
CHAPTER 1—1853



"Present State of the Capitol at Washington," January 1853 U.S. Senate Collection



August G. Schoenborn,
draftsman, 1889 *Architect of the
Capitol*



Thomas U. Walter, 1860
Architect of the Capitol



Pringle Slight, carpenter
Architect of the Capitol



Jefferson Davis
Library of Congress



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



Thomas Crawford, sculptor, 1846
Architect of the Capitol

CHAPTER 1—1853

M.C. Meigs¹

Journal

Diary from Oct. 15th 1852

to Dec. 31st 1855

Principally at Washington
Engaged upon the Public Building
and aqueduct:

¹This is Meigs' own title page. He apparently used the 1852 date because, although he began writing in May 1853, he began the narrative with events in October 1852.

[longhand transcription follows]

[MAY]

At Washington on duty in charge of Washington aqueduct and Extension of U.S. Capitol.

* * *

[Beginning his journal in May 1853, Meigs started out by giving a brief resume of the events of the past few months before he received orders to take charge of constructing the Washington aqueduct and the extension of the U.S. Capitol. Meigs began the narrative on October 15, 1852, when he received orders to leave his post at Rouses Point, New York, at the upper end of Lake Champlain, where he was engaged in the construction of Fort Montgomery. The new assignment was to superintend some coastal works in Delaware and New Jersey. When Meigs reached his parents' home in Philadelphia on October 28, however, he learned that General Joseph G. Totten, the chief of engineers, had a new assignment for him: to take over planning for a method of bringing fresh water to Washington, D.C.]

[Meigs spent the months from November 1852 through February 1853 conducting a survey and preparing a report for the chief engineer, outlining three possible methods of providing a reliable water supply, drawing water either from Rock Creek or from the Potomac at either Little Falls or Great Falls. Meigs recommended the third method, which would require constructing an aqueduct to bring Potomac River water from Great Falls, Maryland, to Washington. On March 4, 1853, Congress appropriated \$100,000 to begin the project.]

[Meigs apparently wrote the following entries for March and April in May.]

MARCH 24. By order of this date I was placed in charge of the construction of the Washington aqueduct and of the extension of the United States Capitol and of the extension of the wings of the Patent Office.

AP. 11. Owing to difficulties in the terms of the contracts for the Patent Office² wings which seem to require the commissioner of Public Buildings to determine all disputes and to make the Secretary of the Interior the judge in case of disagreement, the Secretary of War by authority of the President erased from the President's orders transferring the Capitol extension and Patent Office wings to the War Department the words "erection of the wings of the Patent Office" thus leaving them under the control of the Interior Department and releasing me from any obligation to take charge of them.³

²The Patent Office building, on 8th Street, between F and G Streets, N.W., now houses the National Portrait Gallery and the National Museum of American Art.

³The transfer of authority for construction of the Capitol extension from the Interior Department to the War Department is discussed in the Introduction, on page xxix.

[APR.] 15. Made a careful inspection of the foundations of the Capitol extension of which I took notes.

[APR.] 16. Engaged in inspection of foundations. The result will be found in my report upon them. In general terms, the mortar is not so good as it should be, the stone is of good quality being a micaceous gneiss not of peak hardness ranging according to its quality, the weaker stone bearing about 8,156 pounds, the sounder stone 20,715 pounds per square inch, i.e. from 507 to 1,123 tons to the square foot.

[APR.] 25. The question of whether an engineer officer should be called upon to give bonds having been raised by the comptroller, I have been engaged in disputing it for some days and finally obtained an opinion from the Attorney General Mr. Cushing⁴ that the law did not require it and from the President⁵ that he would not require it. Today I received a draft for \$2,000 for the Capitol.

* * *

[MAY] 7. Attorney General gave his decision that the Capitol contracts are legal.

[MAY] 8TH. Sunday.

[MAY] 9TH. A large gang of stone cutters at the work today cutting marble for the Capitol.

The want of cement prevents my directing the contractor for laying bricks to begin work. Received: draft \$20,000.

[MAY] 14. Saw the Secretary of War⁶ who on my recommendation released the Brickwork contractor Mr. Fred. A. Burch[?] from his contract leaving the work to be done by days labor which is much better. The price was so low, \$2.49 per thousand for furnishing all the labor of laying, scaffolding, mixing mortar, etc., everything except the bricks and materials for mortar, as to make it impossible for him to do the work in a proper manner without heavy loss to himself.

Received: Treasury draft for \$50,000.

[MAY] 15. Sunday.

⁴ Caleb Cushing (1800–1879) of Massachusetts was attorney general, 1853–1857. He had served as a Whig in the House of Representatives, 1835–1843.

⁵ Franklin Pierce (1804–1869), Democrat of New Hampshire, was president of the United States, 1853–1857. He had served in the House of Representatives, 1833–1837, and in the Senate, 1837–1842.

⁶ Jefferson Davis (1808–1889), Democrat of Mississippi, was secretary of war, 1853–1857. In this capacity, construction of the Capitol extension came under his jurisdiction. He served in the Senate, 1847–1851 and 1857–1861. Davis was president of the Confederacy, 1862–1865.

[MAY] 16. Very sick last night with an attack of cholera morbus which prevented my being at the work at bell ring this morning..

Directed Mr. Jones⁷ and Mr. McFarlan⁸ of masonry to make arrangements to begin work, with a moderate force, as our supply of cement for two weeks will be only 300 barrels.

This much has arrived from N.Y. but my second order for 200 has miscarried and I am advised that they will not be able to ship before the packet of Monday 23d.

Ordered today of M.C. Woodward⁹ 1,000 barrels to be sent with all convenient dispatch.

Provost and Winter¹⁰ demand today that the U.S. shall make arrangements for hauling the marble from their workshop to the Capitol, claiming that they did not anticipate being obliged to haul the stone so far when they made the contract, but that the United States were bound to place the stone at such parts of the Capitol grounds as they might designate. This letter will require some consideration. Mr. Walter¹¹ to whom I referred it corroborates the facts and statements of their narrative but has never paid them for the hauling (extra hauling as they call it).

[shorthand transcription follows]

[MAY] 17. Replied to Provost and Winter that after considering their application and examining their contract, I decided that they are bound to do all hauling of the marble after it is once deposited upon the ground by the United States. Their contract requires them to do all work necessary for cutting, rubbing, setting and completely finishing, to provide trucks, to haul the stone, all scaffolding, and whatever else may be necessary to accomplish the execution of the work. One of the things necessary is the hauling from their cutting sheds to the foot of the walls. They are to be paid also for work cut but not set, deducting the price of hauling and setting.

I think, too, that this is one of those things to be foreseen, and that if they did not foresee that Congress and the Supreme Court would not allow them to cut stone so near as to disrupt their deliberations, they ought to suffer for their want of foresight.

I received today from Mr. Walter his report of the history of the plans of the extension. This report shows that no written approval of

⁷Zephaniah Jones was foreman of masonry, Capitol extension, Senate wing.

⁸Alexander B. McFarlan was foreman of masonry, Capitol extension, House wing.

⁹M. C. Woodward was a cement vendor.

¹⁰Provost, Winter and Co. of Philadelphia had the contract to carve and install marble for the Capitol extension.

¹¹Thomas U. Walter (1804–1887) was architect of the Capitol extension and new dome, 1851–1865.

any plan by the late President, Mr. Fillmore,¹² exists. The plans now under consideration were worked out under his general supervision, and he would doubtless have signed them had they been presented to him for that purpose, but they were not.

Began receiving brick today from Byington¹³ on Adams Contract.¹⁴ Set some bricklayers to work and spent a large part of the day in trying to lay out some part of the walls, in which I was defeated by the bad adjustment of my transit and level and by the inaccurate manner in which the brick work already done has been laid out.

Tonight wrote to the Secretary, transmitting my notes on acoustics and ventilation in relation to the proposed changes in the plans of the south wing to improve the House of Representatives and requesting him to submit them to some persons of eminence in science; also transmitting Mr. Walter's history of the plans.

* * *

[MAY 18] Finished my notes on acoustics and ventilation and wrote a letter transmitting them and Mr. Walter's report on the history of the adoption of the present plans to the Secretary of War. There is no written approval of the plan by President Fillmore, and I suppose that the present President, Pierce, will feel fully empowered to make such changes as he may think proper. This will go in tomorrow.

Laid out with a theodolite¹⁵ the inside face of the outer walls of both wings. I found that the brickwork already executed is not quite correct. The walls are in many places as much as 4 inches too thick, and seldom less than ½ inch to 1 inch too thick.

[MAY] 19TH. The most dusty day ever. _____
_____ dusted, for the dust has been thick enough to dust.

Carried in my letter and report on proposed changes in Halls of Congress and handed them to Mr. Campbell,¹⁶ chief clerk at the War Department. He promised to get them before the Secretary today. I wish to have them referred to Professors Henry and Bache¹⁷ and to

¹² Millard Fillmore (1800–1874), Whig of New York, was president of the United States, 1850–1853. He served in the House of Representatives, 1833–1835 and 1837–1843, and was vice president of the U.S., 1849–1850. He appointed Thomas U. Walter architect of the Capitol extension and selected the plan for the extension.

¹³ S. Byington and Co. of Washington was a brick contractor for the Capitol extension.

¹⁴ Christopher Adams' contract to supply bricks was in default and had been picked up by Byington.

¹⁵ A theodolite is a surveyor's instrument.

¹⁶ Archibald Campbell was chief clerk of the War Department, 1853–1857.

¹⁷ Joseph Henry (1797–1878) was the first secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1846–1878. Alexander Dallas Bache (1806–1867) was superintendent of the U.S. Coastal Survey, 1843–1867. Both belonged to the scientific club with Meigs and served as advisers on the strength of marble as well as on acoustics and ventilation for the Capitol.

get their verdict in this matter as soon as possible, as we are hindered in our work by the doubt which hangs over this point.

This evening received a note from the President, brought by three watchmen who were to state their own case, their allegation being that Mr. Brooks,¹⁸ the superintendent, was a Whig and was influenced by his political feelings in employing laborers. The President directs me to state the facts in that case.

I have examined the rolls and found that they were discharged with many others in November last, that a number more were discharged in December, and that in January nearly the whole of the rest were sent off. I reported the facts by letter to the President and that I did not believe that Mr. Brooks had been guilty of any improper conduct, nor that these three men had been discharged on political grounds.

[MAY] 20TH. Mr. Burgess¹⁹ spent the morning adjusting the gravity [?] level and about 4 p.m. gave it up. I shall have to do it myself. Mr. Provost²⁰ still harps upon his extra hauling and tries to convince me that I did wrong to decide that he must pay for it.

No answer from the Secretary yet as to the new plans. We have a few brick masons at work who are backing up the marble. Mr. Slight,²¹ the master carpenter, pleases me much. He is at work making a stage [?] to drive carts with materials directly into the basement. This will save a great deal of handling of bricks and such things.

I spent a large part of the morning at the Capitol. The men seem to be well chosen and industrious. I sent an answer to the letter of the President, giving the facts as they appear in reference to the 2, Langess [?] and Grant [?], and informing him that I believed their statement as to Brooks having been influenced by political feelings in his selection of laborers was false.

Mr. Byington is delivering bricks hard-burned but very rough and much cracked. They are the best we can get at present, however, and I consented to receive some arch and pillar bricks if of good shape and not in too great a proportion to the rest.

[MAY] 21ST. Spent the morning in trying the levels of the south wing²² and, finding discrepancies, I adjusted and readjusted the levelling instrument, but without eliminating the errors. The windowsills in the east front are 1¼ inches higher than those of the west front. In telling Mr. Walter this, he said he knew that there was a difference of 1¼

¹⁸ Francis J. Brooks was foreman of laborers for the Capitol extension.

¹⁹ Andrew Burgess was an engineer in Washington.

²⁰ Alexander Provost was with Provost, Winter and Co.

²¹ Pringle Slight (1790–1860) was master carpenter for the Capitol, 1825–1860.

²² The south wing is the House of Representatives wing; the north wing is the Senate wing.

inches, as the work of Emory,²³ the granite contractor, had not met that of Provost, the marble contractor, and Emory had been obliged to cut down his work from the corridor to the west corner. My level shows that the Provost work is wrong. This must be corrected in the upper courses, so as to disappear before we reach the basement cornice.

At the Department today, found that the Secretary, currently Davis, had adopted my letter to Professors Bache and Henry and had sent them my notes on acoustics and ventilation for their examination.

The report of Jones on the north wing shows 3 masons to have laid 3,000 brick[s], or 1,000 each; McFarlan, in the south wing, laid, with 4 masons, about 3,100, or 776 each.

The specimens of marble for Doctor Kenneth [?] are ready to be sent on Monday. I hope his analysis will give us some information that will enable us to detect these bad stones before they go into the wall.

I telegraphed to Watertown today for the portable steam engine to make mortar.

[MAY] 22ND. Sunday. Went to church.

[MAY] 23RD. Paid M. C. Woodward for his cargo of cement. His 305 barrels weighed at 300 pounds to the barrel only 284 barrels.

Procured from Wurdeman²⁴ a steel standard; compared it with the standard at the Coast Survey office, Mr. Saxton²⁵ making the comparison.

Temp. 75 degrees. Length of brass standard, allowing correction for 13 degrees of temperature.

	12 inches 00165913	24 inches 00231826	36 inches 00497739
Steel shorter	0 inches 0012	0 inches 000	0 inches 0005
Length of steel	12 inches 00045913	24 inches 00231826	36 inches 00447739

I find today that I had misunderstood the data given me by Mr. Walter and laid out the walls too thin. I corrected them all this afternoon. It will be necessary to take down the basing of 2 or 3 piers which have been raised to the height of about 4 feet.

* * *

[MAY 23 CONT.] Mr. Guthrie,²⁶ Secretary of the Treasury, sent me a letter of F.S. Bailey of Louisville on the use of lead pipes, which he

²³ Matthew G. Emory of Patapsco Granite Quarry was a granite contractor.

²⁴ William Wurdeman was a mathematical instrument maker.

²⁵ Joseph Saxton was supervisor, Weights and Measures, for the Washington Coast Survey.

²⁶ James Guthrie (1792–1869), Democrat of Kentucky, was secretary of the treasury, 1853–1857. He served in the Senate, 1865–1868.

denounces. He praises my report very well. I wrote a note to Mr. Guthrie thanking him for the letter.

[MAY] 24TH. A rainy day, not much done. I telegraphed to New York for a level. The _____ had none. Mr. Cluskey²⁷ offers one, a very heavy, strong Dumbly level, a good deal used, at \$70. Ordered it cleaned by Burgess for trial. Wrote to Hurd and Brevard [?], Watertown, to send in a portable steam engine as soon as possible. Tried levels of south wing, also of south front of old Capitol. Force today by U.S. 48¼ days, cost \$107.77; by marble contractors 116 days.

[MAY] 25. Rainy day. Adjusted the Cluskey level, having first had it repaired by Wurdeman. It is a large and rough instrument but a very steady one, easy to adjust, and with a good telescope and a bubble division of each 20 seconds. It is cheap at \$70, and I will buy it for the Washington Aqueduct.

I directed the joints of the marble set thus far to be grouted. Some of them are very open. The work done by myself so far is much stronger than that done before, and the mortar of brick work two days old is already hard.

* * *

[MAY 25 CONT.] . . . Force today by U.S. 69½, \$144.83; by marble contractors 116 days. Wrote also to Mr. Leeds of Brooklyn to ask information in regard to marble, sending him a dozen copies of the advertisement for American marbles.

[MAY] 26TH. Mr. Woodward regrets that his cement did not hold its weight, will charge the loss to the operatives, and thus hopes to correct their practice. The load on _____ will probably be deficient also. Measured this morning the rods used to lay out the Capitol. They are too long for the United States standard. I created a 10-foot rod to be used as a standard hereafter.

* * *

[MAY 26 CONT.] I have finished the ramp by which carts ascend to the levels of the floor of the building in the south wing, and the carts delivering bricks now dump them by the walls in which they are to be used. This arrangement will save the labor of a large number of men, each of whom would cost \$1.25 a day.

The "O" point of the Washington City survey has referred to the outer edge of the top of the granite base of the north set corner of

²⁷Charles B. Cluskey was a Washington architect who was also associated with C. B. Cluskey and Co., an iron manufacturer.

the old Capitol. This, Mr. Burgess reports, is at the same level as the south set corner of the same. Its reference is 89.86 above tide in the Potomac.

* * *

[MAY 26 CONT.] Force today by U.S. 69¼ days, cost \$143.33; by Provost and Winter 111.

* * *

[MAY 27] Mr. Heebner²⁸ was here, and he went round with me to look at his stone which I had rejected. To most of it he could make no objections, but in trial I ordered, I believe, two stones to pass which had once been rejected for color, and the other suspended for examination as to a crack which proved avoidable.

* * *

[MAY 27 CONT.] Force today, U.S. [blank space], cost [blank space]; by contractors for marble work [blank space].

[MAY] 28TH. Another cargo of marble is beginning to come, and the vessel is aground below Alexandria and has sent part of her load up by a lighter.

* * *

[MAY 28 CONT.] Mrs. Meigs²⁹ has come for me, and I must go home.

Force today, by U.S. 73½ days, cost \$140.62; by marble contractors 112, men and such.

* * *

[MAY] 30TH. Commenced to demolish the bad work and remove the discarded stones of the Capitol. The work done by the brick masons begins to show. The marble continues to arrive with speed. I found it necessary to write to Provost and Winter to forbid their cutting stone till they have from me a list of the numbers measured by the measurer. Their workmen have in some instances erased the marks in the stones, and this produced a difficulty in recognizing them by Mr. Harkness³⁰, the measurer.

Force today, by U.S. 79¾ days, cost \$162.42; by marble contractors 108, men and such.

²⁸ Charles Heebner was with Rice, Baird and Heebner, marble suppliers for the Capitol extension.

²⁹ Louisa Rodgers Meigs (1817–1879) was Montgomery Meigs' wife.

³⁰ John C. Harkness was the sworn measurer at the Capitol.

[MAY] 31. Fine day for work. Sent Provost and Winter a copy of the instructions of the forming of marble work. Also directed them not to cut any stones before they receive from me their numbers as the evidence that they have been received by the U.S.

Force today, 88 $\frac{1}{4}$, cost \$172.67; by contractors 110.

JUNE 1. Made my monthly reports for Capitol extension, aqueduct, and Fort Montgomery. I wrote to the Secretary of War to ask permission to use part of the east park for the marble capital and cutting. I took the letter up myself. The Secretary not being in, I left it with Mr. Campbell, chief clerk, with 4 drawings of the different modes of arranging the grounds. A scaffold has been erected under the portico to enable us to draw the column and pilaster capitals.

Force today by U.S. 94 $\frac{1}{4}$ men, cost \$185.68; by marble contractors 118, men and horses.

[JUNE] 2. Employed nearly all day in drawing the capital of a column of the eastern portico. Paid off yesterday the mechanics and laborers. Amount of payrolls about \$2,700.

Force today is 91 men by U.S., cost \$815; by marble contractors 104, men and such.

[JUNE] 3. Finding that it was going to take up more time than I could spare, I directed Mr. Schoenborn³¹ to make the drawing of the capitals. His portfolio shows a remarkable skill, the most beautiful drawing of the architecture I ever saw.

I received today a letter from the Secretary, Mr. Davis, stating that complaints are frequently made that my foremen decide against employing workmen because they are Democrats. This is the same complaint made to the President, which I thought I had sufficiently answered. It is a pity that Mr. Davis listens to them, and I shall write to him and try to get Mr. Emory or Mr. Reeves to undeceive him.

Force by U.S. 89 $\frac{1}{4}$ men, cost \$183.72; by contractors 114, men and such.

[JUNE] 4. I had today a long talk with the Secretary, explained to him the state of the work and the impossibility of escaping charges of politicality. Upon a review of all the circumstances of the case, he concluded to let things remain as they are; that the discharge of Mr. Brooks for being a Whig would cause a just clamor more difficult to bear than the unfounded clamor now made.

³¹ August G. Schoenborn (1827–1902) was a German architect who was Thomas Walter's head draftsman.

I reviewed the bill of stone for the eastern fronts prepared by Mr. Walter this evening, and by reducing the beds to 18 inches and 30 inches, which makes nearly all the stone of less than 30 feet, I have reduced the bill for the stone alone from \$19,770.57 to \$8,982.81, a saving of \$10,797.76, besides the consequent saving in cutting.

Mr. Harkness informs me that under the contract and the explanatory letter from the architect, he measures the rustics for cutting as though they are made of two stones as in the [drawing inserted] old Capitol, so that he pays for 4 beds instead of 2, though 2 only are cut. This seems to me the most extraordinary thing I have yet found in my investigation.

Force today by U.S. [blank space] men, cost [blank space]; by marble contractors [blank space] men.³²

[JUNE] 5. Sunday. Went to church and enjoyed a day of rest.

[JUNE] 6TH. Monday. A fine, cloudy day, cool and pleasant to work. I find from a talk with Mr. Harkness that the mode of measuring the rustic stones allows for the cutting as if it was done as in the old Capitol; that is, as if each rustic was composed of 2 stones, one 1 foot 3 inches, the other 7 inches high. This allows to the contractors the measurement and pay for 2 beds which they do not need at all, as a compensation for cutting a little deeper, 2 inches, the upper part of the block. The whole of a large double head [?] rustic costs about \$18 to \$19. To get a rope haul, the pay is about \$55. There are other parts of the work, however, in which as much will be lost as is made in this. This allowance is wrong, I think, paying for work not done, the high price by measuring it to cover the cost of a little increased work in part with the stone. The proper mode is to allow a higher price for the more difficult work and not pay for what is not done at all.

The second cargo of cement has arrived. Some of the walls or piers have reached the height of the springer of the arches.

* * *

[JUNE] 7. I called today to see Professor Bache and was surprised to find that he and Henry go tomorrow to Philadelphia. I got orders from Mr. Davis to go with them to Philadelphia, New York and Boston and assist in their experiments in sound, and thence to the quarries. Mrs. Meigs will go with me.

* * *

³²From June 4 to June 14, Meigs continued to indicate that he planned to insert the number of workers each day but failed to fill in the blanks. These statements have therefore been omitted from the conclusion of each entry for those days.

[JUNE] 8TH. To Philadelphia by 6 o'clock line. Visited the museum building, the concert hall, Walnut Street Theater.

* * *

[JUNE] 9. Experimented in concert hall, with gas lighted and without. Went to a public meeting in the lower salon of the museum building. Tried Musical Fund Hall and Mr. Mills' Circular Church in Sansom Street, the worst room I have seen out of Washington.

* * *

[JUNE] 10 To Girard College³³ and Eastern Penitentiary. To New York at 2 p.m. Visited Niblo's Theater.

* * *

JUNE 11, Saturday. Visited Niblo's Theater, Metropolitan Hall, West Church Presbyterian in Carmine [?] Street, Saint Bartholomew's in Lafayette Place, and Franconi's Hippodrome.

* * *

[JUNE] 12, Sunday. Visited Saint Bartholomew's Church and the Tabernacle, the last probably the best room we have seen. It is a square room with a flat ceiling and a gallery. The stairs of the Metropolitan and Saint Nicholas hotels are alone worth the visit to this city.

* * *

[JUNE] 13, Monday. Professor Bache having other duties, we visited today only the Tabernacle and Castle Garden. The Tabernacle being empty was not so good as last night, when filled, but it was still easy to fill it with a voice. At Castle Garden is a curious whispering gallery under the arches covering the lower tier of guns. This gallery is 20 feet wide and 370 feet long, an annular arch. It is easy to converse from one end to the other, while a person on the floor of the terreplein cannot hear a word. It is a very bad room for speaking from the center or across the center. I could not without great difficulty understand Professor Bache when I stood in the center of the room and he spoke, and I within a few feet of him. There was no difficulty in filling the room with the voice. It was too much filled, and the reverberations confused the words so as to make them unintelligible.

* * *

³³Girard College, designed by Thomas Walter in 1833, was a white marble building in the Greek Revival style.

[JUNE] 14TH. We visited today several churches in Brooklyn: Dr. Bethune³⁴ or Plymouth, Holy Trinity, and the Pilgrims. Bethune's is a very beautiful church, lighted from the roof. It is small, well-cushioned and carpeted, and is a good church to hear in. Were it larger, it would be a bad one. This day's work finished our examination in New York. Tomorrow I go to the quarries and am to meet Mr. Bache in Boston on Tuesday next at 9½ a.m.

* * *

JULY 25. Absence from the city and incessant occupation have interrupted my journal. I visited Fort Montgomery, sold my horses and cattle and household goods, and thence took my wife to Boston, where I met Bache, examined several public rooms, and returned to Washington. Bache and Henry reported favorably upon my plans for the Capitol. The Secretary recommended and the President adopted them, both for the House of Representatives and the Senate.

I have been trying to get on with the changes in the foundations caused by these alterations but have been delayed by a strike of the bricklayers, which has deprived me of the hands.

* * *

[JULY 27] I find many letters tonight to answer. Major Frazer writes that bricklayers get \$2.00 in New York and can be sent here.

Louisa is still at Piney Point, but I expect her tomorrow.

[JULY] 29. I suppose the strike of the bricklayers is over, for I saw today the president of the association at work in the Capitol. Mr. Corcoran³⁵ seems to dislike the loss of the deposits of the Capitol and waterworks. He told the Secretary of War that I did not deposit with him. The Secretary seemed to forget the fact that the Treasury is prepared to take care of its own money and promised to speak to me on the subject. This I learn by a note from Campbell, chief clerk. I called to see the Secretary today but he was not in the office, and I explained to Campbell the state of the case. The depositing with the Treasury of the U.S. is for me an entire relief from responsibility and danger, and I think it my duty to myself and to the U.S. to place the public money in the place prepared for it by the government.

We have about 40 bricklayers at work.

³⁴George Washington Bethune (1805–1862) was a Dutch Reformed clergyman who was pastor of a church in Brooklyn Heights, 1850–1859.

³⁵William W. Corcoran (1798–1888) of Washington was a banker, who with fellow banker George W. Riggs formed Corcoran and Riggs in 1840, the forerunner of the present Riggs Bank. He later founded the Corcoran Gallery of Art, based on his own extensive collection.

AUG. 2. The payroll for July is over \$6,000. There are over 300 men on the rolls employed by the U.S., and contractors have about 120 men. Their work in July amounted to over \$10,000, working on cornices, which is the most profitable part of their work.

I forgot today to make my monthly reports.

[AUG.] 3. Wrote my monthly reports today. I have spent over \$70,000 in the month. We have 50 bricklayers, and I expect 20 more from New York.

I met the President this evening. He asked how I was getting on and seemed pleased at my account of the result of the strike.

We used on 2nd, 66 barrels of cement and 20,000 bricks.

* * *

[AUG. 7]. We lay now 40,000 bricks daily, and the work of the Capitol advances. On the aqueduct, the delay continues, but I am building houses and derricks.

* * *

[AUG.] 12. We have now about 60 masons at work, who lay over 42,000 bricks daily. We used on the 10th 91 barrels of cement and 43,000 bricks. I think the men seem contented and industrious. The weather has been very hot, and some have given out.

An accident of quite a serious nature happened the other day, by which a carpenter named Clark had a hand crushed. I went to see him today. He will probably save his hand, with one stiff finger. This was caused by some error in rigging a derrick. The poor fellow bears it bravely but suffers much.

[AUG.] 22. We laid 53,000 bricks today. The marble setting is delayed for want of some rustics which are supposed by the quarrymen to have been supplied.

[AUG.] 23. I was called upon on Saturday, 20th, to measure with Mr. Sanger,³⁶ civil engineer of the yards and docks, some masonry at the Navy Yard, to determine whether it showed a fair day's work or not. The brick-laying cost \$11.15 per thousand, the rubble-stone foundation \$6.96 per cubic yard. My brick-laying on the Capitol yesterday cost \$4.07 per thousand, laying 53,000.

Charles is quite sick with bilious fever, which has prevented me from going tonight to Virginia to visit the Blue Ridge Tunnel. I hope to go this week.

³⁶William P.S. Sanger was a civil engineer at the Washington Navy Yard.

[Journal skips here to October 24.³⁷]

[longhand transcription follows]

[OCT. 24] On the Capitol the Brick contractor parted[?] having delivered only 1,150,000 about instead of 10 million at \$5.88. I proceeded today to replace him. Here the brickmakers offered at \$7.50. I agreed to take all they could furnish. They promised about 40,000 per day and for a time sent rather more. I proceeded to Baltimore where I bought a million to be delivered there at \$7.12 ½, here by rail road at \$9.12½. In Philadelphia I bought 1,000,000 hard at \$6.37, 300,000 and paving at \$8 to be shipped. Freight was for a few loads \$2.00 then \$3.00 and now \$4.

In New York by Engineer agency I engaged 3 million for \$5.50 and \$6.50. Freight from N.Y. besides stowage 50¢ in vessels, was \$2.50. The higher priced bricks are bought at Croton. Freight there is \$3.50.

They are arriving now in large quantities from these various sources. And are delivered faster than we can haul them away.

The Capitol extension marble work is delayed in consequence of the want of marble to finish the basement. The brick work proceeds rapidly. At the time of the failure of the brick contractor, there were a few days when the supply was so insufficient as to make some delay but not enough to stop the men from work.

Now we receive about 100,000 a day and the bricks accumulate not being able to get masons enough to lay them as fast as received.

The bricks used from abroad are of excellent quality, the New York however being much smaller than those made here and in Philadelphia and Baltimore.

The contractors for marble, Rice and Heebner,³⁸ are trying to get an advanced price for some part of their stone and have appealed to the Secretary, maintaining that they are not required by contract to send the particular sizes which I ordered. This has caused delay and kept our walls back.

On Saturday 22 we received from all quarters about 99,000 bricks, on Friday 21st about 114,000.

My account report on aqueduct was sent in on Friday. On Capitol extension was written on Saturday, not yet recorded and sent in.

Expended Aqueduct to 30th Sept:	\$15,343.50
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³⁷Meigs' two little sons, Charles D. Meigs (1845–1853) and Vincent T. Meigs (1851–1853), died on September 3 and October 8, respectively, of 1853. Their illness and death probably accounts for the long gap in the journal from August 21 to October 24, 1853. It may also explain the fact that Meigs resumed the journal in longhand, not again using shorthand until late January 1854, after he obtained a compendium and book on "phonography."

³⁸Rice, Baird, and Heebner of Philadelphia had the contract to supply marble for the Capitol extension.

Available	84,656.70[?]
Expended for Survey for bringing water into Wash- ington	4,998.00

Expended for Capitol extension by me since I took charge—

to 30 Sept:	[blank space]
Available:	[blank space]
Total expended since 1st Dec. 1852 by Mr. Walter and myself—	[blank space]
Total expended from beginning to 30 Sept 1853—	[blank space]

I received on Saturday a letter from Hiram Powers³⁹ declining to prepare designs for the Capitol tympanum. I presume however that his objections can be removed.

Somebody about the office steals our books and drawings and I have today directed Mr. Slight to prepare a set of drawers and a portfolio stand which can be locked up to contain them.

The force on the 22d was 381¼ days work: cost \$602.70.

Contractors for marble work, 137 days total 518¼ days.

This is a very stormy day, rain snow and slush. Very little work done today in Capitol. Instructed Mr. Slight to make me a case of drawers for drawings and a portfolio stand. Our drawings and books are not safe unless locked up.

[OCT.] 25TH. Wrote to Mr. Harkness, measurer, requiring him to have the approval of marble work by Rutherford⁴⁰ before measuring it to the contractor's credit—365 days work \$605.59.

marble	128
	<hr/>
	49,300—

[OCT.] 26TH. Sent in quarterly accounts for Capitol, waterworks and Fort Montgomery and surveys for waterworks. Measured the South wing of Capitol extension.

	by measurement	by drawings in office
Found the E Front	142 feet 5.05 inches	142 feet 2.5 inches
Found the W Front	142 feet 4.7 inches	142 feet 2.5 inches
Found the S Front	239 feet 1.17 inches	238 feet 7 inches
Found the N Front	239 feet 1.05 inches	238 feet 7 inches

Receiving large quantities of bricks from Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York, weather cool, yesterday morning till 9½ a.m. too cold to

³⁹Hiram Powers (1805–1873) was an American sculptor whose bust of John Marshall and statues of Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson are now in the U.S. Capitol.

⁴⁰Alexander Rutherford was superintendent of marble work for the Capitol extension.

lay bricks. Some 6 masons tempted by the offer of \$3 per day up the country have left us lately. Received today 137,000 bricks, laid above 45,000. Force on Capitol by U.S. 377 $\frac{1}{4}$, cost \$587.00
by contractors 127 days—total 504 $\frac{1}{2}$

[OCT.] 27. Force on Capitol by U.S. 402 $\frac{5}{10}$, wages \$678.55, by contractors—132 $\frac{5}{10}$.

Mr. Clement West⁴¹ handed in his resignation today to take effect 1st Nov. as he has not been here since 4th Oct having been away on his own business. I consider his engagement terminated on 4th Oct. having done 3 days work only in this month. While in Philadelphia on his own affairs he sprained his ankle, which is the reason assigned for his continued absence.

Force employed today 413 $\frac{3}{11}$ —\$636.46 by contractors 134 $\frac{1}{2}$.

* * *

[OCT.] 29. Discharging bricks and piling on wharf, by days work vessel with 70,000 cost \$49. = 70¢ per thousand. They are stowed in N.Y. in the vessels by the job at 50¢.

Laid out the positions of the pedestals on East portico of North Front South Wing.

Paid Provost and Winter for their marble work \$7,180.92

Received from various sources 122,116 bricks. Laid about 46,000.

Force employed [blank space]

* * *

NOV 1. Pay roll for Oct \$13,488.67 Force—[blank space]

Received 141,328 bricks

* * *

[NOV. 2] Mr. Rice⁴² has come to see about his stone. Very anxious to get some relief under his contract which he says is ruining them.

He complains that he is required by specification to deliver stone 2 feet 6 inch bed while the contract called only for stone of 9 inch to 18 inch bed for the ashlar work. The determination of what is ashlar is of importance.

The contract speaks of it only twice. "All the ashlar work to have beds 9 inches to 18 inches" and in another place, the pilasters to have such and such joints "forming a bond with the ashlar." Here ashlar

⁴¹ Clement L. West was a draftsman on the Capitol extension project. He had studied with Thomas Walter in Philadelphia and came to work at the Capitol in 1851. He later served as disbursing agent in the 1860s.

⁴² John Rice was with Rice, Baird, and Heebner, the marble contractors.

is expressly distinguished from the pilasters and his claim to 9 inch stone is if this be considered reduced to a comparatively small quantity. Received 137,000 bricks.

Nov. 3. Very much occupied today by Mr. Rice, who left me without any conclusion being reached as to the disputed order for marble. He showed me, however, that I had made a mistake in one place in making the window jamb and its pilaster in the principal story in two pieces instead of one. By making it in two pieces we have a vertical joint perpendicular[?] to face of building and 10 [?] feet high. Which is bad construction. I shall probably alter this though it will add considerably to the expense by throwing some 300 jambs into the large class of stone. Received 129,000 bricks.

Force [several words of shorthand not transcribed]

[longhand transcription continues]

[Nov.] 4. Engaged Mr. Ellis⁴³ to arrange our mortar mill which is imperfectly arranged at present.

Received 150,448 bricks, laid about 60,000—60 masons. Saw the President, who appoints Tuesday for the formal commencement of the aqueduct and will go if he possibly can spare time. The mayor and corporation will go at any rate.

Force 386½ \$634.75 Marble cutters contract 123.

[Nov.] 5. Fine day. Received 146,603 bricks.

[Nov.] 6th Sunday.

* * *

[Nov. 7] Laid on Capitol about 60,000 bricks received 136,349.

* * *

[Nov.] 8. Grand celebration of the beginning of the aqueduct.

The President, Secretary Davis, of War, Senator Douglas,⁴⁴ Mayor and Councils of Washington and Georgetown, Old Father[?] Ritchie and a number of guests, in all a little over 100 persons went up to the Falls in our packet and the steam packet which was engaged for the occasion. The mayor and councils of Washington provided a cold collation and champagne which were heartily enjoyed by the company.

⁴³Probably Jonas Ellis of William M. Ellis and Brother of Washington, manufacturer of steam engines and other machinery.

⁴⁴Stephen A. Douglas (1813–1861), Democrat of Illinois, served in the Senate, 1847–1861.

[The complete journal contains a full description of the ceremony.]

* * *

[NOV.] 9. Violent rain storm suspended nearly all operations. Received however on Capitol 56,681 bricks.

* * *

[NOV. 10] Mr. Rutherford reports another act of insult and resistance to his authority on the part of Mr. Meade⁴⁵ foreman of marble cutting contractors.

I yesterday sent in to the contractors a letter dated on the 4th calling their attention to this conduct, which they received about the time of the occurrence now complained of. I have sent his report (a copy) to them for their action in the premises.

* * *

[NOV. 10 CONT.] Captain Bowman⁴⁶ denounces the stone of the Capitol extension as worthless, friable and liable to disintegration.

Received the block of sandstone from Lee's quarry which was sent to New York to be tried in the Eastman machine. It is beautifully cut, smooth and true, and I am assured that the chisels stand nearly a day's work without sharpening.

Force today—[blank space]

* * *

[NOV. 10 CONT.] Received Capitol 136,599 bricks, laid about 65,000.

[NOV.] 11TH. Yesterday was a fine day and a good day's work was done on the Capitol.

This morning made an examination of the marble on the ground at the Capitol and I do not find much of it friable and liable to the objection made by Captain Bowman. Some there is, and I have directed the preparation of a number of cubes from the different qualities with a view to crushing them at the Navy Yard and getting some reliable information on this point. Bowman's examination I think must have been unlucky.

I found today that Mr. Provost has retired from the superintendent of the contract at the Capitol extension, having exchanged with Mr. Winter⁴⁷ from the Patent Office building and that Mr. Symington⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Edward Meade, the marble-cutting foreman, was apparently an employee of Provost, Winter and Co.

⁴⁶ Alexander Hamilton Bowman was Meigs' counterpart at the Treasury building extension.

⁴⁷ William H. Winter was a partner in Provost, Winter and Co.

⁴⁸ Mr. Symington was with Provost, Winter and Co. and owned a marble quarry in Vermont.

is also at the Capitol extension. What this means I don't understand. Mr. P. has perhaps got tired of being found fault with.

Have had a long talk with Mr. Winter in regard to the disagreement between Meade and Rutherford and he promises that he will do his best to make all go harmoniously. Received 159,683 bricks.

* * *

[NOV.] 12TH. Received 174,215 bricks. . . . Laid about 60,000 bricks in Capitol Extension.

Force $387\frac{3}{4}$, cost \$637.00, by contractor 132. Total $519\frac{3}{4}$.

[NOV.] 13. Sunday.

[NOV. 14] Received a letter from Provost, Winter and Co. They deny any neglect of duty and they insist that the fault is with Rutherford, rather than with Meade.

In regard to the last collision between them they propose to offer testimony.

An estimate of quantity of bricks we have and at wharves for Capitol extension makes it	3,000,000.
The quantity yet to move is about	1,389,000

and if the season continues open to middle of December we shall use about that quantity. The brickmaking machines here furnish brick about 1st June and there will be about 40 days work in the Spring before they will be ready. In 40 days we can lay, having plenty of hands, 4,000,000 bricks so that our supply will be short without their [?] cargo.

Received 169,432 bricks, laid about 55,000. Force $394\frac{1}{2}$, \$62,664, by contractors 142, total $536\frac{1}{2}$.

* * *

[NOV. 15] Yesterday evening I received from Provost, Winter and Co. a letter denying Rutherford's allegations and sending two affidavits from Meade, their foreman, and McEvoy, a journeyman, denying the charges against them.

Occupied all the afternoon in levelling[?] the north wing to receive the cornice or rather to receive the ashlar course next below the cornice. The differences of level amount to about $\frac{1}{16}$ inch in different parts of the course.

Mr. Walter is occupied with drawings for the increase of the General Post Office building at request of Post Master General Mr. Campbell.⁴⁹

⁴⁹James Campbell (1812–1893) of Pennsylvania was postmaster general, 1853–1857.

Received bricks: 156,365. Force 387, \$62,666, by contractor 137, total 524. Laid about 60,000 bricks.

* * *

[Nov.] 16. I called today to show Captain Bowman a specimen of marble from a block at the Capitol. He said it was a different stone from any specimen he had found at the quarry and promised to come up some day to examine the stone on the ground with me.

Occupied all day in office duties and discussing the question of ventilation with Mr. Walter. There is some little difficulty in finding exit passages enough for the air from under the floor. The inlet through the roof is complete.

Laid about 60,000 bricks, received at Capitol 174,966.

Force employed: 65³/₄ masons, 44 carps.[carpenters?], 190³/₄[?] laborers, 65 carts, 3 smiths etc.

* * *

[Nov. 17] Force employed today 400, \$662.52, by marble workers 129¹/₂, total 529¹/₂, 1 architect, 2 clerks, 1 measurer, 3 draftsmen, 1 messenger, 10 foremen, 68 masons, 44 carps. [carpenters?], 3 smiths, 142 laborers, 2 [illegible], 1 superintendent, 1 asphalter[?], 7 watchmen, 65 carts, 2 foremen, 74³/₄ stone cutters, 7 smiths, 5 teamsters, 3 horses, 1 [illegible word], 37 laborers. [List was added in margin in tiny handwriting that is only partly legible.]

Received 153,499 bricks. Laid about 55,000. Mr. Rutherford denies all the charges in Provost and Winter's letter against him and explains his letter of complaint of the 9th as not intended to charge Mr. Meade with threatening him, but the journeyman. On referring to the letter the words "latter individual" I find do relate to the journeyman. Paid about \$13,000.

* * *

[Nov. 18] The search for quarries in Virginia has finished and I have written to the Georgetown College that I would take the Lee quarry at \$5,000 and requested them to prepare the needed papers.

Force employed. [blank space]

Received 140,000 bricks. Laid about 60,000.

* * *

[Nov. 19] Fine day.

Received Mr. Rutherford's letter denying the charges brought against him by Provost, Winter and Co. Captain Maccomb⁵⁰ arrived with his family.

[Nov.] 20. Sunday.

* * *

Nov. 22. The Secretary thinks I have not gone sufficiently into detail in the report on the Capitol extension and requested me to send with the report the letters and reports made upon the foundations and the changes in the plans, and to add some detail to the report itself.

[Nov.] 23. At work upon report. Received 90,000 bricks. Laid about 60,000.

[Nov.] 24. Thanksgiving day suspended operations.

[Nov.] 25. Cold morning, ice in gutters, looks badly for brickwork.

* * *

[Nov.] 29TH. Yesterday I engaged Signor Vincenti⁵¹ at \$6 per day, he having lowered his claim and which when on trial was \$50 per week. I discharged also Mr. Smith who has been on trial and whose work did not satisfy me. His work at \$3 per day is more costly than Vincenti was. He has made two leaves and the bell and abacus for a pilaster column since the 12th October at \$3. The leaves have no spirit and the bell and abacus will do for our model I suppose—they cost \$120.

* * *

[Nov. 29 CONT.] I received yesterday from Mr. Thomas Crawford⁵² a set of photographs from his model of a design for the pediment of the Senate wing. It illustrates the progress of civilization and the decay of the Indian race, and is a very fine composition I think.

The Secretary approves it highly and promised to obtain the President's sanction today. The works full size in plaster are to cost \$20,000.

⁵⁰ John Navarre Maccomb (1811–1889) was married to Louisa Meigs' sister, Annie Rodgers Maccomb. He was with the army department of topographical engineers. Meigs placed him in charge of the Capitol extension during his absence in 1861.

⁵¹ Francis Vincenti (dates unknown) was an Italian modeler and sculptor, who worked on the Capitol extension, 1853–1858. Two busts by him of Chippewa Indians are in the Capitol, Beshekee (Buffalo) and Aysh-Ke-Bah-Ke-Ko-Zhay.

⁵² Thomas Crawford (1813/1814–1857) was the American sculptor responsible for the statue of *Freedom*, the pediment sculpture on the Senate wing of the Capitol, the figures of *Justice* and *History* over the Senate wing door, and the design of the bronze doors for the Senate and House wings. He had studied in Rome and continued to work there.

Vincenti has since he left us made a very fine bust of the President, a speaking likeness.

Laid about 63,000 bricks.

[Nov.] 30. The arches are closing rapidly on north wing. On south wing they are finished. We are preparing to put in the cement backing. And with this beautiful day everything looks fair for a completion of the brick work of basement.

Received the President's approval of Crawford's design and have just written the order for the execution of the models. I hope the work will be worthy of the design and shall esteem myself fortunate in having been the means of causing such an example of American skill to be executed.

I answered Provost and Winter's letters about their contract and Rutherford and hope we shall have no more such disputes.

Submitted to Secretary and General Totten⁵³ orders to go to Pennsylvania Railroad Tunnel and Harlem Tunnel and Fort Montgomery and Vermont marble quarries.

* * *

DEC. 1. The brick delivery is nearly completed. We are receiving now only from Baltimore and Philadelphia.

Yesterday 68,933 were received, about 63,000 laid.

Pay Roll for Capitol last month is as follows:

McFarlan mason S. wing	\$1,955.97
Jones " N. "	2,028.28
Foremen	567.
Slight carpenters	2,176.89
Horses and Carts	2,247.72
Smiths, Champion ⁵⁴	357.40
Laborers, Brooks	5,988.49
Office	294.50
	<hr/>
	15,636.23
Provost and Winter Estimate	5,592.

Making about \$20,000 spent in workmanship.

On the Aqueduct 150 men have been employed.

on Fort Montgomery 1 man

⁵³ Joseph G. Totten (1788–1864) was a military engineer who served as chief engineer of the U.S. Army, 1838–1864.

⁵⁴ Samuel Champion, blacksmith, was supervisor of the machine and blacksmith shops for the Capitol extension.

Sent in reports for the month to Secretary and General Totten. Provost and Winter object to my decision as to price of surbase of window and [illegible] promised to examine it and correct it if wrong.

Mr. Jones of Tennessee⁵⁵ called, to look into our management and I rather suspect to find fault. He expressed no dissatisfaction however and I hope felt none.

Received 67,646 bricks, laid about as many.

The derrick for hoisting concrete is up but the snatch blocks etc. are not yet rigged—58 masons at work on north wing, south wing nearly finished for the season.

* * *

[DEC. 2] Saw Mr. Edward Everett,⁵⁶ showed him the designs of Crawford approved by the President, and he regretted Powers' misunderstanding and said he would write to him and would probably be able to induce him to present a design.

* * *

[DEC. 2 CONT.] Received the Secretary's order to visit the Vermont quarries.

* * *

[DEC. 2 CONT.] Received 106,497 bricks.

* * *

[DEC. 3] Today the north wing is nearly completed for the season as regards brickwork. The south wing is covered with masons. Fine day though raw.

* * *

[DEC. 3 CONT.] The derrick is rigged to hoist materials to the second floor of the Capitol south wing. The step which is hemispherical of cast iron and perforated to allow the chain or rope to pass through works very easily. [drawing inserted] I feared there would be a good deal of friction but it works admirably—and I am much pleased with my derrick.

The mayor⁵⁷ called. He says the committee to procure a testimonial for me on the part of the City Council have decided that some thing to hold water, a tea kettle for example, will be most appropriate if I like it. I told him I thought my wife would like that. He says they

⁵⁵James C. Jones (1809–1859), Whig of Tennessee, served in the Senate, 1851–1857.

⁵⁶Edward Everett (1794–1865), Whig of Massachusetts, served in the House, 1825–1835, and in the Senate, 1853–1854. He was secretary of state, 1852–1853. He was one of Meigs' advisers on sculptors for the Capitol and recommended Thomas Crawford to him.

⁵⁷John W. Maury was mayor of Washington, 1852–1854.

also want a portrait to which I demurred. He insisted and I suggested a bust by Vincenti if it be not more costly than the portrait.

* * *

DEC. 5. Left Washington for Philadelphia by 8 a.m. train, reached Philadelphia in afternoon.

* * *

[On December 6–8, Meigs visited the Allegheny railroad tunnel in Pennsylvania in relation to the tunneling work that would be required for the aqueduct project.]

[DEC. 8] Returned at night to Philadelphia, which I reached at 8 a.m.

* * *

[DEC. 8 CONT.] Letters from Mr. Walter reporting progress.

* * *

[DEC. 8 CONT.] 5½ p.m. to 10 p.m. to New York by Camden and Amboy R.R.:

Found letters from Mr. Walter. Mr. Denham⁵⁸ has already exhausted his credit at Treasury. I sent a further credit of \$2,000.

Concrete on south wing. Engine works well. Masons paid off—or sent to north wing. Wrote to Mr. Chase⁵⁹ of the House, about bricks to Mr. Walter, enclosing letters, and to Louisa after 12 p.m. and now to bed.

[DEC.] 9TH. In New York at Crystal Palace disappointed in seeing stone cutting and drilling machines. The driving steam boiler being out of order. Went to J. Levy's⁶⁰ marble yard where I saw a good specimen of sculptured Lee marble, leaves delicately cut and a couple of babies about 8 inches long for a mantel piece in the hands of the sculptor who says this stone cuts to a finer edge than the Italian.

At the Crystal Palace a specimen of Allen Adams and Co. Fair Haven, Rutland County, Vermont, pure white apparently and about 4 feet thick.

⁵⁸ Zephaniah W. Denham, originally hired by Thomas Walter in 1851, was Meigs' chief clerk on the Capitol extension project.

⁵⁹ George W. Chase (? –1867), Whig of New York, served in the House of Representatives, 1853–1855.

⁶⁰ A James Levy is listed as a New York marble dealer in *Rode's New York City Business Directory, 1854–1855*.

Called upon Fowler⁶¹ (Janes, Beebe and Co.). The marble he showed Mr. Walter is from a quarry opening by the Messrs. Young, builders of New York. This at Sudbury but is not yet opened so as to afford much prospect of marble. The specimens shown were small and seamed. Their agent writes to them that he has a 2 foot vein opened.

The cars on Hudson River [Rail] Road left at 5 p.m. instead of 6 as I had been told. Took the steamboat *I. Newton*?, reached Albany at 5½ and by Stage Coach

[DEC.] 10TH. Troy [New York] at 7 a.m. Cars for the west gone. Mr. Symington who was to meet me here has gone on to Danby [Vermont], where I follow by the 12 o'clock train.

Reached Rutland [Vermont] about 2 p.m. Walked up to the quarry part way and met Mr. Symington returning and got into the buggy with him.

The quarry lays on the mountain side several hundred feet above the rail road. The stone? dips. South west face shows? East side of mountain, distance from railroad station about 1½ miles.

There are several quarries. The stone varies in texture and color. Large and fine crystal and seems to rest upon uncrystallized limestone. The hill so far as I saw is entirely composed of limestone, but I did not go above the quarry, which is perhaps ¼ of the height, and the upper rocks may be of a different quality.

The thickest veins are grey and good for nothing. Much of the stone is veined with a greenish mineral which when long exposed decomposes.

There are two or three veins white enough for building and two or three feet (Mr. S. says 4 feet) in thickness. But I doubt whether a good large life size bust of Webster could be got out of the whole mountain.

Certainly there was nothing in sight which would give an Apollo Belvedere⁶² free from vein or spot. Mr. S. proposes to send two blocks to Washington from the two lower veins now worked as specimens, desiring to have them adopted for the capitals of the Capitol. Another finer grain crystalline marble but not white he proposes for the interior. Thinks he could deliver it at \$2 per foot.

In the evening went on to Rutland, beyond which no train goes tonight.

⁶¹ Charles Fowler was a partner in Janes, Fowler, Kirtland and Co. (successor to Janes, Beebe and Co.), the New York foundry that provided the iron for the dome.

⁶² The Apollo of the Belvedere is a late Greco-Roman sculpture of the god that was found in Italy in the sixteenth century and is now in the Vatican.

[DEC.] 11TH. Spent at Rutland. I went to church in the morning in Episcopal Church in an absurd imitation of Gothic, clapboarded and mixed with Roman. Why don't the American people employ architects instead of wasting their money on such abortions[?]. A little skill would have made with the money spent upon this church a tasteful pleasing edifice. It might not have been gothic but it could have been sightly.

* * *

[DEC. 11 CONT.] The Rutland quarries are at West Rutland 4 miles west of this place. I hope to go there in the morning. This has been a most lovely day. I will write to Lou and then to bed.

I looked into the old graveyard here today. The older stones all [illegible word]. But the face on which the inscription is cut stands well. The lower[?] inscription 1794 being perfectly legible. The lines ruled[?] for the lettering in one of the oldest are perfect still.

All collect lichens and darken with age and none is perfectly white. As a building material it is I think far inferior to the Lee magnesian limestone with all the defects which this shows.

[DEC.] 12. At 6½ a.m. by rail road to West Rutland 4 miles and walked a mile further to the quarries. They are in the west slope of a hill of moderate acclivity. The deposit consists of many beds of from one to 3 feet or 3 feet 6 inches thick dipping at an angle of 45 degrees into the hill, the strata being parallel to the crest. The overlying bed is a blue limestone considered here of no value. It is blasted out to get a place to work at the marble, which is then cut out by grooving with jumpers[?]. The grooves are cut at each end and at the lower edge of a block entirely through the stratum, which is then raised by plays and feathers[?] and being thus detached in large blocks these are split up into manageable sizes by plays and feathers.

They say a man cuts from 2 to 3 cubic feet per day of this grooving. This [is] tedious work.

There are 4 principal quarries. The deepest is 100 feet deep. The water is pumped from this by a chain pump 100 feet long worked by steam. Another is pumped by a horizontal force pump. Very heavy derricks are used with a 6 inch rope in 5 parts[?] and [illegible word] with iron guys 7/8 inch, of which an absurd number, about 12, are used to each derrick.

The power is a windlass worked by a pair of horses or oxen. The windlass is a vertical arm[?] throwing into or out of gear and with a friction clutch.

The design is simple and very good. [drawing]

The above section gives a good idea of the quarry at the large steam mill. The others are much like this but not quite so deep.

All the marble except one bed of 3 feet is more or less striped with greenish layers. These are so ruled[?] through it as to render it an unsightly stone for building if laid in its quarry bed. The face shown is always its white and curved face. The white statuary[?] is about at 0. It is in great demand. None was on hand today.

The houses in Rutland are very generally built upon stone foundations faced with slabs of marble and this marble has generally a dirty appearance. The choicest slabs of course are not used but if they were I judge that they would stain as the others. The stone is too delicate for a building material and is very inferior I think to the Lee stone for this purpose.

About 20 feet at the outcropping edge of all the beds is shattered, weather stained and worthless. The shattering is curious, presenting as at Danby in some places such regular cracks as to seem to be a different stratification parallel to the surface of the hill.

No stone for building is to be had here. I ordered a specimen 1 foot square sent to Washington by express to try its qualities as a stone for carving.

Possibly the statues for the pediment might be obtained from it, but they would nearly use a year's supply.

About 200 men are employed in this quarry in summer at wages exclusive of board of \$17 to \$26 per month. In winter 60 men at \$9 per month exclusive of board. The saw mill does not run in winter.

I have seen nothing yet which as a building stone compares with the Lee. The clouds or veins in all this Vermont marble are greenish and of an inferior material which decays where exposed to the weather. The blue marble is no better than slate and the white in a few years gets black with lichens or fungi.

I returned to Rutland at 11:15 a.m. and left there for Rouses Point at 3:20 p.m. Reached Rouses Point at 9 p.m., stepped carelessly off the station platform 3 feet high and sprained my ankle. Wrote to Lou and this journal and now to bed.

* * *

[On December 13 Meigs inspected Fort Montgomery, checked his horses, and paid visits. He then took a train back to Rutland, where he spent the night.]

[DEC.] 14. Left Rutland at 6½ a.m., reached Troy at 10½. Went to see Major Symington at the arsenal. He was absent but Mrs. Symington was at home. At 3:20 p.m. by rail road through Albany to Pittsfield.

Thence I came to Lee [Massachusetts] by a carriage 11 miles. This 11 miles cost me \$4. I reached here about 9 p.m. and sent a note over to Mr. Heebner asking him if he was not in bed to come down and see me.

The town or at least that portion of it which I see at this house is in uproar and excitement on account of a ball at the public hall. Perhaps about the beer[?], don't seem to know what they are doing.

About 2 miles or less north of Lee on the east side of the public road is a quarry of a white [illegible word] crystalline stone. I picked up two pieces by moonlight. The larger one is not very white. The smaller is of a yellowish white very nearly white, crystalline and translucent. I should like to see the stone in mass in the daylight. It effervesces slightly with an acid and is I suppose a magnesian limestone of much coarser texture than Rice and Heebner's.

It is magnesian limestone coarse grained and discolored and the quarry I am told by Mr. Heebner was opened for the Lenox jail.

[DEC.] 15. Went up to the quarry and saw Mr. Heebner. The cold weather has nearly arrested his work, as the stone splits wild while frozen and he is not able to reduce the blocks to near the required size. He still says they are losing money but that he can send 120,000 cubic feet of stone next year if he can have his matters so arranged as to enable him to do it at a profit.

(Met Mr. Packer of the firm of Packer Horley[?] and Co. of East Dorset [Vermont] as I passed there yesterday. He tells me that they sell their marble in blocks of 30 or 40 cubic feet delivered on the canal at nearest station to the quarry for \$1.50 a cubic foot.)

Heebner says that if he can get a supplemental contract giving him \$1.98 for the 2 foot x 2 foot 6 inch bed stones of the order of 9th August last, now in dispute used for the window jambs of the principal story, he would be willing to undertake to furnish all stone required for the interior from his quarry in blocks not exceeding 120 cubic feet at \$1.98, to furnish the tiles sawed 3 inches thick $\frac{1}{8}$ inch on each edge for the fitting and with faces rubbed smooth at \$1.28 per square foot, and to supply the shafts of the extension columns in single blocks at \$1,400 each. Mr. Heebner says he has bought up all the good beds of this stone in his neighborhood, and that Mr. Larned, the contractor for the Charleston Custom House has since he was there with Captain Bowman tried to purchase an interest in the quarry. This is curious since he condemned the stone when there with Bowman. Heebner says he is a granite man and may be working to defeat the project of using marble and to get the custom houses built of granite.

I left Lee about 10 a.m. The Housatonic train was behind time and we were delivered some two or three hours [late] at Bridgeport [Connecticut], reached New York by New Haven Rail Road at 7:30 p.m. Here I found letters from Mr. Walter. The weather in Washington has continued favorable and the work has gone on finely. All the works[?] of north wing except 4 had been commenced on the 10th and with fair weather the whole could be finished in a week. They use 114 barrels cement a day.

Mr. Walter says the engine works well in raising the materials for concrete on the south wing.

I saw a very good horse windlass at the Rutland quarries of which sketches are in my notebook.

The committees on the District of Columbia and on Public Buildings in the House are announced with the rest and Mr. Stanton's⁶³ name is not upon them. He was chairman of the Public Buildings Committee last year and is I presume somewhat displeased. He has introduced a resolution which passed directing the committee to inquire upon what authority an officer of the army has been placed in charge of the Capitol extension and what changes have been made in the plans and what is the additional expense, what bond if any I have given and to inquire into the expediency of placing the superintendence under the Commissioner of Public Buildings or some other civil officer.

This is the second act of the war. I had notice from Engineer Alexander⁶⁴ that Stanton of Kentucky had told him he intended to have me removed. This was the declaration, the first act was the leaving him off the committee of which he had been feared to be chairman, and this I presume was done at the request of the Mayor Mr. Maury and probably also of the Secretary of War.

He has felt the blow and is now trying to retaliate by carrying out his declaration.

* * *

[On December 16, Meigs examined a tunneling machine in Harlem and later a stonecutting machine in New York. He returned to Philadelphia that evening.]

[DEC. 17] Went out to Murthas[?] marbleyard to see the stone cutting for the new Farmers and Mechanics Bank in Chestnut Street. It is from Lee. They use the blue variegated variety.

⁶³Richard H. Stanton (1812–1891), Democrat of Kentucky, served in the House of Representatives, 1849–1855. He had chaired the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds in the Thirty-first and Thirty-second congresses (1849–1853). He was Thomas Walter's strongest supporter in Congress.

⁶⁴Captain Barton S. Alexander was an army engineer.

I understand that a good deal sent here has been condemned as too soft and some for being too dark in color.

I saw some nice cutting of brackets and such things, two with acanthus leaves, one lion head partly worked, some molded caps finished and rubbed.

They look very handsome, surface very smooth, arrises very sharp. I got the following notes from Mr. Struthers⁶⁵—

It saws easier than Italian but cuts harder. He thinks his men to whom he pays 25¢ per square foot for handsawing, that is measuring one face only, make as good wages as on Italian at 30¢. $\frac{1}{3}$ more Italian can be cut in a day than Lee. Journeyman would make fair wages at 20 to 25¢ per square foot on beds, 50¢ on faces, and the rubbing would cost about 12½ cents.

Works harder but rubs easier than Italian. Must be carefully selected. The top stone is too soft and ought to be removed. But thinks the second[?] hard stone very good and durable—*Hard on tools*—

He owns a Stockbridge quarry of marble carb.[carbonate?] Fine. It costs delivered in Philadelphia to him \$1.25 per cubic foot.

If dividing a Lee stone to make two dressed faces would prefer sawing to splitting.

[DEC.] 18. Went to church.

[DEC.] 19. Left Philadelphia at 8½ a.m. Reached Baltimore at 1½ p.m. Went to Sesson and Bainb:[?] Mr. Heebner was in the cars and I went with him to see the marble works. Their engine which does the plain sawing and rubbing and polishing is 15 horsepower. The letting down gear for the saw guys[?] is good.

Reached Washington in evening.

[DEC.] 20. The arches of north wing Capitol are all turned except of a couple of rooms near the corridor end where walls are barely commenced. All is frozen up hard and cement has given out. The men are cleaning up the building generally and covering the concrete with sand. The south wing has its concrete floor of principal story nearly finished. Another day would have done it. On north wing some concrete is laid but not much. Still the work is in good condition for winter.

Murphy, Ward and (Rau?)⁶⁶ bricklayers called to complain of Mr. Jones for discharging them, making a quarrel with him on that ac-

⁶⁵ Mr. Struthers was with Struthers, Grebel, and Baird, a Philadelphia marble company.

⁶⁶ Parentheses and question mark are Meigs'.

count. They threaten vengeance which they call redress. Ward says he is no workman and not fit for his place.

* * *

[DEC.] 21. Called at Engineers and War Department to report return.

* * *

[DEC.] 22. I had a long conversation with the Secretary, who is full of fight and would be ready to carry the war into Africa. He thinks ill of Mr. Stanton. The latter was at the Capitol this evening, finding fault I am told with the arrangements and expenditures and with the chairman of the Committee of Public Buildings whom he was doubtless endeavoring to impress with his own feelings.

* * *

[DEC. 24] The work on the Capitol is suspended by frost and by the want of cement. A cargo is at Alexandria detained by ice.

[DEC.] 25. Sunday and Christmas. The children enjoyed themselves very much.

[DEC.] 26. Monday kept as a holiday and as Christmas. Saw in the evening Professor Henry who is greatly concerned at the attack threatened by Mr. Stanton. Reassured him and told him I had written to the Secretary requesting him to assemble the commission on building stone, that General Totten thinks Bache will be very willing to be upon it. Told him also of my conversation with Senator Jones in regard to the marble and that I had requested him not to move in regard to the matter as this commission would be better able to reach the truth than any congressional committee. Jones I suspect of some interested motive. He was very anxious that I should see certain friends in New York. Does he hold an interest in the quarry? He does in Eastman's⁶⁷ stone cutting company.

* * *

[DEC. 27] Mr. Winter told Mr. Walter that he heard I expressed the opinion that Provost and Winter had set on Stanton and assured him on the honor of a man that it was not so. That Stanton when asked why he did it said he considered that he had been struck at by the War Dept. and had written his motion in a moment of irritation at losing his place as chairman of the Committee of Public Buildings.

⁶⁷Captain Seth Eastman (1808–1875) had taught Meigs topographical drawing at West Point. He and his father, General Eastman, designed a stonecutting machine that Meigs used for the Capitol work. Subsequently, starting in 1867, Seth Eastman painted a series of seventeen forts and nine Indian scenes that hang in the Capitol.

Rice writes a disagreeable letter to Walter in regard to Heebner's visit, warning him that Capt. M. will find *Chemley*[?] a hard one to fight and that I had better not get him engaged in a contest. Pish! I thought better of Rice.

The Secretary of War's Report speaks very favorably of my works and conduct.⁶⁸

* * *

[DEC. 28] The Secretary proposes to make some change in the composition of the marble commission, and sends word through Campbell for me to call at the Department in the morning.

Mr. Walter's list of outstanding liabilities which I paid on assuming charge amounts to about \$95,000. This deducted from my own expenditures leaves for the cost of the work done this season, including the large quantity of marble on hand and the nearly 3 millions of bricks, less than \$300,000.

* * *

[DEC. 28 CONT.] Mr. Winter called, he is now desirous of having the cost of cutting surbase tried as I proposed by keeping account of time on it. I told him the instructions to Rutherford still remained in force if he chose to avail himself of them.

The wind of Monday blew a great deal of sand used to cover the masonry of the south wing off. They are now putting on the board covering of it. All work is suspended except this preparation for winter.

The stone cutting proceeds merrily[?], about 68 cutters are at work. The contractors say they are losing money and I think it is likely.

[DEC.] 29TH. The Secretary preferred a commission upon the marble consisting of fewer members and after some little discussion he determined upon my advice to constitute Totten, Bache and Henry the commission instead of revising the former one. One reason was that he did not like to have two persons who were directly engaged on the Capitol upon it. He proposed Henry with Bowman and myself. I told

⁶⁸Meigs pasted in his diary the full text of the Secretary of War's report for 1853. The portion of the report that refers directly to Meigs follows.

The work for the extension of the Capitol which, by your order of the 23d of March, was transferred from the Department of the Interior to the War Department, has been prosecuted with due diligence under the special charge of Captain M.C. Meigs, of the Corps of Engineers, and it gives me pleasure to bear testimony to the manner in which that officer has discharged his duty—fully sustaining his reputation for professional skill, zeal, and fidelity. He was placed upon this duty April 4, 1853, and directed specially to examine into the condition of the foundation, which had been previously laid, and minutely to inquire into the arrangements for warming, ventilating, speaking and hearing.

[The full text of the portion of the report pasted in the journal appears in the Appendix on page 783.]

him Bowman was committed against the stone, and I had no desire personally to be on the commission. I thought Mr. Walter would be mortified by my being put into his place, and I preferred therefore to have a new commission to revising the old one omitting him.

I wrote a letter for the Secretary's signature requesting them to act, to examine the causes and remedies if any of the discoloration and to continue the experiments of the former commission in marbles with a view to the interior.

I had some conversation with him in respect to Rice and Heebner's contract. Explained their proposals and refusal to furnish stone and received his direction to prepare a statement in writing to be submitted to the Committee on Public Buildings for the action of Congress. Either to authorize a change of contract paying \$1.98 for the broad courses of ashlar not specified in their contract and \$1,400 each for monolithic column shafts and \$1,100 for those in 2 pieces or refusing the authority, in which case we go back to the 9 inch ashlar.

* * *

[DEC. 29 CONT.] I left cards today for Mr. Burton Craige⁶⁹ of North Carolina, chairman of House Committee on Public Buildings, and for Mr. McDougall⁷⁰ of California, William's friend.

[DEC.] 30. The *Sun*⁷¹ correspondent Jon[?] corrects his error as to cost of bricks and gives a good word to the present management of the public works in this district saying among other things that the Halls of the Capitol it is said will be made as if they were not intended for a deaf House and blind Senate.

* * *

[DEC.] 31. Last day of the year. Slush covers the earth. There has been a very extensive snow storm. Telegraphic dispatches from Milwaukee to Portland show a snow storm over the whole region.

* * *

[DEC. 31 CONT.] I signed a letter to the Secretary referring to him the correspondence with Rice and Baird in relation to the marble and requesting him to secure from Congress authority to make a supplementive contract or a refusal so as to enable us to get the stone or to agree to take the thin stone of the specific cuts in 9 inch to 18 inch beds.

⁶⁹Francis Burton Craige (1811–1875), Democrat of North Carolina, served in the House of Representatives, 1853–1861.

⁷⁰James A. McDougall (1817–1867), Democrat of California, served in the House of Representatives, 1853–1855, and in the Senate, 1861–1867.

⁷¹Baltimore *Sun*.

If they grant me this right, we will have our 100 columns monolithic, and a solid substantial building, if not we must be content with a thin veneering of marble.

Senator G.W. Jones⁷² of Iowa called at office to see the specimens of stone cut by the stone cutting machine.

G.W. Jones⁷³ of Tennessee of the House also called with Mr. Davis⁷⁴ of Indiana to look at specimens of marble he had left at the office.

* * *

[DEC. 31 CONT.] A French sculptor Mr. Saunders⁷⁵ called, introduced to Mr. Walter by Mr. Keitt⁷⁶ of South Carolina, a member of the Committee on Public Buildings. He desired employment as a sculptor.

I told him to let me see what he can do first. Mr. Keitt will call to see me when I hope to show him that we have American artists far beyond these suing[?] foreigners in skill.

* * *

[DEC. 31 CONT.] The mayor is very much pleased with the design for the silver pitcher, which is really a very handsome one. It is in Galt's⁷⁷ however for an estimate. He is anxious to make it, thinking it will be a very handsome work and give him reputation.

⁷² George Wallace Jones (1804–1896), Democrat of Iowa, served in the Senate, 1848–1859. He had been a territorial delegate in the House of Representatives, first from Michigan and then from Wisconsin, 1835–1839.

⁷³ George Washington Jones (1806–1884), Democrat of Tennessee, served in the House of Representatives, 1843–1859. For the Confederacy, he served in the house of representatives, 1862–1864.

⁷⁴ John G. Davis (1810–1866), Democrat of Indiana, served in the House of Representatives, 1851–1855 and 1857–1861.

⁷⁵ Henry Dmochowski Saunders (1810–1863), a sculptor, was born in Vilna in what is now Lithuania. For political reasons, he fled to France, where he studied before moving on to London and the United States. In 1857, he produced two busts of Polish-American Revolutionary War patriots for the Capitol (Thaddeus Kosciuszko and K.K. (Casimir) Pulaski). Saunders may have spoken in French, thus leading to Meigs' error regarding his nationality.

⁷⁶ Lawrence M. Keitt (1824–1864), Democrat of South Carolina, served in the House of Representatives, 1853–1856 and 1856–1860. He was on the Public Buildings and Grounds Committee in the Thirty-fourth Congress (1855–1857) and chaired the committee in the Thirty-fifth Congress (1857–1859). Keitt served in the Confederate army, 1862–1864.

⁷⁷ M.W. Galt and Brothers of Washington were jewelers.