence since Forney's defec-

¹⁴⁹John W. Forney (1817–1881) of Pennsylvania was clerk of the House of Representatives, 1851–1856, and 1860–1861. He was later secretary of the Senate, 1861–1868. In 1857 he established a new newspaper in Philadelphia, *The Press*. While in Washington in the 1850s, he was an editorial writer and partner in the *Washington Union*.

tion is now considerable. He can readily perceive a plausible mode of attack, and he says that letter writers are already engaged upon it. It is this, to denounce the expenditures, say they exceed estimates, charge want of capacity, etc., etc.; no corruption, for this would lead to investigation, and both President and Secretary are [too] just men to entertain such charges without opportunity for defense, and there are too many Senators and Representatives who would take up the matter if such accusations were known.

They aim, therefore, to get me quietly detached and the work left in their hands.

Mr. Rice, himself, he supposes, is actuated probably by ambitious motives and a desire to add to his fame in connection with public works. This may make him more dangerous than those who act from more corrupt motives. He aims probably to render Mr. Walter discontented and to use him as a tool before and after my overthrow is attained.

In reply to the letter from which I gathered the greater part of the above, which letter is only a confirmation of what I had advice of weeks since and of which I have daily received the corroboration, so that I believe I know the plot pretty thoroughly, I have written a note from which I extract the following:

Dear Sir:

Your letter details and confirms a scheme of which I have had advice for some time.

The motive of John Rice is simply this: He is not able to furnish the 100 columns in single blocks for the Capitol porticoes as he expected and contracted to do. The reserved 10 percent of his contract now amounts to \$15,000, which may be forfeited by this failure that existed in purchasing columns elsewhere to supply his default. Thus, there is a direct interest of \$15,000 and a contingent interest of the profit or loss on the columns (100 of which, at his price of \$1,400 each, cost \$140,000) in having me removed and some suppler man in my place.

Perhaps he would desire to see Walter, himself, restored to authority over the purse of which by legislation he was deprived. Of professions of trust and confidence in me, I have thoroughly understood Mr. Rice from the beginning to have lately offended him by requiring Mr. Walter to cease acting as his agent in some matters which, however small and innocent, cause discredit and attach to him from a suspicion of too great connection with the contractors.

As for the dome and other works, I have always been ready to acknowledge the aid of Mr. Walter and have saved him time and again from dismissal by the late administration. I have been ready to give to him, though placed by the powers above as my assistant only, the position and credit of a partner, so that we might build these great works as our joint works.

By as much as he is more practiced and skillful than myself in architectural detail or ornament, he is inferior in knowledge of scientific construction and mechanics. The plan of the new Hall is absolutely mine. He was only the draftsman, and in all questions of architectural detail in this and other parts of the building, after consultation, he has carried out my views on the drawings and I have executed them.

As for questions of acoustics, heating, ventilation and construction, metallic roofs, etc., etc., or any questions requiring science or mathematics, on these I have never consulted him, for his opinion is nothing worth. To other assistants in these matters, I am ready to acknowledge my obligation, as I am to him for his assistance in his own specialty—always, however, being responsible and qualified throughout, requiring him to put upon paper, after cordial discussion, that which I finally thought right. And I have always had the assurance of grateful friendship and cordial cooperation from him, which I received quietly, knowing that whenever he thought himself strong enough, the train always kept ready would be offered.

The great work, the Hall, the solution of the acoustic problem, is mine, and to me the world attributes it. This has touched his vainglory. He attempted to prevent its occupation by telling many Members that it was damp and dangerous. He decried its decoration as in bad taste, told them that I ruled him with a rod of iron and that he had not been allowed to correct its bad style, etc.

The House of Representatives sent a committee to examine and report. The committee were unanimous, and the House, by a more than $\frac{2}{3}$ vote, moved in. The room they found dry, warm, perfect in light, hearing and, notwithstanding the unfinished condition of the ventilating apparatus, better heated and ventilated than any other quarter of an acre between walls. And when the novelty of the style of decoration wore off, the decoration proved almost universally satisfactory.

They asked me what my architect meant. He meant to keep them out till the plot exploded, then to move them in and deliver the Hall as his work, scratch my name from the records, and pocket not only what is his, which is much, but what is mine and which is more.

Knowing and expecting all this for 5 years, I still, believing him to be the best architect and faithful and industrious in his duty to the nation, though to me most untrue, kept him employed, and I trust still to keep him in place, defeating this as other plots by plain, straightforward dealing, and still to get for the country his talents and taste, which in architectural form and decoration are great.

In all other branches of art, his taste is nothing. In painting and sculpture, which he hates as rival arts and taking, when used in building, the attention from the architect to the painter or sculptor, his taste is nothing. He says they are not arts, that architecture is the only art, and that Michelangelo was a humbug and no artist.

He lately told me that the very inferior fresco picture hastily painted in one of the panels of the Hall solely in order to show to the Congress the effect of painting in these panels, and which I hope in time to see replaced by a good painting, was the most beautiful picture he had ever seen; that if the panels were only filled with such paintings as these, he would not care if there was not another bit of color in the room.

Treating your letter as confidential, I have no objection to your speaking to those who care for the matter of these as my sentiments, not by publication, which is conspicuous and vainglorious; and on such record I rest my justification, after these great works are completed, when the world may ask who in truth built the Capitol and aqueduct.

Very truly yours.

I have troubled you with the above that you may see the difficulties in my path and ask that should Mr. Walter make any charge against me, I may see it. You will not, I know, act upon it without opportunity of defense.

I am, most respectfully, your obedient servant, M.C. Meigs.

* * *

[DEC.] 27TH. Sunday. I went to the Capitol today. Very warm. Mr. Register,¹⁵⁰ a Methodist, preached a _____ sermon but perfectly

¹⁵⁰The Reverend Samuel Register was pastor of the Foundry Methodist Church in Washington.

heard throughout the Hall. I met Mr. [Titian] Peale with his wife and some friends coming out. They were delighted with the perfect hearing of the Hall.

[DEC.] 28TH. I have today a letter from my father, who does not approve of my writing to the papers in defense of my works. No doubt he is correct as to the principle, but in the case of the papers, almost engaged in an attack upon me, not publishing the official reports of the committee of Congress. I think that I was right in sending to them a copy of part of that report and ask them to publish this.

All well at Philadelphia.

I wrote to my father today, telling him of the reasons which have compelled me to take in the papers some notice of the letters which have been written against the success of my new Hall of Reps. The article from the *Star*, which I have put upon this page, will serve, I trust, when he sees it, to relieve his mind a little.

I signed today the drawing of the fan room for the Senate ventilating and heating. We have begun now to push forward the boiler setting and other works of the heating apparatus of the Senate and north wing. I have not yet got any fan in operation, and it will be some time yet before any of them will be ready to start. The cone [?] is in the fan room for the House of Representatives but not yet hung in place.

[Printed material inserted.]¹⁵¹

* * *

[DEC. 29] I gave orders in regard to some of the works at the Capitol. Finishing the desks in the reporters' gallery is of importance. Mr. Speaker Orr asked me to be certain to have that done by the time Congress assembled again. He promised to see the Secretary of War in reference to my affairs. I told him of Walter's course in regard to matters generally, and the desks in particular is a small thing to show the way the current runs. He asked me to write a note to him upon the acoustics of the new Hall, and he would give in writing his opinion.

[DEC.] 30TH. I had a long talk with the Secretary of War this morning. I went over the ground of his late letter in regard to contracts for Robinson for the laying of the pipes. I also spoke of the affair of Walter's late conduct and of my letter to him, detailing the plots in which I had reason to believe that Mr. Walter was engaged against me.

¹⁵¹ An article from the *Washington Star* stating, "The new Hall is as much superior to the old one as is light to darkness. Its acoustic properties are inconceivably fine."

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]¹⁵²

[DEC. 30 CONT.] I then spoke of the Walter case. He listened but said nothing. I went into a more detailed explanation of the affair than I could in writing and showed him, though he did not admit or deny it, that I knew that Mr. Walter had been at him to endeavor to prejudice me in his opinion.

* * *

[DEC. 30 CONT.] Upon the whole, the interview was a satisfactory one. I left him free from the irritation which I know he had felt during this time and with a better feeling towards me. I had also, I think, blocked the way of Mr. Walter's intrigue.

I hear today that Mr. Rice is here. He made to Mr. Denham some explanations about his having come which Denham said he thought entirely uncalled for, and hence he suspected that the true cause was one he wished not to be suspected. I have not seen him, for after leaving the department, I came home to write.

I have a letter from Rev. [Byron] Sunderland which speaks in the highest terms of the ease with which he spoke in the new Hall upon his Sunday's services. I have a similar letter from Mr. Cummins, and I wrote today to Mr. Orr, asking him to express his opinion.

For a more detailed account of the interview with the Secretary, I must refer to my letter to my father of this day which is in the private letter book. I left the room with conviction growing stronger that the Secretary is a man of no principle at all.

Mr. Brady brought to see me tonight Mr. Litelli [?], an Italian artist. He has painted for Mr. Cyrus Field,¹⁵³ of telegraphic notoriety, a room with which he is much delighted. I had a slight specimen of his work which is not as good as I had a right to expect from the letters in his favor which I have seen.

Mr. Denham thinks that Mr. Walter and Rice know of my letter to the Secretary and says that Mr. Walter was in the office today, when he saw him for the first time in several days, and that he looked very much dispirited. He thinks he feels discouraged and beaten. I am sorry if it be true that he feels thus, but he brought the contest on himself, and I have acted only in self-defense. If he is victorious, it will be by fraud. If I beat him, it is by plain, straightforward dealing.

¹⁵² An unidentified article reporting on preparations for the new House chamber, including setting up desks for the reporters' gallery.

¹⁵³ Cyrus W. Field (1819–1892) was an American financier who promoted the laying of the first submarine telegraph cable across the Atlantic.

[DEC.] 31ST. Mr. Davis called to see me today and told me of an interview with the President, whom he had gone to see in reference to the reports that I was too interfered with. He gave to the President a full account of the whole progress of these works, of the Capitol extension and of my connection with it and with Mr. Walter.

He spoke plainly, and the President told him that I was the son of Dr. Meigs, whom he knew and respected. That it had never been suggested to him to relieve me from the Capitol but that it had been suggested to relieve me of the aqueduct and the Post Office. That he had been told that I had too much work for one man to do, etc.

Davis said that he did not believe any other man could do it and that he had at one time been of the same opinion, but that he had afterwards come to the conclusion that the occasional visits to the aqueduct served as relaxation from the office confinement, etc., and that I had done the work thus far; and that after I had gone through the labor of making out the plans and details of the work of the aqueduct, it was only right that I should be allowed to finish it.

The President promised to him that, at any rate, nothing should be done of this kind without his seeing him again. And Davis says that if he sees him again and finds any such thing in contemplation, he will speak very plainly to him.

As for Floyd, I gave Davis an account of my interview with him. He asked what he said when I told him of the stolen drawings. I said, "Nothing." He did not let it appear that he had ever heard of it before or that he had not. Davis looked his disgust and said he wished to know whether he expressed the disgust which most honorable men would feel at such conduct.

I told him that Governor Floyd rather felt inclined to look upon it as a game of politics and that he did not care much which won, Walter or myself.

I do not think much will be attempted after this. They have a warning. Mr. Davis will bring up his strength to help me.

And so closes the old year. In it I have had much of drudgery, of work, of labor. Not all paid for in money but in satisfaction of good conscience and in the knowledge of growing reputation, which in time may give me the means to educate my family better than I am now able to. I have lost nothing in these points. I have completed a Hall which is one of the great works to which I have devoted myself, and in this I consider that I have gained a triumph.

M.C. Meigs, Captain Engineers.

[longhand transcription follows]

Washington City

Dec. 31, 1857

This diary has served now for two years in this volume and for 3 years in the preceding volume which begins in May 1853 and ends with 31 Dec. 1855 to record something of the varied employments, duties and experiences of a very busy life.

The record will perhaps never be read except in parts by myself in looking back for dates and memoranda yet it has served in some degree to cause self examination at the close of every busy day and thus it has not been a useless employment.

M.C. Meigs