
CHAPTER 7—1859



Progress on dome, 1859 *Architect of the Capitol*



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



Montgomery C. Meigs, 1859 *The Papers of Montgomery C. Meigs*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, *Shorthand Journal*, Volume 3 (1858-1860)



Captain William B. Franklin, Meigs' replacement at the Capitol, 1860
National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution



"The United States Senate in Session in Their New Chamber." December 1859
U.S. Senate Collection

CHAPTER 7—1859

[JAN. 1] Upon this New Year's Day I have first passed water through my aqueduct. 6 years and 2 months I have been at work upon it. One year more I hope will finish it.

* * *

[On January 3 Meigs started the flow of water from the receiving reservoir to the distributing reservoir and from there through the conduit to "the Capitol and Navy Yard."]

[JAN. 3] As it was now 10½ a.m., and the Senate room is to be ready and chairs arranged today and I had requested the committee on arrangements to meet me there at 12, I left the water at this point, got home, changed my clothes and got some breakfast; and, taking a carriage, went up to the Capitol.

I found the committee on arrangements in the Senate Chamber, which was arranged with chairs and desks and in possession of the officers of the Senate. At 2½ p.m., a messenger came to ask me to go down to the fountain to meet Mr. Myers, who sent word that the water was coming and would be there in a few minutes. I sent my congratulations to him, with word that I could not then leave the committee. But I said to Mr. Davis, "I have a message which will please you. It is reported to me that the water which I left on its way down from the reservoir will be in the grounds in a few minutes. We can see it in the fountain from the western windows."

Mr. Davis shook my hands with a warm "Congratulations"; and with Senators Collamer, Kennedy and one or two others, went upon the library portico to see it. The water did not keep us long waiting. It soon began to bubble up from the jet.

At 4¼ p.m. we had the cock opened to its full extent, but the jet somewhat disappointed me. I knew that a 4-inch jet could not rise to a great height from a 12-inch main of 5½ miles in length, but this did not rise as high as I supposed it would. Some 20 or 30 feet only, and it was a magnificent column of water.

Mr. Davis had gone down with me to look at it. I directed that by tomorrow morning a 1½ nozzle should be put into the pipe. This will rise to a much greater height. At 10 a.m. it is to play.

The Senate will move in at noon, and a great crowd will probably be in the grounds on their way up to the Senate. This will be a public information that the water has reached the city.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]¹

JAN. 4TH. Today I was informed, before I was out of bed, that in consequence of the breaking of a pipe upon the avenue, the water could not be let on to the fountain at 10 a.m., not before 12. It had been announced by me later to the _____ that it was to be on at 10 a.m., and some persons assembled to see it and went away angry and disappointed, among them my friend Ben Perley Poore, the _____ editor of the *Union*. He will vent his displeasure in the paper, no doubt.

The Senate assembled at 12 o'clock. Mr. Crittenden moved that they adopt the report of the committee, made by Mr. Davis, to go to the new hall. He made a short oration, which was very beautiful, and was followed by the Vice President, Mr. Breckinridge, with the most eloquent oration I have ever listened to. Everybody speaks of it with admiration. His tribute to the memory of Calhoun, Webster and Clay was beautiful, and his condemnation of the man who should strike his sacrilegious hand at our Union was terrible and sublime.

In the new Chamber, they seemed at once to make themselves at home and went to business. The galleries of both chambers were crowded. The air was pure. A good deal of voices in the room, caused by the entrance of a crowd from the old chamber, made some difficulty of hearing at first. But of this I have no anxiety. The temperature kept at 70, within a degree, all day.

The fountains in the grounds I had been obliged to make from a 1¼-inch hole in a wooden plug driven into the 4-inch jet, as that discharges too much water and overflows; and besides, I do not think that it would be supplied with [flow?] enough for _____ by the 12-inch main which alone is now laid.

I have directed the making of some iron nozzles of 1¾, 1½ and 1¼ for the fountain, one of which we will have on tomorrow, when I expect it to rise to 100 feet or probably more. The wooden plug did not [stand]. The sides _____ up and broke the jet into drips. It rose, however, some 60 feet.

Thus are two great parts, some of my great works, done. The Senate Chamber is added to the Hall of Reps, and the water from the receiving reservoir is in town.

¹An excerpt from the proceedings of the Senate on January 4, 1859, including the speeches of Senator Crittenden and Vice President Breckinridge. The text of the two speeches is in Appendix, page 795.

God be thanked for having made me the instrument of this much good to this city; for having given me health, temperance, patience and skill to accomplish in the midst of attack, so far, so great a good.

The jet at the Capitol today was small in itself, but it is great in its significance as an index of the fact that this city will forever after have a sufficient supply of water for safety, health and comfort. No more shall the houses of the poor burn in flames for want of the means to extinguish them. And the poor and the servant will now be relieved of the unhealthy labor of carrying water from the pumps through the snowed-up streets of winter.

Two pipes were found burst yesterday. Both were repaired, and the water in play upon the fountains by 11 a.m.

On the next page are some notices of the press. It is curious to see the indifference this great boon to the city received, to see in some of them the malice which has always followed me on the part of some of the writers making much of the slightest opportunity for abuse and forgetting the great good which I have done.

[Printed material inserted.]²

* * *

[JAN. 5] I find that the jets at the Capitol will use as follows, for the _____ noted. In this I assume the head to be 115 feet at the orifices.

1 inch jet per hour, in gallons ³	8,163
1¼	12,750
1½	18,340
1¾	24,990
2 inch	32,670
4 inch	130,600
6 inch	293,900

[longhand transcription follows]

The supply of the 12 inch pipe its end being open on this front[?] would be by the tables-position 63,420 gals; of a 30 inch—627,100.

Taking no note of the effect of bands[?] and changes of grade.

²(1) An article from the Baltimore *Sun* of January 3, 1859, reporting that the Senate would move to its new chamber the next day. It added that privileges of the floor would be so strictly controlled "that even cabinet officers are not included in the category of the favored." (2) Two unidentified articles reporting on the arrival of the aqueduct water, and an undated one from the *Union*, complaining—as Meigs had predicted—that the fountain at the Capitol did not start playing at 10 a.m. as previously announced. (3) An undated article from the Baltimore *Sun*, apparently of January 5, 1859, describing in detail the new Senate chamber. For text of article, see Appendix, page 805. (4) An unidentified article describing the proceedings when the Senate moved to its new chamber.

³Figures in this list and in the longhand below are difficult to decipher.

[shorthand transcription resumes]

So that the 12 inch pipe would be able to fit into 2 jets of 2 inches diameter.

I hear that some complaint was made yesterday in the Senate by Senators of feeling a draft of air upon the back of their legs, from the ventilators.

JAN. 6TH. At the Capitol today. I went into the reporters' gallery of the Senate. The hearing seemed to be perfectly good. I found the reporters disposed to complain that the seats were too high and told them that we were altering them as fast as possible.

I, at Mr. Breckinridge's desire, ordered the slab taken out of his fireplace and arrangements made for a wood fire.

No complaints today of the drafts in the room. Mr. Briggs has stopped off the passages, so as to remedy the evil I believe was present.

Mr. Pearce talked with me for some time about Goodine [?], the French painter of sea pieces, who is desirous of painting a battle piece for the stairway. I hope that he will be commissioned to do it.

The general admiration of the Senate and the stairways is gratifying, but I agree with [Rives] of the *Globe* that the most beautiful thing in Washington is the jet in the grounds. It rises 60 or 70 feet in a beautiful column, and it signifies so much good, so much safety, health and purity, that I cannot tire of looking at it and thanking God that He has enabled me to be an instrument of it all.

* * *

[JAN.] 8TH. Spent the day at the Capitol, at work in the office.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]⁴

[JAN. 11] I met Governor Seward today and gave him some photographs of the water and Capitol and President's house for Lady Napier, as he had requested. I also gave a drawing of the Capitol and of the fountain to Mr. Pearce and to the Vice President, to whom I also gave a copy of the President's house and Capitol.

⁴Senate proceedings of January 10, 1859, setting rules for the privilege of the floor. Senator Pearce urged that Meigs should be admitted in order to regulate the ventilation, but Senator Fessenden successfully objected to making an exception for Meigs. As adopted, the resolution allowed only the following to be admitted to the floor while the Senate was in session: officers of the Senate, members of the House, the House clerk, the president of the U.S. and his private secretary, department heads, foreign ministers, and former presidents, vice presidents, and senators, as well as senators-elect and Supreme Court justices.

* * *

[JAN.] 13. Today I spent at the Capitol office. I was in the Senate before the meeting of the body. The temperature had been complained of by Mr. Slidell. We brought it down today to 68 degrees, a little lower upon the walls where the cold masonry and iron affects the indication. And today I fear they will complain that they are too cool. But only one or two in a day find any fault, and this is good success with these Senators, old men and ready to complain if a draft touches them.

I wrote to Speaker Orr, turning over to his charge the works in the ceiling and roof above the Hall of Reps. I advised him to put them all under the charge of Mr. Entwistle, the engineer in charge of the heating and ventilating. He, with his gang, ought to do all the work, the repair, and keep everything in order.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]⁵

[JAN. 14] Mr. Davis has sent me a resolution asking the Committee on Public Buildings to report a plan for extending the heating of the new wings to the old Capitol building. He asks me to draw up a bill for the purpose and submit to him my thoughts upon the subject.

[Printed material inserted.]⁶

15TH JANUARY. The works of art in the Capitol extension are decorations, not pictures, generally. The sculpture is the work of American artists. Crawford has his greatest work here and the greatest work of sculpture yet executed in this country by any American artist. This is forgotten, and a cry raised against the employment of wall painters, which has resulted in the stopping of the painting of the only battle piece of much consequence ordered, *The Taking of Chapultepec*, by Walker.

Still, who is to sit upon the commission of Mr. Marshall, how much are they to be paid, and how many hours' work will they have in a year? How long will it take to decide the question of the _____ of all the designs which will be offered in any one year for execution in the Capitol?

⁵ An undated article from the *Boston Journal*, signed "Perley" (Ben Perley Poore) reporting on the arrangements for seating senators in the new chamber.

⁶ (1) An unidentified article dated January 12, 1859, reporting on a meeting between the American Congress of Artists and the special committee on the decoration of the Capitol. The committee had ordered the decoration to stop, with the idea of employing American artists. (2) An unidentified article stating that "The Treasury is absolutely bankrupt. Capt. Meigs was unable to pay to-day the money due upon the Capitol extension. . . ." (3) An advertisement selling workhorses, mules, and carts by order of Capt. M.C. Meigs. (4) Two accounts from unidentified newspapers of the meeting of the Senate on January 14, 1859, when the gas lighting was first illuminated.

* * *

[JAN. 15 CONT.] We are out of money for the Capitol, and the Treasury cannot fill the requisitions from the War Department. Sometime since, in the beginning of this month, I sent in a requisition for \$70,000. After much delay, I obtained upon it \$10,000 _____ to Mr. Clayton, for I must either keep 250 men without work for them, under pay, or discharge them unpaid, to walk the streets and abuse the government as cheating them of their pay. We have money enough to meet the payroll.

Provost and Winter came to ask for theirs. Their bill for last month, unpaid, is about \$24,000 for marble work done, and they have not the means of paying their men. I told Winter he had better go to the Secretary of War and tell him that I would not pay him because I had no money, that the requisitions were not filled.

He came back later from Mr. Drinkard, chief clerk, saying that the Secretary of the Treasury had at once agreed upon the request of the Secretary of War to advance to Captain Meigs enough money to pay his bill. Mr. Denham, upon this, went up to the Treasury to get it.

He was taken to Clayton, who blew off in his usual style, declared that I had \$60,000 downstairs on deposit and yet came to ask more from the Treasury in its present state. That they had given me \$10,000 a short time before and then I had said this was all needed.

Mr. Denham told him that the Secretary of War had asked for this money, not Captain Meigs, and did not care whether it was given or no. That it was for a contractor. That I had not asked for money. That I had not \$60,000 downstairs, and that even if I had, I was liable at any moment to be called upon for it. That if the contractors had gone on as I had the right to expect, it would have been paid out long before, etc.

After some suggestion that I could use this money for the purpose of paying Provost and Winter, Mr. Denham replied that I never did and never would use the money of one appropriation to pay the debts of another, that it was plainly against the law and regulations, and that if all the world beside did it, so long as the law stood, I would not.

Mr. Clayton said he did not so much object to Captain Meigs' tenacity upon this subject but he would go to the Secretary of War and get Captain Meigs instructed to use some better discretion in asking for money. So I suppose that there will be an attempt of some kind or other to interfere with me there.

If I had managed upon the aqueduct with as little discretion as these stupid fellows, Clayton and Cobb, in the Treasury, and let my work get out of the things I was bound to furnish—cement, sand, bricks,

etc.—as they have let the government fail in providing money while they had the authority to call for loans at any time and have failed to use that authority until they are bankrupt, instead of calling for the loan long since and having it ready in time, I should be justly amenable to the charge of want of discretion. As it is, I think I can show a cleaner record than Clayton or Cobb.

I looked over the list of letters to be sent up to the Secretary in the report upon the Senate resolution of inquiry upon the heating and ventilating question. There are over a hundred.

I received today another order to appoint a watchman, a man named [James V.] Dishman, in the place of McKay, resigned.

Honorable Mr. Dimmick⁷ of Pennsylvania also called, with a letter to him from Drinkard, in which had been enclosed the letter delivered to me by Smith, ordering him to be appointed in place of Duffy. I told Mr. Dimmick that I had suspended action upon the orders until I could hear from the Secretary, to whom I had reported; that Congress, he knew, had appointed these new Capitol policemen to take charge of the part of the extension heretofore under the charge of my watchmen; that this relieved my men of much of their duty, and that it was a clear waste of public money to appoint more watchmen at this time.

I read to Dimmick the report I had made to the Secretary in Smith's case and told him that, as a member of Congress, he could not advise the appointment of an office which was not needed. He said no, and that he supposed the Secretary would accept my report.

I told him that if I got the Secretary's order to pay any man, whether useful or no, I should pay. It would relieve me from all responsibility. But that I felt it to be my duty to advise him of the facts when he had acted in ignorance.

* * *

[JAN.] 17TH. To the office. I met the committee on desks.⁸ They are in favor of making a change and dispensing with the present desks. They said they would report a resolution directing me to have them removed and the chairs arranged in the most compact form. I have no idea if they will succeed.

Mr. [John P.] Hale moved in the Senate today to inquire into the propriety of reconstructing the interior of the Senate wing of the Capitol so as to make the Senate come against the outside walls. This is

⁷William H. Dimmick (1815–1861), Democrat of Pennsylvania, served in the House of Representatives, 1857–1861.

⁸Members of the special House committee were William P. Miles of South Carolina, John Letcher of Virginia, Israel Washburn of Maine, George H. Pendleton of Ohio, and Edward Joy Morris of Pennsylvania.

a return to Walter's original project and is, I suppose, intended to make a hit at me. I had to tell him on Saturday that I could not take an Irishman whom he had wished me to employ.

I explained at some length to him that to do so would be to dismiss someone already at work and this would do an injustice. He took it amiably. But I can attribute this move, which he does not of course expect to be successful, only to some such little ill-feeling.

In the evening I went to the Wilkes⁹ party, the exploring expedition. Met Captain Hudson, who laid the Atlantic cable. He declared that the cable is perfect but that it is kept quiet as a speculation; that they will let it work when they are ready. He says Capitol is by far the finest building he has ever seen.

[Printed material inserted.]¹⁰

Tonight I went to the party of Captain Wilkes of the Navy.

[Printed material inserted.]¹¹

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]¹²

[JAN. 31] Having no more money than is needed to pay for the payrolls of this month, I have directed that tomorrow morning all workmen be discharged from the Capitol extension.

[Printed material inserted.]¹³

⁹Charles Wilkes (1798–1877) was a naval officer and explorer who commanded an expedition, from 1838–1842, that explored the Pacific northwest coast, the islands of the Pacific, and the coast of Antarctica.

¹⁰A clipping from Senate proceedings of January 17, 1859, with the text of Senator Hale's resolution.

¹¹Here Meigs pasted a glimpse of the future. Perhaps because there was an empty space on this page, he placed here a clipping from an unidentified newspaper (perhaps the *New York Tribune*—see page 765 note 74 (3)) dated November 16, 1859, reporting his removal as superintendent of the Capitol extension for refusing to obey an order of the secretary of war. It added that "Capt. Meigs had been favored with this special service more than double the usual time, to the exclusion of other officers equally meritorious, and also that he had succeeded in monopolizing all the great honors of this branch of his profession."

¹²(1) An excerpt from Senate proceedings of January 21, 1859, regarding the adoption of Senator Hale's resolution. Hale's proposal required the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds to look into reconstructing the Senate chamber against an outside wall in order to have windows. (2) Excerpt from Senate proceedings of January 24, 1859. The Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds reported a resolution requiring Meigs to learn what furniture was needed for the new Senate wing and to solicit bids to provide it. Senator Andrew Johnson objected to immediate consideration of the resolution because he did not want Meigs to have that role. (3) Excerpt from Senate proceedings of February 9, 1859. The Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds reported that legislation sought by the Hale resolution "is inexpedient." Hale objected to immediate consideration of the report.

¹³(1) An unidentified article of February 15, 1859, apparently from the *Union*, mocking the expense of the new wings and the dome while Congress was at the same time cutting expenditures for the army. (2) An unidentified article responding to the previous one, pointing out that the economy benefited from expenditures on the Capitol.

* * *

[*Meigs was ill from February 2 to 14.*]

[Printed material inserted.]¹⁴

[FEB. 19] I have also sent to Mr. Carroll, clerk of the Supreme Court, an estimate for altering the rooms of the Senate for the use of the court, fitting up the present court rooms with iron shelves, etc., \$50,000.

I have also sent to Mr. Davis, of the Committee on Public Buildings, an estimate and report upon the extending to the [old] building of the Capitol the system of heating now applied to the wings. The estimate amounts to \$74,000 and the pipe to be used, 84,000 ft.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]¹⁵

[FEB. 22] Major Sibley tells me that General Cass the other day told him that he thought John would get his appointment to West Point, that he had made a speech to the President, urging his claims as my son. I hope that it will prove true. I have not told my wife, for it, in case of failure, would only raise hopes and increase the disappointment.

* * *

[FEB.] 23. To the Senate to see Mr. Bayard. He wishes the estimate for the accommodation of the Supreme Court reduced, feeling that they will not be able to get so much as \$50,000 through the House. I told him that I could revise a little the style of doing the work and thus might make a considerable reduction. Brought home the papers.

* * *

[FEB.] 26TH. To the Capitol to see Mr. Bayard, who sent for me and wished me to modify again my estimate, as he found that they needed iron shelves in one room. This adds \$1,100 to the estimate.

¹⁴(1) Excerpt from Senate proceedings of February 14, 1859, on whether to admit Meigs to the chamber while the Senate was in session. The Senate decided to allow him on the floor in order to test the heating, which had portions of the chamber as hot as 89 and 94 degrees. (2) An article from the *Union* of February 16, 1859, according to Meigs, complaining that 25 percent of War Department expenditures would go to projects other than the army, including the Capitol extension and the aqueduct. The article noted that members of Congress would probably then cite the total expenditure as the cost of just the army and complain it was too high. (3) Two unidentified articles chiding the *Union* for seeking to end the War Department's construction projects and thus terminate the jobs of large numbers of construction workers. (4) Excerpts from the Senate debate of February 15, 1859, on the War Department appropriations.

¹⁵An undated article from the *Daily Globe*, containing a speech in the House by Representative Aaron H. Cragin of New Hampshire (according to Meigs' notation), attacking the cost of the Capitol extension. Cragin (1821–1898), American party then Republican, served in the House, 1855–1859, and in the Senate, 1865–1877.

He also desired me to see some members of the Court of Claims and make a report for altering their rooms for their use.

Dr. Reid, the [ventilator] of the Houses of Parliament, called. Wishes to see me. I have written to invite him to dine on Monday.

I find that the Ways and Means Committee have reported in the bill \$400,000 for the Capitol, \$150,000 for the Post Office, but nothing for the aqueduct. I must look to this.

* * *

[FEB. 27] In the afternoon I heard a cry in the street and found that Dan Sickles, a Member of the House of Representatives, had shot Barton Key,¹⁶ District Attorney, in the avenue, at the corner of Lafayette Square. He shot him two or 3 times.

It is said that Key has been intriguing with Sickles' wife, who is young and pretty. That notice was sent to [Sickles], who, taking witnesses, went into his wife's presence this morning, read the anonymous letter to her. She fainted and acknowledged her guilt and told him that Mr. Key was by appointment to come to the square and wave his handkerchief for her.

Sickles, with Mr. Butterworth, laid await for him. He came. They sallied out, met him or overtook him at the southeast corner of the square. Sickles pulled his pistol, a _____ trigger. It failed. Recapped, shot him in the thigh. Key cried out, "Do not kill me," and stepped behind one of the trees. Sickles put his arm around the tree and shot him through the body and he fell.

Sickles, they say, fired again at him and shot him in the hand. Butterworth stood by as witness.

* * *

[FEB. 27 CONT.] Sickles then went up to Judge Black's,¹⁷ the attorney. Here he gave himself up to the police. He was taken home, and after some time, two carriages of the Maryland police and Mr. Sickles passed here on their way to the jail, with a crowd of boys following, shouting.

* * *

The President has issued his proclamation calling an extra session of the Senate on the 4th of March at noon; though what he does not say, they talk of changes in the cabinet, etc., etc.

¹⁶ Philip Barton Key (1818–1859), the son of Francis Scott Key, served as district attorney of the District of Columbia, 1853–1859.

¹⁷ Jeremiah S. Black (1810–1883), the attorney general, who had previously served as a judge in Pennsylvania. Black served as attorney general of the United States, 1857–1860, and as secretary of state, December 1860–March 1861.

* * *

[FEB.] 28TH. I found by inquiring at the committee room of Ways and Means of the House of Representatives today that the committee had, upon the 18th of December, acted upon the appropriations for the public buildings and aqueduct under my charge and had reduced the sum for the Capitol from the estimate of \$500,000 to \$400,000 and had disallowed the appropriation estimate for the aqueduct of \$250,000.

I saw Mr. Phillips¹⁸ of Pennsylvania, who said that he did not remember anything about it, that he was friendly to the appropriation and would vote for it, and that he could not take charge of it. Mr. Phillips must attend to his own business. He was too rude. They have had a quarrel about supporting bills reported by the committee. Phillips voted against some which had appropriations which I thought objectionable. For this, Phillips took me to task in the House of Representatives.

I saw Mr. Goode, who said that he thought I was going to finish the work with the last appropriation. I explained. He said his committee did not meet now and there was so little chance in the House of Representatives, I had better go to the Senate.

* * *

[FEB. 28 CONT.] I came home at 4 p.m. to dine with Dr. Reid, whom I had been obliged to invite as he had sent me a note asking to see me before he left town in the morning. He wished some information in regard to my works of ventilation and heating at the Capitol. He came out here with a note from the then minister, Mr. Buchanan, now President, introducing him, with a view to getting some employment at the Capitol.

I found, when he came to see me some two years ago, that I was so far advanced that he could not ask to be associated with me. Indeed, I told him that my works were just about to be dry, almost done, and I could not consent to have anyone come in at that date and take part of the credit of them. Now he wishes to give, in a book which he is about to issue, some reason for his having done nothing, as he says many people take great interest in his coming with that view.

I told him that I had no objection to his seeing everything and giving just such notice of the works as he thought correct. That I placed my own reputation upon the publicity of these works. That I hoped at the same time to publish a description of them, but that no notice he could put into a book of travels could interfere with this. I promised

¹⁸Henry M. Phillips (1811–1884), Democrat of Pennsylvania, served in the House of Representatives, 1857–1859.

him some drawings and photographs which would show him generally the works in which he is interested.

During the night, Mr. Whiteley¹⁹ moved the \$250,000 for the aqueduct. I see that it failed. I was not up there. An attempt was made to cut down or strike out the \$400,000 for the Capitol. It failed.

Mr. Marshall tried his proviso of last year to prohibit the expenditure of money upon the painting of decorations unless first submitted to and approved by the committee of artists authorized last year. This failed. They have done nothing, and the House is probably tired of them.

The Senate will probably insert the aqueduct. I hope so. The Capitol and Post Office are safe.

[Printed material inserted.]²⁰

MARCH 8. Constant attention upon Congress and an attack of sickness since the adjournment have prevented my writing up my journal. I now endeavor to bring up the lost time.

On the 1st of March, or rather during the previous night, the House of Representatives passed the appropriation for the Capitol of \$400,000 and for the Post Office of \$150,000. Refused, upon the speech and motion of Mr. Avery,²¹ to add a proviso to the latter that none of the money should be expended by an officer of the Army.

* * *

[MAR. 8 CONT.] I got the appropriation put in the Senate. I also got the appropriation for the heating and ventilating of the old building, \$74,000; for altering rooms and making a library for the Supreme Court, \$38,000; and for altering rooms for the Court of Claims, \$5,000, inserted upon my estimates.

The House subsequently struck all this out, however. And the Senate in order, in the last hours of the session, to save the bill, to which they had after a severe struggle got the treasury note amendment giving 20 millions of treasury notes to carry on the government, attached

¹⁹ William G. Whiteley (1819–1886), Democrat of Delaware, served in the House of Representatives, 1857–1861.

²⁰ (1) Brief unidentified articles reporting on the last evening of the House session, which included adoption of a resolution directing Meigs to remove the desks from the House chamber after adjournment and regroup the seats into "the smallest convenient space." (2) Excerpts from the report of the House special committee on the clerk's accounts, apparently exonerating Cullom; (3) an undated article from the *Washington Star* about the report; (4) a brief excerpt from an appropriation act providing \$400,000 for the Capitol extension with the proviso that none of the funds could be spent for "decoration and embellishment" by sculpture or paintings without the approval of the art commission. The works by Crawford and Rogers that were already underway could be completed and paid for, and the painting of rooms that had already been started could be finished.

²¹ William T. Avery (1819–1880), Democrat of Tennessee, served in the House of Representatives, 1857–1861. During the Civil War, he served in the Confederate army.

and forced through the House, receded from all its amendments to which the House had not agreed, and thus passed the bill.

I spent day and night mostly in the Senate Chamber, watching the course of legislation and the ventilation and heating, for this was the first time since the Senate gave me the privilege of the floor to note the ventilation and heating that I had been able to go in. My sickness had kept me away before.

I found in a few hours what was the difficulty. The draft now complained of came from the set of registers in the walls of the galleries and blowing so strongly as to be felt and could not run the fan the first day, being obliged to let it stand until the air began to be heavy, and then ran it for 5 minutes and let it stand for 10 minutes.

In this way, I managed to keep the air from becoming oppressive, though we had the galleries crowded at night and in the daytime, too. I caused the corner registers to be covered with frames covered with canvas. . . . This turned the current into a vertical one; and the others being nearly closed, the drafts disappeared, and we ran the fan at 40 or 45 revolutions all the next day and night, and no complaint was made of drafts.

I must carry out permanently the disposition thus made with some other, such as small registers under each desk, so that every Senator can command a separate supply of air if he desires it, and stop all the horizontal currents or change them into vertical ones. This will cure all the troubles of the Senate ventilation. Some corrections in the House of Representatives also must be made.

Congress sat all the night of the 3rd and 4th morning, taking a recess at 8 a.m. of the 4th till 9 a.m. Then passed the miscellaneous bill, losing my aqueduct and all the small appropriations for the Supreme Court, for heating and ventilating the old build[ing], etc., and gave to me

for the Capitol extension	\$400,000
Post Office	150,000
	<hr/>
	\$550,000
I have for aqueduct on hand	200,000
Dome	460,000
	<hr/>
	\$1,210,000

Last year I had some 3 million, so that I feel quite poor this year. Poverty and riches are comparative.

[Because of the failure of the aqueduct appropriation, Meigs ordered most work on the project to stop, except on the Cabin John bridge,²² which he hoped to finish with the money remaining.]

* * *

[MAR. 8 CONT.] Today I went up to the Capitol to see Mr. Orr, who wished to make arrangements to have his bust put into the Speaker's room. The bust is a bad one, made by Saunders. The bill promised to have it put upon a bracket.

I thanked Mr. Orr for his uniform support of me, the value of which from a Speaker I told him I well knew. He was very kind, said he supported me because I deserved it; that it was a duty to stand up for a man who was placed in a position exposing him to the carping of all sorts of people and did his duty; and that I was therefore under no obligation to him; he did it because I deserved it, etc.

He goes home, does not return to Congress until, I suppose, he can return as Senator. I like him and am thankful for the strong support he has given to me for two or three years past.

The Postmaster General [Aaron V. Brown], who has been sick for some days with pneumonia, died this morning. He was one of the best of a very poor cabinet.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]²³

[MAR. 12] Mr. Denmead [foreman of machinists] wished to know when the work would go on. I told him that Mr. Walter had stolen my drawings and that I had referred and reported to the Secretary of War, telling him that I could not undertake to do the work so long as I had not the drawings made in my office and needed for the work.

Denmead asked if there was not much more work to do upon the other public buildings, the old Capitol, etc. I told him I had made an estimate for heating the old building but that it had failed in Congress, after passing the Senate.

They are a pretty pair of rascals.²⁴ Both have a hang-dog look. Denmead is the man who acknowledged in the papers that he paid

²²This bridge carries the aqueduct across a deep stream valley. Designed by Meigs, the Cabin John bridge was for many years the longest single-span masonry bridge in the world.

²³An unidentified newspaper article reporting that the House passed a resolution to remove the desks from the House chamber. The paper approved, saying the House would attend to business better and "fewer letters will be written during those hours."

²⁴The other was a Mr. Lapsly, a contractor for the Post Office, who had come with Denmead to see Meigs.

\$100 each to such agents of railroad companies as bought his engines, and had the face to attempt to justify it.

Drinkard told Mr. Denham [Meigs' chief clerk] that he thought that he could bring Mr. Walter and myself together; it was a pity we should be enemies, etc. Mr. Denham told me that this might have been done some time ago but that Mr. Walter had not acted openly and fairly in the matter.

Drinkard also told Mr. Denham that Mr. Walter had been there and said that Captain Meigs had all the drawings necessary to design the heating apparatus. Mr. Denham told me that he believed that if I said I needed some, it was not so; that he had never known me to go around a tree but always to march right square up to it. Well, Drinkard said, that had been his experience with me, too.

* * *

[MAR. 12 CONT.] I wrote today a letter to Mr. Walter, of 3 I copied. Letter written on the 5th of March and not sent because of other occupations. In this letter, I return to him his certificate of the draftsman's work upon the dome during the month of February because he has signed it as Architect of the Dome, telling him that it is not safe to permit and pass without notice any assertion of authority of title by him inconsistent with that which I hold from the Secretary and President, and that he has no commission as architect of the new dome and which would justify his assuming such a title in official communication to me.

[Printed material inserted.]²⁵

* * *

[MAR. 14] Mr. Heebner called. Says that Rice came to Philadelphia in a great stew lately and told him to come down here at once to attend to the contract for columns. That Rice had seen the Attorney General, who said he had decided the question submitted to him. That he had then seen the Secretary to endeavor to get him to give him the contract. The Secretary told him he could not give him such a price and that he intended to refer the whole matter to Captain Meigs.

He told Heebner that Senator Bigler was coming to see me at my house, and Heebner was surprised that I had not yet had a visit from him.

Heebner says that the Secretary is to refer the matter to me with some instructions and that Bigler is coming with a tale of _____ to give him influence and strength with me. What it all means, I do

²⁵ An excerpt from the House proceedings of February 28, 1859, with debate on appropriations for the Capitol extension and the aqueduct.

not know. I know only that Bigler's tale is not likely to have much influence upon any opinion I may have about the contracts.

* * *

[MAR. 14 CONT.] Mr. Briggs came to see me today. He returned yesterday morning. He says that he has seen the _____ works and Mr. Nason; that the former offered to give him all the capital necessary to build up a business in steam-heating and one-half of profits. That Nason, after some consideration, offered to give him $\frac{1}{2}$ or, rather, a different rate for several years, being on the whole equal to or better than one-half of profits in his business, supplying the capital also. But that Nason's offer would not be available until May 1860, at which time his partnership with Mr. Dodge terminates.

This would allow him to remain with me for one year; and if I desired it, he would decide to take Nason's offer and stay with me until next May. This being upon the whole, he thought, the best offer for himself.

I told him that I certain[ly] desire to have him remain, and upon this he decides to write to Nason, accepting.

He still gave Mr. Briggs, I think, a good prospect of making a fortune, and it will keep him with me so long as it is likely that there will be much necessity for his assistance.

* * *

[MAR. 14 CONT.] I feel tired of this constant whirl of the Secretary of War, fighting scamps, of whom I fear he is not the best, without the support and assistance which I have a right to look for from him.

Mr. Denham tells me that he saw Mr. Walter driving up the avenue like mad today, about the time that he would have received my letter telling him that he had no right to sign his name in an official communication to me as architect of the new dome. Going to the War Department, no doubt.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]²⁶

[MAR. 17] I have a letter from the Secretary of War dismissing Mr. Carstens, who has been so long foreman of the decorative painters. He is a quiet, modest, honest, skillful artist with great taste and one who has behaved himself well. I cannot without great difficulty fill his place.

²⁶(1) Brief unidentified article listing the cadets appointed to the U.S. Military Academy, Meigs' son not among them; (2) a newspaper notice from Meigs dated March 27, 1859, warning that payment had been stopped on a lost \$4,200 check.

Someone who has been dismissed at the time we diminished our force has made complaints, has, I suppose by threats, led him into some improvident language, and he is dismissed.

The Secretary will listen to any tale-bearer who reports against anyone in whom I place trust or confidence. He has not asked me to inquire into the facts but sent for Carstens and Mr. Davis, himself. What it is, I do not know.

* * *

[MAR.] 18TH. More rain. The list of the cadets is out. . . .

* * *

[MAR. 18 CONT.] I have not been successful. It is evident that the appointments are made by Floyd. Well, it leaves me independent. I owe nothing to this administration except bad treatment by the Secretary and shuffling by the President, who, telling me that I am right, lets the Secretary go on. He must be under cow to this fellow, whose brute force of purpose and boldness are too much for the timid caution and pusillanimity of the President.

Mr. Carstens came to see me today. He says he is satisfied that he would not now take his place again; that he has always done his duty, acted without fear or favor, but that after this he could no longer be independent. He told the Secretary that it was true, as this blackguard McLean said, that he had said he would not obey an order from the Secretary that did not come from Captain Meigs, who had employed him; that he saw no use for Captain Meigs or himself if the Secretary was to hire the men.

It is a strange lowering of the dignity of the place of Secretary of War to listen to the complaints of such fellows, send them out with letters to bully the foremen, upon whose independence depends the honest and economical management of the public works, and this without consulting me, the engineer charged with all this responsibility.

I gave Carstens a good recommendation to take with him and wrote to the Secretary, acknowledging the receipt of his order, stating that I had communicated it to Mr. Carstens, who ceased to be employed, and that I had lost a valuable, industrious and honest assistant, and that the department had not informed me of the cause of his dismissal.

I answered Mr. Walter's letter of the 15th in regard to the assumption of the title of architect of the new dome. He has been to the War Department with the letter of the 5th and his answer and asked that I may be ordered to pay the bills. This will, of course, in the present state of the feeling of the Secretary be done, but no order from him will change the rights of the case. Neither he nor any man on earth

can now make Mr. Walter the official architect the last months of last year.

I have been hard at work at my desk all day and am still behind with my work.

[MAR.] 19TH. I have an order from the Secretary of War to pay the draftsmen reported upon the dome by Mr. Walter upon the certificate which he has sent in, signed Thomas U. Walter, Architect New dome, etc. The Secretary orders me to pay the money forthwith and styles Mr. Walter the architect thereof.

I have also tonight a letter from Mr. Walter sending back the papers, with a very impudent letter from him in which he denies all that I said and says nothing will ever induce him to sign the papers in any other way, etc.

I grow weary of all this and must have this matter pushed to a conclusion by the President and Secretary. It is too much worry, and worry not work wears out a man.

* * *

[MAR. 22] Writing a letter to the Secretary of War upon the Walter dispute.

* * *

[MAR. 24] I received today in an official envelope from the War Department, but without any letter of transmission, a paper which purports to be a statement of the number of persons employed upon the Capitol extension on the 16th of March. It is in Walter's handwriting and is evidently submitted by him to the Secretary, for what purpose I do not know. It is not correct.

If the Secretary wished information upon such matters, he should have asked it from me, not from one of my subordinates, who has no access to my books or accounts. I have sent it to the office to have a correct statement made out.

* * *

[MAR.] 25. Signed my letter to the Secretary upon Walter and my position.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]²⁷

²⁷ (1) An unidentified article reporting on a lecture about acoustics and ventilation delivered by Dr. David B. Reid. (2) A brief article from the *Union* of March 30, 1859, according to Meigs, discussing the work at the Capitol since Congress adjourned. It concluded: "In the north wing the corridors are now being gorgeously frescoed. By the close of the summer these adornments will be completed, and the Capitol will then possess certainly the finest ceilings upon the American continent."

[longhand transcription follows]—written beneath the article from the *Union*]

Union is sold to Geo. Bowman,²⁸ Supdt Pub. Printing. I cut this out with the first article for years in which the *Union* has spoken word [?] of praise of anything I have done.

[shorthand transcription resumes]

[MAR.] 31ST. Received from the War Department a letter in regard to the contract of Rice and Baird in which the Secretary says that he has acted under a mistake and must therefore, he supposes, throw away the bids of December. He also directs that I report the ability or inability of Rice and Baird and Heebner to carry out their contract. He makes an argument about this matter which is good for nothing. He thinks a decoration without Italian marble is inadmissible.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]²⁹

1ST APRIL. I wrote today to the Secretary of War and to Mr. Walter in regard to this eternal dispute, and I trust that the letters may at last bring some dissuasive action about.

I told Mr. Walter that so long as he wrote to me, I must be the judge of the propriety of answering him. To the Secretary, I quoted the parts of documents 65 and 138 of 1856 which relate to the duties of Mr. Walter and myself. Mr. Walter had quoted some of these documents as sustaining his position. I found in them much for sustaining mine.

The demand of the House of Representatives for a statement of the duties, pay and services of everybody employed upon the Capitol and Post Office extension, from the beginning of the work and for time, required a full report; and in that document, which was given to them, Mr. Walter is put down as having been in charge until I took the work in April 1853, and from that time as assisting me. If this was wrong, he should have protested at the time, when it would have been corrected by the Secretary and President and sent the information in to Congress. But he remained silent, and he could not plead ignorance, and thus he precludes himself from now saying that it was not correct.

The Secretary sends me a letter in which he states that the department had ordered an advertisement under the supposition that the contract of Rice and Heebner was practically void; that as it now seems

²⁸ George W. Bowman was the superintendent of public printing.

²⁹ An article from *The Crayon* of April 1859, according to Meigs, reporting that a committee of three artists would be appointed by the president to determine what works of art or sculpture would be commissioned for the Capitol.

that this contract was not void, it supposes that nothing remains but to throw away the bids of the month of December last. And it desires to have from me information as to the true state of the contract and the ability of the contractors to carry it out in full.

He seems to look to a forfeiture of the contract. If he does this, he will get us into a rare state of confusion. He does not seem to have the least idea of the importance of this contract or this work.

I find that the exterior surfaces of the walls of the Saint Isaac's Cathedral, St. Petersburg, which are retained [?] with marble from 2 to 3 feet thick, just about the same system of construction which I have adopted, took 19 years to build and that they contain not much more than $\frac{1}{2}$ as much marble as there is in the exterior walls of the two wings of the Capitol. I have got the marble to build these wings, including a part of the arcades under the porticoes, which add very much to the quantity of marble, in 6 years.

So that the absolute power of the Emperor of Russia has not done as much in the same time to the great building of his capitol as we have done here. And now the Secretary seems to look upon this supply of marble as though it was a business of only the purchase of a few thousand bricks. He knows nothing.

* * *

[APRIL 2] At the Capitol, I met Mr. Miles³⁰ at my office and went to look at the arrangement of seats in the House of Representatives. Determined upon the arrangement and that the seats should be like pews.

* * *

[APRIL] 6TH. I wrote today a long letter to the Secretary of War, in answer to one from him, about the marble contracts. It looks as though he intended to declare them void. I endeavored to induce him to look upon the matter as a greater one than he seems inclined to.

I find that we have paid to Rice, Baird and Heebner for marble—of which under their contract they have delivered 392,000 cubic feet—\$674,556.02, and have \$15,000 retained as security, making \$689,556.02.

To Provost, Winter and Co. for marble work we have paid \$1,300,177.08. Their reserved security is \$15,000, making \$1,315,177.08. The total sum thus far paid upon these contracts is \$2,004,678.10.

I fear that all I have to say will have little effect upon the Secretary, however.

* * *

³⁰William P. Miles (1822–1899), Democrat of South Carolina, served in the House of Representatives, 1857–1860. He later served in the Confederate congress, 1862–1864.

[APRIL 7] Tonight I read to [John] Lee my letter to the Secretary about the contracts. He approves. I wrote also to Mr. _____ this morning in answer to a letter about Mr. Rice and Mr. Walter.

* * *

[APRIL 12] I found a letter from the Secretary of War ordering me to put up the cases for the Senate post office upon the plan which he sends me, designed by Mr. Walter. This is another instance of petty spite.

Nothing coming from Mr. Walter, I had directed plans to be prepared. They were sketched by Mr. Slight. I had them changed to suit my taste. They were made after consultation with the officers of the Senate post office and suited them.

Mr. Walter must have heard that they were being prepared, so he goes to work, makes plans somewhat different, gets the Secretary to adopt them and send them to me with orders to execute them, and to direct Mr. Walter to make the working drawings in his office and under his direction.

This sort of thing has now happened for the 3rd time. The first was the Vice President's desk and the desks of the Secretary of the Senate and his clerks. Of this, the drawing was returned to me. The 2nd was the arms of the gallery seats. Of this, his drawing has not been returned, though I requested it. This is now the 3rd.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]³¹

[APRIL 14] Heebner came to talk about his contract for the columns. Says that Rice was in a great pucker about the letter to the Secretary, of which I had sent him extracts. That [Rep. Henry M.] Phillips was now engaged as their lawyer. Rice had tried to get him to act, which he refused until Heebner saw him, having found out that Heebner had something to do with the contract. Rice had told him that he was the managing partner and endeavored to get him to act without seeing Heebner.

Decker Campbell, who has been applied to and has acted for Rice several times, Heebner says, was quite excited against me, but that he told him he was in the wrong and explained my action and his own to him, which changed his opinion.

³¹An unidentified article, dated April 11, 1859, reporting on the funeral of William H. Winter, at which Thomas Walter and John C. Harkness were pallbearers and the stonecutters association marched, accompanying the body to Congressional Cemetery at 18th and E Streets, S.E. on Capitol Hill.

* * *

[APRIL 15]. I saw at the office Mr. Heebner, who expected Mr. Rice, who seems not to have come.

* * *

[APRIL 20] I have orders to go to the quarry and to Philadelphia to confer with the contractors for marble for the Capitol extension, to return and report the result to the Secretary.

* * *

[APRIL 22] I had a talk with Briggs about the business of the office after he leaves me.³² I think, upon the whole, the best successor will probably be Mr. [Charles] Talcott.

A long and impudent letter from Mr. Walter. It does not touch any point in controversy. I do not wish to reply to it if I can help it, and will wait until I can read it coolly.

[APRIL] 23. I have from the War Department the letter upon the marble contracts. It has been some days delayed by the endorsement dates. The order to go to the quarry came on the 20th, the day of its date. I find that it directs me to go to Connolly's quarry also.

I have also a string of questions from the Secretary in relation to the officers and men employed by the Capitol extension and Post Office, with inquiries about the pay, duties, expenditures, etc., upon the building and upon the Post Office heating. A demand for copies of all bills paid to Nason and Dodge. What are the duties of Mr. Robert Briggs? Etc.

All this means mischief. This Secretary will ruin me if he can. I have done my duty, and he will, I trust, find that to prosecute an honest man is to bite against a file to fight against God.

The answers will take weeks to prepare and require much writing. This is what wears me out, makes me old, not the doing of my work but defending myself against these attacks. Attacks, too, from those who should either support and defend me or relieve me at once.

* * *

[APRIL 23 CONT.] I informed Talcott that I proposed to take him to the Capitol as an assistant, in place of Mr. Briggs.

I take up the journal, which, in consequence of occupation, has been neglected, and supply from my pocket book as far as possible the omissions.

³²Nothing in the diary explains the change since the entry of March 14, when Mr. Briggs expected to remain at the Capitol for another year.

23RD APRIL [CONT.]. I received today the order to go to the Lee quarry to make inspection and report upon the prospect of getting the marble columns. I am also directed to visit the quarry of Mr. Connolly at Texas, near Baltimore. He says that he has the columns and can furnish them. I doubt it. I have advised him upon his application to me that if he thinks he has the rock, he had better hold on to it, in the present state of the contracts.

* * *

[APRIL 25] Set out to visit the Lee quarries at 3 p.m. Reached home [Philadelphia] at 10 p.m. Saw my brother and sister, Emlen and Mary. Frank was in bed and father and mother in the country.

[APRIL] 26TH. Called to see Mr. Rice. Visited the Market House at the corner of 16th and Market Streets. A fine structure. Built by Rice and Company.

* * *

[On April 27 Meigs traveled on to New York.]

[APRIL] 28TH. To Lee. Mr. Heebner was in the cars, returning with his family to Lee.

At the quarry, I find things in a worse state than I expected. The large masses of stone do not longer show. The quarry is much worked out. I do not think when done that it is possible to get the shafts in two pieces. In 4 or 6 pieces they might be got, perhaps, but not in any reasonable time. It would be impossible to get them out and at the same time get the large blocks yet needed for the cornices, architraves, etc., etc., without taking several years to do it.

[APRIL] 29TH. Back to New York. I stopped at the Central Park, which is well worth a visit. 700 acres of pleasure grounds, being prepared by 3,000 workmen. Spend over a million per annum. This is doing things in the style which is worthy of a great city.

* * *

[APRIL 30] To Philadelphia by evening train.

1ST MAY. Spent the day with my parents pleasantly [in the country].

In the evening. I went back to Philadelphia in order to be ready to take a morning train to Phoenixville to see the iron works of Phoenix Company, where they roll the H beams.

I went to the West _____ Street Church, a domed edifice, very handsome. The interior, with some mistakes, is yet more beautiful.

Here I met Mr. Cornelius, the gas-fitter and fixture maker. He does a business of 2 million or more per annum. He seemed very glad to see me, joined me and walked home, shaking hands on parting and saying that he must apologize for his familiarity and embarrassment but that, in truth, he was glad to see me, for he had a more than common regard for me. I have bought much from them and have not blackmailed them, as most builders do.

2ND MAY. My wedding day. 18 years married. I have reason to be thankful for a good wife and a happy life in the enjoyment of domestic peace and quiet. She has managed my household affairs almost entirely, for I have, at least for the last 6 years, been too much occupied to give thought or time to them.

I went today to Phoenixville to see the great rolling mill. Mr. Reeves, the vice-president, went with me. I had an interesting day. He tells me that he had thought of the roof truss which I have invented before and that he offered to build it for Rice over the Market House but that Rice declined. I met at the works Mr. Walter, their draftsman and engineer. He had made the drawings of it for Mr. Reeves.

[MAY] 3. My birthday. 43 years old.

* * *

[MAY 3 CONT.] At 11 p.m. I set out for Washington by railroad.

[MAY] 4TH. Arrived at 6 a.m. All well.

At 3 p.m. I went to Baltimore to visit Connolly's quarry.

* * *

[MAY] 5. With Mr. Connolly to his quarry, 14 miles from Baltimore and back. I found 4 blocks of marble for the columns quarried, and I believe that I could with ease get out the whole. His price is \$1,550, or \$155,000, which is 15,500 more than the contract price of Rice, Baird and Heebner and than that at which they offer Italian. The marble is such as is used in the east and west fronts of the Post Office extension, of inferior quality, of magnesian limestone or dolomite. Not so fine nor so good and fresh in color as that of Lee.

I returned to Washington, getting home at 6 p.m.

* * *

[MAY] 9TH. Mr. Davis called to see me and walked with me through the Capitol. He reports immense damage to property by the rise of the Mississippi. It is higher than known for years.

* * *

[MAY 10] Wrote report upon visit to quarries, result being that the columns cannot be had at Lee, may be had at Connolly's. They are of inferior quality.

* * *

[MAY 13] Received from the War Department an order directing the contract of Rice, Baird and Heebner to be declared void and that a contract be made with Connolly for the columns.

* * *

[MAY 14] I acknowledged receipt of the order of the Secretary upon the annulling of the contract of Rice, Baird and Heebner for the marble columns, which includes the whole of the marble for the Capitol extension exterior. I sent to them a copy of the order and wrote to the Secretary that I had done so, not venturing to keep the order as it was positive and was against my advice.

I asked instructions in regard to making a contract with Mr. Connolly, telling him that I thought he ought, with reasonable fortune and management, to make at it if he got it at the price of the bid, \$75,000. Of this letter I did not receive a fair copy in time to sign it before I went to Philadelphia by the evening cars. I therefore left it.

* * *

[MAY 16] [At Philadelphia] I called to see Mr. Rice. He protests against the annulling of his contract. I told him I did not think the annulling thus far was legal; that I did not think the Secretary had the right to do it. The contract provided that if done, I should do it, and in my opinion it ought not be done.

* * *

[MAY 17] The President has taken up the case of Rice's contract and sent for the papers.

[MAY] 18. The President has sent for the papers in Rice's contract case. Lee tells me, and so does Mr. Denham, that Drinkard told the President that I had advised the action which had been taken by the Secretary and that the Secretary intended to do as I wished and advised.

I showed Lee my letter of the 6th of April in which is recapitulated the argument against forfeiting this contract under any proper circumstances, which letter I referred to in making my report upon the visit to the quarries, which advice I still adhered to. Determined to see the President and make this known to him.

In going on Saturday night to Philadelphia, I met Mr. Baker, the Collector of the Port of Baltimore, who is in the confidence of the President. I had a long talk with him about this matter, among others. He had been told many things by Rice which had at a former time disposed him to think ill of me, but has long since seen the truth. I believe that he will be a friend with the President.

Rice had telegraphed to him about his contract forfeiture, and he had seen the Acting Secretary, Drinkard, for the Secretary himself had gone to Virginia to recruit his own body and that of the Democratic party.

I assigned Talcott to duty at the Capitol extension in the place of Mr. Briggs, who is going away.

* * *

[MAY] 19. Mr. Davis sent to ask me to call upon him before going to the office this morning. I found that he had seen the President, had a talk with him about the trouble between myself and Walter and Floyd. Asked what had been done.

The President said nothing had been done; that he could not manage; that there was always trouble between "Floyd and Meigs"; they were now in trouble; and then referred to the Rice contract, which he told Davis I had advised be forfeited and now objected to.

Mr. Davis told him that he would undertake to deny that I had so stultified myself, that he knew me and knew my views upon this, though he had not spoken to me about it lately.

I read to him the late correspondence upon the subject, which showed him that he had been right in his opinion.

I then went to the White House and found the President would not be in until 11 a.m. Then to the War Department to see Mr. Drinkard. The Secretary is still absent. He argued that they both, Floyd and he, thought they were carrying out my views. He said that Floyd lay down for him to read my last letter to him, and when it was done, said with a smile, "That is a decent letter. It is the first letter I have had from Captain Meigs for a long time which does not quarrel with me or condone something offensive."

"What order will you make?"

"Oh, he should have his way. Direct the contract for the columns to be forfeited and a contract made with Connolly."

I then showed to Drinkard that they had not remembered what I had written before and referred to in this very letter. That they had acted against my opinion and advice and told him that they seemed to have mistaken their power over a contract, for they either thought there was a separate contract for the columns, which is not the fact,

or they intended to fight a part and not the whole of a contract, which they could not do. He argued that they could.

I also suggested that the Secretary of War could not legally declare this contract void, as the contract itself provided that the officer in charge alone could do it and did not provide that any other should. He did not agree with me.

I told him that I must see the President, as I understood that it had been presented to him that I had advised this thing, and I must clear myself.

We went over to the White House together. He saw the President and after some time came out, saying that the President wished to see us together at 2½ p.m.

He further said that he had presented my views to the President as well as he could and that the President agreed with me upon every point.

At 2½ p.m. we were at the White House again. After a few minutes, the President came in, saying that was a bad affair. The Secretary of War was absent, the contract declared forfeited, and trouble making in Philadelphia, etc.

I told him the whole story. That I understood that it was represented to him that I gave such advice and that I did not doubt that Mr. Drinkard and the Secretary supposed they were acting upon my advice, but that I came to show him that I advised or directed contrary, and I could only suppose that these gentlemen did not read the contracts or did not remember what I had written.

I took out the long letter of the 6th of April, saying, "This letter, which is too long for you to read, contains my advice upon this matter. It is referred to in the last letter, in which I intend to adhere to the same opinion; and not wishing to repeat with offensive pertinacity the advice before given, I had merely referred to it distinctly.

He took it from my hand, saying that he had better take the time to read it. Read it through carefully. Then read again the report upon the visit to the quarries. Called for all the letters accompanying that report, which I read to him.

He gave his opinion as follows, as well as I can now remember his words:

"I think Captain Meigs' argument against forfeiting this contract, at least at the present time, is conclusive. I agree in the opinion that it is not possible to annul a part of a contract without annulling the whole. Now, what is to be done? I have written to Philadelphia that this has been done upon Captain Meigs' advice, and I must write to correct that statement."

I told him that no mischief had been done; that the contract was not annulled; that believing there was a mistake, I had merely asked instructions as to the contract with Mr. Connolly.

He said he hoped Governor Floyd had not agreed to give any such price as \$1,550 for the columns.

I then presented the question of the right of the Secretary to declare the contract void, saying that a contract was under the protection higher than the law of the Constitution of the United States; that the power to declare it void was an arbitrary power jealously watched by the courts; that it could be declared void only in the way its terms provided and by the persons it provided for that purpose; that the case seemed to me like that of the removal of the deposits. General Jackson could not remove them. He could and did remove his Secretary until he got one who would.³³

I read to him a section of the contract which contains the proviso for its forfeiture. He said this point had occurred to him in reading the contract. I told him it was not a personal question; it was one of law. If the Secretary had not the right under the contract and, in attempting to exercise a right he did not hold, injured the contractor in his rights, the interests involved in this case were so large that the courts would inevitably be called upon to settle them. The person who transcended his authority would then be liable to damages personally.

I learned since that he told Drinkard in the afternoon that he had no doubt that I wrote, too, in this matter that the Secretary had no right to declare this contract void.

The result was that he wrote upon the back of the letter, below the order of the Secretary, "The order of the Secretary of War of the 11th instant is suspended for further consideration upon his return from Virginia." And we left. . . .

I saw Drinkard afterwards, and he said that he had seen the President again and that he expressed his highest esteem of my ability and clear-headedness, but said that the misfortune was that I had a very strong will and I was working with a man who had just as strong a will and that we did not agree.

He told Lee, after I left the door where they were talking together, that I had a great triumph; the President sustained me upon every point; that I talked to the President with as much indifference as

³³ President Andrew Jackson opposed the Second Bank of the United States and vetoed the legislation to recharter it in 1832. The following year, he undertook to remove the government's deposits from the bank. When Secretary of the Treasury Louis McLane objected, Jackson appointed him secretary of state and named William J. Duane, who opposed the bank, in his place. Duane, however, also objected to removing the deposits, and the president in turn removed him as treasury secretary. Finally, Jackson appointed the attorney general, Roger Taney, as secretary of the treasury, and Taney followed the president's orders to remove the deposits.

though I was talking to my own clerk; that I interrupted the President; and that I talked better than I wrote.

He also told him that the President in the afternoon told him that he had no doubt as to the correctness of my position that the Secretary of War had no right to declare this contract void. It was my affair only.

* * *

[MAY] 21ST. Mr. Drinkard, now Acting Secretary of War, informed me that he had spoken to the President, after seeing me the other day, about the propriety of my going to look at the quarries. The President said that we ought to have the most full information before deciding such a question and that I ought to go, as I had suggested to Drinkard. They were deciding without having inspected the quarries from which the marble was offered.

The President today asked him whether I had gone and told him to issue the order. He wished me to draw it up, which I did at once. He said he would sign and send it to me.

I then went to the office, made arrangements to go, and left in the afternoon train for Philadelphia, drawing from the funds of the Capitol extension \$100, as I had not enough to go with.

* * *

[MAY] 23. Spent the greater part of the day in Philadelphia. Called upon Mr. Lambdin,³⁴ whom the President has appointed a member of the Capitol Extension Art Commission. He was not at home. In the afternoon to New York.

[MAY] 24TH. New York, looking up bidders for marble columns. Bought some [photographic] plates from [Edward] Anthony.

* * *

[MAY] 26TH. To Dover, Dutchess County, New York, to visit the quarry of Wilson and Cromlin [?]. They went with me. The quarry is a mass of magnesian limestone, rather coarser in grain than that of the Lee quarries and not quite so good in color.

[Printed material inserted.]³⁵

³⁴James R. Lambdin (1807–1889) of Philadelphia was an American painter. His portrait of Senator Willie P. Mangum is in the U.S. Senate Collection. The other members of the commission were sculptor Henry K. Brown and John F. Kensett (1816–1872), a landscape painter and engraver.

³⁵(1) An unidentified article of May 23, 1859, praising the creation of the art commission for the Capitol. (2) An unidentified article reporting on creation of the art commission and construction of the dome. The article noted that the dome would be “out of proportion to the centre building upon which it is being erected, at a cost of millions of dollars.”

There is enough of it to supply half a dozen cities, if it is all as sound as what is now exposed. I took views for the stereoscope with the camera which I had with me for this purpose, as I did afterwards. Throughout this trip, all of them, however, proved bad, apparently from the effect of the box in which the plates were packed. Some of them were broken, some made pictures barely visible, none gave beautiful, distinct representations which the instrument is capable of giving.

Had I been successful, I should have had a beautiful collection and one valuable and giving so much information upon the subject of the present condition of working of this great interest, the supply of marble.

In the evening I went to Kent, in Connecticut. I am satisfied that we could get the shafts in single pieces from the Dover quarries. Not, however, of very desirable quality.

[MAY] 27. To Canaan [Connecticut], Lee [Massachusetts] and Troy [New York]. I visited the quarries. Canaan offers little. It is the magnesian limestone. Rough in its stratification as the Lee quarry, and from it I do not think large blocks could be got, suitable for our purpose. Lee quarries are not changed.

I had a delightful ride in the morning from Kent to Canaan in a buggy with a good team. Reached Troy about 11 p.m.

[MAY] 28TH. Up to Troy and Boston, a Western Vermont road. Through the beautiful country of East Dorset [Vermont]. This is upon the divide of the valley.

Quarries of Clark and Fulsom, the hilly fields and Kent. They are about 1,000 feet up the mountain, upon the west side of the valley.

* * *

[MAY] 30TH. Rode to Danby [Vermont] in a buggy. Stopped to see the timber spout by which, 2½ miles north of East Dorset, rocks are run down the mountain ½ mile to a steam mill. It is an interesting thing to see.

At Danby, visited the quarries of Symington and Kelly. I scarce think they could supply us, though Symington thinks he could.

To Rutland [Vermont].

[MAY] 31ST. Reached Rutland in the evening. This morning visited the quarries at West Rutland. Made a view of the falls of central Rutland as well as views of the quarries. They are not good.

At noon left Rutland for New York via Troy and the Hudson River Railroad, reaching New York at 9½ p.m.

JUNE 1ST. To Philadelphia and to my father's place, Hammonasset.

[JUNE] 2ND. To Washington. Having travelled 1,006 miles.

* * *

[JUNE] 5. To church. Judge Black, the Attorney General, told Mrs. Rutledge the other day John would have been appointed by the President but for the obstinacy of one man, a kind-hearted but eccentric person. He could have meant no one but Floyd. General Cass strove to get the appointment for him but did not succeed.

I met Mr. Davis at church, told him of the interview with the President.

[JUNE] 6TH. At the Capitol extension. Went over the building with Mr. Briggs and Mr. Talcott, to show what is to be done.

* * *

[JUNE 10] Having omitted to visit all the quarries which ought to be visited and hav[ing] now paid off the debts of the works for the past month, I set out this evening for Philadelphia and New York and New Haven. Reached Philadelphia at night.

* * *

[JUNE] 13TH. In Philadelphia. Father paid me the allowance he has been in the habit of paying for some years past. He had not paid it in February, so that \$200 was due. It is acceptable at this time, for I am out of money.

In the afternoon line I went to New York. Took quarters at the Metropolitan Hotel.

[JUNE] 14TH. Visited by Harlem Railroad the quarries at East Chester and Scarsdale.

They are near Tuckahoe and upon the line of the railroad. I took views of them which will be developed in Washington.

Returning part way to New York by the railroad, I took at Williams' Bridge the cars of the afternoon train for New Haven in order to see Mr. [Joseph S.] Wilson, chief clerk, who had made a proposal but had not specified the location of his quarry.

[JUNE] 15. I called last night with my cousin, Mr. Atwater, upon Mr. Clark and found that he had been at Hartford, attending to his duties as a state senator. So I went to Hartford and found Mr. Clark in the Senate chamber and arranged with him to go to his quarry.

JUNE 1859

* * *

[JUNE] 16TH. To Bridgeport [Connecticut], then upon the Housatonic Road to Falls Village, where I examined the quarry of Mr. Clark. There is no chance that he could get suitable blocks for the column shafts from this bed of marble. It is a bare possibility and that is all. The stone is exposed, not yet quarried, does not look well. There is enough of it, but not of good quality.

* * *

[Meigs returned to New York on June 16, then went on to Philadelphia and Baltimore the next day to visit the Maryland quarries.]

[JUNE] 18TH. Rode out to the quarry of Mr. Robinson, from which Messrs. Crowley have offered the columns. I also visited the quarry of Connolly and took views of both.

* * *

[Meigs returned to Washington on June 19.]

[JUNE] 24TH. The Art Committee is in session. I met them by appointment this morning and spent the greater part of the day with them, showing them the building and what was to be done for it. Also showed to the painters of the committee the statues of Mr. Crawford.

I explained to them the position of the affair between Mr. Walter and myself. They listened attentively to the exposition of my views and purposes and thanked me for it. They said nothing about Mr. Walter. I told them that they must hear his account of the matter and then determine for themselves which was right; that it would be different, of course, from mine, but that I was prepared to prove by the documents that I was right.

* * *

[On June 23, Meigs learned that some of the cadets appointed to West Point had failed to qualify. He then asked the president to name his son to fill one of the vacancies. Buchanan met with Meigs and explained that the captain would need to ask Secretary Floyd, since he was the one who had objected to the appointment.]

[JUNE 25] I then went to the War Department with a letter applying to the Secretary for appointment of my son. I have a copy of it here.

[longhand transcription follows]

Wash: 25 June 1859

JUNE 1859

723

Hon. John B. Floyd

Secretary of War

Sir:

I have been informed that two of the cadets appointed at large have failed to qualify.

I enclose a letter to the President, calling his attention to the many testimonials on file in favor of my son John Rodgers Meigs, a grandson of the late Commodore John Rodgers of the U.S. Navy.

I am well assured that if you will mention his name favorably to the President he will receive the appointment.

I believe that he is well qualified and that his claims and his abilities are as well supported as those of every other candidate. In writing upon this youth's [?] application I cannot think that the differences in opinion upon official actions which have to my great regret and disadvantage existed between us will be permitted by you to prejudice his prospects.

I trust that while I have entered protests against action or want of action by this department which appears to me to injure me in my position or reputation, I have always confined myself within the just bounds of that official and personal respect which is due to your character and to your position.

Certainly I have never intentionally transgressed them.

Leaving this matter in your hands with confidence that the result will be in accordance with the advice you may think it right to give the President.

I am

Respectfully

Your obt svt

M.C. Meigs

Capt. of Engrs.

[shorthand transcription resumes]

I had, before handing this to the Secretary, saluted him, expressed my regret that he had been so unwell, and read to him the conclusion of the report upon the marble column question, which I said I believed was right and was also such as would be merciful to the contractors, best for the government, and agreeable both to the President and to himself. To this he seemed to assent.

I then said, "I have another matter upon which it is more difficult for me to talk to you, inasmuch as I have a personal interest in it," and handed him this letter. I said, however, that as my hand was difficult to read, perhaps he had better allow me to read it to him.

After I had read it, he looked very angry. Said, "Captain Meigs, I can never forgive, to one who knows so well its meaning, official discourtesy. To any other man I could, but not to you. When a man like you does such a thing, it means something."

I, as I have always before done, disclaimed any intention of official disrespect. Assured him that I had always meant to be respectful though I had been most severely wounded by his acts. That I had sought every mode of getting my difficulties with Walter settled, in vain, and that the failure of the Secretary to act had been a grievous injury to me. Etc.

After a pretty long time, he said that I had not applied to him for the appointment of my son; that he had opposed it and would have sacrificed his position in the cabinet had the appointment been made. I said I had applied to him the first year and had not renewed the application because I thought it useless. He said he had never seen any such application from me, and if there was one, it must have come through the President.

I would not contradict him, but I said, "I have been for the last year under the strong impression and conviction that I had made application to you in the first place when I wrote to the President also"; but, at any rate, this was, if omitted, no cause for his opposition. That these appointments had always, in my knowledge of them (and I had been here longer than he and knew more of this official routine than he), been looked upon as Presidential appointments, not given by the department but by the President. That I knew one President, after making the first year proper appointments, or such as were of the Army thought proper, sons of officers of the Army, Navy and civil service, to say the next year that the law did not limit him and he would be damned if he did not give them to his friends, and he did so for the remaining 3 years of his service.

He said I had entirely misconceived him, misunderstood him. That I had set myself to thwart him in everything.

I denied this. Told him I had always felt it my duty, when he gave an order which I thought wrong, to express my views freely but respectfully and to obey when he insisted. That I had always done this after consideration. That he had many times grievously wounded me, done me great injury. That I did not profess to be immune and had sometimes felt much angered, but that I had waited until I could write

or speak coolly before I acted in such cases, and I believed I had always been able to do only what I believed was my duty.

He said if the President intimated his wishes to him, he should obey at once.

I told him that if the President ordered him to do something in his department which he thought very wrong, he would quit it at once, and that his position was therefore better than mine. That it was my duty, after representing my views, to obey if the order was insisted upon and I did so. I was not at liberty to retire, as he was. I was here under orders, not in a place of my own seeking.

We had a long discussion, in which he told me, among other things, that I had oppressed Mr. Walter, who would always have yielded to me.

I replied that I had been attacked by Walter and had merely defended myself.

He said that he had opposed my son's appointment and would have given up his place rather than it should have been given to him and that I was the only man in the United States who could have prevented my son's getting this appointment. That now the place was blocked. One who had failed was to have another trial. The President had designated one person for a vacancy, should one occur, and he had designated one. That if they were _____, then the places would be already filled; but that if in these circumstances a vacancy should still exist, I should have it. And that my son was young and could wait until another year.

I told him I thanked him for this assurance, which was what I had expected from him. It was not worthy of his character to allow my son to suffer from anything that I had done to which he might object. He said this was far from him. Etc.

I then went to the White House to report progress to the President. After waiting some time to get through with an interview with Mr. Fowler, the New York Postmaster, I was admitted. He said he had no idea I had been waiting all that time, and I replied I was anxious to see him and it was my duty to await his leisure. That I had come to report progress.

I then detailed my interview with the Secretary; and when I told him that he had at last promised to give the place to me, he clapped and rubbed his hands together with the greatest delight. Said, "I knew that was what Floyd would do." He should enjoy now seeing how Floyd would tell him of this. He would not let him know that he knew anything of it. He believed Floyd was a generous fellow, etc.

The old man seemed much pleased and to look upon it as a triumph of his knowledge of human nature and of Floyd's good qualities in particular.

I told him what Floyd said about the place being filled. He said that the chief clerk told him that he had endorsed upon someone's papers that he wished his attention called to them in case of any vacancy occurring, but he was informed that this person could wait until next year. That he would take care of my son. That they would try very hard to manage it, etc.

In short, he gave me very kind assurances upon the subject and showed an evident desire to give the appointment to me.

I thanked him for his patient attention to my statements and his kindness in promising the appointment and took my leave with a better opinion of the old man's nature than I had before.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]³⁶

[JUNE 29] General Cass sent word today that they had a conversation about John in the cabinet and that it was determined that he should have one of the places made vacant by the late failure; that if this could not be managed because of promises already made by the President and Secretary, then next winter he should certainly have one.

I trust that the President will be able to keep his promise to me of giving him one of the late vacancies. Next June he will be rather old—18 years, 4 months, which, with the 5-year course, would graduate him at 23½ years of age. Still, many go there quite as old as this.

[JUNE] 30TH. The article from *The Crayon* is one of the very few which show some proper feeling in regard to my efforts for art at the Capitol. I have got little besides abuse and misrepresentation for what I have done.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]³⁷

³⁶(1) An article from *The Crayon* of July 1859, according to Meigs, listing the members of the art commission for the Capitol appointed by the president. The article also praised Meigs' work on the decoration of the Capitol, "the cause of national Art has not had an impetus similar to that given it by Captain Meigs since the organization of the government." It commended Meigs' "judgment and liberality." (2) An article from the *New York Courier* of May 22, 1859, attacking the decoration of the Capitol as "most dreary and disheartening," and reporting the appointment of the members of the art commission.

³⁷An undated letter to the *Dollar Newspaper*, reporting on progress on the Capitol extension and the dome. It described the decoration underway in the north wing corridors as "illustrations of American birds, flowers, and fruits, in the highest style of art. They justly claim the attention of a great number of visitors."

[JULY] 2ND. Saturday. I went to the Engineer Office today and found that the cadet appointment has not been made but that they have determined to put back two of those rejected by the examiners. This leaves but one vacancy, and that is promised from last winter to a stepson or relative of Mr. Morris,³⁸ the breech-loading rifle patentee. The boy, he tells me, is a son of a widow whom he married, and her first husband was a major in the Army.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]³⁹

[JULY] 6TH. Writing report to the Secretary of War upon his questions about the Post Office and Capitol extensions.

* * *

[JULY 13] Mr. Heebner has been here today. He says that Rice and Walter have now determined to get up a resolution in Congress calling for Italian marble columns. This would be a curious move from these parties.

He also says that Walter is preparing an estimate of the cost of completing the Capitol which is to be used in comparison with that which I sent in some 3 years ago. This will be a petard to hoist the engineer, himself, if the original of that estimate is in the handwriting of Mr. Walter.

* * *

[JULY 14] I met, as I went in [to see the president], at the door, Dr. Blake, Commissioner of Public Buildings, who said that he had a conversation of "of an hour this morning with him, and he had spoken of Walter. Said he had a bad impression in regard to him and did not see how he had got so wound around the Secretary of War. Blake did not speak any good of Mr. Walter, for he thinks him a rascal. He said, however, that the President spoke in very high terms of me.

* * *

[JULY] 15. I nearly finished today the report in answer to the questions of the Secretary upon the Capitol and Post Office. These questions require much study to reply properly to them. They are intended not to get information for the benefit of the public but to get advantage

³⁸This may be William H. Morris (1827–1900), who invented a repeating carbine in 1859, but, according to the *Dictionary of American Biography*, he did not marry until 1870.

³⁹An article from the *Baltimore Sun*, dated June 30, 1859, reporting that Meigs was visiting quarries to determine whether any might be able to provide marble for 100 columns for the Capitol porticoes.

against me in the campaign which the Secretary and his friends have been so long carrying on against me.

* * *

[JULY] 16TH. To the office. I ordered 3 more [skylights] for the grand stairways, as the one just put up by Mr. Gibson⁴⁰ is very good.

* * *

[JULY 20] Louisa met Mrs. [Ledyard]⁴¹ today. She spoke of the opposition of Secretary Floyd to John's appointment at West Point and of having said in cabinet that his objection had been removed and said that it was now considered and settled in that he would have it; that it could not be withdrawn; that her father, General Cass, had taken great interest for John. It was an unprecedented thing for a Secretary to let his private feelings influence his public acts in this way. She said that she understood that the Secretary's feelings were not friendly to me and spoke as though it was well understood in the cabinet. Said the President was very anxious to make the appointment and that her father said it was unprecedented for a President to make such an appointment against the strong opposition of his Secretary.

Louisa understood her to think that the Secretary's course was not much approved by the rest of the cabinet.

* * *

[JULY 23] This evening I took Louisa down to Bailey's⁴² to spend the remainder of the summer.

* * *

[JULY] 29TH. Mrs. Magruder came to me today, with tears in her eyes, to tell me that her husband had found an error in his cash account; that he was almost crazy about it and she feared the worst results for him, and begged me to be gentle with him and to give him some time in which to settle out the error or make up the sum. She did not know how much it was.

I told her I could have no opinion upon the matter until I knew what were the circumstances; that he had been entrusted by me with money, and that he had no right to apply it to any other purpose than the [pay] of persons employed; that I could not pretend to judge until I knew the facts.

⁴⁰ Mr. Gibson was probably with J. and J.H. Gibson, the company that supplied stained glass for the skylights.

⁴¹ Matilda Cass Ledyard was the daughter of Lewis Cass and the wife of Henry Ledyard.

⁴² Entry for July 30, 1859 gives location.

She did not even know the amount of the deficiency. She said she had some property and that it should all be sold or mortgaged in order, if necessary, to pay up the money; that I should not nor should the United States lose.

Mr. Denham and Magruder [the paymaster] came soon after to report. It seems that he is short \$2,100 by the present report; that he thinks he will be able to make arrangements to pay it up at once. He does not know where it has gone to. Mr. Denham suggests that the part of a payroll may have been omitted in summing up a single sheet.

I doubt this. I fear that he has lost or had it stolen. I had frequently thought he was not the right man for such a trust, too excitable, though perfectly honest in his intentions. But he had been employed upon high recommendation for this place, and it was difficult to relieve him from it as it would have looked like suspicion.

* * *

[JULY 30] Mr. John Rice called. He had come to see me about his pay for the last shipment of marble. . . .

* * *

[JULY 30 CONT.] I went down into the country this evening to spend the Sunday with my family, who are at Bailey's, about 6 miles from here, in Fairfax County [Virginia]. They are enjoying themselves and being benefitted by the fresh air.

* * *

[AUG. 2] The Secretary of the Interior [Jacob Thompson] told me he had a dispatch saying that Mr. Davis was very ill. He feared dangerously so. He is at Oakland [Maryland], in the mountains of Allegheny, upon the line of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.

If this be a fatal disease, the country will lose one of its best servants, a man of strong conviction, of strong will, courage and industry, one who never hesitated to do or say what he thought right. Such men can ill be spared in these days of time [?] serving politicians. They are rare. I shall lose a strong friend, and the party of Mr. Walter will gain courage and be less fearful. The Secretary of War and the President are now restrained by their fear of giving mortal offense to one standing so high in the councils of the nation.

* * *

[AUG. 4] Mr. Sonnemann reports that for want of drawings, he cannot make out the _____ of the plates for the dome as ordered. These drawings Mr. Walter has taken away, and I have been calling upon the Secretary to compel him to return them for 18 months.

Article from the *Home Journal* of New York. The [panels] and niches are put in by me, the important ones against Mr. Walter's wishes. He is jealous of painting and sculpture [because they] take in a building the attention from the architect to the artist, leading him to oppose the things that might lead to the use of painting and sculpture.

The idea of making everything in the Capitol express an American idea, that all must be of the highest order of art, is fine enough, but to accomplish it, where are the artists to do the work? In the meantime shall we not wish to use such appropriate decorations as will make the building beautiful and pleasant to the eye? This I have done, and tried not to leave the other undone.

[Printed material inserted.]⁴³

[AUG. 6] In the evening, as I was about going to dinner, I received from the War Department a letter enclosing one from Mr. Walter, a report upon my letter, stating that he had abstracted the drawings from my office and that I could not therefore, as I had frequently reported before, make studies for the heating of the Post Office.

This is a _____ and false letter and excited for the moment great indignation. I do not know, however, upon further consideration, that it may not enable me to bring this thing to a head.

I rode down to the country in the afternoon and spent the evening with my family.

[AUG.] 7TH. Sunday. Spent in the country, resting.

* * *

[AUG. 8] I spent the day in writing to the War Department an answer to the letter of Mr. Walter of the 5th, which is not yet finished.

I wrote asking for a copy of a letter of Mr. Davis, written upon the 23rd of January, 1858, in communicating to the Secretary the correspondence between Walter and myself of _____ 1858. This was the beginning of the dispute which I have ever since been endeavoring to get set right.

I have not [before] asked for a copy of this letter because, though Mr. Davis wrote to me that he had written such a one and kept no copy, and that I could get one by asking at the department for it, I knew the feeling of the Secretary to be such that to ask for the letter would only irritate him. Now, however, needing it to answer Walter's attack, I have thought it right to ask officially for it.

⁴³ An article from the *Home Journal* of July 30, 1859, according to Meigs, praising Meigs for giving sculpture commissions to American sculptors. It then, however, complained that the architectural design of the walls should not be spoiled with painted decoration.

[AUG.] 9TH. Still engaged in writing the answer to Walter's letter.

I have received the letter of Davis, or rather a copy of it, from the War Department. It fully sustains all my position. And for the benefit of my children, I make a copy of it here. [Copy of letter does not appear in the manuscript, in either shorthand or longhand, but a copy from the published *Papers of Jefferson Davis* has been placed in Appendix, page 791.]

* * *

[AUG. 10] I went in the evening to the Capitol to look at the brass railings which have been put up upon the south private staircase. 3 of these rails are now in place. I have removed the walls which have shut off the light in the south wing, and they show to much better advantage.

I have also in the two lately put up increased the width of the rail, so that it is much steeper than the first one. For this I have directed curved brass to be designed.

I hear that Mr. Davis is up and out of danger; that indeed, while he was quite sick, he was never dangerously ill, except that he has been enfeebled in constitution, and therefore any attack resembling in any degree his last serious illness is alarming to his friends.

[AUG.] 11. I have determined, finding that Mr. Magruder has not yet raised the money to make up the deficiency in his accounts, to go tomorrow to Philadelphia and endeavor to borrow the money from my father in order to make good the balance. It is my duty to have at all times the money ready to pay the debts of the work.

Though I cannot be blamed when such a case as this occurs, where a clerk for whose correctness I have not only good assurance but a bond as security, signed by some of the first men of wealth in the city, still if it should be known that I have not the money, the thing would be telegraphed over the whole United States in forms which would throw doubt upon my credit. Mr. Magruder I believe to be honest, and I believe that he will repay the money, but I have now waited for him for 2 weeks and it is not yet paid.

It is a trial to me to go to my father and ask him for this, though he has that much money belonging to my share of my grandfather's estate in his hands. Yet I fear it will be inconvenient to him to raise the money at once, and he will feel as though I had met with the misfortune he has always been looking for. He has a nervous fear of public accounts. Rightly, too; for here, with every possible precaution, I am in the power of the Secretary of War, my enemy, who would at once take advantage of such a thing for my injury, not leaving me time to make arrangements for paying the money lost by the default of my

clerk, but taking advantage of such a thing in order to demand instant payment in the hope of ruining me.

* * *

[AUG.] 12TH. I find that Mr. Magruder has not yet succeeded in getting the money to pay up his default and I feel uneasy, as it is now 2 weeks since he informed me of the deficit and promised to pay it in a day or two. I therefore determined to endeavor to raise the money myself, so that if the affair gets into the newspapers, I may be able at once to say that I have the money and that it is myself, not the United States, that is in danger if he and his sureties fail to pay the money.

I left in the morning line at 8 o'clock and reached Philadelphia at 1½ p.m. . . .

* * *

[AUG. 12 CONT.] After a pleasant evening, I told my father and mother what I had come for, the danger in which I found myself by the failure of a trusted clerk who I believed to be fully able to pay all his default and whose default had, while the money was being raised by him, left me with a balance due to the United States, not in my possession, so that if the matter got into the papers, with their unfriendly feeling towards all officers of the army and their desire to make a sensation by their dispatches, I should find myself named a defaulter by telegraph all over the United States.

Then, too, the Secretary of War is ready to catch me at any corner; and if he should know that he could, by calling upon me to pay over my balance at any moment, put me into a bad position, I could expect no mercy from him.

Father was a good deal shocked. He asked what security I had that his deficit was not \$20,000 instead of \$2,500. I told him that he could not have made this default without being discovered and that my chief clerk had examined the accounts and reported this as the true sum. That from the securities charged to Thomas Parker; the rich grocers, _____, Richard Wallach, [the] marshal; and William F. Bailey, alderman and bookseller, I had no doubt of being able to recover the money, for the bond seemed well drawn and for \$10,000, while they represented property believed to be worth over a million.

Father said he had in the savings bank 3 or 4,000 and he would go to town with me in the morning and get me the money, but when could he have it again. Would he lose it? I thought not, that it could be repaid within 30 days; but if I had difficulty with the sureties, I had my lots in Washington, of which my share was assessed at \$7,500. These I could sell.

[AUG.] 13TH. Went down to Philadelphia [from the country]. Father got the \$2,500 out of the bank, the savings fund, and came home with it in his pocket. It was in gold, and he said he felt like a thief all the way. That he had never drawn more than \$200 in specie from a bank before, and that the man at the bank looked very ill-pleased at his demand for so much gold.

* * *

[Meigs returned to Washington early on August 15.]

[AUG. 15] Mr. Magruder, with his two brothers-in-law, Dr. and General Morgan, came to see me and tell me what he could do. He said that he had failed to get the money by loan and had at last determined to sell out his property. That he had advertised it for tomorrow morning. And after seeing what he wants to bring, he has disposed of some of the servants—slaves, in short; that he wished for a day or two in order to enable the mother to find homes for the children in town, so as not to separate them. That he could, if he sold them to go South, get the money at once. He, from motives of humanity, wished not to do this.

His brother-in-law also spoke of this, said that he was able to pay the money and he ought to do it at once, that they had advised him to sell.

I replied that I had waited for more than two weeks, and thus putting myself into a position of peril; that for all this time my account was deficient by the sum which he failed to pay. That I could not pretend to explain the deficiency.

Mr. Magruder reported to me, when called upon for the money, that he found himself deficient and that he did not know; that he could not explain it, and I, of course, could not. That if it was my case, my character involved in such peril, I should at once sell everything I had in order to raise the money and pay the debt. That, feeling that by indulging him so long I was in a dangerous position and that the money, which was promised upon the first of the month, was not paid yet, I had gone on Friday to Philadelphia and borrowed, at some inconvenience and cost to myself and others, the money to make my account good, until I could recover from him. That thus I felt in less danger and I could not require him to sell away the children from their mother and would wait a few days. But that it ought to be done as soon as possible.

* * *

[AUG. 15 CONT.] Mr. Magruder ought not to have come to me with his tale about his servants. If he will hold such property, he must take

the consequences. He ought not to have made me thus a party to their sale, which I abhor. I have not the means of paying his debt of government money, and yet I am put into the position of knowing and insisting upon his selling these people in order that he may pay what I had trusted to him and he has lost.

He still cherishes the hope that he may find the error in some wrong addition in the payrolls. Mr. Denham seems to have given this up.

Mr. Heebner came on with me on the cars. He says he understands from Rice and Walter that Walter is writing, at the order of the Secretary, a report upon the Capitol extension in which he says he will have a good opportunity to show up my bad mismanagement, etc. In short, an attack upon me, an attempt to throw upon me the blame of the high cost of the extension above the estimates, etc.

Is it possible that the Secretary has, unknown to me, called upon my subordinate thus to attack me? Can he have called upon him to write the annual report, meaning thus to displace me?

Heebner says that it will contain Walter's ideas and also Rice's suggestions. That Rice spoke of it but not freely, not trusting him lately as he used to. That, among other matters, Walter said he intended to recommend to the Secretary the use of Italian marble for the column shafts; and Rice also said that this was to be done. That an attempt would be made to get an order thus signed for Italian marble. This is dead against all that Rice has been intriguing for for years. They are a precious set of rascals.

The Secretary, by this morning's papers, is reported to be improving in health at the Virginia Red Sulphur Springs. What must be the matter with him?

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]⁴⁴

[AUG. 16] This morning, at 3 to 3½ a.m., a fire broke out in the shop of the Capitol extension near the boilers, which, with great rapidity, destroyed the machine shop and all its contents, the smith shop, and the marble sawmill attached to the Capitol extension.

The whole was over before I heard of it. I was called about 7 a.m., with the information that it was over.

I went up there with Mr. Denham, who had come to inform me, and found the place a smoking ruin.

⁴⁴(1) An article from the *Washington Star* of August 16, 1859, according to Meigs, and one from the *Washington Constitution* of August 17, 1859, both reporting on the fire at the Capitol machine shop. (2) An article from an unidentified newspaper about the fire in the Capitol workshops.

The lathes, planing machines, etc., are all so much injured that it would be as costly to repair them as to get new, except one or two of the machines. The sawmill, with a thousand dollars' worth of marble in it and near it, is destroyed.

This will be a great inconvenience to us in our work. The work is so near finished that there is not enough left to justify the rebuilding of this or the purchase of new machinery or repair of the old. I shall have to send the work hereafter to other shops.

The machines had done their duty and had paid for themselves in doing it. It was convenient to have many small works which required attention done here, as being done better and quicker than we could get them done elsewhere. There are not shops in this city to do them.

The watchmen appear to have been on duty and to have gone through the shops many times during the night. Mulloy had been through the place where the fire began within $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour of the time when it broke out. He had been there at 3 a.m. and was sitting at the stable, looking towards the shops, when he saw a flash of light and, running into the shop, found the blaze spreading so that it drove him out at once. It was then, he said, too late to save it. He got out the horses with the assistance of those who came first and opened the bronze shop and had the bronze taken out. This building was saved.

I cannot make out, after examining all those I thought could know anything upon the matter, whether it was an incendiary fire or accidental. Denmead, Thomas, Beatty, the engineer, the fireman, all testified that the fires were all put out. The watchman who passed through the shop many times during the night could see and smell no fire. Mulloy says he could hear no noise as of any person about the building to give him reason to believe that anyone set it on fire. The others think it must have been set on fire.

The coals were drawn out from under the boilers last night, first with a wire, then dropped into the ash pit into 3 or 4 inches of water. And I was there this morning seeing that this duty was actually performed as declared by engineer and fireman. Everything was very dry about the shop and boiler shed, and the fire, once started, spread like wildfire.

I suppose the loss, counting the cost of the machinery, must have been some \$20,000, though if it had been put up at cost as done with and while in good condition, it would not have brought probably over \$10,000. But the delay and increase of cost of work is considerable.

After reviewing the ruins and giving orders for the preservation of tools, etc., I went to breakfast and took a letter to the War Department making report of the facts, saying that I should make an investigation and report the result. I found Mr. Drinkard there, and I found that

Mr. Walter had been up just before me. What he had said, I did not hear.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]⁴⁵

AUG. 17. I took testimony today again. The general result is that the watchmen were at their positions; that Mulloy went through the building at 3 a.m. and was sitting, looking at it, being at the stable or between the stable and the yard of the statues. At the time the fire broke out, he saw a bright light flash up, not a flame, and ran into the building after the fire had made such progress that it was beyond his control. And this was at 3½ a.m. The fire was then above the boiler, at the south end of it, not extending as far as the stack. Of all this he is sure, pointing out to me upon the ground the place in which he saw the fire.

The cinders of the preceding night still lay in the fire pit, having been thrown out into 3 or 4 inches of water which lay upon the floor.

The only cause, for the fire or fires were evidently carefully put out, is incendiarism or the spontaneous [combustion] of oil waste or of cinders in the deposits of cinders under the shed alongside of the boiler. This place had been used for years for this purpose.

I did not know this or I should have prevented it. Mr. Thomas positively denied that this place was ever used for this purpose, and I have no doubt that he thought he was right. Yet he had to have known of the custom. Still the evidence is plain that these cinders were left to lay in the ash pit all night, before being thrown up, and that when thrown up, they were always dripping with water. No ashes had been thrown up here since the Saturday night before.

The fireman says that on Saturdays he was in the habit of throwing up a part of the cinders, first well-soaked in water, in order to make room for kindling or some such purpose the next day.

Still, here is a danger, and from this or other design, the fire must have originated. The watchman having gone through only 30 or 20 minutes before the fire broke out so violently, makes it seem impossible that the cinders could have been smoldering for two days.

[Printed material inserted.]⁴⁶

⁴⁵ An article from the *National Intelligencer* of August 17, 1859, and an Associated Press article dated August 16, 1859, both about the fire.

⁴⁶ A notice by Meigs, from an unidentified newspaper dated August 20, 1859, soliciting bids for the ironwork ceilings over "the principal staircases in the Capitol Extension."

Yet it has made a clean sweep. Much of the machinery is so much injured as not to be worth repairing. The larger pieces, however, can be repaired and used again.

* * *

[AUG.] 19TH. Mr. Denham brought me today the deposit book showing a deposit of the money returned by Mr. Magruder, a deposit of \$2,478.26. . . .

* * *

[AUG.] 20. Saturday. I went in the morning train to Philadelphia in order to return to my father the money, \$2,500 in gold, which I had borrowed of him in order to be prepared to meet any failure on the part of Mr. Magruder. Mr. Magruder having put up his balance, which was deposited in bank yesterday, I am at liberty to return this.

* * *

[AUG. 22] The ride to Washington was dusty. Reached home at 6 p.m. My wife is in the country.

* * *

[AUG.] 23RD. At work at home. This evening John Lee told me that if I wished my report in answer to Mr. Walter's letter upon the drawings of the Post Office to go in with this letter to the President, I had better send it in.

I therefore sat up very late at night, writing it out from the notes which I began to write upon the receipt of the matter from the War Department. I found that I had written so angry a letter as to require much trimming out of words which, though deserved, were too angry to add to the strength of my argument.

As I wished to send it in in the morning, I wrote out a fair copy of about $\frac{1}{2}$ of it during the night and sent to Mr. Moore to come up in the morning and help me make a copy. He came about 9 a.m. and took the beginning of the letter, while I made a copy as legibly as I could of the latter half of it. It took us until 12 o'clock to write it out to some 33 pages.

I made of this an argument upon the whole subject of the failure of the War Department to settle this controversy about the duties and authorities of its officers, and I quoted the letter of Mr. Davis of the 23rd of [January], 1858, which he wrote to the Secretary of War, when he sent to him the correspondence between Mr. Walter and myself in which the dispute began. This letter is very full and satisfactory for my side of the question.

I spoke plainly about the thing done to me, to the works, to the workmen and to the public services by this toleration of insubordination and disobedience. I spoke also of the failure to act upon my appeal to the President and the injustice of suppressing for so long a time since last September, nearly a year, an appeal from an inferior to a superior authority. But the letter, in order to meet the dull ring of falsehood in Mr. Walter's positions, was, in spite of all that I could do, very long. I fear no one will ever read it through. A rascal can tell in a page such lies that it may take a quarto to refute them.

[AUG.] 24. I sent in [to] the War Department my letter upon Walter.

After dinner I went to the country by stage to see my family. Found them all well. A rainy day.

John Rodgers and his wife are staying there. So are Mrs. Rodgers and Jerusha, and Kate and Annie were there before. They have now nearly the whole family.

* * *

[AUG. 25] Lee came to me today and told me that he had read my letter upon the Walter case, sent in yesterday, and that while it was well stated, I had committed myself by using some expressions which would come within a question of a court martial. That I had spoken of certain conduct as being disgraceful to those who committed it and those who tolerated it. He advised me, therefore, to say to Drinkard that I wished to change some words, that it was evident the letter was hastily written, as it was in the handwriting of two persons, myself and my clerk.

I asked him whether Drinkard was at the office. He said he was. So I went at once to the department and asked the Acting Secretary to let me have the letter in order that I might look at it, with a view to taking out some expressions which I believed might be too strong. I told him that he, of course, understood that I felt strongly upon this matter and that I wished still to speak always in the properly respectful terms which are due from a subordinate to his superior officer.

He gave me the letter, saying that he had intended to take it to the President, that he should do it tomorrow. But he thought, as it was to be cabinet day, he would not be able, and that therefore I might keep it till such hour as I might choose.

Bringing it home, I showed it to Lee, who read it with me and advised me to take out some expressions, to omit some parts which he said could add nothing to the strength of the argument while they showed feeling and temper which would injure me. So I have again gone over this long letter and have taken out some things.

Buell⁴⁷ tells Lee that I am mistaken in regard to his opinions, that I am right generally, though I have made too much of some small points; that I ought pay no more attention to Walter than to a dog in the streets; that the Secretary, the Department, is the responsible party, and that to it should all my words be addressed.

This is true, no doubt, but it is difficult to write to the Department, treating all its acts in respectful terms.

[AUG.] 26. I had the letter to the Secretary copied with the changes which I made in it last night by which, by the advice of John Lee, I made it more respectful and more fitting for the address of an officer to the Secretary of War, while I took from it none of its strength.

I took it in to Drinkard this morning and thanked him for having given me the opportunity to revise it. I also spoke to Major Buell, asking him to read this, as he had read much of the other correspondence. He promised to do so if he got the opportunity.

* * *

[AUG. 30] I may have the model of *Freedom*, for the top of the dome, by Crawford, set up in the old Hall of Reps. Here is a stereographic of it.⁴⁸ It is 20 feet in height.

* * *

[AUG.] 31ST. I received this evening a dispatch from Major Delafield, Superintendent of West Point, telling me that one of the cadet candidates upon the list at large had failed again in the examination for admission, after having failed in June and been given another trial.

I went up to call upon Drinkard, Acting Secretary, to ask his advice, as I had received an intimation from him some days ago to be on the lookout, as it was understood that in case of such a failure, the President would appoint John.

He was not in, and I came home and wrote a letter to the President, informing him that I had the information and was presenting to his consideration the name of my son. I wrote a similar letter to Drinkard, saying also that I applied with some hopes of success, after the encouragement given me in June for the first vacancy, and this is a vacancy in the list at large.

1ST SEPTEMBER. These letters I delivered, one at the President's house and the other to Drinkard in person, this morning. Drinkard promised

⁴⁷ Don Carlos Buell was in the Adjutant-General's office of the War Department. He later served as a Union general during the early years of the Civil War.

⁴⁸ See illustration on page 347.

to attend to it. He afterwards sent me word that the President declined acting until he had official information.

A telegraph was sent to West Point from the Engineer Department, and in the evening came one from Delafield in reply, giving the names of the rejected. This I took to Drinkard at his house, and he said he expected to see the President early in the morning and that the appointment would be made, he supposed.

[SEPT.] 2ND. This morning the President declined to make an appointment until he saw the official returns made in the regular way. However, Drinkard tells me that he said distinctly that upon receiving this, he would make the appointment of my son. That he sometime since told him that "if one of the at large candidates failed, it would be a good opportunity to appoint Captain Meigs' son," and that this morning he distinctly understood that he would do it in due time.

* * *

[SEPT. 3] My poor boy has been in a great state of excitement all this time. He is very anxious to go and has hoped so confidently that he or I would be called today. Through it all, though, I was not yet sure of it, that politicians are slippery persons, and that until I had the appointment in my hand, I was not sure of it.

* * *

[SEPT.] 5TH. This morning, the official papers have arrived from West Point giving the information which the President wished before acting. He made the appointment of my son as a cadet to West Point. He said he wished to hand it to me himself. Therefore, the Acting Secretary of War, Drinkard, advised me to go to the White House, though he thought the President would, perhaps, before I could get there after the appointment was made, go to the State Department, . . .

I found that the President had gone and would not be back for some time. So I went home and returned after a couple of hours, [when] I was received. He handed me a paper, saying, "Captain Meigs, it gives me great pleasure to hand you this appointment for your son to West Point. It would have given me pleasure to have done so sooner, but I could not make the appointment against the protest of my Secretary of War."

I thanked him and said that the Secretary had behaved generously in withdrawing his opposition upon the presentation of the case to him by me.

He said, "Yes, Floyd had behaved handsomely in this matter."

I replied that I acknowledged it and intended writing to him a letter in which I should express my opinion and my thanks.

He wished I would do so. "And I have to say to you again, as I have said before, that I wish that in your communications to the Secretary of War, you would, while expressing your opinions strongly and fully, use some conciliatory language."

I told him that I had frequently kept letters for the Department for a week, in order to be able to strike out of them all that looked like passions of feeling; that I knew that my only safety in this controversy was to keep my temper, and that I had endeavored to do so. That I felt deeply aggrieved by action of the Secretary of War and thought that I had acceded well, considering the provocation.

He did not agree with me in this, said that no man better than myself knew how to express himself and his views strongly and fully and clearly and yet to use language not offensive.

We parted with expression of thanks on my side and of good feeling on his.

* * *

[After receiving the appointment from the president, Meigs immediately took his son John to New York. The next day they continued on to West Point, where Meigs introduced his son to the superintendent. On September 7 John passed his examination, and the next day Meigs left him at West Point and returned to New York. He then spent the next few days in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, visiting pipe manufacturers and his parents.]

[SEPT. 12] Reached Washington at 5:45 p.m., and after getting home and leaving my baggage, I took the carriage at once and rode down to the country to see my wife and report progress. All well.

[SEPT.] 13. At home. Louisa came with me. I have suffered from toothache during the night and must go to the dentist.

* * *

[On his return, Meigs found an order from Drinkard, the acting secretary of war, ordering him to have Thomas Walter prepare the plans for heating the Post Office without delay. Walter also wrote to him that he was ready to proceed with the designs under Meigs' direction and that he was willing to have any of the drawings Meigs required sent to his office. Meigs, however, was concerned about Walter's ability to carry out the work, since "he has no knowledge of the principles upon which such work depends." On September 18, Meigs responded to Walter that he could not specify which drawings he needed, since he had no record of which ones Walter had taken 18 months earlier.]

[SEPT.] 14 AND 15. At work upon correspondence. I have been over the Capitol and its shops. The work is not going on as well as it should

do, as it would if I had the same intended authority I used to possess. I feel less interest in it, and I cannot drive it while I am taken up with the correspondence and disputation of the War Department, which ought to support me; in fact, is trying to defeat and embarrass me all the time.

* * *

[SEPT. 16] The paragraph from the *Star* is not far wrong. I do not like our benches. They do not work as well as I had hoped from the beauty of the drawings. And iron arms are too heavy.

[Printed material inserted.]⁴⁹

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]⁵⁰

[SEPT. 20] I wrote today to the Secretary (Acting) to ask his approval of my sending to West Point, for deposit in the drawing academy's gallery, the original materials of the pediment by Crawford. These are very valuable, being the originals and thus in fact better and more valuable than the marbles, which are more costly, but in a less pliable material, less likely to have the full expression and spirit of the artist.

At West Point, they will be preserved under the guardianship of the United States itself, to whom they belong, in a permanent institution. And they are useful to the cadets in the academy, giving them an opportunity to become acquainted with the best American sculpture. They are accessible to the artists of the country whose headquarters are in New York. They are seen by thousands of visitors from all parts of the United States who throng West Point for months in the summer, so that the place is peculiarly the proper place of deposit for them. They will be able to arrange them in their proper order, as they have a long room for the purpose.

I have had them packed for some time, ready to send, and today I sent a letter detailing the reasons for placing them at this institution, and the Acting Secretary, Drinkard, at once approved the proposition.

* * *

⁴⁹(1) An article from an unidentified newspaper describing the new arrangement of seats in the House chamber, with rows of benches replacing the desks and chairs. (2) An article from an unidentified newspaper, reporting that the loss from the fire at the Capitol machine shop totalled more than \$22,000, but that the machines would not be replaced because the Capitol extensions were nearly finished. The article concluded: "As very exaggerated reports of the damage to the public interests have gone abroad, we have made inquiries, with the above result."

⁵⁰An unidentified newspaper article (probably from the *Washington Star*, according to Meigs' comment above), reporting the removal of desks from the House chamber and their replacement with benches. It noted that Meigs did not particularly like the sample benches, which the article described as not beautiful but "strong and durable."

[Printed material inserted.]⁵¹

[SEPT.] 21ST. Today I received from Mr. Walter some drawings of the Post Office, probably all that are needed for the purpose of studying the heating arrangements.

I spent the day partly in the dentist's chair and partly in the Capitol extension. I do not find that we are doing a great deal of work there, but still the keeping of such an organization as I am obliged to have there is costly. The work is spread over so vast a space. We are getting short of money.

The work in the halls is going on, and we are detained for want of cast iron standards for the benches and for valves for the registers.

* * *

[SEPT. 21 CONT.] Decided today upon the style of upholstering the seats of the House of Representatives.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]⁵²

[SEPT. 27] Mr. Heebner came here today as I was going to the Post Office to make some measurements of the depths of the cellars and the rooms for boiler vaults. He says that Mr. Walter is engaged in making a review of some of my reports, particularly that in answer to the demand for the manner in which I proposed to spend the money available for the Capitol extension. That he has all the papers which I sent to the department placed at his disposal. That he is preparing something to be submitted by the War Department to the Attorney General. It is, he thinks a statement that I have spent and made money in a way not authorized by the appropriation. That I have, for instance, spent money on bronze railings which are, as it will be attempted to show, a violation of the law prohibiting money being spent upon sculpture. That I have spent money upon the seats in the House of Representatives which ought to have been paid for out of some other appropriation. Etc.

He has also entered into a plan with Provost, Rice and others to get a resolution passed by Congress for refitting the columns of the Capitol extension to be got from Italy or from any quarry the contrac-

⁵¹ An article from an unidentified newspaper reporting that the loss from the fire at the Capitol machine shop totalled more than \$22,000, and that the machines would not be replaced because the Capitol extension was so nearly finished.

⁵² A dispatch to the New York *Tribune*, dated September 21, 1859, reporting that the War Department had approved Meigs' recommendation that Rice, Baird and Heebner be allowed to furnish monolithic shafts for the Capitol porticos from other American quarries than the one in Lee, Massachusetts.

tors might elect. He now advocates Italian marble for the columns and wishes to have them made in 4 pieces. This is Rice's plan.

Heebner says that he reproached him with the change, his former opposition to the columns [monolithic] and his opposition to Italian marble, but that Walter said he was always in favor of Italian, in fact, but was so situated that he could not express his views frankly; that it would be better now to let the past take care of it. Etc.

All this does not mollify Heebner, who told him that if he and Rice had acted properly, he would by this time have had the greater part of the columns here.

Bigler has been here, too, and with Mr. Walter went to see the President, in which they did not succeed. The honorable senator is loud in his complaints of something which I have done in regard to the ventilation of the Senate Chamber.

Walter prophesies failure in the ventilation of the House of Representatives. I find all the clerks are talking against whatever is being there done, criticizing the seats, etc. One of them, Mr. Buck,⁵³ was finding great fault to Mr. Denham the other day, telling him that he understood the panels weighed some 3 to 6 tons each. Denham told him to look at them and judge for himself and not to give his credence to such tales. He thought, too, that the ventilation was to be very bad, but acknowledged that he did not know that it was right and took his opinions from others than myself, who am responsible.

It is singular to see such ill feeling got up by this rascal Walter.

* * *

[OCT. 3] I determined to have the arms of the seats of the House of Representatives painted of a Florentine bronze color. This work is going on.

* * *

[OCT.] 4TH Abstract of payrolls for September. . . .

Cap. Cost	
Mr. Walter	375.
Bricklayers, plasterers, etc.	979.62
Receivers, etc.	1,383.62
Painters	1,277.94
Ornamental plasterers	1,139.91
Carpenters	2,857.62
Laborers	2,994.49
Smiths, machinists, etc.	1,309.65
Engineers, clerks, etc.	796.50

⁵³Daniel Buck was the clerk in charge of files of the House.

	\$13,114.35
Dome	
Foremen, carpenters, etc.	803.33
* * *	

[OCT. 14] Went to the Capitol to see Mr. Vallandigham,⁵⁴ the member from the State of Ohio. Succeeded in defeating Mr. Lewis Campbell. He wished to be informed as to the arrangements for the new hall, saying that he intended to defeat them.

* * *

[OCT. 18] There is a strange riot going on at Harpers Ferry.⁵⁵ It is reported that a mob has taken possession of the armory, stopped the trains of cars and shot several persons. The report at first was that the negroes had risen and that the abolitionists had taken the place.

Probably the fact is that some riot among the workmen discharged from the armory has taken place and the whole thing has been exaggerated. At the same time, the President has sent up a detachment of marines from this place and ordered 3 companies of troops from Fort Monroe, under the command of Robert Lee. The thing sounds too improbable to be believed, and yet it is true.

* * *

[OCT. 19] The riot at Harpers Ferry is over. Bob Lee, with a detachment of marines led by Major Russell and Lieutenant [Israel] Green, took the fire engine house, into which the rioters, some 18 in number, had been driven by the rifles of the marines by storm. It seems that they were only 22 in number originally and that 15 of them were killed. Only 3 escaped uninjured. The affair is a wonderful example of the ease with which a few determined men or fanatics can at any time in every peaceful society throw everything into confusion. They held for two days the United States Armory, disturbed the whole country, brought over 1,000 troops, volunteer and regular, into motion, and at last were taken prisoners in their citadel by 20 marines. The number of the storming party did not exceed 20.

I had a visit this morning from Mr. [John G.] Chapman, the painter from Rome. He came to see me to tell me the condition of the works of Crawford upon the doors. He says that they were more than sketched, that they were massed out, and that his man, a German, can finish them, not as Crawford could, but better than any American now living can. That the artists of all countries in Rome are ready to give

⁵⁴Clement L. Vallandigham (1820–1871), Democrat of Ohio, served in the House of Representatives, 1858–1863.

⁵⁵On October 16, John Brown had seized the arsenal at Harpers Ferry.

advice and labor to assist in completing them. That the feeling in favor of Crawford is very strong in Rome. He was a man highly esteemed, both personally and as an artist, and his early death when in the beginning of the success of his career excited great sympathy.

I had, though, an interesting conversation with him and advised him to see the Secretary of War and speak with him upon this subject, that I had referred it to him, but that I thought his advice might be of greater influence than mine. I had advised that Mrs. Crawford be permitted to finish these doors.

He says that Rogers' doors are of a kind to be popular at home, though without much finish and detail; and though not as high as works of art as Crawford's would have been, they will be probably more popular.

* * *

[OCT. 20] I opened the bids today for the ceilings of the stairways of the Capitol. There are 4 of them. The 4 are alike, except in some small details of size.

The bids by Wood and Barrett of Philadelphia, the Architectural Iron Works of New York, Janes, Beebe, Kirtland and Co. of New York, and Ellis and Brother of this place were all from parties experienced in such works—parties whose business is to make reliable estimates for which they pledge their credit and upon which they risk their money. And yet the differences were extraordinary.

Janes, Beebe, Kirtland and Co. bid \$1,125 for each of the 4 ceilings, \$4,500. The Architectural Iron Works were a little higher. Ellis and Brother bid \$16,000 for the 4. Wood and Barrett offer about \$27,600 for the 4.

This is curious. After reading the bids before the competitors, I said, "Gentlemen, you should not be surprised or much blame an engineer if he sometimes makes mistakes in the estimate for a difficult and complicated work and when you estimate a bid for work in your own business, in one line only, make such differences as this."

[OCT.] 21. Drawing up contract for the signature of Janes, Beebe and Co. for the ceilings.

Received today from one Heinisch, a German bronze worker in the shop, engaged upon the doors of the Senate, a complaint against Lassalle, the foreman. It seems they had a quarrel, and Lassalle struck him. This led to his leaving the work and coming to me and complained that Lassalle had treated him thus and also that he neglected his duty, discouraged the men from industry, told them they would get no credit for working here. And much more of the same; that he

left his shop and went home to sleep two or 3 hours every day in the summer. Etc., etc.

I took down the charges and placed them in the hands of Mr. Talcott to investigate. I fear that there is some truth, though much malice in these charges. I have never felt proper confidence in Lassalle. But I have not been able to get a better man to take charge of the work. I am sure it has not gone on with the economy desirable and proper. But I could do no better with the material I had at my disposal. The job having been started, it seemed best to put an end to it.

* * *

[OCT.] 24TH. Wrote to ask the price of 3 mirrors for the President's room.

On Saturday night we discharged some 26 carpenters. The work at the Capitol is being finished.

* * *

[OCT.] 27TH. I have been for the past few days at work upon the annual reports of the various works under my charge. I find that I have spent in the past year which is ending the 30th of September last:

For Capitol extension	\$ 649,105.11
New dome	51,358.28
Post Office	185,875.21
Fort Madison	6,588.43
Washington Aqueduct	642,130.40
	<hr/>
Total spent in the year	\$1,535,057.43

The total expenditures upon the works from the beginning had been:

	Balance Asked	
Capitol extension	5,430,828.33	94,171.67
Post Office	1,008,116.21	41,883.79
New dome	268,614.79	431,385.21
Aqueduct	2,399,997.91	2.05
Fort Madison, since I took charge	31,441.58	3,918.62
	<hr/>	
	\$9,138,998.86	\$571,361.34

Of this, about \$600,000 (\$599,891.12) for the Capitol was spent by Mr. Walter before I took charge of the work. The exact figures are, leaving as spent by me since the first of January, 1853, \$8,539,107.74.

This is a large sum of money to pass through one man's hands. I thank God that no man could accuse me of having soiled my fingers with one cent of it.

Fort Madison	50,000.00
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I ask for the next year for the Capitol	
extension	500,000.00
Post Office	70,000.00
Aqueduct	500,000.00
	<hr/>
	\$1,120,000.00

I have today quite good portraits of Rives⁵⁶ and Brumidi.⁵⁷ The first, one of my assistant engineers and who built the Cabin John Bridge for me so far as it has gone. The other, the artist and fresco painter who has directed the rich decoration for the better rooms of the extension of the Capitol. He painted the Agricultural room, ceilings of the Senate and the House of Representatives, the Military and Naval Committee rooms of the north wing, the Raphaelesque corridor, the post office of the Senate, the antechamber of the Senate, and designed the bronze railings of the private stairways of the House of Representatives and Senate.

He is full of genius and talent, designs with a fertility which is astonishing to me. A Roman of 1/2 Greek extraction. A captain of cavalry in the Roman revolution, obliged to leave his country upon the defeat of the revolutionists by the French. He painted for the Church of St. Paul, some of the oil portraits of the popes which have been executed in mosaic for the walls of the church. He painted the altar piece for the new Church of Aloysius here.

[OCT.] 28TH. Mr. Denham went today to the Treasury to get the money for a requisition sent to the War Department about the 20th instant, and not finding it there, he called at the War Department to see whether it had been overlooked.

Mr. Reese, the requisition clerk, told him that it had been made out and that it was in the room of the Secretary of War, who had not signed it. He seemed to think that it was intentionally withheld and advised him to see Mr. Drinkard, Chief Clerk, who was acting as Secretary of War in the absence of the Secretary himself, who has gone to Harpers Ferry to look after the excitement about the Brown's case.

Denham declined, saying that he did not think he should interfere, for if the money was withheld, it was for the department and Captain Meigs to settle that matter. He had called only informally, as a clerk.

However, it ended in his seeing Mr. Drinkard, who said that the Secretary refused to sign the requisition. And upon Denham attempting, in answer to Drinkard's talk, to show the awful consequences of such a course, and saying something about the impropriety of this act and not advising Captain Meigs, Drinkard became somewhat excited,

⁵⁶ See illustration on page 189.

⁵⁷ See illustration on page 39.

said that he did not see why Captain Meigs would not pay Mr. Emory's claim after having been so often ordered to do so.⁵⁸ That the Secretary would not sign the requisition, and he did not see how I was to get it if he would not sign it.

* * *

[OCT. 28 CONT.] I laughed at the folly of such a course: to leave a requisition unanswered while the money is being spent, to complain that I do not obey orders, and yet not to prefer charges to compel obedience or punish the guilty. The money must come to me or someone else, as the men who have been doing the work must be paid. But I suppose from the Secretary's taking such a course that he has made up his mind to make the break with the President and force him and torment him to relieve me. For this I am prepared.

I have done my duty, without fear, partiality or selfishness, defending the rights of others in my charge with the same zeal that I have defended my own and avoiding passion, anger and uncharitableness. I have been foully wronged by this Secretary, and I have not sought revenge.

* * *

[OCT.] 30TH. Today, in church, Captain Franklin⁵⁹ told me that he wished to see me after dinner. He came and said that the Secretary had requested him to go with him to Harpers Ferry the other day, saying that he wished to have an extended conversation with him upon public buildings and that he must not speak of it until he got back. He said little, however, seeming not to know how to approach the subject. He told him that he had difficulties with me from time to time and that they had now reached such a state that one of us must retire.

He did not speak unkindly of me, however, and finally put off the conversation until tomorrow at 11 a.m., when Franklin is to see him again.

Franklin said he came to me to tell me and what would be done in such a case, and wished to know whether there is some means of accommodating the affair.

I told him what had happened lately, the Emory affair, the orders for the boilers for the Post Office. That I could not retire from my position or do anything that would lower it or myself in my own eyes

⁵⁸Meigs refused to pay Matthew Emory for work on the Post Office until he had the drawings and could determine just how much Emory was actually owed. Walter was still in possession of the drawings and would not return them.

⁵⁹William B. Franklin (1823–1903) was a captain in the Topographical Engineers. He was a member of the scientific club with Meigs. In 1859 he succeeded Meigs as superintendent of the Capitol extension and dome.

or those of the world. That the Secretary, I believed, had been imposed upon by lies until he was entangled with Walter and with these Thomas and Robinson people in regard to the Post Office heating, that he could not well withdraw. That he hated me and would have removed me long ago had he had the power. That I suppose he must now have made up his mind that one of us should retire. That I had for a long time held that one of the 3—Walter, the Secretary or myself—must go, and that as they were together and I was of less importance to the administration than the Secretary, I had felt that I would be probably the one to go. That I was, in fact, only prepared to leave with credit. Etc.

Franklin says that he would get out of the affair if he could, that he does not relish the task. He feels that it is a great wrong to me. He will see the Secretary tomorrow if he keeps his appointment with him, and after that will see me again. In the meantime, he wishes me to say nothing of what he has communicated.

* * *

[OCT. 31] I heard from Wright, to whose house I went, with his wife, who was calling at ours too late to return alone, that it was reported in the street this evening that I was relieved from the Capitol extension and that Franklin was to take my place.

Major Sibley came to see us this evening; told me as he went away that he had heard the same thing.

In the evening, Franklin came to report the result of his interview with the Secretary, who he said plunged at once in _____ ways. Said that he had always been thwarted by me; that I had published an advertisement of his days of the new administration in the interregnum between his and Davis' tenure of the War Department. This, Franklin seemed to think, was a place where the shoe pinched. He told him, too, that when he recommended anybody for a subordinate place, I always made difficulty.

Franklin asked him whether it could not be explained, whether it might not be some misunderstanding. The Secretary said no, it had gone too far, and referred to my last letter in regard to the case of Mr. Emory as proving this. He said he wished him to get that letter from Mr. Drinkard and read it.

Franklin told him that he had great objections to the duty, that he did not feel prepared, that he had other objections, and that one great one was that he thought I was the proper man to finish my own works. At this, the Secretary got very angry and closed the conversation at once, telling him that he had determined to order him upon it and that he should issue the order today. He told him that he intended

relieving me from the Capitol and Post Office but not from the aqueduct.

Drinkard met Franklin and told him that he supposed, as he had his conversation with him, that he would now issue the order at once; that he was going to see the President immediately about it. Franklin, however, says that he knows that he stayed at the office all afternoon and did not go to the President's. He thinks that he has not got the President's permission and that he may intend to go so far that the President cannot countermand the order.

* * *

[OCT. 31 CONT.] So it stands. I feel less regret than I thought I should. I have done my duty, and I have been tormented, and completed, so far that no man can claim them, many great works. All this is of most interest, but the building is done.

I offered to Franklin my advice and assistance to induct him into his new position.

NOV. 1ST. I stayed at home today to see Franklin, who expected to hear from the Secretary and get his orders. About 11:30 a.m. he came to say that he had heard there was some difficulty and that the matter was to come before the cabinet meeting at noon, that he thought I had better go to see the President. I told him that I had nothing to say to the President; I did not care enough for the thing to go. That they could act by their own choice; I had done what was right, and if they acted without hearing me, it was well. I could not ask a favor or make a personal application to the President upon the subject.

I wrote a letter, however, to the President and sent it around by Thomas [Allen]. The messenger at the door said he would give it to the President at once, that he was just after coming in from the State Department.

Washington, 1 November, 1859

To the President of the United States

Sir: It is commonly reported that an order has been written, if not already issued, relieving me from certain public works.

In justice to myself, I ask that my last letters to the War Department upon Mr. Emory's extra claim for granite work of the 22nd ultimo and upon the bids for boilers of the Post Office of the 19th ultimo be read before you finally decide the case.

I have endeavored simply to do my duty to protect the interests of the United States, in all things under my charge and while expressing plainly my views, even when differing from

the War Department, to give the department no just ground of offense.

I am, with grateful acknowledgments for kindness and courtesy received from you and with the highest respect, your obedient servant.

M. C. Meigs

Corps of Engrs.

I heard nothing more for some time, and after dinner I rode up to the Rock Creek Bridge.⁶⁰ Here they are putting in the wooden bracing of the upper part of the structure.

On coming home, I found a note from Captain Franklin, in which he says that he finds the cabinet meeting ended in smoke, that he had hoped it would have put a stop to this thing, but that he has the order to receive from me the works and property, and supposes that I have the corresponding papers. I have not, however. Perhaps they may come tomorrow. Perhaps they do not know enough of my propriety to send to me the order relieving me from the charge of some millions of the property of the United States.

Major Lee came to see me this evening in high indignation. He says that he sees Franklin is very much elevated by the prospect, that he makes a weak objection only and does not put his protest against taking my work in writing and that he is trying to carry water on both shoulders.

I see myself that he is elated a little at the work, and I cannot blame him, for it is a great work, worthy of ambition. He does not see fully the danger to which he is exposed and is young and ambitious and no doubt thinks himself capable for it. I suppose and hope he is. He has behaved honorably, and I must adhere to my intent and offer to give him my best assistance to start fair.

NOV. 2ND. I received in the morning mail today the order of the Secretary of War relieving me from duty in charge of the public buildings. It is as follows:

[longhand transcription follows]

Washington Nov. 1, 1859

Sir.

You are hereby relieved from duty as Engineer in charge of the construction of the Capitol and Post Office extensions and the new Dome.

⁶⁰The bridge that carries Pennsylvania Avenue over Rock Creek Park was built to also contain pipes for the aqueduct.

You will accordingly, turn over all the buildings, materials, tools, [books] papers, and other public property connected with these works [complete?] with the funds remaining in your hands, to Captain William B. Franklin of the Topographical Engineers, who has been assigned the duty in your stead.

Very respectfully

Your obdt servt

John B. Floyd

Secretary of War

Captain Montgomery C. Meigs

Corps of Engineers, in charge of Capitol and Post Office extensions and new Dome.

[shorthand transcription resumes]

I wrote hastily a short address of farewell to read to all foremen, whom I directed to be assembled in one of the rooms of the north wing, and when Franklin called by appointment, I took him through the Post Office and the Capitol and dome, explaining to him all that I could in a short time.

I got the foremen in the antechamber of the Senate and got Mr. Moore to read to them the paper which I had prepared and which is upon the other page. They seemed to feel regret at the parting. Many of these strong men looked upon me with moistened eyes; and, for myself, I could not trust my voice to speak or to read what I had written. Mr. Harkness, the [sworn] measurer, made a reply for the men.

I then took Franklin through the shops, and after some business, we drove home.

[Printed material inserted.]⁶¹

Exactly 7 years ago, on the second of November, 1852, I received in Philadelphia orders to report immediately to Washington to take charge of the services and projects for bringing water into Washington. On the 3rd I reached this city, and I at once went to work.

⁶¹(1) An article from the *National Intelligencer* of November 3, 1859, reporting on the transfer of responsibility for construction on the Capitol, Post Office, and dome from Meigs to Franklin. It printed the statement written by Meigs that was read to the foremen and other workers. (See Appendix, pages 807–9 for his statement and the response by John C. Harkness.) The article concluded: "At the conclusion of these remarks, those assembled were presented by Capt. Meigs to Capt. Franklin, when with many regrets they took leave of their late Superintendent, whom they held in so high and just esteem." (2) A letter reprinted from a San Francisco newspaper written by a visitor to Washington who described and praised the Capitol extension and its decoration. (3) Brief articles from the *New York Tribune* and *Washington Star* reporting the transfer of responsibility for the Capitol from Meigs to Franklin.

The result was the appropriation for the aqueduct, which is nearly completed. And in the course of time, upon the 29th of April of the next year, 1853, I was placed in charge of the Capitol extension; and the Post Office extension followed, upon the appropriation being made by Congress. A new dome, also.

I have done my duty. I know that I have endeavored to do it, and I have worked hard for the intervening time. I have held a great power and great trust. I have been tormented, though, and assailed by interested parties from time to time.

I have for the last two years been so tormented by attacks of the Secretary of War, pushed on by his own resentments and by intrigues of Walter, that I would long since have received orders relieving me honorably from my charge with pleasure. I have so told the President more than once, and I have said the same to my friends in the Senate. I also told them that I felt that I had been placed in charge of a great public interest and that I would not weakly desert my post; that I had done my duty; that I had a right to the support of the President and of the department instead of the position and persecution which I received from the Secretary, and that I would not ask to be relieved.

I now retire, feeling that I am freed from a great labor and a great responsibility which I have met with honor and fidelity; that I have carried these works so far that no one can really take from me the satisfaction and the name they have made for me, occupation enough to prevent me from suffering from idleness, though not enough to fatigue me.

By a curious accident or happy intention upon the part of the editors of the *Intelligencer*, the following article appears in the same paper which announced my relief.

[Printed material inserted.]⁶²

[longhand transcription beneath the clipping about Anderson]

Is this rascality or craziness? He brought his designs to me before I entered upon my duties in charge of the Capitol, abusing Mr. Walter and Mr. Fillmore and urging me to employ him. I never copied from his drawings the least line or sketch!

[longhand before several pages of photographs]

⁶²(1) An article from the Philadelphia *North American and U.S. Gazette* of November 4, 1859, declaring that Meigs' transfer was caused by a disagreement with the War Department and that Meigs' mistake was in wanting to control so many public works, which caused professional jealousy. This article was copied in *The States* of November 5, 1859. Beneath the clipping Meigs wrote in longhand: "States since I am out is willing to copy an article in my favor." (2) An unidentified article (probably the *National Intelligencer* piece Meigs mentioned above) about architect Charles Frederick Anderson, stating that his design for the Capitol extension was being "carried out in a most mutilated form."

The following photographs taken to record the condition of the Capitol Extension, Dome and Post Office at the end of October date of annual report serve now to illustrate the condition in which I turned these works over to Captain Franklin.

[shorthand transcription resumes]

* * *

3RD NOV. Today I went to the Engineer Department in order to report verbally my return to the Engineer Department entirely, as I have now been relieved of all works which were under their department.⁶³ I found General Totten, Captain Wright and Mr. Prime [?] there.

* * *

[NOV. 5] Wright has sent, at my request, the *Intelligencer* content of my address to the foremen of mine in the engineer posts. I wish as many as possible of our officers to read it.

* * *

[NOV. 5 CONT.] . . . I went to the club at Dr. Craig's. I met the whole club there: Bache, Henry, Taylor,⁶⁴ Franklin, Schaeffer, etc. Franklin had much to say about his position. He said that Mr. Walter had come down today after I left and was very kind. He showed Franklin a set of designs for the construction of the lower part of the corridor which hides the masonry under the dome and wished him to sign it, saying that then they could begin to photograph it and make ready to construct. This he did, as though it was a mere matter of course for the superintendent to sign whatever he brought to him.

Franklin desired time to look into it. Afterwards he suggested that there was some _____ in which this was necessary. Mr. Walter said it might be possible, that Franklin could make it a little lighter, but he had studied it with great care. Franklin, however, told him he would rather have a little more time to consider it.

Thus, he says, the affair begins already. He supposes that Mr. Walter, as an architect, must have something to say to the engineer. I told him he must read the instructions under which I acted and interpret them for himself.

I gave him also some account of the manners in which I had intended to construct the upper part and the lower part also of the dome,

⁶³ On the Capitol extension, Meigs reported directly to the secretary of war, but on the aqueduct he reported to the army's chief engineer and through him to the secretary of war.

⁶⁴ W.B. Taylor was assistant to George Schaeffer at the Patent Office and a member of the scientific club.

how far I had carried the studies, so that he could judge of what I had done and what Walter had done after he separated from me.

Ledyard told Annie [Macomb] today that the President held out for me, that all the cabinet opposed this act, until Floyd maintained that it was unprecedented for them to interfere in the disposition of such things, which belonged entirely to the head of the department, and gave them to understand that they must choose between him and me. Mr. and Mrs. Ledyard were highly indignant.

Mrs. [Canfield] met Jerusha and told her that her father, [General] Cass, was taken entirely by surprise, knew nothing about it, etc., meaning that he knew nothing of it until he met the question in cabinet.

[NOV.] 6TH. Today, after dinner, I walked with John Rodgers to the distributing reservoir. Coming back, I met Dr. Blake, who said that he had seen the President and wished to give me the result of his talk with him. He had told him that the removal of myself had caused great dissatisfaction outside.

[Printed material inserted.]⁶⁵

The President seemed to be annoyed. Said that he had adhered to me, for whom, he said, Dr. Blake knew he had a very high opinion, until I had placed him in a corner where he could not support me longer; that he was obliged to give me up or to give Mr. Floyd a very distinct intimation that he no longer wished to keep him in his cabinet; in fact, this means that Floyd had given him to understand that he must choose between us. He said that I had not obeyed an order, etc.; that I had been directed to call upon Mr. Walter for some drawings and had replied that any intercourse between us was impossible.

I explained the matter to Blake as it really occurred, and he said I had acted rightly. I will endeavor to get the truth to the President.

The President said that that man Walter ought to be removed at once, and Blake told him that he agreed with him and wished he would remove him at once. The President seemed much annoyed and swore a little about the affair and about Walter, expressed a high opinion and a liking for me, etc.

[Printed material inserted.]⁶⁶

⁶⁵ (1) An undated article from the *New York Times*, according to Meigs, reporting on his meeting with the workmen. (2) An article from the *National Intelligencer* of November 7, 1859, reporting on the new seating arrangement in the House chamber, with benches in the center and large tables on the sides for members who wished to write. It also discussed other preparations for the convening of Congress.

⁶⁶ Brief notices from the *Washington Evening Star* of November 3, 1859, and the *New York Tribune* of November 4, 1859, reporting on Meigs' removal from the Capitol extension and his replacement by Franklin.

[NOV.] 7TH. I went to the office today. Going over the Capitol, I found the work advanced. The tables have been received and placed in the House of Representatives, in which the men of the Clerk have nearly completed putting down the carpet.

Franklin seemed glad to see me, saying he had been wishing that I had come. He and Sonnemann were engaged upon a photograph of the machinery drawing of the dome, which Mr. Walter had referred him to as proving that I had approved the design for the lower part of the stylobate of the dome. I told him that this was not true. This was a drawing of the machinery, and upon it Mr. Sonnemann had copied a single section or part of the work which Mr. Walter had been drawing. The original drawing I had not seen, and there was not enough to show what was the intended construction. I had no plans and signed the drawing with no intention of being bound by this construction.

I had also a number of drawings of the stairs in the body of the dome, copies of the drawings which have been in the hands of Janes and Beebe and the work of which has been cast and is now being put up. This he had brought to Franklin to sign, telling him that they were already executed.

What is he after? Did he approve this? I told Franklin that he would find a drawing with my name upon it for all that I had approved. That object, I suppose, was to get his name upon these duplicates of copies and show that every superintendent signed, doing as he desired, that the architect remained the same, and the work was his; and perhaps after getting a set of photographs of this to disprove those which I had signed or even to erase my name from them altogether.

[NOV.] 8TH. At home studying for the performance of the boilers of the Capitol extension, etc. I find that they are capable of doing very good work, having worked as high as 9.8 pounds of water evaporated for each pound of anthracite consumed. This is not the average result. The average for 23 days in October was 8.17 pounds water, 11 pounds coal. They are capable, with careful firing, of doing as high duty as any boilers in use.

The coal consumed in heating the south wing of the Senate is, upon an average, 2.917 tons per day.

[Printed material inserted.]⁶⁷

⁶⁷ (1) An article from the *New York Herald* of November 7, 1859, claiming that Meigs was removed from the Capitol extension because he had rearranged the seating in the House of Representatives without authority. (2) An article from the *New York Tribune* with an Associated Press dispatch stating: "The cause of Capt. Meigs' removal is said to be his refusal to award a large contract for heating apparatus for the General Post Office to a party in Norfolk. The Norfolk party was warmly urged

The *Herald* is, as usual, wrong. I have the approval of the War Department to purchase the tables for this new arrangement of the Hall of Reps, costing about \$2,100. On the whole cost of the alterations, I have not cast up the cost of the changes, but they were done under a direct order of the House of Representatives, and the Secretary may disallow them if he chooses.

The Associated Press comes nearer to the truth now.

In summer, 0.818. Average for the year, $1\frac{1}{4}$, 1.2573 tons per day. And the total consumption for the year is 460 tons. This heats a building 1,350,000 cubic feet, and not only heats it but keeps the thick walls and arches ventilated all summer and free from condensation or moisture, which in the old Capitol in damp weather runs down in streams from the walls and the ceilings.

My wife has been made very indignant today by reading the letter in the *Herald*⁶⁸ which is on the preceding page. It reads at first sight as though I was a defaulter, but when read with some care, it appears to be a charge that the Secretary had differed from me as to the propriety of a certain expenditure and had called upon me to return money expended upon the public building and removed me because I was not rich enough to pay it.

None of this is true. I heard sometime since that Drinkard and Walter were preparing a case for the Attorney General, asking from him an opinion as to the propriety of my making the alterations in the House of Representatives out of the money appropriated for the construction of the Capitol, taking the ground that the House of Representatives had been turned over to Congress, I suppose. But I have heard nothing from this, so that I suppose they gave it up or the Attorney General threw cold water upon them.

Moreover, I have the approval of the acting Secretary, Drinkard, to my purchase of over \$2,000 worth of tables for the new arrangement of the Hall. This it would be difficult to stop against me. Should they attempt to stop my accounts, I have only to go to Congress for an appropriation to meet them. I take it Congress will be for the working order, and I have no doubt of the entire propriety of my expending the money in this way. I do not believe that the question will be raised.

* * *

by Gov. Floyd. Capt. Meigs' refusal was soon followed by his removal." (3) A brief note from the Philadelphia *Public Ledger & Daily Transcript* of November 10, 1859, stating: "The removal of Captain Meigs from the superintendence of the Capitol . . . is attributed to the old feud between him and Mr. Walter, the architect." The article called Meigs "a man of sterling integrity" in a position "where the temptations to use its influence for his own benefit were so great and the opportunities so many."

⁶⁸The article of November 7, 1859, stated: "The causes which led to Capt. Meigs' downfall are said to be founded in his failure to settle his accounts." It added that the secretary of war had required Meigs to return to the construction fund some \$50,000 used to refurbish the House chamber.

[NOV.] 9TH. I went to the office today in order to begin the work of sorting and designating the papers and books, etc., to be turned over to Captain Franklin, separating those which I retain. This is a labor which will occupy some time, and this first installment of it grates very harshly upon my feelings. I find myself looking over the index and abstracts of contents of letters written when I first took charge of the public buildings. I find them referring so much to matters in which I have a personal interest that it recalled the old memories, and it seemed a very great injustice to be obliged to turn them over to the custody of another, to lose the right to refer to them.

[Printed material inserted.]⁶⁹

I was obliged also to see something of the progress of the work in the drawing rooms upon the designs which I had left the working up of details. It is not pleasant to see these things going on under the direction of others, even when those others show a disposition to carry out my views and desires as far as possible.

* * *

[Nov. 9] I saw Dr. Blake, who came to tell me that he had had an interview yesterday with the President, who as usual professed the greatest kindness towards me, the highest esteem and respect for my ability, integrity, etc. Blake told him that I had professed to have no cause of quarrel with him; that I understood that he had defended me, etc. He then again returned to his expression that I had put him into such a fix that he could not do other than he had.

To this Blake replied by saying that I objected to this view of the case, that the Secretary of War had put the President in this fix, that I had done only my duty, etc.

The President said that he was surprised to find upon the return of the Secretary that I had disobeyed the order; that he thought, as a military man, I would not have done such a thing; that I might have put myself into a very serious trouble, etc.

Blake did not know enough of the facts to be able to reply to this. But it is evident that he has listened to some accusation of the Secretary that I disobeyed an order and has not therefore read intelligently and impartially my letters which called upon him to read before deciding. And now he talks to my friends about my having disobeyed an order

⁶⁹ An article from the *National Intelligencer* of November 10, 1859, containing the text of resolutions of respect for Meigs from the workmen at the Capitol, Post Office, and dome. The text of the article is in Appendix, page 809. (2) A small note from the *Washington Evening Star* of November 10, 1859, mentioning the workmen's resolution. Beside these clippings, Meigs wrote: "The official Constitution remains silent. Has not noticed my relief at all." [The *Washington Constitution*]

and thus will endeavor to persuade them that I have been treated very kindly and with great leniency.

I have no remedy for this until I can hear that such a cause is assigned by the Secretary in a way that I can take notice of it. This may be done perhaps by some of my friends asking the President to give his reasons, and then a court martial can be called for.

This seems to be a convenient way of getting rid of the danger and responsibility of a court martial, when the Secretary would be obliged to let all the papers come out. He accuses me to the President and condemns me to unheard indignity. Well, I believe in the wisdom and benevolence and justice alike of the Almighty. I believe that this is for good, though it is a trial just for the present. I do not see the good except in relief from my care and toil.

The resolutions upon a preceding page from the foremen and others employed upon the Capitol extension, etc., give the lie to the charge made against me by such men as spoke about me to the President, that I have been a military tyrant, rude and rough and harsh to my men. These are grateful memorials to me of the effect of my course upon those who have been associated with me. The original paper sent to me is signed by about 80 of the foremen and workmen. . . .

I have sent copies to my friends. Sent to the President. And I have also sent them to the *New York Tribune* and to the *Times*, though they had notice of this affair.

[NOV.] 10TH. Spent at the office, separating the papers for the change of masters.

Dr. Blake came to see me and told me of an interview with the President. I do not know but that I have, upon the preceding pages, spoken of this interview. But I have not time to read them over. He said that the President, as usual, expressed great regard and respect for me but that he was surprised that I should have disobeyed an order of the Secretary; that, as a military man, this might have put me into a very disagreeable position. Etc.

I have disobeyed no order; and if he has been persuaded to act upon such a charge without giving me an opportunity of defense, he has been disobeyed and equally an injustice has been done.

* * *

[NOV.] 12. Saturday. An article in the *New York Times*, which is upon the preceding page, is evidently from the War Department, cunningly published in an opposition paper in order that they may be able to disavow it. I have letters from Major Barnard and Cullum asking me if I had not better give them the data by which to answer it. I doubt

it is time for me to speak yet. The article does me no harm. Comments of the editor take off all the injury it might do. It is not official, though I have no doubt that it is from Drinkard and probably with the consent of the Secretary.

I think I had better leave the matter and work until I can, by some friend in the Senate, get an answer from the President as to whether this was the reason assigned and then ask for the opportunity of proving that the charge is false.

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]⁷⁰

[NOV.] 15. Brought today to Captain Franklin about \$31,000, balance of money in my hands for public buildings. . . .

* * *

[Meigs traveled to Maryland and then to Philadelphia for visits with family, from November 16 to 22.]

[NOV.] 23RD. I went to the office in the morning, and Dr. [Charles S.] Tripler came by appointment. I took him over the Capitol extension to show him the building and its ventilation and heating.

* * *

[Later on November 23, Meigs and two other men took a boat down the Potomac for several days of hunting. He returned to Washington on November 27.]

DEC. 1. To the office. Went through the Capitol. Our boilers at the Capitol are doing very well. They have a very high evaporating power.

* * *

[DEC.] 3. To the Capitol. Members are arriving.

I hear that Mr. Walter has just made an estimate of the cost of finishing the Capitol extension and puts it at \$1,500,000. Franklin told him he thought he had put certain of his paintings, etc., too high, and

⁷⁰ (1) An article from the *New York Times* of November 10, 1859, according to Meigs, stating that he was removed for refusing to obey an order from the secretary of war. Meigs noted "Not true" in the margin. The article then outlined the case of Meigs' refusal to pay Emory, failing to indicate his need to see the drawings to verify the amount owed. The article was followed by an editorial disclaimer indicating that it represented the views of one side only and that the paper could not vouch for its accuracy. Meigs filled the margins beside this article with comments and corrections. (2) An article from the *New York Times* of November 11, 1859, according to Meigs, approving of the removal of desks from the House chamber because it would force members to pay attention to debate instead of writing letters. In the margin Meigs corrected the estimate that the change cost \$80,000, stating that the cost was actually \$16,000.

Walter answered that he had made these estimates large in order to show extravagance on my part. Franklin told him that he thought this was hardly the proper thing for them to do; they should estimate what they thought the work would cost.

[DEC.] 4. Sunday. To church.

[DEC.] 5TH. I went to the Capitol to see the first meeting of the new Congress. The hall looks well with the new arrangement of seats, better than it did under the old arrangement.

I saw some of my acquaintances among the Members and Senators. No organization was effected today, and there is no prospect of one for many days to come.⁷¹

* * *

[DEC.] 7. I went again to the Capitol and spent the day in the gallery of the House of Representatives, which is crowded. The debate was an excited one upon disunion and upon a book which some of the Northern members have been endeavoring to circulate in the South, a book written by a Mr. Helper, a native of North Carolina,⁷² and addressed to the non-slaveholders of the South. Bitter crimination and recrimination are the order of the day. Threats of disunion, etc. The John Brown invasion has caused a great excitement in the South.

[DEC.] 8. I went to see Mr. Davis today. He arrived on Monday evening, I believe. He was very friendly, says that my affair of the Department cannot be allowed to rest as it is, but he would prefer that it should come up in some other way than by being called up directly by himself. Thinks that the call [for] the papers in the case of the heating of the Post Office, etc., will give an opportunity for examining the whole matter.⁷³

[DEC.] 9. Today we dined at the President's. Louisa was taken in by Captain Franklin. The dinner was handsome. The President seemed in very good humor with himself and the ways of the world. He placed me near him and gave Louisa a post of honor. Seemed to be inclined to make himself agreeable to us. Attempted some joke about my being difficult to govern, which I did not take up, as I thought it best to let him see that his treatment of me was not a thing to be joked about.

⁷¹Not until nearly two months later, on February 1, 1860, was the House of Representatives able to elect a speaker, William Pennington (1796-1862), Republican of New Jersey, who served in the House, 1859-1861.

⁷²See note 41 on page 609.

⁷³The Senate Public Buildings Committee asked the War Department for these papers.

He said he would be very grateful when relieved from his toil and responsibility and that no criminal could leave the prison at the expiration of his term with more joy than he should leave the White House. And yet he complained that they will not cease to assert that he is a candidate for re-election. Nothing he could say or write would put an end to this accusation. I believe, myself, that he looks forward to the chance of re-election with some hope. The fact is that no one places any confidence in the word of the old man.

* * *

[DEC. 10] The Secretary of War has ordered Captain Franklin to make a bargain with Janes, Fowler, Kirtland and Co. of New York (The successors of Janes, Beebe and Co., who have done so much work in iron for the Capitol under my direction, very skillful persons and very reliable) for the iron and iron work of the whole dome at seven cents per pound.

I have been in the habit of buying the heavy casting of the framework of the dome at $2\frac{3}{8}$ cents, fitting them up in the shop here at a cost which I do not think could have exceeded $\frac{1}{2}$ cent, making, say, $3\frac{3}{8}$ cents in place.

The inexpensive casting of the covering of this framework, difficult forms to mold, I have got, including fitting and putting up, from Janes and Beebe at six cents per pound. Now they get a contract at 7, including both.

Mr. Fowler, their agent, lately endeavored to persuade Captain Franklin that his bargain with me at 6 cents included the whole dome. Now he gets from the Secretary 7. As there are, by their estimate, 15,000,000 pounds of iron in the dome, of which not quite 4 millions have already been cast, there would remain 11,000,000, which at 7 cents amount to \$770,000; at 6 cents, \$660,000; making this a clear gift of \$110,000 of public money over and above the price at which the same party was anxious to do the work.

Can these things be and not be exposed to break up this cabinet? There was no competition, no advertisement. Such a contract is in direct violation of the law which prohibits making contracts in the District of Columbia without 60 days' advertisement.

As Mr. Drinkard was very much engaged in the letting, he came down to the office to tell Franklin that the Secretary wished all bids which came in by 10 a.m. sent up at once. Orders had been given to Franklin to invite bids from two parties only. Only one bid, Janes and Company's, had thus been received; and then, against the advice of Captain Franklin, the officer in charge, it was accepted, and Franklin was ordered to make the bargain.

Does not someone make money out of this? Does this man give out such contracts at such prices without making some profit out of them?

* * *

[DEC.] 13. Mr. Heebner called to see me. He has brought his wife down to show her the Capitol, etc.

* * *

[DEC.] 14. I wrote today to Captain Franklin, sending him a copy of the estimate made in August 1856 for completing the Capitol extension, with remarks upon the estimate lately made by Mr. Walter.

I paid for the boiler plate ring which surrounds the dome above the lower story $6\frac{1}{4}$ cents per pound, in place, riveted and finished.

* * *

[DEC.] 17. Captain Macomb arrived this morning. He looks well but he has had a hard journey over the plains. He has been upon the waters of the Colorado with General West. He has been absent two years and 10 months. Anna received her husband with open arms.

* * *

[DEC.] 19TH. I went this morning to Baltimore. Kate, Mrs. Henry Rodgers, was going under the escort of Mr. Hodge. I wished to see Poole and Hunt in order to [shore?] them up, to break up this contract of the Secretary's for the dome at such an extravagant price. I had a long talk with Mr. Hunt and Mr. Sampel, the monied partner of the firm.

* * *

[DEC. 19 CONT.] Messrs. Poole and Hunt will offer, they say, to do the rough casting of the dome at $2\frac{7}{8}$ cents per pound and will press the matter so as to expose the affair.

I told them that if they did this, the present contract in violation of the law would be broken up, declared void, and that they then would have a chance in the proper open competition which would ensue.

* * *

[DEC. 20] Great anxiety is felt at the state of public affairs. The House of Representatives is still with organization, the members talking freely of dissolution of the Union. All loyalty seems to have been driven from the minds of members. I cannot believe that there is any danger to this government.

[Printed material inserted.]⁷⁴

* * *

[DEC. 21] I gave Annie today a check for \$25 to buy a dress as a Christmas present for my wife, who needs one, I think. My dear Louisa is very self-denying, purchasing little for herself, but she is not able to save money for me. So long as I have it, she will come for it. We spend, in keeping up this establishment and in clothing and schooling for the children and herself, our whole pay of about \$2,500 every year and for gifts of about \$400, making \$2,900, and the 100 or so which for the last two or 3 years I have received for professional advice. Making, say, \$3,000.

Mrs. Rodgers, Louisa's mother, pays for herself and Jerusha's board \$600. Annie, for herself and family, has paid \$600 also, I believe, making \$4,200. The rent for the house, which belongs to Mrs. Rodgers, is not included in this but it is a part of the expenses. And Mrs. Rodgers spends her whole income, which is about \$1,600, upon herself and Jerusha and the support of her daughter who is in the insane asylum.⁷⁵

* * *

[Printed material inserted.]⁷⁶

[DEC. 23] So my heating apparatus for the Capitol extension is completed and turned over to the care of the Senate and House. I have made inquiries and can hear of no draft in any part of either hall. All seem to be satisfied with the ventilation and the heat.

I went around the Senate chamber the other day and found the thermometers in the galleries and upon the floor agree, ranging from 69 $\frac{1}{4}$ to 70, except with one or two which, being different from others quite close to them, I think must have some defect in the tubes and give

⁷⁴ A collection of various newspaper clippings from the fall of 1859. They include: (1) An unidentified article dated November 15, 1859, which asserted: "the Capitol is brightened up and much advanced in the interior arrangements since the last session," describing the decoration of the corridors and staircases and the changed seating arrangement in the House chamber. (2) A letter to the *Philadelphia Ledger*, dated September 3, 1859, which described the large numbers of people who visited the Capitol to view Crawford's statues for the pediment, and the plaster model of the Statue of Freedom, which were displayed in the old House chamber (now National Statuary Hall). (3) An article from the *New York Tribune* of November 16, 1859, declaring: "It is alleged, in vindication of the act [replacing Meigs], that Capt. Meigs had been favored with this special service more than double the usual time, to the exclusion of other officers equally meritorious. . . ." [See p. 698 note 11.] Jan. 17, 1859) (4) An article from the *Washington Constitution* of November 15, 1859, praising the new seating arrangements in the House of Representatives. (5) An unidentified article stating that Meigs' removal stemmed from a "refusal to obey the instructions of the War Department."

⁷⁵ Elizabeth Rodgers (1815–1898).

⁷⁶ An excerpt from Senate proceedings of December 22, 1859, that contained a letter from Franklin turning the heating and ventilation apparatus of the north wing over to the Senate. He also recommended that the staff who were experienced in maintaining the equipment should be retained by the Senate to ensure that it continued to function properly.

incorrect readings. One of them was at 74½, and those on both sides of it were not over 70½.

The House of Representatives has fully tested the heating and ventilation again, for the galleries have been crowded all day and every day since the meeting of Congress, and after a long day's session the air is so pure that on leaving the hall, any difference in the freshness of the air is imperceptible.

* * *

[DEC. 28] I hear that the models of Crawford's figures have been well repaired and set up at West Point.

* * *

[DEC. 28 CONT.] The club met at Professor Bache's tonight. Captain Franklin tells me that he has sent in a protest against the bargain made by the Secretary's order with Janes, Fowler, Kirtland and Co. for the [iron] work of the dome at 7 cents. That Drinkard has sent down to get the price at which I had bought iron work for the dome. That no notice has yet been taken of the paper he sent in. He says that he has not any written agreement with this paper, no contract, that none is wanted. He has distinct orders to get the work from them, and they have the drawings of the lower part of the dome upon which they are now at work.

* * *

[longhand transcription follows]

[DEC. 31] End of year 1859, a year to me of much labor, much I hope accomplished but which leaves me suffering under the sense of deep injustice on the part of some persons high in public office who have been entrusted by the people with great power which they have abused to private advantage.

Let this be a lesson to me to work and live, endure patiently looking for a reward not here but hereafter—thankful to Almighty God who leaves in health and being the family [friends?] and [three illegible words].

[Meigs' journal for 1860 has not been transcribed as part of this project, because he was no longer in charge of the Capitol extension and dome construction. In the fall of 1860, Meigs' conflict with Floyd reached a climax in which Meigs refused to obey an order of the secretary. As a result, in September Floyd ordered the captain to Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas islands in the Gulf of Mexico, where he spent several months constructing fortifications. In spite of indifference from the War Department, Meigs also managed to strengthen the fort with men and arms against a possible south-

ern attack. Then, on February 13, 1861, he received orders to return to Washington.]