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CHAPTER 3—1855

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"Calling of Cincinnatus from the Plow," the sample fresco painted by Constantino Brumidi in room H-144 *Architect of the Capitol*



Meigs' assistant, Alfred L. Rives, 1859  
*Architect of the Capitol*



Snake door handle *Architect of the Capitol*

### Sketches by Meigs

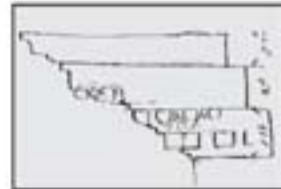
*The Papers of Montgomery C. Meigs, Manuscript Division,  
Library of Congress, Shorthand Journal, Volume 1 (Oct. 15, 1852-Dec. 31, 1855)*



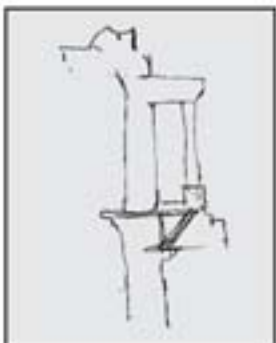
Capitol dome with statue  
on top



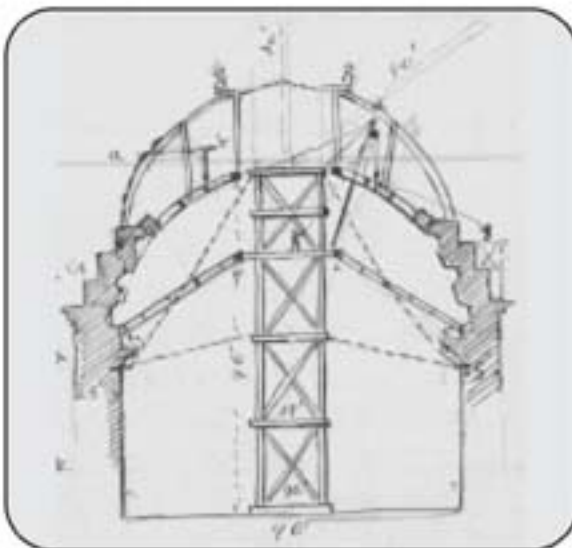
Temporary roof of Rotunda



Cornice



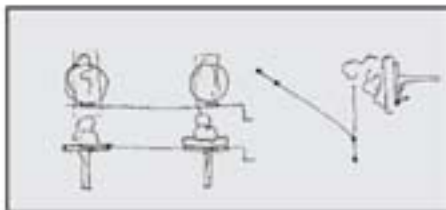
Column for dome cantilevered  
beyond wall



Scaffold that fell



Turning table for sculptors



Turning table for carving models

## CHAPTER 3—1855

[shorthand transcription follows]

[Sketch]<sup>1</sup>

JAN. 1. The first day of the New Year. Bright and beautiful, though a winter's day. The air has been balmy, the sun bright.

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[JAN. 1 CONT.] A few people called here today, not many. I have not taken pains to keep up my visiting acquaintance, and my friends, if they visited, knew that I was not visiting today and that my wife's family were all in distress, looking vainly for the return of the *Albany*, which we never shall see more. God grant that the end of this year may show no further breaks in our circle. Give me wisdom for the duties with which I am charged and enable me to fulfill them all with credit and with usefulness, so to live that I may have no reason to fear death should His summons come before another New Year's day appears.

JAN 2ND. I set August [Schoenborn] to work today to draw in the columns and the front of the old portico of the Capitol in my drawing of the new dome. He draws with great rapidity and skill.

Mr. Walter seemed out of spirits today and discussed his disgust with the people of this place, both politicians and inhabitants. He did not say why, but I suspect that while it was announced in the *Star* that he would keep open house, he had fewer visitors than he wished, and that thus his vanity was wounded.

General Cass sent to say he wished to see me in the anteroom of the Senate today. I went, and after waiting some time, the General being engaged in the discussion of the bill then under consideration, he came out, said he only wanted to see me. Though he had no feeling in this matter at all, he only had great doubts as to the success of anyone's attempts to make rooms fit for public speaking so as to give good effects in all parts of the rooms; that the problem was a most difficult one, etc. He did not know anything about it himself. I told him if he had time to hear me on the subject, I thought I could satisfy him that I had a reasonable prospect of success, but he had not time.

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<sup>1</sup> See sketch of new dome on page 190.

He had never read my notes on the subject but would do so before it came up and would refer to them and to me. Said he had expressed his opinion of me on the floor and would do so again on this occasion. So the old man is going to speak upon a subject about which he, by his own showing, knows nothing but cast doubts upon the success of the project of his friend, which he has not yet read, to risk throwing obstacles in the way of the early completion of the work. And all for what? Someone must have been at him about this matter.

I went this evening to see General James of Rhode Island about it. I told him what Cass had said and that it would probably rest with him to answer him, as a member of the Committee on Public Building. I gave him a copy of the notes to use, as he would probably have mislaid his, and he promised to attend to the General and answer him. Said that upon the question of hearing, he had never had any doubt that I was quite right and would be successful, but he did doubt my success in bringing the ventilation downwards, that he had spoken with Walter about this. I told him that I had heard of his doubts but did not care to discuss them at this time, that I had no doubts myself but had promised it to Bache and Henry that I would so arrange the air passages that the ventilation could be carried either way; and that he, as a mechanic, must know that it was a simple problem in mechanics to send air in any necessary quantities and to any desired spot; and that we blow with one fan sometimes 50 smiths' fires, cutting off any one or blowing it as we pleased. He agreed to this.

As for the dome, he asked if I would draw up for him an amendment to the appropriation which would cover the matter as I wished, and he would offer it, and had no doubt of its passing both Houses. Asked whether I would have money enough without any increase in appropriation or whether it was necessary to give us the other hundred thousand. I told him money ought to be given, but still, if it could not be got, the authority would do, for the money would last till the next meeting, and then if we were out, more could be got at once.

I explained to him my project for executing this dome. He had said that I had piled up bricks at an astonishing rate. I told him I wanted to get up our working drawing for the dome and send out some of the patterns within a few weeks, get the casting all fitted and ready and put the proper machinery, build it rapidly, and thus astonish them when they came back next year, by showing them what could be done in iron, as I had shown them something of what can be done in bricks this year. He seemed pleased at the prospect and promised to help it forward.

I went over to see Captain [Edmund L.] Hardcastle of the Topographical Engineers, who has moved into Harding's house opposite. He is intelligent and agreeable and a good officer. . . . He read to me

an article in the Buffalo *Daily Courier* of the 13th of December upon a report of the Secretary of War which notices the Secretary's [reference] to me and does it in terms very complimentary to me. Here it is:

Colonel Davis, in conclusion, speaks of the extension of the Capitol and of the admirable arrangements and administrative ability displayed by Captain Meigs of the Engineer Corps, who is charged with the superintendence and direction of the work. It is well for the country that the jugglers and bargainers and political contractors do not succeed in getting this vast and responsible undertaking into their greedy hands. It is well for the administration that it stood by Captain Meigs when unprincipled newspaper reporters and scurvy politicians were doing their best to oust him from a situation which, however much honor it might confer, afforded him not one cent of profit. The government by this time have learned that honorable gentlemen who regard their reputation above all things are of more real value to the country than those who so long as they can fill their pockets are indifferent to everything else.

We not only congratulate Captain Meigs on the credit he has deserved and won, but the War Department for appreciating his services and retaining him in his responsible position in spite of the hue and cry of interested politicians and of men who, to please their constituents, lay the foundation of the Capitol with sand and roof the edifice with canvas.

That is a pretty good \_\_\_\_\_ for me, I think.

Senator Dodge came in this morning to ask me to increase the pay of the Irishman who now puts on the asphalt. I told him I could not do it, that he had a good place at better wages than other workingmen got and as much as his knowledge enabled him to earn. Could I take on 3 more laborers? No, but if he would leave the names of any such in whom he felt an interest with the foreman who selected the men as we wanted them, it might cause them to be remembered and thus get that employment before long. But he must remember that in thus designating a man, he might be doing injustice to a better man who would otherwise have been employed. He felt the force of this observation and said perhaps it would be best not to speak thereafter. I told him my instructions were in all cases to take those who had shown themselves to be the most deserving. I spoke to him about the distress in the iron business and the advantage of putting up our dome at once, and he promised, upon the case as presented by me, that he would vote for it.

[In the left margin] This day's notes, including several stops for Mrs. Meigs, is written at the rate of 26 words to the minute, with all the vowels in.

\* \* \*

*[Meigs spent January 3 in Annapolis at Fort Madison, returning by 7 p.m.]*

[JAN. 3] Miss Margaret Mead came to see me this evening about her friend and protege Smith,<sup>2</sup> the sculptor; wished to get him employment. I showed her that I had no work at present, and I advised her to tell him to go to the contractors and ask them for work, which they would no doubt give him, upon the decorative portions of the marble work. This would not injure his chance of employment when any sculpture is to be done, and it would in the meantime give him food and support. It is certainly better for him to live on silver than to starve while waiting for gold.

[JAN.] 4TH. This has been a busy day. I found at the office Mr. Freese, the millwright, to whom I had written about the fitting up of some sawing machines. He occupied some time. He is to go back home tonight and to see in Philadelphia Messrs. Sutton and Smith and let me know at what price they will agree to make me the casting necessary for the frames of the saws.

I found, too, Mr. Thomas, of Thomas Brothers, here and received from him their prices for the decoration of the ceiling of the House of Representatives. The prices seem to me reasonable, and I gave him the order to execute the work so far at present as to model it. When modelled, he is to inform me, and I am to go to New York to see the models and for approving and authorizing the manufacture of the molding.

Ellicott<sup>3</sup> also called. He wishes to bid for the ceiling of the House of Representatives, which is a piece of work in which he has no experience and which he could not do as well as those who have been in this trade for some time. I showed him the drawing and told him that he would make a mistake if he attempted it. For the braces of the roof of the Senate Hall, I told him I was willing to accept a bid from him. He was very urgent upon me to give him the opportunity to bid for the other and said that he had the best man in the United States for this work. I told him to bring him to see me.

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<sup>2</sup>The sculptor referred to may be Carl Rohl Smith (?-1900), a German-born sculptor who worked in Washington and designed the monument to General William Tecumseh Sherman in front of the Treasury Building.

<sup>3</sup>Paul Ellicott was a contractor.

Mr. Roosevelt<sup>4</sup> came, introduced by a letter from Senator Brodhead, or from Mr. Broadhead,<sup>5</sup> perhaps, not the Senator. He is an importer of English plate glass which he offers at lower prices than the French. Both the rough and the polished. I told him that with equal qualities, I would give the preference of course to him who would furnish cheapest. He is to send me specimens, with prices.

Mr. Winter thinks I have not allowed him enough for the friezes of the windows. Says there is a great deal of difference in the cost of the short and the long ones. I told him I thought I had gone pretty far in my pricing of these windows, saying that I had contracted to make them as originally designed for \$250 each and that while our changes had not much altered the forms, they had increased his price to about \$1,000. However, he gave me notice of his intention to have a talk with me upon the subject tomorrow.

\* \* \*

[JAN. 4 CONT.] General Cass sent for me today to ask me where he could find an article in one of the British reviews upon the Halls of Parliament. I told him I had not seen it. He said that he had seen it but could not lay his hand upon it. He had been talking with Mr. Clayton of Delaware upon this subject, and "Clayton says that you will be all right and will have no difficulty." "I will not say anything that you could take exception to." And with this he left me. Why this talk about it at all? He knows nothing of the subject.

\* \* \*

[JAN. 4 CONT.] A letter from Mother<sup>6</sup> today about John.<sup>7</sup> She says that he is recovering but they are very anxious lest he should go to work before his strength is perfectly re-established, and she asks Lou if she can invite him to spend a week away. We have both written—she to Ann,<sup>8</sup> I to John—to invite him. And I hope he will be persuaded to come and pay us this visit. If he stays at home, he is certain to go to work long before he can be fit for it. If he comes here, I shall have pleasure in showing him my works and in showing him over the city, and he will derive both pleasure and profit from his visit, besides the saving of health.

<sup>4</sup>Theodore Roosevelt, Sr. was with Roosevelt and Son of New York, importers of plate glass. He was the father of the future president, who was born in 1858.

<sup>5</sup>Perhaps John M. Broadhead, a comptroller at the Treasury Department.

<sup>6</sup>Mary Montgomery Meigs was the mother of Montgomery C. Meigs and the wife of Dr. Charles D. Meigs.

<sup>7</sup>Dr. John F. Meigs (1818–1882), Meigs' brother and a Philadelphia physician, had been ill.

<sup>8</sup>Ann Ingersoll Meigs (d. 1856) was the wife of Dr. John F. Meigs.

[JAN.] 5TH. I had many visitors today. I found at the office, waiting for me, a Mr. Charles Stewart, who wished to sell me some of the machinery of the defunct stone-cutting company. I went down to look at the establishment with him. They have a fine set of shafting and belting, a beautiful steam engine, and a pair of saw frames which would answer our purposes exactly and are ready to remove and put up. He wished to rent the building to the United States for a moderate rent. The engine is too large to run, as I have no work that would occupy a half of it. If I had money to buy the whole establishment for myself and set up some manufacture, it would be a first-rate speculation. The place cost about \$63,000, I am told by Stewart, who, by the way, is not reliable, and was bought in for \$20,000 at auction. It, he says, belongs to Shelton and Beech and some two or three others.

Our line of shafting is up, and I told him I would buy the belting, which should suit us, at 10 percent off the New York price. It is nearly new, having run only 3 months and done little work. The wear is nothing, and its use for that time is an advantage as it is stretched. It will save much trouble in fitting it up. I told him that I might buy the saws but I must have proof that he was authorized to sell, as I felt some hesitation about buying from such a defunct corporation. He said he would give me a statement of the title which would satisfy me.

Among my visitors this morning were Judge Carroll of New York, brother of Mr. [William T.] Carroll, Clerk of the Supreme Court. He was accompanied by one Mr. Hastings<sup>9</sup> of the House of Representatives. Gouverneur Kemble of Coldspring came, also. I showed them all over the drawings and over the building; and Kemble, who takes interest in such matters, I took to the atelier to see models and the process of carving a figure in marble, and also to the blacksmith's shop, to show him our mode of forging in dies and punching at the same time. This he said was new. In the smith shop, I found several persons looking at this, which seems to be creating quite a sensation.

I want to make a couple of turning tables for carving the models upon. If turned by a tangent screw, I think that with a pendant frame and parallel motion I could rough out the brick much quicker and sooner than in the ordinary mode by using the calipers. This idea I will work out on paper, at any rate, and if it works well in promise, I will have the tables made and try it. [Sketch]<sup>10</sup>

I want also to put up a rough lath of wood in which to hang one of the columns for the vestibules, the corridor, and using the lathe guide principle and the hammer and chisel to cut those and round

<sup>9</sup>George Hastings (1807–1866), Democrat of New York, served in the House of Representatives, 1853–1855.

<sup>10</sup>See illustration on page 190.



the column and save the time consumed in cutting the \_\_\_\_\_ and squaring the ends.

I did not do any work today except to give some directions, among which was the putting up of the regulations in the sculptor's room to prevent the loafing of all the Italian refugees in town there. They have prevented him from working, and it has grown to be a pest.

I found this afternoon a fresh Italian in there at work upon a Newfoundland dog, begun this day, after I went to the office, and advanced enough to show that he has a quick hand and an accurate eye, and he seems to be making a spirited and natural dog in clay. Vincenti promised to keep his door fastened hereafter and to prevent this loafing, but petitioned for permission for his brother sculptor to finish his dog now begun. This I accorded to. Vincenti seems to be a gentleman, and I am sorry to see him fall into the hands of such people.

Mr. Fowler of the firm of Janes, Beebe and Co. was also at the office this morning. He says that they will send in a bid for the ceiling of the House of Representatives in a short time. Thinks that he could have made the decorations of cast iron as sharp as I can get them made of carton pierre. I am, however, inclined to have the Senate ceiling entirely finished in iron. The roof work goes on rapidly, and I shall have all the suspender eyes finished in a few days. The assembling links for the diagonal braces are now being punched in the steam hammer, and I found a large pile of them as a result of this work.

[JAN.] 6TH. Major Mordecai brought his brother today to look at the Capitol and the drawings. I took them over the work and showed them all the drawings in the portfolio.

I received from Mr. Crawford today a long letter. He has shipped the [plaster models of the] schoolboys, the mechanic, the schoolmaster, the soldier, the merchant and some accessories of the southern half of the pediment. He sent me a sketch of the blocks required to make them. He sent also a long description of finding points in the marble or, in other words, of the process of sculpture. He says he uses the old Italian method, which is to put above the modelling the block, frames of wood, divided in the same manner. Plumb lines from these frames give corresponding ordinates. By this, some points are established, but the calipers do the greater part of the work.

I directed a copy of the cast iron part of the proving machine to be made so as to have it cast and prepared for use.

I shall get the West Point foundry<sup>11</sup> to make a couple of turning tables with tangent screws, as sketched yesterday; and if they work

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<sup>11</sup> This was the foundry owned by Gouverneur Kemble. See note 18 on page 48.

well, as I expect, will probably have a couple more, which will be enough to rough out all our statues.

Crawford asks, as I supposed he would, for more room for his door. He thought the arch of the other architectural molding in the doorway might all be dispensed with and that he would then have room for a door which would be beautiful. He has the natural liking of a sculptor for sculpture, though with this, moldings are useless. I read his letter to Mr. Walter, and we think that we will be able to dispense with some of the architecture and give him part of the room he asks for, though not quite all. The door as designed is, even Crawford confesses, graceful and beautiful, but I think that it will be improved by giving more room for the sculpture.

\* \* \*

[JAN. 6 CONT.] I signed my accounts current today for the quarter. I have spent for the extension \$151,915.54; Fort Madison, \$189.20; water-works, \$731.23. Total for the 3 months for all 3 works, \$152,835.97. My pay has been, for all this work and expenditure and risk, about \$480, which is less than  $\frac{1}{3}$  of one percent.

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[JAN.] 8TH. I called this morning to see Mr. Gouverneur Kemble on my way to the office. He will make for me the turning tables for the sculpture. I also called upon Honorable Mr. Singleton<sup>12</sup> of the House of Representatives, from Mississippi. He said that he had heard Mr. Stanton talk and that he was quite satisfied to leave the ventilation of the Capitol to me; that he had more confidence in my opinion than in his own or Stanton's on such a subject.

\* \* \*

[JAN. 8 CONT.] At the office, Major Barnard of the Engineers came in and spent the morning. I brought him home to dinner.

I set Mr. Ober to drawing from my sketch the tables for the sculptors. He sketched out the parallel motion. [Sketch]<sup>13</sup> I received today the wrought iron rafters for the Capitol roof. They are being delivered hauled by our carts.

Dr. John Meigs, my brother, arrived this evening, looking very thin and pale. He will stay with us a week and I hope recoup.

JAN. 9. The wrought iron rafters are being delivered. I received today from the Tredegar Works a bill of lading for \$4,400 worth of the iron,

<sup>12</sup>Otho R. Singleton (1814–1889), Democrat of Mississippi, served in the House of Representatives, 1853–1855, 1857–1861, and 1875–1887. He served in the Confederate Congress, 1861–1865.

<sup>13</sup>See illustration on page 190.

principally angle iron for the roof purlins. Anderson wrote to ask me to pay at once by draft on New York, as it would be a great help to him in carrying him through the difficulties of these troublous times for all businessmen. I sent him the draft, as he had sent a bill of lading, and his bargain was to deliver upon shipboard, not here.

John Barnard spent the morning at my office. John [Meigs] also came in, feeling well enough to ride down there. I took him through the old Capitol to the Senate gallery, into which we could not get, however, because it was filled up with members of the old soldiers convention. We got into the House of Representatives gallery, where he was [interested?] in the proceedings.

Latham<sup>14</sup> of California spoke. He is a ready and impressive or, rather, attractive speaker. After some time spent there, we returned to my office, and I met Colonel Taylor of Ohio, who said he was just taking 2 gentlemen, Messrs. Eliot<sup>15</sup> and Edmands<sup>16</sup> of Massachusetts, to look at the extension. I took them round, and as they met John, Eliot greeted him warmly. After a little conversation, John went to the office and Mr. Eliot rejoined us, saying there was one of the glorious Philadelphia doctors. I told him I was glad to hear him speak thus of my brother. He said he knew my father well, also.

Edmands seemed intelligent. They went into the House of Representatives and asked questions about it. Then into the office and looked at the drawings. Edmands criticized the dome of Walter, and justly. It was rather surprising to me at first to hear him do so; I have been so accustomed to hear an indiscriminate admiration for it. He thought that it was too much cut up, as it is. I told him that this was the first study and would be modified in execution, that I felt the same fault and had a sketch underway that would remedy it.

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*[Dr. John Meigs told Meigs he was considering giving up his practice for health reasons but Meigs urged him instead simply to "limit his practice to a certain district . . . the abandonment of his profession would make him unhappy, I think."]*

[JAN. 9 CONT.] I ordered today the marble for the statues which have been shipped. The drawing of my machine for carving is progressing. I read a full description of the wood carving machinery of Jordan in

<sup>14</sup>Milton S. Latham (1827–1882), Democrat of California, served in the House of Representatives, 1853–1855, and in the Senate, 1860–1863.

<sup>15</sup>Thomas D. Eliot (1808–1870), Whig of Massachusetts, served in the House of Representatives, 1854–1855 and 1859–1869.

<sup>16</sup>John W. Edmands (1809–1877), Whig of Massachusetts, served in the House of Representatives, 1853–1855.

the *Art Journal*<sup>17</sup> for 1848 tonight. I think I may perhaps use it for the decorations of the ceiling of the Senate Hall.

[JAN.] 10TH. I had a visit from Miss [Knower], the sister or sister-in-law of Secretary Marcy,<sup>18</sup> this morning. She came to look at the photographs of Crawford's statues, with which she seemed to be highly pleased. Says that she has an artist, Mr. Palmer,<sup>19</sup> of Albany, who she thinks is of great promise, whom she seems to have under her special patronage, whom she will bring to see these things. She is an intelligent woman and seems to take great interest in these matters of art. I feared that she would try to recommend her protege for employment on the extension, and I took the liberty of cautioning her that persons were apt to fall in love with an artist with whom they might be brought in contact and thought him, because he had made a good bust or single figure, fit for such a work as the pediment; that it was a commission which should be given only to one who had given, by great works, the evidence of ability to fill it. She laughingly agreed with me and said she did not fall in love with artists, not even with [Hiram] Powers, whom she had seen for a long time in Italy, and that she knew that I was right in my opinion. She said she would bring her friend, and I told her I would be happy to see him. She is an agreeable person.

\* \* \*

[JAN. 10 CONT.] Senator Norris<sup>20</sup> of New Hampshire, a good friend of the bill, is very sick with an attack of a seizure of the heart and is not expected to recover. I saw Mr. Pearce of Maryland today in the library. He promised, sure as fate, to go for the dome. I also saw Pratt of Maryland and told him to speak to Pearce about it and see if they could not get it carried in the Finance Committee.

By some mistake, the order intended to cover the belting bought from the stone cutting company here was sent to Campbell and Coyle<sup>21</sup> after it had been got from the company. They have today sent up the belting which is not wanted. I inquired as to the cause of the

<sup>17</sup> Either the *Art-Union* (London: W. Thomas, 1839–1848) or, if Meigs was mistaken about the year, the *Art-Journal* (London: George Virtue, 1849–1912).

<sup>18</sup> William L. Marcy (1786–1857) of New York served as secretary of state, 1853–1857. Earlier, he had served in the Senate, 1831–1833, and as secretary of war, 1845–1849. Marcy's second wife was Cornelia Knower, and the visitor was her sister, Miss Knower.

<sup>19</sup> Erastus Dow Palmer (1817–1904) of Albany was a sculptor whose 1874 statue of Robert R. Livingston is part of the Statuary Hall collection in the Capitol. In April 1857 he submitted a proposed design for the House pediment, which failed to be accepted by President Buchanan and Secretary of War Floyd.

<sup>20</sup> Moses Norris, Jr. (1799–1855), Democrat of New Hampshire, served in the House of Representatives, 1843–1847, and in the Senate, 1849–1855. He died January 11, the day after this entry.

<sup>21</sup> Campbell and Coyle of Washington was a hardware company, which also had a sawmill, selling lumber and other materials and supplies.

mistake, and finding it one of those which will unavoidably occur sometimes, I directed it to be paid, for it will do to replace the other one once out, or for the other belts which we will want for the other machines not yet received.

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[JAN. 10 CONT.] I wrote to Mrs. Margaret Mead today, declining absolutely the offer of her friend Smith<sup>22</sup> to take my bust or that of one of my family as a specimen of his style of work. I told her that I had seen his busts of Walter, of Mills, and of Maury and that I did not need others for specimens. These I could look at without being in any suspected obligation to the taker.

I wrote tonight to Cornelius and Baker, the lamp makers, of Philadelphia, sending them the models in plaster and wax of the caps for the small pilasters and columns of the stairways. These models are not worked with Vincenti's usual success, and I requested them to exhaust the skill of their artists and chasers upon them before they begin to cast. They will send me a rough as they will propose it to be finished before they begin work, and I am to have an estimate of the cost in gilt and in bronze in order to determine whether to give the order.

Vincenti had in his room a cast of a snake which he caught on Sunday and which he had coiled up upon a table and then taken a cast in plaster. I was surprised to see the beauty and the delicacy of the plaster cast from this natural object. The water snake upon my tea kettle, that worked in silver by a good workman, is rough and coarse when compared with this transcript from nature. I must have some more casts of natural objects taken—fish, game, \_\_\_\_\_ and beaked fowls. I think one in Philadelphia, a cast from a chicken which had been picked [?], was good.

Our lathe and planing and drilling machines which have arrived have at last been put in motion. The partial is not good. It is of the cheap quality and it has a few teeth out of the gearing wheels. So has the lathe one tooth out, which was put in by hand in order to enable us to use it today. The small lathe which we have received is a partial. The long 11-foot lathe ordered from Gage, Warner and Whitney has not yet arrived. I shall buy no more partials and cheap working tools, I think. The large drill looks in work like a very good machine.

The rafters of Cooper and Hewitt's iron make a good show as they are being piled up at the shop. I wrote to Cooper and Hewitt today, sending them the report of the trials of their iron as compared with

<sup>22</sup> Probably Carl Rohl Smith, the sculptor she was supporting in the entry for January 3.

Tredegar. They have failed as much in strength as they have excelled in work, quality and malleability.

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[JAN. 11] I received today a letter from Lieutenant [Henry K.] Davenport of the *Priston Steamer*, giving an account of the search just made by her for the *Albany*. He thought that she must have foundered in the vicinity of Bermuda at the time the British line-of-battle ship the *Bausqueen* [?] was injured. They found no sign or tidings of her in the Caribbean Sea. Mr. Davenport speaks very highly of Hal, whom he knew intimately, having been in the mail steamer service with him for some 4 years. Poor fellow. I cannot make up my mind to show this letter to my wife and thus dispel the lingering hopes which she still feels.

\* \* \*

[JAN. 12] Walter told me that Mr. James, of the Senate, had been at his office while I was engaged with Shoemaker and that he wished to make a speech upon ventilation that would set the public's mind at rest and put a stop to all this agitation; that Cass had promised not to call the matter up till he had returned from California[?],<sup>23</sup> where he was going with the remains of Senator Norris of New Hampshire, who died yesterday or this morning. He wished to get some information to enable him to make a correct speech. I wish he would hold his tongue except to answer anything that Cass may say which is wrong, for I think it will be impossible to fill him up so as to prevent his making some absurd mistake.

I received from Cooper and Hewitt some beautiful and fine wire drawn from the renewed iron which shows great ductility, though it proved to be weak when tested.

JAN. 13. I reprov'd Mr. Winter this morning pretty severely for the unskillful manner in which they moved the large stone for the vestibule. They had chipped the first one badly, and when I told him he must make it right, he said if I expect to get the building done without defects, I would find myself mistaken. I went with him, at his request, to see another pillar they were then about to haul. I told him that this would be defaced, but he was very confident that it was all right. After it was placed by the front door, he passed me and said they had got it up all safe. I made him go with me to examine it, telling him that I had said it would be injured and I believed we should find it so.

<sup>23</sup>This is clearly a mistranscription. Norris is buried in Pittsfield, New Hampshire, and the secretary of the Senate's report for that year includes the payment to send Norris' remains to Manchester, New Hampshire.

Upon taking off the ropes by which it had been swung, I found it worse defaced than the other. The ropes had broken the edges wherever they had touched them. The rest they will swing by means of round \_\_\_\_\_ in the ends or dowels.

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[JAN.] 14TH. I wrote today to Macomb and to Mr. Trowbridge in answer to letters from Annie and Kate to my wife, asking something cheering in regard to the *Albany*. There is nothing cheering to be said, and I had to write to Macomb and to Mr. Trowbridge and tell them that I could say nothing. I do not suppose there is one chance in 100,000 of our ever hearing from any one of the crew of this vessel. I had to express my own opinion to Lou in consequence of her having these letters, and she has been in great distress all day. Mrs. Rodgers, too, took Annie's letter while Lou was at church and read it. She has been in bed all day since. Jerusha<sup>24</sup> seems, too, to have realized that there is some danger of the vessel's being really lost, and she is now sobbing and crying, with no command over herself. I fear she will disturb her mother but is quiet.

For a few days past, we have been laying stone pretty briskly, have finished the west window of the south front, but today the frost has set in again, and I fear we shall be idle again for some time.

\* \* \*

[JAN.] 15TH. This morning I made a drawing of the tool and tool holder recommended by Holzapfel<sup>25</sup> for cutting iron and brass and sent them to Mr. Champion, with Nasmith's Tool Gauge. I directed him to have a set made to be tried in our shops and compared with the common tools which are used in the work shops of this country.

Lefferts and Brothers write that they have shipped to me several sheets of copper of different thicknesses and that Mr. Lefferts will be here in a day or two.

\* \* \*

[JAN. 15 CONT.] I sent for Ellis and Brother to look at the drawing of the balance beams of the proving machine, to make an offer for the patterns and casting.

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<sup>24</sup>Jerusha C. Rodgers (1819–1883) was the unmarried sister of Louisa Meigs who lived in the Meigs household.

<sup>25</sup>John Jacob Holzapfel invented an ornamental lathe in London in the 1780s that continued to be produced until 1914.

[JAN. 15 CONT.] I met Colonel Taylor of Ohio in the Rotunda. He said he was trying to get Mr. Craige to make a speech upon public building and introduce a bill to allow us to make a new dome.

I sent letters to Mr. Trowbridge and to Macomb today, written yesterday, in answer to the letters of Annie and Kate, which Louisa received yesterday.

I signed the drawing of the column for the corridor today and told Mr. Rutherford to look for stone to make some of the caps of.

I am told by Mr. Walter that Mr. Hunter of Virginia wishes to answer General Cass upon the ventilation and heating question and that he will come into the office tomorrow to get some information upon the subject. I should rather have him speak than Mr. James, who is not a man whom I would wish to have as my defender.

\* \* \*

[JAN.] 16. I sent today to Mr. Hunter of the Senate a copy of the report upon the ventilation of the Reform Club house by Dr. Howard. Howard seems to be one of the men who use strong language. He denounces unsparingly the chimney draft proposed by Dr. Reid<sup>26</sup> for the Houses of Parliament. The Reform Club is ventilated by a fan driven by steam engine high pressure of 5 horsepower. The fan, he says, is capable of supplying 11,000 cubic feet of air per minute, and the waste steam heats the air supplied to a temperature of 75 degrees or 80 degrees. There is in the upper part of the building, in the attic, a stove intended to help the fan by making a draft. This, Howard says, is mischievous and useless; that the differential barometer showed that the power of the fan exceeded the stove by some 120 times, while the stove burned 300 pounds of coal to the 200 pounds of the steam engine.

The specimens of copper came today. I shall have to use 30-ounce copper. I believe 23-ounce is too thin. It gives way under the heel [?] and becomes indented. Mr. Lefferts came in just as the copper arrived. Mr. Crocker had been in and left the room a moment after Mr. Lefferts entered.

By the way, a curious contretemps happened in this connection. Mr. Crocker said to me that he would like to see the copper when it came and the man who was to corrugate it, also, if he could see him without being introduced to him. I told him they would be together in the office in the morning, and I could write a note to him to come from the House of Representatives to look at the copper, and then he could see both. He said he would bring several Members who wished to

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<sup>26</sup>David Boswell Reid (1805–1863) was an expert on ventilation, who designed a system for the Houses of Parliament.



see me and the works, and then he could accomplish his object. While we were speaking, a young-looking man entered the room, whom I took to be a clerk with a bill or a mechanic asking for work. As Mr. Crocker left, I turned to speak to him and asked what he wanted, and he announced himself as Mr. Lefferts. I do not know how much of our conversation he heard, but he was in the room for some time while we were speaking, and he might have heard a good part of it if his ears were sharp, for we did not speak in a particularly low tone. After he left, I wrote a note to Mr. Crocker, telling him that the copper was here, having arrived half an hour after he left, and that the young gentleman who had come in while we were speaking was the man whom he wished to see.

Lefferts brought me 4 sheets of copper of different weights. The 30-ounce is the proper weight, I believe. None of those lighter are stiff enough to be safe. Mr. Lefferts tried to persuade me that there was no danger from the contraction of the copper if corrugated. Says they rivet their iron plates together and make no provision for expansion. He did not know that fastening iron plates to iron rafters and iron purlins was fastening iron upon itself and that thus the covering and the frame would expand equally, and of course there could be no disturbance. 1,200 inches, or 100 feet, of iron expand from 32 degrees to 212 degrees into 1,201½ inches, while the same length of copper becomes 1,202 inches, a difference of ½ inch, sufficient to pull out rivets. So I must make provision in my fastening for this much motion.

A young man, a Mr. Hammond he called himself, came in today to see if I would use a patent which he owns for filling the frames of iron building [?] with some non-conducting substance. He wants me to undertake to use it in the dome, which he thought would be made much more substantial by being thus filled in with clay and plaster of paris. I could not give him much encouragement. He asked first for Mr. Walter, who had gone to Baltimore. Said that Captain Bowman thought it the greatest invention of the age.

\* \* \*

*[Meigs' brother John wrote that he had returned safely to Philadelphia.]*

[JAN. 16 CONT.] All the family except Mrs. Rodgers are in great distress at the absence of news of the *Albany*. She seems to keep her hopes yet. She does not know that the opinion of the officers is so unfavorable.

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[JAN.] 17TH. After a careful examination of the sheets of copper which I have received, I today decided upon the 30 ounces to the foot copper

for the covering of the extension, to be cold-rolled bright and smooth and corrugated. It will take for the ceilings of the two wings, exclusive of the porticoes and the corridors, 14,260 pounds, costing \$36,500. But the one is heavier than necessary; the other is too light.

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[JAN.] 18TH. I went today to the Senate to hear the debate upon the Army bill, in which I expected to hear General Cass call upon Mr. Hunter, according to his notice, to explain the mode of ventilating and warming the new Halls of Congress. This Army bill, however, did not come up, and I was disappointed. I called to see Commodore Perry<sup>27</sup> on my way to the office. He looks well and younger than when he sailed for Japan. He was then worried and anxious about his expedition, of the stoppage of which he had some reason, I believe, to be apprehensive. Now he is full-fledged with victory and success.

I saw Crocker, who is ready to bid for the copper.

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[JAN. 18 CONT.] I saw Mr. Lefferts at the office and showed him the letter I was about to write to the copper people in regard to the supply of copper. He was opposed to some ideas about it.

Messrs. Thurston, Gardner and Co. of Providence were here today looking at the drawing of the ceiling of the corridor of the south wing pediment. They saw Mr. Walter, who explained it to them and I saw them for a moment, but I had to go back to the Senate and had only time to tell them not to bid so low as to lose money and yet that a high bid would not get them the work, as they would have competitors. General James came to me in the Senate gallery to say that they would not bid, not thinking that they could compete with bidders here. But he wished to know if there was not something that they could do in the way of making a steam engine for the ventilation. I told him that this would be a small matter, as I found Dr. [Howard] said that a steam engine of 5 horsepower at the Reform Club, London, supplied 11,000 cubic feet of air per minute.

I also told him that I hoped they would bid for this work as I had not intended to discourage them from offering, but only to caution them against bidding at so low a rate as to risk loss.

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<sup>27</sup>Matthew Calbraith Perry (1794–1858), a naval officer, was sent to Japan in 1852 with a fleet to negotiate a treaty opening Japanese ports to trade from American ships. The treaty was signed in March 1854, and Perry arrived back in New York on January 12, 1855. Perry's daughter Sarah was married to Louisa Meigs' eldest brother, Robert S. Rodgers.

Mr. Chase<sup>28</sup> of Ohio has introduced a bill or resolution to authorize the President to buy a work of art from Hiram Powers. I must try to see him and show him the letters to Powers in regard to the pediment.

\* \* \*

*[On January 19, Meigs went to Annapolis to inspect Fort Madison, returning home that evening.]*

[JAN. 19] I reached Washington at 7 p.m. Found that Senator Pearce of Maryland had been at the office to see me and said that he would call again. I regret to miss him, as I wanted to show him the drawing of Crawford's sculpture and to have his approbation.

\* \* \*

[JAN.] 20TH. I had a visit today from Senator Pearce of Maryland. He looked at the drawing and the mode of making up the designs, went over the south wing with me, admired the arched ceilings, the convenient arrangement of the Hall of the House of Representatives, the private stairways, etc., and said that he was glad he had come, that his visit gave him confidence, and that he believed I would be successful, that he now saw that the building would be great, monumental indeed. He admired the dome and said he would try to get the Finance Committee to reconsider their action, for they had not adopted the amendment which he proposed for an appropriation so as to enable us to begin the dome at once.

Captain Talcott<sup>29</sup> came in also, with General [Gratitot]<sup>30</sup> and the general from Richmond. They looked over things and went through the building. Talcott also wanted to see my smith shop, the mode of forging, and the irregular cutter, which had just been set up and put in operation.

I paid Mr. Lerge [?], the partner and agent of Nathaniel Gere, the patentee of the irregular cutter, for the machine and the deed giving the right to use it. I paid him, also, \$15 for coming here and setting up and putting it into operation. The master carpenter, Slight, and some of the workmen have been shown the mode of using it. One of them has been detailed to work the machine, making sash bars and the molding about the windows, frames and shutters.

<sup>28</sup> Salmon P. Chase (1808–1873), Free Soil then Republican of Ohio, served in the Senate, 1849–1855 and briefly in 1861. He served as secretary of the treasury, 1861–1864, and as chief justice of the United States, 1864–1873.

<sup>29</sup> Charles G. Talcott was assistant engineer on the aqueduct project. In 1856 Meigs transferred him to the Capitol extension.

<sup>30</sup> Charles Gratitot had been chief engineer of the army, 1828–1838.

I do not think, from the appearance of the man selected by Mr. Slight, that he has chosen the best one. This man does not look to me like a quick, ingenious fellow. We want at such a machine a man who will be able to find out and devise the various modes of using it. For, while anyone can be taught to do one thing with it, another man would contrive to do a hundred that the first might never think of.

\* \* \*

22 JAN. Monday. A few minutes after I left the office on Saturday, Daniel tells me that General Totten with the Secretary of War came there. I am sorry that I missed them, for I wished to see the General and show him my shops and my arrangements for the interior of the building.

\* \* \*

[JAN. 22 CONT.] I sent out today the letters inviting bids for the copper of the roof of the Capitol extension. I wrote to all who have offered it, as I have fixed the sizes now, and the market has changed since I last wrote.

I received today Hayward, Bartlett and Company's offer for the ceiling of the House of Representatives.

I have got the irregular cutter going at last. It works beautifully.

Lou is now waiting to ride to the office with me, and so many are talking to me that I must go. Monty is jumping and shaking and talking near me.

[JAN.] 23RD. Tuesday. Today I had a visit from two of the commissioners of the Ohio state house and the architect. They came to ask some information about the ventilation and heating of the Capitol. I told them of my designs and gave the architect a copy of my report. They took up a good deal of my morning. I ordered a circular saw and its axle from Campbell and Coyle. I had a visit from the Honorable Mr. Howe of Pennsylvania in regard to the copper. He had not received my letter and asked for a proposal for it.

I sent to Mr. Pearce of Maryland a copy of the amendment which I wish added to the Capitol appropriation in order to get authority for building the dome.

Mr. Elliott,<sup>31</sup> of the office of the Secretary of the Senate, gave me today a copy of the last volume of Salaman's Travels in Europe, to read what he says of the studio of Powers. Powers had two female figures, one America and one of California, which I believe he wished

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<sup>31</sup> Seth A. Elliott was a clerk in the office of the secretary of the Senate.

to have bought by the United States. Salaman writes like a man of science, and his visit was rather to the scientific men than the artists of Europe.

I have been studying today the arrangement of the table and drills for a wood-carving machine. I thought at first of using a parallel motion like that of the common rule by parallel radius bars, but I find it makes a rather clumsy arrangement, and I shall probably use instead two tables running upon wheels.

Captain Alexander gave me today the result of some experiments upon the stiffness of Cooper and Hewitt's beams. The large beam of rolled iron broke with a bearing of 16 feet under a weight of 7 tons.

\* \* \*

[JAN.] 24. I opened today the bids for the iron ceiling of the House of Representatives. Janes, Beebe and Company of New York offered at 4 cents for the iron and 6 cents for the iron, both cast and wrought, delivered and put up complete. Hayward, Bartlett and Co. of Baltimore offered at the rate of 5¼ cents for the cast iron and 1 cent each for the bolts with nuts, ready to put up. I have accepted Janes and Beebe's offer at 6 cents for the work put up complete, and think it low. They also offered to complete the Hall ceiling at \$10,000 for the cast iron and \$4,000 for putting it up, making \$14,000 for the ceiling complete. I prefer the price at so much, 6 cents per pound.

I received a visit also from the fresco painter, Brumidi, who brought his sketch in oil of Cincinnatus at the plow. It is good and shows skill in drawing and composition and coloring, much greater than I expected. He is to begin it in fresco in about a week, taking a week to make his cartoons full-size.

B. B. French came to ask my opinion as to the offers he had received for the roof trusses of the Patent Office. He thought that one bid by a Mr. McIlhenny of this place was too low for it to be possible for him to fulfill it. I think so, too, and advised him to accept Janes and Beebe's, which was at a low but not impossible rate. He said he would do so. I had also visits from Mr. Howe and Mr. Crocker, whose letters about copper had gone to their homes instead of to the House of Representatives. I supplied them with copies.

As I was coming home, I ran into the Senate and there found the Army appropriation bill up and Mr. Bayard on the floor, saying that he believed someone was a man of intelligence, of honesty, of genius, that he believed he was animated by pure motives and desire to carry out a great work in the best manner, etc. I believe he was speaking of me and in terms of such praise that I did not feel quite easy in sitting to hear him. But someone else soon followed him, whom I had no difficulty in listening to. The debate was not finished when the Sen-

ate adjourned. But I had strong friends upon the floor. General Cass had made his speech and brought on, I suppose, all this row.

[JAN.] 25TH. I have put upon the next page some parts of the debate which took place yesterday upon the motion of Senator Johnson<sup>32</sup> of Arkansas to strike out the appropriation for the extension from the Army bill. The debate was one which was highly complimentary to me by those who spoke of me at all. General Cass, James, Hunter, Bayard, Badger<sup>33</sup> all spoke of me with a degree of confidence which is pleasant to read. I get praise enough, quite as much as I want, perhaps more of it than I do of blame, though that is given me fast enough by some Members of the House of Representatives. But I do not get much money. The result of this debate was the rejection of Johnson's motion and the passage of the appropriation, but it had the effect of alarming the friends of the extension, so that no one moved the addition to the item of the authority to build the dome. I regret this much, as it would have enabled me to spend a large quantity of money among those who much want it, the workers in iron.

[Printed material inserted here.]<sup>34</sup>

I came home last night and wrote till late some notes upon the quantity of air necessary for the supply of the House of Representatives and Senate chamber. I find that 3½ cubic feet per minute for each person is the proper supply. The House of Representatives has a capacity, when crowded, of one person to each 30 feet of floor and gallery, or 4,309 souls. This would require 15,000 cubic feet per minute, which would suffice to renew the whole air of the room once in 31 minutes, or twice in one hour. The supply in one minute used 1,154 pounds; one hour, 32 tons.

The Senate has a capacity of 3,042 persons. They will require 11,000 cubic feet per minute = 831 pounds, and in one hour 24 tons.

From Dr. [Howard's] report upon the Reform Club, I find that there a 5 horsepower steam engine supplies 11,000 cubic feet of air per minute by a fan, besides doing various other things. At this rate, a 5-horse engine for the Senate would suffice, and a 7-horse engine for the House of Representatives. These weights of air are such as would surprise any Member of either House who has spoken upon this subject. I gave them to General James this morning, and he said he would

<sup>32</sup>Robert W. Johnson (1814–1879), Democrat of Arkansas, served in the House of Representatives, 1847–1853, and in the Senate, 1853–1861. For the Confederacy, he served as a senator, 1862–1865.

<sup>33</sup>George E. Badger (1795–1866), Whig of North Carolina, served in the Senate, 1846–1855.

<sup>34</sup>An excerpt from the Senate proceedings of January 24, 1855, in the *Congressional Globe*, containing a speech by Lewis Cass complaining about plans for heating, ventilation, and acoustics for the House and Senate chambers, with responses by Senators James (RI) and Bayard (DE).

be ready to speak in such a manner as would set the question at rest if it arose again. It did not, however. The appropriation passed without any debate, I believe, this morning. But I have lost the dome, unless I can get it in the House.

I had visits this morning from Bayard, from Douglas, from Bell<sup>35</sup> of Tennessee. They went with me into the House of Representatives and saw for themselves what they said quite satisfied them. They admired the drawing of the dome and said they would vote for it.

But afterwards I had a letter from Senator Pearce, who has been sick. He says he consulted with Hunter, James, Bayard and others friendly, and they thought it better to let it go over to the next session, which they think will be freer from this disposition to cavil at military superintendence than this House of Representatives is. They say that they think by that time my work will be so advanced and will speak so well for me that there can be no more opposition. I hope so; and for the sake of the poor mechanics out of work, I must make one more effort for the dome.

I have received at last the bolt-cutter and the lathe from Nashua. They are fine pieces of mechanism. The work in our smith shop begins to move. The men look pleased and satisfied and plenty are offering their services.

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[JAN. 26] I met Major Ogden<sup>36</sup> at the Department and also Captain Alexander, who does not agree with me as to the value of the parts in the diagonal trussed corridor. He insists upon leaving out the lower string of the bridge and making it thus: [Sketch]. In which he is certainly wrong.

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JAN. 27. Saturday. Spent at the office, principally in the shops. The day was cold. A few of the stone cutters were at work. My men are engaged in shoveling off the snow which lies about the building. Those in the blacksmith's shop are at work as usual. They find it difficult sometimes to keep up steam enough for the work to be done. Their steam, while I was in the shop today, got so low as to make it impossible to raise the steam hammer for a time. I think the difficulty lies in the ignorance of the man who fires and who fills up the grate so as to stop the draft. I gave him directions as to this. He has been used to fire with wood and knows nothing of the proper mode of using Cumberland coal.

<sup>35</sup>John Bell (1797–1869), Whig of Tennessee, served in the House of Representatives, 1827–1841, and in the Senate, 1847–1859.

<sup>36</sup>Cornelius A. Ogden was an engineer with the army.

The Baltimore *Sun* contains an article upon the new dome, copied from the *Sentinel*, praising it to the skies and giving a puff to Mr. Walter, with a proviso that if he be allowed to build it without interference by less able and tasteful men, it will be a thing to give him as high a reputation as that gained by Michelangelo by the dome of St. Peter's at Rome. This article of the *Sentinel* was written upon letters by Dunnington which I furnished him and to which he called the attention of the reporter of the *Sentinel*. This man is one of those, I suppose, in the interest of Stanton, and he has taken occasion to put into it a sort of cavil against my ignorance and want of taste.

Mr. Zollicoffer<sup>37</sup> of Tennessee came to see me today to speak a word for the young stone cutter Zollicoffer<sup>38</sup> who came to ask me for employment as a draftsman. He says that he supposes there is some connection between him and his own family, though he had not known him until he came to see me lately. He wished me to do something for him. I told him that if I needed another draftsman, I should be glad to avail myself of his services if he was very skillful, but that at present I was full. I showed him the dome, which he much admired.

I must really take time to work up my own and see whether I cannot make it better than Walter's. If I cannot, I do not wish to have it built. But I do not like to leave to him all the credit of designing these things when in fact half at least of their beauty belongs to me. For I have had the direction of even this very dome, which he changed and changed but used the suggestions I made to him when studying it. He has very long practiced great facility in designing such things as general exteriors, but when he attempts to make a new roof, he is put to hard work and labor and does not show much facility or fertility.

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[JAN. 27 CONT.] Bache asked me if I had known, before I learned it by Senator James' speech, that most of the fire engines use \_\_\_\_\_ spouted out like the stream from the nozzle and spread gradually as it proceeded. I told him no one thought it was necessary, only in some degree, to observe the laws of physics of projectiles in providing for the reflection of sound. He said that he had told someone that if James got his speech from the architect of the Capitol, meaning me, he should move my expulsion from this club.<sup>39</sup> I told him that James was \_\_\_\_\_ by Mr. Walter and that he was beyond his reach. However, James' speech has the appearance of knowledge about it, which, to

<sup>37</sup> Felix K. Zollicoffer (1812–1862), Whig then American party of Tennessee, served in the House of Representatives, 1853–1859. During the Civil War, he served in the Confederate army.

<sup>38</sup> Charles Zollicoffer was hired as a draftsman for the Capitol extension in 1855.

<sup>39</sup> Meigs, Alexander Bache, and Joseph Henry belonged to an informal scientific club of eight members which met on Saturday evenings at the homes of the members.



the many who will read it, will look like truth and reason; and though it does not bear the test of examination by those of us who have studied the subject, it will not be seen by many who do understand it and will, I believe, do more good than harm. I feared some ridiculous blunder in these debates if that arose and therefore had asked Senator Benjamin, who has about the clearest head for such things in the Senate, to say, if he got the chance, that such discussion was out of place there and that no one ought to venture to criticize my work unless he could understand my report upon the subject and show a flaw in its reasoning or an error in its principles or the mode of their application.

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[JAN.] 29TH. Mr. Bartlett was here today to examine the drawing for the roof of the corridor and basement of the south wing in order to estimate for its construction.

I called in young Zollicoffer from Provost and Winter's shop today to copy some of the drawing of the iron work. Janes and Beebe want to set their men at work at once, and to do this they need the copies of the drawing which we have not had time to make yet.

I told Rutherford to examine the stone now cutting in the shop and see whether he could find any patches which he did not know of before. He took the information that someone had there \_\_\_\_\_ very hard. Provost and Winter also asked me about it, but were satisfied when I told them that it was not done by an enemy or through any malice.

Winter was raising one of the pillars of the basement this afternoon as I was coming home, and I stopped to see the process. I told him that there was danger to the foot of his shears, which was not fastened in any way, slipping; but he insisted that it was not so, "No danger at all, Captain, not the least in the chain." But just as they got the stone, which weighs 7 tons, fairly upright, both feet began to slip, and they spread until fortunately one got blocked up by some planks which lay in a doorway and the other brought up against the base of one of the pilasters. There were a number of persons in the vestibule at the time—among others, Middleton,<sup>40</sup> of the Senate Secretary's office. I was so placed that I could not reach either door without going under the shears, and after a few moments shuffling, I got into the corner of the room and there waited my fate, not knowing whether the whole would fall upon me and whether it would break in pieces. It was a curious feeling for an instant, while this great mass was moving we could not tell where. I did not feel alarmed but waited my fate, for I thought the chance was that the whole affair would break,

<sup>40</sup>The Secretary of the Senate's report for 1854 and 1855 lists no one by the name of Middleton as an employee of that office.

and then it was impossible to say which way it would fall. However, nothing gave way or was injured. And for this I thank God. It was curious that I had cautioned Winter against this very incident just before.

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JAN. 30. Mr. Van Sant came to see me today. . . . I showed him the dome, with which he was delighted and will go for it. I told him we should have got it in the Senate but for the fear there felt of this attack upon me. This he said there was no danger of, for they could not raise this question again in this session. He had not thought it worthwhile to oppose the motion to revive the special committee but had said to the members that they would not attend and if anything was attempted to be done, they would ask to be discharged from the matter. As he and Faulkner are of this opinion, they, with the minority of last year, make the committee stand for me as 5 to 2, which leaves Sapp and Stanton in a helpless minority. I am glad to hear this so directly.

I took Mr. Stone today through the workshops. The old gentleman was much interested. He said that I had done 10 years' work since I had been here. I took him to see the cartoon drawing by Mr. Brumidi. He is not much advanced, the cold weather interfering with his colors. He has taken a house on Delaware Avenue, within one square of the Capitol, for his work. Has a woman, I suppose his wife, with him, to whom he introduced me, a dirty, slatternly person.

He had a very good cartoon for a picture of the Martyrdom of St. Stephen to be painted in the Church of St. Stephen, 28th Street, New York. This cartoon is about ½ size of life and is a striking and vigorous work. The whole sketch is in brilliant colors. I sent him today a marble slab to rub his colors upon, and sent a bucket of lime for his white, as the other, he says, froze.

After I left last night, they had another accident with the shears in the vestibule. The lashing slipped and let the pillar down by the rung. It tottered for some time, but falling upright upon the blocks prepared for it, it did not fall over. They broke off about an inch, however, of the corner. Here is what they call an accident, and it is an accident just as it would be one if a man should attempt to pry up the corner of the House with a scaffold pawl and the pawl should break, as it would of course, and he should call this an accident. The fall was the result of ignorance and nothing else. The rigging was not properly made, and it did not hold what it was designed to hold.

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[JAN. 30 CONT.] Mr. Crocker came in to see me and to ask about copper. He says that they laughed at Senator James' speech, which seemed

to be a written speech; that when he got through, he was done, and some questions were asked him, but he could go no further. And they had it all their own way. He understood that the speech itself was a good one.

[JAN.] 31ST. The *Union* of this morning contains an article upon the ventilation of the Capitol extension, praising Mr. Walter and abusing me, evidently written by Mr. Stanton. I find Mr. Walter quite excited about it, with a headache, which I attributed to its effects. He wanted to write to Stanton asking for a copy of his evidence before the committee there referred to, as he said it was falsely quoted. I advised him to keep cool and to say nothing about it; that I had thought of writing a short reply, saying that we were not at variance and that we were both devoting all our energies to the work and did not mean to allow ourselves to be set at variance by injudicious attempts of friends to exalt either at the expense of the other.

I saw afterward Senator James, who, he said, was much disturbed by this article, which appeared as a criticism of the notice of James' speech. James said that I ought to answer it, as it would be looked for from me.

Mr. Winter spent a good part of the morning with me, trying to convince me that I ought to make some further allowances for his work, as he says they have not made this month enough to pay their expenses. Of this I am doubtful, though their bill amounts only to \$16,600.00, which is much less than I supposed. For last month, with fewer men on the rolls, they made \$18,000. I have directed Rutherford to report the time upon some of the long window architraves. These they think much more valuable than the others.

I intend, also, to ascertain tomorrow what is the total number of days' work they have done, so as to judge of the amount of their payroll.

Winter was full of apologies for the accident to the shears and to the pillar in the vestibule. It was an experiment, etc. Declared he had not been told that I positively ordered that the shears should be placed in a perpendicular position, etc. I told him that I had given him these directions myself and had told Rutherford to give them to him and to say that I forbid the stones being raised except in that way. He said he was always anxious and ready to do what I told him to do. Etc., etc., \_\_\_\_\_ ad nauseam.

\* \* \*

[JAN. 31 CONT.] [Horatio] Stone says that I have done, since I have been at the Capitol, ten years' work upon the common rate of building this government's works in this city.

\* \* \*

[JAN. 31 CONT.] Senator Dodge the younger came to ask me to employ a machinist. I told him to send the man to me and also to see Champion, who had the hiring of the men in his shop.

FEB. 1. The payroll for the Capitol for Jan. is as follows:

**[longhand transcription follows]**

<b>Feb. 1</b>	
se[??]	\$947.
Foremen R[ ] etc.	614.25
Hired horses and carts	147.43
Labor	2,218.17
Carpenters	1,730.25
Clerks draftsmen etc.	558.25
Masons N. wing	218.86
do S. wing	268.75
	<hr/>
	6,702.96
Marble work by contractors	16,660.90
	<hr/>
Total of pay roll and contract	\$23,363.86
The expenditures in January were	
for Capitol ext.	\$38,437.21
for Aqueduct	305.53
Fort Madison	797.37
	<hr/>
Total expended in January	\$39,[5]40.11

on which my pay was \$165.21 or less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  of one percent. The number of men under my command during the month has been about 580.

The sum left in my hands on 31 Jan. subject to check is \$59,411.99. The sum appropriated & at my discretion for the various works under my charge is as follows:

Capitol, water works & Fort Madison	\$896,172.19.
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**[shorthand transcription resumes]**

In reference to Winter's application for more pay for the architraves, I find that there is no great difference from the time upon which I based my estimate. But I have not yet studied the matter. I have a report from Rutherford upon the cutting of some late stones which

I will try to apply tomorrow. Today I was busy making my monthly reports, all of which I completed.

\* \* \*

[FEB. 2] Mr. Crocker called to ask about copper. He says he and Mr. Howe are ready to make their proposals. I telegraphed to Phelps, Dodge and Co. of New York to say that I had not received their answer to my invitation to make proposals. They answered, and I received the reply within the hour, that they had sent by yesterday's mail. I telegraphed back, "Not received, but send copy by this evening's mail or advise by telegraph or both."

My answer to "Justice," who I suppose is Stanton, is in the *Union* of this morning. Senator James told Mr. Walter that he was much pleased at it; that it was mainly a straightforward and just and proper thing. Mr. Crocker read it and said that it was all right and that if they had been obliged to resort to underhand measures, I was safe; that Stanton had given up his attack in the House in utter despair.

Mr. Zollicoffer and Cullom<sup>41</sup> of Tennessee came in to look at the dome, bringing some other Member whose name I did not catch. They admired it much and would go for it if an amendment is moved to the Civil and Diplomatic bill.

\* \* \*

[FEB. 2 CONT.] I met Senator Pearce today, who told me that he had heard some Members of the House grumbling about me, saying that I would not even allow Mr. Walter to make a design for a dome but insisted upon making the design myself, etc. He asked me what was the fact in reference to the drawing I showed him, whether Walter had not had something to do with it. I told him that I had been with Mr. Walter in making it, that it was drawn by Walter, that  $\frac{9}{10}$  of it was his entirely; that he had changed some parts of it to suit me, particularly the lantern, but that the design was his almost entirely.

He asked me, also, what were my relations with Walter as to power. I told him that I had the power to dismiss him tomorrow if I thought it right, but that I had, by my own urgent representations, prevented his dismissal long ago by the Secretary, and that our personal relations were friendly; but that I did not depend upon any sincerity in Walter, who would desert me if he could thereby help himself. That he was a vain man and without proper strength of character. That he said he lived upon praise, while I did not and was satisfied with doing my duty. He said that was enough to show the sort of man he was.

<sup>41</sup> William Cullom (1810–1896), Whig of Tennessee, served in the House of Representatives, 1851–1855. He was clerk of the House of Representatives, 1856–1857.

\* \* \*

FEB. 3RD. I opened today bids for copper for the roof of the Capitol. Messrs. Crocker Brothers and Co. of Taunton, Mass., were the lowest bidders at 30 cents per pound, and I accepted their bid. Mr. Howe, for the Pittsburgh and Boston Mining Co., was the next, at 30½ cents. Crocker and Howe were present at the opening, and I think that Mr. Howe was much disappointed at the result, for he had set his heart upon having the roof of the Capitol covered with copper from his mine.

\* \* \*

[FEB. 3 CONT.] I sent to Janes, Beebe and Co. the drawing and working plans of the ceiling of the House of Representatives. I also sent to them tracings of the roof of the corridor in the basement of the south wing to enable them to make an estimate for that job. They have got the roof of the west wing of the Patent Office to make. For this they are to receive \$750 per truss, the trusses being about 60 or 70 feet span. They bid at \$980 or 950 and were the lowest bidders except one at \$666, which was so manifestly too low that it was not considered. But after having been thus the lowest fair bidders, the authorities at the Patent Office concluded to offer them the work if they would take it at \$750, and they determined to take it and make a little less as they could at that price.

\* \* \*

[FEB. 3 CONT.] The New York *Express* has been publishing an article upon the ventilation of the Capitol, founded upon General Cass' doubts. It goes for pulling down whatever is wrong, as it says the bad heating of the present halls causes an expense to the United States of \$1,000,000 per annum. I must send it my report and ask it to read and no longer doubt, if it can understand.

\* \* \*

FEB. 6TH. The *Union* of this morning contains another article by Justice, in which the thin disguise of a desire to defend Mr. Walter against the attempts of my friends to set me up above him, and to ascribe to me one that belongs to him, is dropped. In this article he says that I have all authority, and quotes from the instructions of the Secretary of War to me to establish that assertion, one that not one of my friends would wish to deny. He says that Walter is in the situation of a mere draftsman and indeed makes him hold a most mean-spirited and disgraceful position.

I think that Walter took this article, however, which is worse for him than the other, with less disturbance than he did the other. He

asked me what he should do, said that he had thought of writing a very severe reply to it and that he had refused to speak to Stanton. Since the first article appeared, he was ready to break a lance with him at any time. I told him he had better leave the matter, as it was what I had done with it. I had not replied to his first attack, stated my position in order to prevent injury to him, and I did not intend to touch it again. I think the *Union* is a strange administration paper, to be publishing accusations against the President and Secretary that they have violated the laws and appointed me, in direct violation of the law, to my present position. And I wonder that they do not get a rap over the knuckles for it. The fact which explains it is that Stanton is the Chairman of the Committee on Printing in the House of Representatives.

\* \* \*

[FEB. 6 CONT.] Mr. Crocker came in to see about his bargain for the copper. He says he has written to his people to make a few sheets of the copper in order to try the effect of rolling the cold-rolled copper, and he promised to do his best to help me in getting a good result.

I have been today examining Anderson's letters and the orders sent to him for the iron. He writes to me that he has shipped the last of the angle iron, while by my memorandum it seems that he has not yet sent enough.

\* \* \*

[FEB. 7] Mr. Ober is at work upon a drawing of an eccentric chuck for me. He had never seen one and did not know how to set to work to draw it. I had to show him the whole. He is also making a drawing for a carving machine which I think of putting up.

I find that the work upon the roof is not so well arranged nor progressing so fast as I could wish. Mr. Champion has not yet got a man at the boring machine. Nor has he anyone yet fitting the ends of the rafters. I told him today that this would not do and that he must get two or three men at once. There is a great deal of jobbing to do which interferes with the roof. He thinks the jobbing will always be soon over and makes a special provision for it. I have given directions which I think will prevent this for the future. I think I must get a punching machine. There are so many small holes to be made in the different parts of the rafters and other beams of the roof that it will be an endless task to bore them all with a drill. Champion has not yet a drawing of the upper parts of the roof; he has only the truss itself. These must be copied and placed in his hands.

I have been reading Salaman's *Visit to Italy* this evening, and I feel a strong desire to travel myself in Europe. I ought to see the great

buildings of the Old World before I finish the interior of the Capitol; for while I can form a good idea of the best examples of exterior architecture from drawings and engravings, we have nothing that gives a proper notion of the interior. I fear that I may make the decoration tawdry instead of elegant, fall into a tavern instead of a palatial style. I must write to some of the painters and ask them upon what terms they will be willing to engage in the decoration of our palace. My Italian friend and fresco painter can no more paint an American than he could a Chinese scene. He has no more idea of an Indian or a Hill [?] Continental than of the troops of the Emperor of Japan.

[FEB.] 8TH. A cold and snowy day. I busied myself today principally working upon some of the drawings of the roof of the extension which have not been quite completed yet, though sufficiently suited to be worked over. I also had a drawing of an eccentric chuck finished today and wrote to Gage, Warner and Whitney to make it, fitting it to one of their lathes which we have in the shop. It is needed for the purpose of boring eccentric holes in the bead [?] stocks of the carving machine which I am getting up drawings for.

I received a letter from Senator Pearce asking me to make the Library Committee an estimate for a railing in the Library of Congress to prevent persons from stealing and defacing their books. I showed it to Mr. Walter, who was perturbed at it, thinking there might be some dissatisfaction with him, as he had been requested to do the same thing some days since. I told him that I supposed it was some mistake upon the part of Mr. Pearce, that he did not remember, if indeed knew, that I was not in charge of the library appropriation; that perhaps he was getting impatient at the delay and wrote to me hoping to get the estimate sooner. I advised him to go to work upon it at once, as it would not take long to make an estimate accurate enough for this purpose. He is at work upon it tonight.

\* \* \*

[FEB. 8 CONT.] I found Mr. Walter making the drawing of the ceiling of the Senate without any opening for the admission of air. I called his attention to it and had the panels near the wall made with gratings for that purpose. He sunk part of the cornice also with piers for the same purpose.

The boring machine at the shop is at last at work. It bores accurately and fast. I think, however, of getting a punch press, for there are so many holes that I fear our boring machine will not be able to bore them all in time. There is, however, a large drill at the stone-dressing shop which would answer our purpose. Perhaps I may buy that. It is for sale at a cheap rate, I believe. We need very much a good gov-



error for our steam engine. I had no idea they were so necessary as they are. The chance of throwing off or on an irregular cutter, for example, makes at once a very great change in the velocity of the engine, greater than in most engines, I suppose, because we have no flywheel but depend upon two cranks at right angles for passing our centers.

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[FEB. 9] I wrote to Senator Pearce today that Mr. Walter was making a design and estimate for the railing in the library for his committee and that he would send in the estimate on Monday morning.

\* \* \*

[FEB. 9 CONT.] I made some observations upon the force of the air pipes from the fan in the blacksmith shop. I found that with 120 revolutions of the engine, the head of water sustained in the siphon was 9 inches. This fan blows 7 fires, and I did not find a difference of more than one inch in the height of the water, made by taking off or putting on all these fires. I have not yet calculated the pressure or the velocity of the fan or of the air. This I expect to do tonight.

\* \* \*

[FEB.] 12TH. This morning I found the engine in the blacksmith's shop stopped by the freezing of the pipes which supply the shop with water. The men were engaged in overhauling the rafters so as to be able to match them in pairs for the purpose of fitting them together. Water was hauled so as to set the machine going after dinner.

Colonel Taylor and Mr. Edgerton<sup>42</sup> of Ohio came in to introduce Mr. Rogers,<sup>43</sup> the sculptor, of Rome. He is a young-looking man and had with him photographs from his works, which show talent. His statue of *Ruth* I think very graceful. He preferred his last work, a statue of *Nydia* the blind girl of Pompeii, from the novel of Bulwer.<sup>44</sup> He has made, also, a group of two Indian lovers, and she sits upon his knee, while he takes a thorn from her foot. The faces I did not like. The figures were pretty good. Upon the whole, I think him a person of talent, but think he has hardly shown the genius which should be exhibited before seeking such a commission as that which Crawford has. He left his designs with me for examination, as there were so many persons in the room that I could not look at them quietly.

<sup>42</sup> Alfred P. Edgerton (1813–1897), Democrat of Ohio, served in the House of Representatives, 1851–1855.

<sup>43</sup> Randolph Rogers (1825–1892) was an American sculptor who later designed the bronze "Columbus Doors" of the Capitol.

<sup>44</sup> Edward G.E.L. Bulwer-Lytton (1803–1873) was an English novelist who wrote *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834), the novel referred to here.

I went also with Mr. Brumidi, the painter in fresco, to look at his cartoon, which he had finished. I did not think that he had carried out the promise of his sketch. He has not carefully enough studied the figures. They are carelessly drawn and are therefore out of drawing. His priest is too short for his head. One of his warriors is not standing correctly. And there are other faults in the picture more visible where it is drawn in black and white only than in the colored sketch which he worked from. I pointed out some defects, which he did not seem to be quite pleased at my doing. I told him that he would have many critics, as the American painters would all look with jealousy at him and at his works and that they would find all the fault they could.

Mr. Rutherford came in with a question about the cutting of some pilaster caps which he thought were not done as well as they ought to be. I looked at them and gave my directions as to the point in dispute.

I paid to Mr. Whiting the check for the belts, pulleys, etc., which I bought from the stone-dressing company by his father-in-law Charles H. Stewart's directions.

\* \* \*

[FEB. 12 CONT.] A Mr. Stoneberry came with an introduction from J. C. Rives<sup>45</sup> to speak a word for young Bailey, who happened to be with me at the time. I gave to Bailey a note for Vincenti, telling him to try him and if he could do anything to earn his living, to make him useful, and to give him the benefit of the knowledge he would gain by seeing him at work in his modelling. I suppose that if he is willing to work, he can soon earn his living.

I measured today the size of the little fan which supplies our smith shop. It is 24 inches in diameter. The blades are only 4½ inches by 1 inch. [Sketch] thus. It runs with little noise, and it makes a pressure of 9 inches water in the pipes.

\* \* \*

[FEB. 13] I had one of the capitals which has been finished put up today upon the north wing, resting at such a height as will give it much the effect on seen from the ground that it will have, when finished, when seen from the portico. The lines want deeper cutting. They do not come out clear and distinct. And the leaves turn over too much, so that they have not the broken edge which belongs to them but look like coils. Thus: [Sketch] The line "a" and "b" is too small. This will have to be altered.

<sup>45</sup>John C. Rives, (1795–1864) was editor of the *Congressional Globe* and the *Washington Daily Globe*.

Mr. Cullom of Tennessee came in this morning with Campbell of Ohio and a Member from New York whose name I did not catch. They came to look at the drawing of the dome. Campbell did not so much. The other found fault with it, feared it would have too spirey an effect, too much like a steeple. In this he showed some penetration, for this is one of the effects which I have been looking and thinking about since this design has been under consideration. But we must do the best we can. We have only 110 feet base, and we must have height. If we could get a greater base, I should much prefer it.

\* \* \*

[FEB. 14] Mr. Brumidi came today to make preparations for the painting of his fresco. The first operation is to wet thoroughly for several days the rough coat of plaster upon the wall. This was done twice today. He says that the common sand used in the mortar is as good as any for the final coat of plastering, or "intonaco." I told Mr. McFarlan to prepare himself by getting the necessary tools to do the plastering for the painter as he goes on with his work.

The lime used in the last coat should be kept a long time in pots; so, soon as the weather gets favorable, I must have a large quantity slaked and run into the cellars to be used in our decorated walls.

I caused the revolutions of the fan to be counted today by Mr. Ober with the odometer. But on comparing his results with the gearing, I find them so inconsistent that I have to recheck them. I must defer this matter till I get a governor for the smith engine so as to be able to run it with some regularity.

\* \* \*

[FEB. 14 CONT.] I did some work upon the drawing of the roof of the Senate. Arranged the splice of the rafters. I think I must put some side bracing to the rafter where it is spliced and perhaps in other parts of it. The length is rather too much between the points of support and bracing.

\* \* \*

[FEB. 15] Chiffelle<sup>46</sup> came again to see me today. He says he has been pretty well convinced that he cannot get an appointment into the new regiments, and he wished to know whether I would want more bricks and used machine bricks in the Capitol. He has been urged to enter into the brick business by some gentlemen who have capital and who have a right to use some new machine. I believe the machine in question is Brown's, which is a dry clay machine. I advised him not to

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<sup>46</sup>Tom Chiffelle was the Baltimore City Engineer.

risk much upon its success. He burned some millions of bricks upon the Baltimore and Ohio road, and these persons wish to have his experience in this business. When he found that it was likely to be a dry brick machine, however, he said that he would not ask me to take them and that he would have nothing to do with them if he did not believe they were good for anything; that the frost had a great effect upon them. I told him that I had seen it stated that Latrobe<sup>47</sup> had adopted these dry bricks as the material for the culverts upon the railroads, but in reply to that he said that he had burned upon that road 4 millions of bricks, all handmade.

My expedition to the falls made me late at the office. [*That morning Meigs had ridden up the Potomac to Little Falls to examine work on the aqueduct.*] I found few letters. I sent the tracing of the ceiling of the basement corridor, returned by Janes and Beebe, to Poole and Hunt of Baltimore, to be examined and returned.

Mr. Ober was absent from the office today, having a cold, which he said would keep him away for some days, unless he was wanted for some especial purpose. I made some progress in the finishing of the drawing of the roofs, which have not yet been quite completed.

I had an offer of the services of the young American sculptor so highly spoken of in the *Star* the other day, young Hickey. He is a nephew of Colonel Hickey<sup>48</sup> of the Senate officials. He had understood that I was about to have a capital recut, and he came to offer his services, being willing to undertake to cut a cap and to ask nothing for it if it was not satisfactory. I told him I had not the cutting to do; it was all given out by contract and that I had the model to correct, which had been made not quite as I wished and that I had then allowed my opinion to be overruled. I was now convinced that I did wrong in giving up my opinion, a thing which I seldom did, and I would have the model changed to suit me; and that these caps were matters of too much importance for me to allow stone cutters to cut them according to their own notions by way of experiment. The design was made by the architect; it was modelled by an artist; and, after examination and approval, carved by the stone cutters. If he wished to work upon them, Mr. Maples, the contractor, would, I did not doubt, give him work, as he had a heavy job to do and needed all the assistance he could get for the purpose.

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<sup>47</sup> Benjamin Henry Latrobe (1806–1878) was the son of the architect of the same name (1764–1820) who oversaw the rebuilding of the Capitol after its burning by the British in 1814. The younger Latrobe was a civil engineer who worked in Maryland and Virginia. He was chief engineer for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.

<sup>48</sup> William Hickey was principal executive clerk of the Senate at this time. He was later chief clerk of the Senate, 1857–1867.

I received today from Taylor and Maury<sup>49</sup> the *Yearbook of Facts*<sup>50</sup> for 1855. It publishes my notes upon acoustics and ventilation, apparently extracted from the London *Civil Engineer and Architects Journal*.

FEB. 16TH. Today, Mr. Zollicoffer came in with Mr. Sloan<sup>51</sup> of Tennessee and went to the marble quarry. He is very anxious to have a chance to supply some of his marble for the Capitol. Says he will send it for less than Doherty. I told him to make me a price list so that I could judge of the cost and that I would see whether there was any place in which I could advantageously use it. I thought that I might perhaps make the columns and pilasters in the Senate Retiring Room of his marble. It is the same in appearance as Doherty's. He says that he will have a railroad passing within  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile of his quarry, which will enable him to send direct by rail to Savannah in the spring.

I see by the papers that a delegation of Japanese are here. I went to tell Mr. Vincenti that I wished him to get a sketch from some one of them, and I found that they had been in his studio and he had already made a sketch of one of them which was very life-like and which he is to have another opportunity of retouching. He said that he had only a quarter of an hour to make this in. He is certainly very quick and skillful. I think I must get him to make me a sketch of the same kind of myself.

I spent a good part of the day in the blacksmith and machine shops, where the work is advancing rapidly, though not so fast as my impatience desires. I directed an addition to be made of the shop so as to give us room for 4 more fires which are much needed. I have written to New York and asked the price of the large drill press in the stone dressing company's shop. And I sent to Messrs. Briggs, Hall and Co. the little planing machine which needed some repairs. I also turned over to them the making of some tool-holders, which is needed, and some other jobbing. This jobbing requires a great deal of time and interferes with our work very much. Hereafter, we will do less of it and have it done in the shops of the town.

I had a visit from a Member from New York, one of whose constituents had sent to him and asked whether we want any more marble for our building. He has no interest in the Rutland quarries. I told him that the price of the Rutland marble was too high for building purposes.

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<sup>49</sup> Taylor and Maury of Washington were booksellers.

<sup>50</sup> *The Yearbook of Facts in Science and Art* (London, 1839-1880).

<sup>51</sup> J. Sloan owned the Tennessee Marble Quarry near Knoxville.

Mr. Washburn<sup>52</sup>—and which one I do not know—was in the office today to look at the plans and went over the building. I did not see him. Mr. Walter showed him what was to be seen, in my absence at the shops.

This evening Captain [George Washington] Cullum came in. I did not know that he was in town. I showed him our curiosities in the office. It was too late to show him what was outside. All these things detained me till dark, before I could come home.

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[FEB.] 17TH. Mr. Rogers the sculptor came to see me today. He said that he would feel much gratified and proud to have a commission for one of the doors of the Capitol such as Crawford has. I told him that I was not sure whether I had given to Crawford a commission for one or two doors, and if it was only for one, that I would suggest to him that he should make a sketch for a design which I would, if I thought it suitable, submit to the Secretary of War for approval, and I believed he would be guided by my opinion in the matter. But I must look through my correspondence with Crawford first, to see precisely what I had given him reason to expect. After he left, upon examining this series of letters, I found that I had, in writing to Crawford, told him that I wished designs for two doors. I regret that I spoke of it to Mr. Rogers, but as I did give him hope for a commission, I think I must be able to find some other interior door, such as one of the Senate or House principal rooms, which might properly have a bronze door, and let him present a design for that.

I found Mr. Pepper, the inventor of the Argilo, a patent material looking like agate for building uses, such as floors and walls and \_\_\_\_\_, etc., also in the office. He and his friend stayed and talked a long time. I told them that if I found upon getting some specimens large enough for trial that it would stand as flooring, I would be willing, if it could be finished at a reasonable rate, to purchase some of it for skirting for the walls and a good deal for floor tiles. But that first they must also show me that they could fill any order I might give them. This they undertook to do.

J. Sloan, the owner of the Tennessee Marble Quarry, near Knoxville, was here again. I gave him an order for two mantels in his red marble, one at \$125, the other at \$200, and promised to send to him a working drawing of the lining of the Senate Retiring Room, that he might make an estimate of the sum for which he would be willing to make it and put it up.

<sup>52</sup> Either Israel Washburn, Jr. or Elihu B. Washburne (see note 169 on page 164).

I saw at the hotel today, where I went to call upon Cullum, Mr. Crocker. He introduced me to several Members of the House of Representatives, among others a Mr. De Witt<sup>53</sup> of Massachusetts and Mr. Wheeler<sup>54</sup> of New York. Mr. Dickinson was there, also. He said that I was in no danger from any movement against me in the House of Representatives; that his committee had not had a meeting for a long time and that they had not even taken up my affairs. He did not know whether to try to get a formal discharge from the subject or to let the matter expire of itself. I told him that I think the easiest way was to let it fizzle out of itself, for then everybody would know that if Mr. Stanton had been able to support any charge, he would have done something, and that this fizzling out of the whole thing would be understood as a confession that there was no fault to be made out. Wheeler and De Witt promised to come to look at the dome, and they seemed, Crocker and Dickinson, to think that I would run no risk in trying to get an appropriation for it.

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[FEB. 17 CONT.] I forgot to note that a young gentleman, Alexander Galt,<sup>55</sup> of Virginia, brought me a letter from [Joseph R.] Anderson of Richmond. He is in this city seeking to procure an opportunity to exhibit his head model for the statue of Jefferson which the State of Virginia has commissioned him to execute. He had applied for permission to show it in the Rotunda through Mr. Millson,<sup>56</sup> the Representative from his district, but the permission was refused by Mr. Boyd, the Speaker. I gave him a letter to French, the commissioner, who is the proper person to apply to. But I afterwards saw French, who says that the Speaker and the President of the Senate have both determined not to give permission hereafter to show anything in this Rotunda. Mr. Bright<sup>57</sup> says he will not make the Capitol a place of exhibition for any artist or manufacturer.

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<sup>53</sup>Alexander De Witt (1798–1879), Free Soil then American party of Massachusetts, served in the House of Representatives, 1853–1857. He was on the Ways and Means Committee in the Thirty-fourth Congress (1855–1857).

<sup>54</sup>John Wheeler (1823–1906), Democrat of New York, served in the House of Representatives, 1853–1857.

<sup>55</sup>Alexander Galt (1827–1863) was a sculptor from Virginia, who had studied in Italy. He later carved the bust of Chief Justice John Rutledge (1858) in the old Supreme Court chamber, as well as creating the statue of Thomas Jefferson that stands in the rotunda at the University of Virginia.

<sup>56</sup>John S. Millson (1808–1874), Democrat of Virginia, served in the House of Representatives, 1849–1861.

<sup>57</sup>There was a vacancy in the vice-presidency from 1853–1857 after the death of William R. King. Jesse D. Bright (1812–1875), Democrat of Indiana, serving as president pro tempore from 1854–1856, was the “President of the Senate” referred to here. Bright served in the Senate, 1845–1862, until he was expelled for suspected disloyalty during the Civil War.

[FEB.] 19TH. Monday. Today Mr. Brumidi began his fresco of "Cincinnatus Called from the Plow to be Dictator."<sup>58</sup> I made Mr. McFarlan, the master mason, do the plastering for him. This coat of lime and sand was laid upon a small part, perhaps a yard, in the lower left-hand corner of the picture. This was laid and smoothed by common mason's plastering trowel. Brumidi went over it with a broom and water till he got a somewhat roughened surface. The ground of this plaster was laid last summer, and as a hot stove has been burning, with the wind in the room this ground has got very dry. It was well floated when put on, so that the surfaces are quite true and have an advantage over many of the walls in Italy which have fine and indeed great works painted upon them.

After the coat of plaster was ready, Brumidi proceeded to mix his palette very deliberately. He used the common artist colors—terra di siena, umber, ochres, smalt, cobalt. These were all mixed with lime which has been slaked for some days into a paste. This lime, like all his other colors, are kept in pots of various sizes, placed for convenience in a wooden box of about 30 inches by 18 inches by 9 inches. Water enough was mixed with that to leave some free water floating at the top of the pot. To make his palette, he takes a spatula and pours out of it every color he wished and pours the lime, mixed that upon a slab of marble to the tint he wanted. The color of the tint changes as it dries, an advantage of the effect. He had a brick upon which he dried his brush from time to time; and as that did not dry quick enough, he afterwards went out and brought in a lump of umber. The tint applied to this seemed, from its powerful absorptive quality, to sink in at once, and the change of color was quite remarkable. I was surprised to see him painting so deliberately and also to see him use his colors with so much impasto. He laid them on, it appeared to me, just as they are used in oil painting. The color did not seem to sink in as quick as I had expected. I asked him if his sky was not going to be too blue, for he laid it in very thick with some blue, either smalt or cobalt. He said no, that he feared rather that it would prove too light, "troppo chiaro."

He began about 10½ a.m. and continued to paint, with the interval during which he went home to dinner until I left the office at 4 p.m. I left him at work. The part of his picture which he was at work upon is a left-hand corner, which conveys a distant view of some building and the Tiber, with a boat in which the deputation has come to offer an insignia of the dictatorship to Cincinnatus. A man sits upon the stern of the boat, and a fine figure stands upon the gunwale. The sky, when I left it, was as intensely blue as it could well be made by cobalt.

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<sup>58</sup> See illustration on page 189.



I shall look with interest to see the changes which drying will make in its color. The hand and forearm of the moving figure, with a bundle of fasces upon his shoulder, are in the part of the picture which he was painting upon. When I left him, he had merely put the first tint on this hand and arm, and I do not suppose that he touched that again; and he will therefore, I expect, scrape that all the while this morning.

Rogers and Galt came, according to appointment. I went over the work with them, showing them where there were places for sculpture, enchase, etc. I took them into the studio, where I found that Buffalo [Be sheekee],<sup>59</sup> one of the Chippewas, was sitting to Vincenti for his bust.<sup>60</sup> He is a fine-looking Indian, with character strongly marked. He wore in his headdress 5 war-eagle feathers, the sign of that many enemies put to death by his hand, and sat up, an old murderer, as proud of his feathers as a Frenchman of his Cross of the Legion of Honor. He is a leading warrior rather than a chief, but he has a good head, one which would not lead one, if he were in the Senate, to think he was not fit to be the companion of the wise of the land.

After Galt left, I told Mr. Rogers that I found by my letters to Crawford, which I showed him, in regard to the doors, that I had given him a commission for two doors. I therefore could not give him one of the front doors, but there is a necessity for a door between the old House of Representatives and the corridor leading to the new one. This door will be large and should be well designed. It is larger than the front doors, indeed. This I told him we would send a tracing of to his address. I gave him the general size, and he is to think of the subject and the treatment and to write to me. Rogers is the sculptor of whom Miss Knowler, sister-in-law of Governor Marcy, spoke to me as her sculptor.<sup>61</sup> He left with me his photograph of his works, which I must take an early opportunity to show to the Secretary.

I went afterwards to look at the works which Mr. Galt has brought with him. He had a marble bust of a female—*Helen*, he calls it—which is a beautiful face and most delicately and skillfully carved. He had also a plaster head of Jefferson which he has studied for his study of Jefferson for the State of Virginia. This he has made from the portraits which he found in Richmond, with the advice and assistance of his descendants, who he says told him that this is now the only bust

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<sup>59</sup> Be sheekee or Buffalo (ca. 1759–1855) was chief of the La Pointe band of Objibwa (Chippewa) in Wisconsin. He was in Washington in 1855 with representatives from other Native American groups to negotiate a treaty with the U.S. government.

<sup>60</sup> The bust of Be sheekee by Vincenti is in the Senate wing of the Capitol. An 1858 bronze version of Vincenti's sculpture by Joseph Lassalle is in the House wing of the Capitol.

<sup>61</sup> Meigs was apparently mistaken about this. The sculptor Miss Knowler told him of was Erastus Dow Palmer (see entries for January 10 and March 8, 1855).

of Jefferson. There was a very fine one by Ceracchi<sup>62</sup> burned in the Library of Congress.

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[FEB. 19 CONT.] Mr. Pepper was in again, also, to say that he would send me specimens of his material for floors and skirting.

I talked with Mr. Walter about the proper material for doors. I think that pine, well seasoned, will be the best. He inclined at first to hard woods, but when I told him that he could send to Philadelphia or New York for well seasoned pine, he agreed that if used and decorated with paint, it would be more beautiful than mere varnished hard wood.

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FEB. 20TH. Captain Cullum came again to see me today. I took him over the work and through the shops. He told me that I ought to be careful to prevent Walter from running away with more of the credit of this work than belonged to him. He thought he saw in him the disposition.

Heebner left this evening, having been disappointed in not meeting Rice, who had promised to meet him here. Rice has played him false; after having agreed to sell out, he refused to fulfill his engagement. He refused also to buy out Heebner, who wished to get rid of the partner. The vessel which he dispatched is a few miles below, aground. Heebner desired me not to pay for this cargo until he came back, promising to be back before the money should be due. But he said, in any case, I was not to pay until I received notice from him to do so. He wishes to settle up some debts which are due here. Rice has been in this work a mere financial agent, doing nothing but receiving the money and turning it over. Heebner has had to give him his notes to be discounted to the amount of some \$80,000 and has had to draw at 30 to 60 days for the means of paying all at the quarry instead of being able to pay in gold.

I found this evening the bust of Buffalo, or Besheekee, the Chipewewa, much advanced. He gave to Vincenti another sitting today and is to come tomorrow, when he expects to be able to complete the portrait, nearly if not quite. It is a finely-marked Indian head, and I think that we will have it executed in marble and put somewhere in the [Capitol] extension as a commemoration of a race which once possessed this continent.

Brumidi finished yesterday the hand which I thought he would erase. Today he had the outline of the next figure, putting in upon the fresh plaster, or intonaco. He painted, however, only one of them,

<sup>62</sup>The marble bust of Thomas Jefferson by Giuseppe Ceracchi was destroyed in the 1851 fire.

that to which the hand and arm done yesterday belonged. This figure has some force but is not an important figure in the composition, being in the background. The parts of the work done yesterday begin already to come out with much more force and clearness than they did at first, and they begin also to show spots of irregular color. This is owing to the unequal drying of the mortar. The dark blue sky looks a light cobalt, and the background figures are getting much more visible than they were. For tomorrow, he expects to make the bust and head and body of the next figure, the one leaning upon the fasces. I am surprised to see so much time spent upon the painting. He worked till sunset today without any inconvenience from drying of the intonaco. The work is gone over and over again with the same freedom of retouching and the same thickness of color that is used in oil painting. In fact, the process seemed to be precisely the same.

The appropriation for the completion of the Treasury Building passed the House of Representatives this morning in Committee of the Whole as an amendment to the Civil and Diplomatic Bill. I sent in to Mr. Craige, Chairman of the Committee on Public Building, a note with an amendment to authorize the construction of the dome, to be offered if he thought it judicious and if he did not think it would give rise to the agitation of the military superintendence question. He opened it to read it, and I caught some words from the speaker upon officers of the army and found that it was Mr. Dickinson of Massachusetts, who was speaking upon the superintendence question, one of the Stantons having offered an amendment providing that the new post office, if built, shall be built by civilians. I believe that it did not succeed. I heard Fred Stanton<sup>63</sup> of Tennessee withdraw an amendment which I suppose was the amendment in question. The House then adjourned without taking the vote upon this appropriation.

I saw Van Sant who is anxious to have the dome commenced. I told him to speak to some Members upon the subject, and then I went to the office and wrote a letter to Mr. Craige and enclosed to him a letter which I wrote sometime since to Mr. Pearce of the Senate upon this subject.

I had a good many visitors today. Among others, Mr. Campbell<sup>64</sup> of Ohio, who brought in with him Mr. Farley<sup>65</sup> of Maine and another Member whose name I forget. They were much interested in the drawing of the dome, and I showed them some other domes in the *Parallel*

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<sup>63</sup> Frederick P. Stanton (1814–1894), Democrat of Tennessee, served in the House of Representatives, 1845–1855. He was the brother of Representative Richard H. Stanton of Kentucky.

<sup>64</sup> Lewis D. Campbell (1811–1882), Whig then American party then Democrat of Ohio, served in the House of Representatives, 1849–1857, 1857–1858, and 1871–1873. He was chairman of the Ways and Means Committee in the Thirty-fourth Congress (1855–1857).

<sup>65</sup> Ephraim Wilder Farley (1817–1880), Whig of Maine, served in the House of Representatives, 1853–1855.

*Des Edifices.* I also showed them the fresco going on. In this, they were very much interested. They had all heard and read of fresco but had not seen it.

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[FEB. 20 CONT.] I received and accepted an offer from Paul Ellicott today for the roof braces of the Senate at 2½ cents per pound, to be made in Baltimore and delivered at that price, including patterns. The appropriation for the completion of the Treasury Building was \$300,000 and for the Post Office, \$300,000. Both passed the committee. To the latter, Mr. Stanton of Tennessee offered an amendment that the work should be done by such civil engineer as the President might appoint. But he found much opposition and he withdrew it. This was in Committee of the Whole. It has yet to pass the House of Representatives as a House of Representatives.

[FEB.] 21ST. Wednesday. Today I brought Eastman up to the Capitol with me. He says that the head of Buffalo is one of the best Indian heads he has known. It was the very head he intended to recommend to us for copy. He will try to manage to obtain for me a sitting by this Indian for daguerreotypes. I want to send to Crawford, for use in his models, these heads. Vincenti is making a good likeness of a fine bust of Buffalo. I think I will have it put into marble and placed in a proper situation in the Capitol as a record of the Indian culture. 500 years hence it will be interesting.

Buffalo is the war chief of the Pillagers, one of the bands of the Chipewas. He is thought a wit in his tribe. I saw him laugh heartily.

I found that Brumidi had finished the first ictor yesterday, so that this morning he had a piece of plaster put in for the next figure, which is the second ictor. Of this, he only attempted the upper half of the figure, with sky and tree branches above it. This being more in the front of the picture than the other, required a more careful finish, and he completed this part of the painting by sunset. The work has much force, and the part begun first, though now only 3 days old, already begins to show much improvement in clearness and beauty. The mortar seems to set very hard, and it will make a durable wall, and the picture will be as durable as the wall itself.

Many visitors came in to look at the fresco painter, among others Senator Douglas, who came to look at the dome and to show it to a friend. I told him of the painting, and he was delighted to have the opportunity to explain it to his friend, who had seen the frescoes of Rome. He said he was very glad to see that I was going to fresco the walls.

Colonel Roberts came to say that he had been requested by Mr. Edgerton of Ohio to speak to me in favor of the sculptor Rogers. He wished me to give him the chance to present a design for the south pediment. I wrote to Edgerton what I had done with Rogers and that I thought it better not yet to say anything to him about this pediment; that he was hardly an old enough sculptor to be invited yet to that great work; but that I had given him a subject for him to prepare a design which suited his wishes and his taste.

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[FEB.] 22ND. Washington's Birthday. A busy day for me. Many visitors to look at the fresco painting and the dome.

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[FEB. 22ND CONT.] [Rep. Richard] Stanton then offered an amendment providing for the removal of the present dome and the erection of one of cast iron according to the plans of Walter. He praised it, and his amendment was to construct it under the direction of the architect. To this, General Taylor of Ohio objected, made a speech complimenting both myself and Mr. Walter, and Stanton got up and said that there was no conflict between myself and the architect and he did not mean to express that there was any. He said that he was willing to withdraw the part of the amendment requiring the work to be done under the direction of Mr. Walter. This was done, and the vote was passed by 71 to 70, close shaving. I heard it, and shortly afterwards I got, having returned to my office, a note from Mr. Van Sant of Baltimore that it was passed by this vote. "Hard work," he said.

I wrote to him to say that I rejoiced at the result, as it would enable us to do much good. I also said to him that if he could manage it without too much going out of his way, I should like Mr. Stanton to know that I feel obliged to him for the frank statement to the House of Representatives of the cordial cooperation and relation between Walter and myself, which I had no doubt removed many prejudices and contributed much to the success of the appropriation. This is true. But I am not insensible to the fact that I believe that he was willing to do this because he thought if he did not while in Congress thus secure the passage of an amendment providing for the erection of the dome as designed by Walter, there would next session be one for a dome and I might be the author of the design. He also thus secured a legislative recognition of the fact that Walter is the architect. And perhaps, and indeed probably, he thought that leaving it in this part of the bill, it would fall under the direction of the Commissioner of Public Building. I must inquire into this, and if this be doubtful, ask the Senate to amend by inserting it to fall under my direction. Yet

the letter to Van Sant may have the effect of soothing him a little and putting some stop to his opposition.

The fresco painting gets on rapidly. I found this morning that the lower part of the figure of the second lictor was laid in with the first tints when I reached the office. This figure, I believe, was completed by sunset. I was too much occupied for the last few hours of the day to look at it closely. He included in the part he laid in a foot of the priest. The work thus far looks very strong and forcible.

I went with my wife, who came to take me home about 4 p.m., to look at Vincenti's work. He has made a noble and lifelike Indian head from Buffalo. Buffalo, he says, is much delighted with his opportunity. He looks at it and loves continually to come alone all day and sit for it. One more sitting will complete it.

I forgot to mention yesterday that I had calculated the effects of the strains upon the rafters and tie beams of the roof of the House of Representatives. They amount in the rafter 50 feet long to  $\frac{3}{16}$  inch, in the tie beam 96 feet long to  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch. This I divided among the joints and directed Champion to lengthen or shorten accordingly.

I telegraphed to Shriver<sup>66</sup> at Cumberland and to Wallers and Bancroft<sup>67</sup> at Philadelphia today to ask if they had large drill presses for sale. Shriver answered that they had two on hand: Wallers and Bancroft that they write by mail. We want one at least in addition to what we have now to get through our drilling in time. And for this dome we will want several. We will want, indeed, for the dome many heavy machines, lathes and voussoirs in these columns, slitting machines for the edges of the \_\_\_\_\_.

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FEB. 23RD. Friday. I arose early this morning and wrote a number of letters before breakfast. I then, after breakfast, went to the Engineer Department to see General Totten to tell him of our success with the dome. Which, by the way, has yet to pass through the House of Representatives, having only passed in the Committee of the Whole. Today a separate vote has been demanded upon it. If it does not succeed, it will, in the House of Representatives after the vote which was so good, the one upon it in committee, pretty certainly be put in in the Senate, with some slight modification and will, I presume, pass at last.

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[FEB. 23 CONT.] I had a visit from Cornelius of Philadelphia. He brought me some specimens of lathes for the bronze capitals for the

<sup>66</sup> Shriver and Brothers of Cumberland, Maryland, manufactured power drills and lathes.

<sup>67</sup> Wallers and Bancroft of Philadelphia manufactured drill presses and other heavy machines.

stairways. He had followed the model of Vincenti pretty closely, and I told him that he had not made it with such relief and sharpness as I desire. He said that he did not know what liberties to take with the model, for, though I told him to improve it, he did not know me and thought that perhaps I might be speaking modestly of the model and that I might yet be of the opinion that any considerable change would be too great a liberty. He gave me an estimate for that and the capitals in bronze to cost \$105. They are cast, in fact, in zinc and not in the bronze, but are afterwards bronzed by the electrotype. He is to prepare another set of molds with better relief and submit that to me for examination.<sup>68</sup>

I promised to dine at General Totten's to meet a traveller, Mr. Kohl.<sup>69</sup> He brought the General letters from the painter Huntington,<sup>70</sup> and he is apparently a very intelligent and agreeable man. He has traveled extensively, having been, among other places in the Crimea, at Sebastopol and Balaklava 20 years ago. He says Kate Temple was very agreeable and had much to say about the merits of young Rogers, the sculptor with whom she crossed the Atlantic. She says she saw his *Ruth*, which she much admired, and that in Rome she looked upon him only as a young artist and without any special interest but became better acquainted with him in the voyage.

He told her his story: that he was from Michigan and had supported himself from the age of 9 years; that he had also a mother to support. He went to New York and got into a counting house of a merchant, Mr. Stewart, who, finding in him this talent, sent him to Italy and gave him his support and the means to study for 3 years. He had to work like a dog, but he had paid back his debts, had sent always something to support his mother, and had made \$10,000 overall. He is in the United States to have employment upon the works of the Capitol and that not for the profit but for the honor. He has as many private commissions as he needs. I think that the dome will give him the opportunity he desires for employment.

I told the General of our fresco painter and that I wished to keep some of our own artists to make designs and study this art, so as to get their works in the Capitol, but that they had the idea of such high prices that I did not see how we could employ them; that I wish such a man as Huntington, for instance, would make a design and then paint it in fresco at a salary, we furnishing him with the tools and the materials of his work. Vincenti, for instance, works for \$6 a day.

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<sup>68</sup>The column capitals discussed are in the grand staircases. Although they look like bronze, they are, as Meigs stated, zinc, but they seem to have been painted rather than electroplated.

<sup>69</sup>Johann Georg Kohl (1808–1878) was a German geographer and writer on travel.

<sup>70</sup>Daniel Huntington (1816–1906) was an American painter working in Europe during much of the 1850s. He painted the portrait of House Speaker Robert C. Winthrop that hangs with the Speakers' portraits in the Speaker's Lobby of the House wing.

He said he wished I would write to Huntington such a letter and that if I would send it through him, he would see that he got it and either accepted it or at least received it without taking offense. I fear these artists may think it mean to ask for their work without paying the prices which they have been used to receive for the few commissions they have been getting from the United States.

Brumidi today undertook the tree and the head and robe of the armed man in the background, between the priest and the lictor. He said when I left the office at 4 p.m. that he had undertaken too much and would be obliged to content himself with the figure and erase the tree at night, to be painted again tomorrow.

I saw at General Totten's again the *Devotion* of Weir<sup>71</sup> and asked him if I found a proper place to introduce it in some panel, if he would lend it to me. He said no at first, but soon afterwards said he would do it. He suggested that Weir might make his cartoons and preparations for a painting in fresco and then come here and paint it in a short time. And though I told him that Weir had said he could not undertake again a great work, he hoped I would give him a chance.

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[Printed material inserted here.]<sup>72</sup>

FEB. 24TH. The debate upon the preceding page shows the manner in which we got the appropriation for the dome. It was moved by Stanton, himself, probably with the view to prevent at some other time an appropriation for a dome which might be by me and not at all by Walter; however, had to strike out his proviso excluding me from its construction. And it was distinctly understood by the House of Representatives that they voted the money to be spent by me.

French, the Commissioner of Public Building, came into the office this morning to see me about the mode of applying the appropriation

<sup>71</sup> Robert Walter Weir (1803–1889) was an American painter who had been Meigs' art instructor at West Point. The *Embarkation of the Pilgrims at Delft Haven, Holland*, which Weir painted in 1843, is in the Capitol Rotunda.

<sup>72</sup> At this point in the journal, Meigs inserted extensive clippings from the *Congressional Globe* giving the floor debate in the House of Representatives on Feb. 20, 21, and 22, 1855 (pp. 847–50, 893–94, 33d Cong., 2d sess.) regarding the appropriation for construction of the Post Office building. Debate concerned a proposed requirement by Representative Frederick Stanton of Tennessee, with the concurrence of his brother Richard Stanton of Kentucky, that the work be directed by a civilian architect rather than a military officer. During the course of the discussion, reference was made to the work being done on the extension of the Capitol and the investigation carried out earlier by the special committee. The discussion also covered the proposed method of lighting and ventilating the new House chamber. At the conclusion of the debate, Frederick Stanton withdrew his amendment. At the end of these excerpts, Meigs noted in longhand: "The end of the controversy, I hope." Richard Stanton then offered an amendment to remove the old dome and authorize construction of a new one under the direction of Thomas Walter. Several members defended Meigs against this effort to remove the dome from his authority. Stanton then agreed to strike out that portion of his amendment, and the House adopted the amendment calling for the construction of a new dome.



for the extension of the grounds, and also with a bill of 3,600 or \$3,700 of [Matthew G.] Emory's for hauling marble, which had Mr. Walter's certificate that it was done by [Samuel] Strong's order and in consequence of the orders of the corporation and of the Vice President. I declined paying it. He said, among other things, that if they passed the appropriation for the dome, which he did not much think they would as it was so close a vote, we should all have enough to do. I found that he fully expects to build this dome—that is, to spend the money and have Walter make the calculations and do the work. I told him how I had got the appropriation by my own exercise, that the House obliged Stanton to withdraw his proviso that Walter should build it, with the understanding that it would be built by me, distinctly expressed in debate. "Well," he said, "the way it would have to be done would be by his disbursing the money and Mr. Walter directing it, as it was like any other appropriation for the repairs of the old Capitol anyhow."

I then went to work, saw Walter, and said to him, "French says that we will all have work enough if the dome passes." He said nothing and smiled faintly. I did not know whether he understood me or no, but failed to doubt that he meant to leave the matter in French's—that is, his own—hands. I said nothing but went to the House, saw Taylor of Ohio and Crocker of Massachusetts together, asked them if they did not understand that I was to build this dome when they voted the money, upon the plan that had been shown them, drawn up by Walter and myself in consultation. I explained the difficulty, told them that I did not know whether it was a trick of Stanton's to leave it thus phrased so as to fall to French and exclude me or no; but I hoped they would see some Senators and have the matter arranged in the Senate so that there could be no doubt upon the subject. They both promised.

I then saw Van Sant of Baltimore, who at once declared positively that this was the meaning of the House of Representatives and could not believe that the effect produced was a trick of Stanton's, but said it was a cute one if intended. He promised to see some Senator upon the subject.

I then saw Pearce of Maryland, who promised to have it corrected in Finance Committee by adding "to be expended under direction of the President of the United States."

I explained the matter to my friend Dunnington, Captain of Police of the Capitol, who is on good terms with Hunter, and who promised to take a good opportunity to speak to him. He came into the office in the evening and said he had seen him, and Hunter, who is Chairman of the Finance Committee, promised to attend to it and have it amended.

I then wrote to Pratt of Maryland, to Dawson of Georgia, and to Bayard of Delaware, all of whom are on the Committee on Public Building or on the District of Columbia, and who are friendly to me. I also wrote to Benjamin of Louisiana and to Hunter, himself. They are all in my favor, and some of them will, I believe, certainly attend to it.

No doubt it will be made right. No one can object to placing [it] under the direction of the President, like the other appropriation for the Capitol extension.

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[FEB. 24 CONT.] I was kept till quite late at the office, being bothered with these things. I had with me in the morning Mr. Kohl, the German traveller, took him to Osterman at the Indian Bureau, where he was introduced to the Winnebago agent, General Fletcher. He proposes to go up to the Chippewa country this summer and spring. I also showed him the bust made by Vincenti of Buffalo, which is now nearly completed. It is excellent.

Brumidi has now completed his fresco as far as the priest in white and has made his right foot and the lower part of his dress, which is in shadow. He cut out today the face and part of the 2nd licitor, which did not please him, and repainted it. A drop or two of water also had trickled in the plaster over the foot which was finished yesterday, and he said he should be obliged to cut that out and repaint it.

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[FEB.] 25TH. Sunday. I have stayed at home today in consequence of a cold, which has nearly deprived me of the power to speak at all, caught in the office because of the damp and cold while Brumidi is painting his fresco.

FEB. 26TH. I called upon Dr. Russell at his hotel this morning; and while waiting for him, I had some talk with various Members of the House of Representatives—Crocker, Wheeler, etc.—about the dome and the vote for it. Lyon of New York, who is an eccentric individual, wanted me to put upon the drawing a couple of domes to fill up the triangle. He also regretted that I had not presented a project to alter the old building so as to give it more height and to make the dome so large as to cover the whole of it. I told him that there was not foundation for more than we had designed, then pull down and rebuild. "What about it? Why not make this the largest in the world?"

Wheeler hoped that I would have the rooms ready for the next Congress to meet in them. It would be a good thing for me if I would. I told him I expected to have the room finished but not the outside.

And then he insisted upon the propriety of preparing temporary stairways and lobbies so that they could go into the rooms.

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[FEB. 26 CONT.] The owner of the Rutland Marble Quarries was brought in by a Member from New York. He wished to know what chance there might be for selling marble for the interior. I told him to make a written offer, stating price, that I should like for some of our ornament, bas relief, etc. to use his marble, but that his price was too high for building purposes.

Russell came in while I was engaged with these gentlemen. And I, in my hurry to go to see the Secretary of War, forgot, after getting rid of them, that he was in the other room. I rode up to the Department and saw the Secretary, showed him the photographs of Rogers' works, which he admired, told him how I had got the dome through and of my work and corrected the omission of the direction as to its superintendence. All of which he approved. He had been sorry that it passed, thinking that I would be disappointed at the name of Walter being put into it, but I reconciled him only to that. I told him of the debate and Dickinson's speech, of the fresco, etc., had a long and pleasant time with him, walking home with him at last.

After dinner, I went down to Willard's to apologize to Russell for leaving him and told him that I had, in my anxiety to go to the Department, forgotten him. I found Judge Hand there and asked them both to come up and dine tomorrow, which they promised to do. My cold is beginning to resolve itself a little, though I have a pretty rough throat yet.

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[FEB. 27] Mr. Crocker came in today to look at the copper he corrugated. The specimens arrived today. The copper is beautiful. It is cold rolled and has a very smooth surface. The sheets weigh about 30 pounds each. They should weigh, to be the exact thickness ordered, just 30 pounds, 15 ounces.

I had a visit from Mrs. Temple today, accompanied by Miss Totten, by May White, and by a Mr. Frothingham. They looked at the pictures, the drawings, and the studio with the Indian portrait and were much interested.

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[FEB. 27 CONT.] The fresco begins to show itself much better than it did. The figure of the lictor is coming out in a striking manner. I found this morning that Brumidi had erased all that he painted yesterday. He said that the intonaco dried too fast for him and he did not get

it finished. He had painted the white robe of the priest. He painted it all today above the fold which runs from the right foot obliquely up, leaving the shadowed part below unpainted. It is well done and looks already very well.

\* \* \*

[FEB. 27 CONT.] Kate Temple said that she was displeased at Mr. Walter's way of talking; that he said he intended to make something much more beautiful than Michelangelo's dome of St. Peter's, at least a thousand years ahead of that. So different from the saying of that truly great man. When he looked at Brunelleschi's dome at Florence, he said, "Better I can not; like it I will not build." He was a man above these little vanities, his little finger greater than Walter's lines.

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[FEB. 28] I called at the Engineer office and found General Totten about to go to the Capitol and asked him to come in and see my fresco, which he did in the course of the morning. I also showed him the drawing of the work.

Rice and Heebner are both here. Rice says he will buy out Heebner. They are no longer able to get along together, and I hope they will at once settle their affairs and leave the matter to be carried on by one alone. I do not much care which it is. They both make a fair story for themselves. Rice says that he has managed the finances of the firm well and that the books show an interest account against Heebner of \$2,000. Heebner, on the contrary, thinks that Rice has used money of the firm to speculate and has made him draw on time for all his expenses. He has made him also give his notes for some \$70,000 in the time since he has been at this work. It is evident that there is no great chance of their ever pulling freely together again.

\* \* \*

[MAR. 1] I found Rice and Heebner at the office. They were there waiting for me and to get their money for the last cargo of marble. They are suspicious of each other. Heebner insisted upon having a check for that part of the cargo, \$2,000, which would enable him to pay for the debts of the firm at that place. They have been talking, first one and then another, way, ever since they came. Now Rice was to buy out Heebner. Then Heebner was to buy out Rice. But at last they have gone away without any decision being come to. Rice wants to pay Heebner in city lots at speculative prices, which Heebner declines to take. Yet Rice refused to be bought out himself. He says that he has no business in Philadelphia and that he can go to the quarry and get

out the stone himself. I think that they have both been pleased with the interest and the greatness of the work and that they had not much desired to be separated from it.

I paid them about \$4,500 for this cargo. I made a review of my price for the entablatures of the windows, as Provost and Winter have said that I had not paid them a remunerative price for that. I found by the report of the cutting and carving of 6 of the different sizes that I had for the block fixed the price about \$5 or \$6 less than the required price, and this much I allowed them, which, including the present profit and contingencies, made an addition of \$6.70 upon each entablature. I directed that the time spent in the recutting of the backs of the pilasters of the vestibule should be allowed them, caused by irregularities of the brickwork.

I had many visitors today to look at the dome and at the fresco, both generally admired. The figure of the priest is finished, and today Brumidi put in the upper part of the Senator, who points to Rome and appeals to Cincinnatus to come to the help of his country, with the sky and background belonging to this figure. He painted this with more care than any figure yet, and the head is put in with a delicacy and beauty which has surprised me. It looks like one of Sully's<sup>73</sup> delicately painted heads. The undergarment is finished, the left hand and arm not yet begun. Brumidi said today that after painting in oil for some time, his hand was a little out and first thought he would repaint some of the first parts of the work. After he finishes, he will cut them out and repaint them.

Mr. Taylor of Ohio was in the office with some of his friends, a very tall, old man from the West.

The Senate has been all day discussing the tariff upon the Civil and Diplomatic Bill, and I believe they will sit up all night. They are talking of talking out this session upon this question. The proposition is to pass this bill without amendment and put all the proper amendments into a supplemental bill or to attach them to other bills. I fear for my measures, such as the waterworks and the dome of the Capitol. It would be too bad if the dome was to be left in the hands of B. B. French by the means of the tariff. I do not feel sure that the President would be willing to act so as to take it out of the hands of the Commissioner.

Provost and Winter's bill this month is about \$17,500.00, and as they have not made very good time owing to the cold weather, I think they must have made some money.

Well, I have done my duty in the matter; and if it please God to order it so that I do not have its construction, I cannot do more than

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<sup>73</sup>Thomas Sully (1783–1872) was an English-born painter who lived and worked in Philadelphia.

submit in proper obedience. I have not seen Bowman again to speak to him upon the Treasury Building. I must make another attempt tomorrow.

\* \* \*

[MAR. 1 CONT.] The fire which took place at Colonel Benton's<sup>74</sup> house and destroyed all his books, papers, furniture, and what he most regarded, his valuable manuscripts, has served as a text for the papers of this city to dilate upon the want of water, and they call the attention of Congress—many of her Members saw the fire—to the fact that a supply of water would have saved these things or many of them. The house burned in broad daylight, about 3 p.m. with dozens of people standing round, because there was not water enough to quench the flames. The engines would play for a short time and then the water would give out, and the fire would recover all that it had lost.

MARCH 2ND. I went in to the night session of the Senate. They sat till about 12 midnight. The Civil and Diplomatic Bill was under consideration most of this time. From time to time as bills would come in from the House of Representatives, passed or objected to, they were taken up and disposed of. In some cases, the bills were passed; in others, they were referred to the proper committees or committees of conference were appointed.

The proper correction in the appropriation for the dome was made, putting it under the direction of the President of the United States.

\* \* \*

**[longhand transcription follows]**

MARCH 4TH. 4 a.m. just returned from the Capitol where Congress is still in session. The aqueduct appropriation for \$250,000 passed the House by ayes 82 nay 77—at a little after 3 a.m. God make this people grateful for the blessing thus bestowed upon them:

God grant to me a grateful heart for the high privilege bestowed upon me in being a humble instrument in his hand for the outpouring of this great blessing. One that does not stop in the brief space of one mortal life, but flowing on down the long stream of time for a thousand years will to still increasing thousands aye in their course to millions yet unborn carry life, health, comfort, happiness. Making more

<sup>74</sup>Thomas Hart Benton (1782–1858), Democrat of Missouri, served in the Senate, 1821–1851, and in the House of Representatives, 1853–1855. On February 27, 1855, Benton's house in Washington burned, destroying much of the manuscript for his massive memoir of his Senate service, *Thirty Years' View*, which he subsequently rewrote.

healthful the dwelling of the poor, more grateful the heart of the humble as of the high.

**[shorthand transcription resumes]**

[MAR. 4 CONT.] At the announcement of the result, there was a general applause in the galleries. This caused cries of "Order!" and the clearing of galleries in the House, though someone soon moved a reconsideration of the vote. But he was one of those who voted in the minority, and his motion was ruled out of order. The grateful outburst of the public was understood in a moment, and at once the feeling of indignation which it had first caused seemed to die away.

I have not felt as if I could go to bed without first putting down this record of the result and much toil and of my thankfulness at the reward thus given to my labor. I trust that the Almighty will allow me to complete these great works in which I now find myself engaged.

I must note that I have not seen a night session before in which there was so much decorum and so little of the excitement generally found from drink as in this. No irritation, no indecorum. There was at one time today a good deal of feeling at the reception of a veto, but it seems to have died away, and the business which threatened to be interrupted is going on, gradually and properly.

Evening. The final adjournment had not taken place when I wrote the preceding page. I believe the adjournment took place at noon. The Civil and Diplomatic Bill passed and with it our waterworks. Everybody whom I meet congratulates me, as though it was a personal victory of mine. I thank God for the success, not for my own sake so much as for the good it will do now and hereafter.

\* \* \*

[MAR. 4 CONT.] I called to see Mrs. Cass and the General this evening. They go to Baltimore tonight to take an early departure for Michigan. The General was very gracious but could not restrain the expression of his doubts about the hearing in my new rooms. Every difficult problem, every difficulty, he doubts there will be any possible solution.

\* \* \*

[MAR. 5] The payrolls for February are as follows: \_\_\_\_\_ \$500. Foremen, etc., \$575. Clerks and draftsmen, \$600. Carpenters, \$1,548. Laborers, \$2,117. Horses and carts, \$293.54. Blacksmiths, \$1,067. In all, \$6,593.83. At Fort Madison, about \$700. I have forgotten to make my monthly report this month and must attend to it tomorrow.

\* \* \*

MARCH 6TH. I sent in today my monthly reports, which have been delayed by the incessant occupation of the last few days. At Fort Madison, little has been done. The men have made only about half time in consequence of the severity of the weather. At the Capitol, while much time has been lost, still a good many days have been employed in putting up different parts of the work, and the progress of the month is visible.

\* \* \*

[MAR. 6 CONT.] I obtained the bids for the ceiling of the corridor in the basement of the south wing. The bid which took the work is Hayward, Bartlett and Company's, of Baltimore. They offered the castings at  $3\frac{1}{2}$  cents per pound and the putting up at  $1\frac{1}{4}$ , making for the whole  $4\frac{3}{4}$  cents, which is certainly very cheap. Ellis and Brother bid at  $3\frac{8}{10}$  cents for the castings and were very disappointed at the result. Janes, Beebe and Co. of New York bid at 4 cents for the casting and 6 cents putting up.

The sash weights for the basement were taken by Ellicott. He and Ellis bid at the same rate,  $4\frac{1}{4}$  cents, and Ellis proposed to draw straws for the job. Ellicott drew the long one and won the job.

\* \* \*

[MAR. 6 CONT.] Ellis offered me today the engine and boiler at the fair. But at least the engine is a very well finished one for \$2,000 set up. I think the engine might be a good one to put in my smith shop, which would leave the present hoisting engine there free to use upon the dome. But I do not like to buy a boiler which is no better than the one I have now, which is not large enough to do the work I have for it to do. I must get a boiler of larger size.

\* \* \*

[MAR. 7] Young Whistler,<sup>75</sup> a son of Major Whistler,<sup>76</sup> has applied to me for employment as a draftsman. He is evidently smart and quick but self-conceited and vain. He stayed in my office, as I remember General Totten said he did in his sometimes, saying that he knew I was busy, but nevertheless staying and talking in the most familiar manner, till I heartily tired of him, feeling no great disposition to bring him within my reach.

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<sup>75</sup>James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834–1903), the American painter and etcher, had been working as a draftsman at the U.S. Coast Survey in Washington. In 1855 he moved to Paris to study painting and never returned to the United States.

<sup>76</sup>George Washington Whistler (1800–1849).



[MAR. 7 CONT.] I have written to New York that I should come there in a few days to look at the models for the ceiling decoration of the House of Representatives.

I have it under consideration to inform Messrs. Rice, Baird and Heebner that I shall require them to furnish during the present season all the marble thus far ordered for the Capitol. We have been too long leaving it to them to send it as they choose, and it is too bad to leave this great work to their pleasure. They promised before they made their contract to send it all in a certain time, and the contract is to send it as fast as may be required.

[MAR.] 8 I went this morning to the Engineer Department to see General Totten, and I found that he had written me a letter saying that the money for the aqueduct was not available until the first of July. I went over to the Treasury for the purpose of seeing the Assistant Secretary [Peter G. Washington] and the warranty clerk, Mr. Fisher.<sup>77</sup> They wished a certain extract from the bill. This I got at the State Department. I looked with one of the clerks through the bill several times before I could find the appropriation, which was inserted between two other items in an obscure way which misled me, so that I began to fear that the engrossing clerk, after all, had really left it out, as was reported. But I found it at last. I found, too, that the dome had been amended so as to read "under the direction of the President of the United States."

By the way, Mr. [Richard] Stanton, who came into the office today with Senator Douglas, said that B. B. French, Commissioner of Public Building, was very much put out that he had not got the superintendence of this dome. I told him that I believe he was a little disappointed but that I should have been much disappointed myself not to have it; that it was a thing which was very difficult and very nice to execute; that I think an architect might make a mistake in it and that an engineer might with[out?] an architect make a mistake in design; that I should build it better for having Mr. Walter for the design and Mr. Walter better for having my assistance for the work. He agreed perfectly and said that he thought it ought to be under the same superintendence as the rest of the building.

\* \* \*

[MAR. 8 CONT.] Stanton's meeting with me was curious. He went with Douglas and doubted for a moment, not knowing what to do when he saw me with Mr. Walter. I looked at him and did not feel very easy myself. I looked at Mr. Walter to introduce us, which he did,

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<sup>77</sup> Charles Fisher was a clerk at the Treasury Department.

saying he thought we knew each other. I said something about having met him once before. We shook hands and entered into conversation. We talked about the dome, etc. Mr. Walter after a while took him into the front room, leaving me with some other person who came in. There he saw the painting of Brumidi, which he had not seen before; for, though he has been into Mr. Walter's room, he has not been into mine. He was much delighted with it. Went up to the scaffold. And Mr. Walter declares that he will be henceforth one of my benefactors, that he was pleased with the result of his interview.

\* \* \*

[MAR. 8 CONT.] I went to the auditor's office and asked for some little more delay in attending to my Lee Stone Quarries case and explained why there had been so much delay at the Engineers Office—namely, that they were waiting for me to take the matter up and attend to it personally and that I had been too busy with the appropriation to spare the time, besides having to see the Secretary and not wishing to intrude upon him while he was so busy at the end of the session. The auditor granted the delay. Eveleth, the clerk at the auditor's office, asked me for employment if I took the public building, as he said he was quite tired of the work of the office. He would be very useful to me as being well versed in the making up of accounts to meet the wishes of the department. I told him that if I built the Treasury and Post Office, I think I might be able to employ him and that his experience would be of great use to me.

\* \* \*

[MAR. 8 CONT.] I have engaged Mr. Sonnemann<sup>78</sup> for the dome studies and for the aqueduct. No doubt he will be useful.

I had a long visit from Miss Knower, the sister of Mrs. Marcy, today. She brought the daguerreotypes of the works of her sculptor, as she calls him, Mr. Palmer, that were very beautiful indeed and surprised me. She said that she wished me to see that she knew something of art, for she had seen that I was a little nervous when she first spoke to me of her artist. I showed her my letter to Crawford, written last April, to show her that I had not been so very desirous of giving all to Crawford; and told her that she could not know how many persons proposed to me as artists of great promise some person who had made for that purpose a wooden-looking bust as a likeness; and that as they had been able to recognize it, the maker must be an artist of wonderful talent. She said she understood this and had thought I was a little nervous.

<sup>78</sup>Ottmar Sonnemann, assistant engineer on the Capitol extension, was a German engineer who had studied in Leipzig.

I took her to look at the Indian head made by Vincenti, which she much admired and highly approved. As we left the studio, I asked if she had any taste for machinery. She said yes, indeed, had I any. So I took her to look at the blacksmith's shop. Showed her the roof and made her hold her hand in the blast of the fan to let her see that it was possible to blow air by the fan into a room.

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[MAR. 9] I received today the 3rd drill press, the one ordered from Shriver of Cumberland. It is a well arranged drill and seems well made. Cost \$125, diameter of spindle about 1 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches. It is needed, for I find that with my machinery they are making rapid progress. We are still behind with our drilling. If I had not got the steam hammer which I bought at first, I believe it would have been the work of years to build this roof. Now a large part of it is forged, and we will before long begin upon the Senate roof. We have not yet begun to weld up the parts. So far we have only forged and fitted separate parts of the truss.

I gave today an order for the lumber for the doors and shutters of the extension. . . .

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[MAR. 9 CONT.] Brumidi has now got so far with his picture that today he painted the driver of the oxen. The greater part of the picture is thus finished.

Since they have lengthened our chimney upon the steam engine in the blacksmith's shop, there has been no difficulty in keeping up steam. The hammer is in constant use and the irregular cutter is almost all the time at work. Such is the advantage of studying the books of science, for it was by this reading only that I was able to inform my foreman of the proper mode of making his fire to keep up the steam.

Mr. Walter and I had a good deal of talk upon the dome, which he is now studying out in detail. We will be able to get both greater height and greater diameter than at first intended. The portico of the main building was laid down wrong upon our drawing. It had been measured by Mr. West, and he made it ten feet too little in width. This additional ten feet gives about 120 feet for the diameter of the colonnade.

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[MAR. 10] While going through the office, I called upon the Comptroller, Mr. Broadhead, and told him of the question raised about my purchase of the Lee Stone Quarries. I explained to him the reason for my action and the view I took of it and gave him my letter to the

Engineer Department recapitulating the case. He said I seemed to reason well and fairly upon it and that he would look into the letter with care. I told him, of course, I did not expect him to decide before he saw the auditor and understood from him the view that he was disposed to take of it.

At 3 p.m., Mr. Denham returned with a Treasury draft of \$20,000 for the Capitol and the long-deferred draft of \$20,000 for the Washington Aqueduct. I sent word to Mr. Bryan that we had the money and that he should begin at once his arrangements for work.

I saw the Treasury warrant at Mr. [Charles] Fisher's, the appropriation warrant as it is called, which authorizes the War Department to draw for money. In it are included both the waterworks and the dome. So that there will, I suppose, be no occasion for any special action of the President to assign the dome to the Secretary of War, and I shall be able at once to go to work upon this.

I sent a new applicant for work as draftsman, who had the best specimens I have seen, to Mr. Walter to show his specimens; and he was so much pleased with him that he engaged him at once to come on Monday to go to work for a week on trial. His name I forget. He told me that he had been at work in New York for an architect at \$20 per week. He is, like most of these draftsmen, a German.

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[MAR. 10 CONT.] . . . I have so many applications for my two engineers' places, and just now we are pretty strong in draftsmen, though Mr. Walter asked and obtained my consent to discharge Mr. Zollicoffer for inaccuracy and for inattention. He comes, Mr. Walter says, when he pleases and stays so long only as he pleases and does not make his drawings accurate. Is idle in the room whenever Mr. Walter is absent, and keeps others from working. I hope that this idleness, which has been much more common since Zollicoffer's engagement, will now cease. If not, I shall have to make some other changes.

[MAR. 10 CONT.] I have sent to Hayward, Bartlett and Co. of Baltimore the drawing of the ceiling of the basement corridor. I sent them, also, a wooden rod divided by our standard so as to ensure accuracy in the size of their work and its agreeing with our walls.

Mr. Fowler of the firm of Janes, Beebe and Co. of New York told me that the Crystal Palace Company made their own patterns and sent them to be cast by many different foundries; that when the castings came of the Palace, they had different shrinkages and did not fit each other, so that they had to be refitted at great expense. By sending drawings of the patterns and leaving the patterns to be made by the

foundries and requiring them to agree with our standard, I think I shall be able to avoid this difficulty.

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[MAR. 12] I have taken into the office a Mr. Sonnemann, also, at \$4 per day, as engineer and draftsman, to help me with the dome. He is a good draftsman and an ingenious engineer. He repaired the trunk of the Alexandria Aqueduct last year. This was a work requiring ingenuity and care and seems to have been well done.

\* \* \*

[MAR. 13] Mr. O. Sonnemann reported today. He got my letter at noon today. I gave him a letter to Mr. Bryan to set him to work and make the necessary examination at the [aqueduct] crossing of Rock Creek. I showed him also what I wanted for that bridge and directed him to look at the Patent Office, at the model of the scaffold of the Nelson Column which is there deposited, as I wish to have a somewhat similar scaffold put up for the stand of the derrick for the dome.

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[MAR. 14] Mr. Brumidi has finished his picture, except the head and bust of the boy in the corner. He is waiting for this till I can take Monty as the model for it. Louisa asked him to put him in, and he said that he was a good model and he would make it a portrait. Today was so damp and dark that I did not like to take him to the place. Some little changes will be made in two parts of the picture which were painted first. It was 5 years since he had painted in fresco, and his hand was a little out of practice.

\* \* \*

[MAR. 14 CONT.] Cooper and Hewitt write to me that the scales with which they weighed the beams sold to me were imperfect, and I have ordered the iron to be re-weighed. The weight by our scales was 2,063 pounds greater than they charged for. They will pay the cost of re-weighing. I suppose our weight is correct. They are making arrangements to make beams of 12 inch depth, thus [Sketch], which they are not quite sure they can roll, but they will undertake it if they can get an order for that. They would be very useful in the Treasury and Post Office buildings, and I wrote to them to say so and asked for lengths and weights per foot. I suppose the thickness of the 12 inch beam is such as to give a weight per foot of about 30 pounds.

\* \* \*

[MAR. 15] I forgot to say yesterday that I had a visit from Jonas Ellis, who regretted in tragedy style that they had not been able to please me in their manufacture. They had not been able to sell me a steam engine. They were not beggars, etc., etc. I told him that he had had a chance to bid for most if not all such things as I think were in his line of business and that he had been underbid; that if he could not make them cheap, it was not for him to expect that I should give him the work at a greater expense to the United States; and that such things as were not in his line and I knew that he would lose money upon if he got them, I had not offered to him. How much had I paid him? He said about \$4,000. And I told him that I thought that a pretty good slice of the Capitol appropriations; that my rule was to buy in the place where the work was to be done if I could buy at the same price as elsewhere, but if not, then to buy in the cheapest market. He seems to think that I ought to give him a preference for all the work of the government and build up a great establishment for him at their expense. He had quite a tragedy air, which I did not quite understand, but which I rather think was intended as a declaration of war. I suppose he will join the Know-Nothings and do his best to move me out of the way so as to get a truer American and one that will play into his hands.

B. B. French, the Commissioner of Public Building, sent me today a letter from some person, president of the Nashville Glass Company, Mr. Wicker,<sup>79</sup> of New York, asking him to assist him in getting from a gent named Meigs, who is the manager of the affair, the furnishing of some 10,000 square feet of rough plate glass for the extension. He says that he can compete with any glass, either domestic or foreign, and winds up by telling Brother French, as he calls him, that there is money in it for them both, but that this is in confidence. French sends me the letter with an endorsement that he believes the best way to answer it is to send it to me and that he used to know the man and will be pleased if he is successful, but that one thing is certain—there is no money in it for him. I wrote back to him that the letter was a curiosity and that I thought the proper way to show the writer that we did not propose to make money out of our purchases for government was not to answer the letter nor to buy anything from the company of which he was the president.

I took Monty to the office today, and Mr. Brumidi used him as the model to paint the boy in the corner of his picture. He did not make a likeness but only a sketch which is a boy of Monty's character. This completes the picture, except some repainting which he proposes to do in the first parts of it.

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<sup>79</sup> Wild B. Wicker was president of Nashville Plate Glass Company of New York.

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[MAR. 15 CONT.] Mr. Shippen sent me today the tables of the experiments of the commission upon building materials. They show the Lee marble to stand first in strength of the marbles tried.

We are forging a large piece of iron, a link for the proving machine, which puts our steam hammer to its full power. But it is well done. We had to fagot up the iron for the purpose from the scraps which have been cut off of our tie beam ends. The iron will be first-rate and costly. Ellis said that he could have got it forged in Baltimore for 7 cents per pound.

I commenced today putting up the shed for the saw frames for marble. The stone cutters are off work, Sullivan having died. This is a man who wished to be an assistant overseer.

Have nearly made a new model for the pilaster caps, part of which I molded with my own hands.

\* \* \*

[MAR. 16] We got our new small or middle-sized drill to work today. It seems to be a good one. Mr. Hunt of the firm of Poole and Hunt was there. He says that Chamberlain of Boston makes a good drill that size at \$90. He also tells me that the large lathe which they have was made in Boston by makers who are about giving up business and that I can probably buy it from sale which will take place under a hammer. Name, Seth Wilmarth, who has failed. I have written to him and asked if he has any such large lathes for sale. The Secretary has not yet given me the money for the dome, and I cannot make any arrangements for its construction.

\* \* \*

[MAR. 16 CONT.] Fresco painting is now completed, except that Mr. Brumidi today took out the landscape at the left 1 inch, painted the first day, and repainted it. As he began upon Monday, after he works upon the picture in making little repairs, tomorrow it will be just 4 weeks' work all together.

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[MAR. 17] Mr. Corcoran came with his daughter and another lady to look at the fresco painting today. He says that it has been decided to build only the north and south wings of the Treasury Building and leave out the west wing, for fear of want of ventilation in the parts which receive their light from the courts. This is some notion, if true, of [Secretary of the Treasury] Guthrie's and perhaps of Bowman's.

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[MAR. 19] A Mr. Corsuch [?], whom I had seen at Mr. Morse's in New York, came to see me this evening. He had studied the arrangement of the pipes for heating Blackwells Island Workhouse near New York. He brought me a letter from Mr. Morse. I told him that I had not had time to study the details of the heating apparatus yet, that I needed the assistance of an engineer of some experience in these things to take up the plans and under my direction to study them out. I asked him at what price he would be willing to do this for me. He said he had come with a view to this but not independently for himself but as for Mr. Morse of New York. As I found that he was not a partner of Mr. Morse, I told him that he had better see him before answering me, that I did not intend to give this out as a contract but wished to have someone's assistance in arranging details to suit my own wishes, that I must be responsible for the result and I was not willing to let the thing pass from under my direction.

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[MAR. 19 CONT.] I sent to Crawford today the drawings of the doors as altered. I answered the letter of Rogers, the sculptor, approving his subject for a door of the entrance to the south wing from the main building, which is the life of Columbus. He proposes to divide the door, thus: [Sketch]<sup>80</sup> giving 9 panels, beginning at the lower left-hand corner, with the earliest signs of his life running up and filling the semicircle with the discovery of America, and running down the right-hand side with the events subsequent to the discovery. This will afford a fine subject with great variety of costume and scenery and will fill the corners of the rails with the heads of his principal contemporaries and other ornament. In answering his letter, I told him of the band of sculpture around the interior of the Rotunda. Here we will have a band of perhaps 6 feet in height and 300 feet in length, enough to give the pre-Columbian and post-Columbian history of the continent.

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MARCH 20TH. I had this morning a visit from the Secretary of War. He went over the shops and looked at the work. He authorized me to offer to Mr. Brumidi \$8 per diem. We went to the studio and to the blacksmith's shop. In fact, he made a pretty thorough inspection.

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*[On the afternoon of March 20, Meigs traveled to Philadelphia, where he visited his parents.]*

<sup>80</sup> See illustration on page 348.



[MAR. 21] I went up to Port Richmond and saw the works of Messrs. I.B. Morris and Co.,<sup>81</sup> particularly to look at some vertical lathes which they build. They have them from 2½ to 15 feet diameter. For all such heavy work as turning of large plates or pulleys or boring large cylinders, they are far better than the common lathes with horizontal mandrils. I saw here much machinery which was of good design, though I do not think they have such well finished work as is seen in some of the lighter tool-building shops. They had a planing machine which is capable of doing work about 30 feet long. This is by Wallers and Bancroft and is well made.

I went to the [Pennsylvania] Academy of [the] Fine Arts to look at the plaster model of the Gates of Lorenzo Ghiberti. These are beautiful, but I do not feel quite satisfied with them. I think that the attempt to make bas relief pictures has not been quite successful. The figures grow out of the ground in a way which is sometimes quite extraordinary. One cannot always account for the manner in which they are supported. I hope that our sculptors will be able to make even better gates than these.

I called to see Mr. Rice. He says that Heebner is not at the quarry. He was in town this morning but has gone to Morristown today. They are still at daggers points. He says that Heebner tried to drive him out of the contract and he is not willing to be driven out. He has offered to Heebner to accept his provision for buying out Heebner but Heebner now declines that. I suppose Mr. Heebner would say that he offers to pay him in morose morticaulus [?].

\* \* \*

*[On March 22 Meigs traveled on to Nashua, New Hampshire, via New York and Worcester, Massachusetts.]*

MARCH 23RD. At 6:30 a.m. I left Worcester by railway for Nashua, which place I reached about 8½ a.m. I went first to the shop of Gage, Warner and Whitney. I have bought from them several tools which are the most admirable make, and I wished to look at the establishment in which they had been built. Mr. Gage went with me through his own shops and took me down to Kelsey's Machine Shop, in which the Eastman stone-cutting machine is made. I found a large machine made from the directions I had given to Eastman at work upon a small piece of granite and a smaller piece of sandstone. It cuts both, certainly, but it was not gored [?] so as to work up to its proper speed. The shaft was running a little over 200 instead of the 500 which it should run.

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<sup>81</sup>I.B. Morris and Co., Port Richmond, New York, manufactured lathes.

I examined the flat chisels after they had run over a piece of granite 10 inches wide and 4 feet long, and though they were somewhat worn out, it was much less than one would expect. The platen of the machine is too light and it sprung a good deal in cutting. I did not see a fair trial, for the stone which he had upon the bed was too little. Still, I feel no doubt that it will be of great economy and that it is worthwhile for me to buy one. This one is, I believe, sold. And I must order one.

There ought to be two sets of chisels, so as to save the lost time in taking out the points and replacing them by flat chisels. The stone ought to run under both, first passing the points and then the chisels. I think in ordering one, I must have it thus made. Mr. Kelsey says it will take some 4 months to build a machine. I must try to get some place to do it sooner.

I visited the works of the Nashua Iron Company. They have several forge hammers, all of the Kirk pattern. This has a \_\_\_\_\_ with a steam cylinder and piston which lifts the hammer by being applied under the \_\_\_\_\_ near the axis. They work with great force and with great delicacy. Can be adjusted as well as the Nasmith, and the superintendent, Mr. Dearborn, says that they do not get out of order like the Nasmith. I do not think that they are so beautiful a tool, but certainly they do a vast deal of work. He forges railway axles, locomotive cranks, steamboat shafts, and all other kinds of heavy work. All their work is made of scrap iron. The scraps come from the locomotive shops and other machine shops. I noticed that his scraps were piled upon a piece of pine board, and he said that the board lasted in the fire till the iron was hot enough and begins to stick together.

I had telegraphed to old Mr. Eastman at Concord to come to meet me, and he arrived at 5 p.m. as I was leaving, and I saw him for a few minutes and came off.

\* \* \*

*[On March 24 Meigs returned to New York.]*

[MAR.] 25. I was roused out of bed this morning by a knock which I supposed to be that of the servant coming to brush my clothes. I unbolted the door and, taking refuge with my bare legs in bed again, I saw a man enter with a small valise on his arm. I said, "I suppose you have mistaken the room, sir." "No, sir. Excuse me, are you not Captain Meigs? Well, I am from Boston, and I have been to Washington and looked all day yesterday for you all over New York without finding you. I must go back to Boston tomorrow, and I want to have a little conversation with you." I told him I would see him after

I had dressed and got breakfast. He proved to be Mr. Woodfall,<sup>82</sup> Colonel Thayer's<sup>83</sup> stonemason, in search of employment upon some of my works. He gave me much of his experience, particularly upon the \_\_\_\_\_ Brewster, and I thought he would be a valuable man.

\*   \*   \*

*[Meigs visited "Appleton's building" on Broadway, in which a number of artists had studios.]*

[MAR. 26] In [Daniel] Huntington's, I found a painting of Jesus reproving Martha, not quite finished. Pretty but weak. He has worked out his abilities in the *Mercy's Dream*, I fear, and will never do anything else so good. His drawing is uncertain. He told me of the death, just heard of, of Washington Totten, thus leaving the General, of all his sons, only George, who is struck with his death disease.

I had some talk with Huntington. He thought that the painting of the Capitol should be entirely national. And when he said that I had an Italian, I said I could get any number of them if I chose to send to Italy for them and they would work cheap. I asked if I could get good artists and he said yes. In truth, I believe, from what I have seen at the academy and in this visit to Appleton's building, that Brumidi is for our work better than any painter we have.

Weir is a great painter but he is slow. I must write to him to try, if he can be induced, to paint a sketch for some of our rooms. As for Huntington, he will come to Washington, but I do not believe he has anything in him.

\*   \*   \*

[MAR. 26 CONT.] The academy contains nothing.

I saw at Kubel's today a painting of small size by Horace Vernet,<sup>84</sup> *Joseph's Brethren*. It is a beautiful picture. So perfectly natural in all those paintings which look so simple and easy that it makes one feel as if they had only to take brush in hand and do likewise.

Some of the parts of the House of Representatives are cast, ready to put up.

They say at Janes and Beebe's that they can do the Senate at the same rates, no cheaper. Will send the drawings back by express today.

At Thomas Brothers, I found so much to change in the models they had made for the decorations that I had to stay there much longer

<sup>82</sup> Thomas Woodfall became foreman of masons on the Post Office building.

<sup>83</sup> Sylvanus Thayer (1785–1872), a military engineer who was a former superintendent of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, was in charge of the improvements to the harbors on the New England coast.

<sup>84</sup> Horace Vernet (1789–1863) was a French painter.

than I intended, so as to lose my passage to Philadelphia tonight. The whole style of the leaves had to be changed. They had got them round-pointed instead of acute. I made him alter the eggs, too, which he had made long. This detained me two hours or more.

\* \* \*

[MAR. 27] I left New York at 8 a.m., reached Philadelphia at noon. Saw at Rice's office, on my way uptown, Messrs. Rice, Baird and Heebner, who seemed to be in a \_\_\_\_\_ upon the subject of their contract. I told them that we must have stone.

\* \* \*

*[Meigs returned to Washington on the evening of March 27.]*

[MAR. 28] At my office, I found a note from Mr. Randolph Coyle<sup>85</sup> saying that he and the Secretary of the Interior<sup>86</sup> would come to the office to walk about the Capitol grounds to determine a plan upon which the enlargement should be begun. I saw them and showed them the drawings of the different plans, and they concurred that this was better than walking about the grounds. The Secretary determined that the work should go on upon a certain plan which would interfere with none of those proposed, and it is to be drawn up by Mr. Coyle and the Commissioner of Public Buildings, when he will approve it.

While discussing this, the President came in, and after looking at the plan of the dome, which has progressed during my absence and is now in a very satisfactory state, he said that as I had told him that I was coming up to see him at noon, instead of doing that, he would prefer my coming up with Mr. Walter and dining with him at 4½ p.m. in family, when we could have a discussion and talk over the whole matter of the public buildings.

I went there accordingly, and we had a pleasant dinner.

\* \* \*

[MAR. 28 CONT.] This glimpse of the home life of the President was pleasant but shows that he lives as other people do. It is a good dinner daily but a moderate one. For I can get quite as good a one, and so can anybody with a tolerably clean coat to his back, at any New York hotel for a dollar any day. We drank very little wine. Two kinds only were served, and of these the President drank none.

\* \* \*

<sup>85</sup>Randolph Coyle was a civil engineer.

<sup>86</sup>Robert McClelland (1807–1880) of Michigan was secretary of the interior, 1853–1857. Previously, he had served in the House of Representatives, 1843–1849.

[MAR. 29] I had a visit today from a Mr. J. M. Reed<sup>87</sup> of New York, who brought me a letter from my Uncle Henry.<sup>88</sup> He is a large builder of iron houses in New York, built the big building on the corner of Cortland Street and Broadway, which is a pretty good specimen of cast iron architecture. It is too much cut up, too little solid material, like all other iron buildings in the North and indeed elsewhere. I think that we are making our dome too much a copy of a stone building and too little like iron. But it is perhaps better than making it like the New York houses, a palace of glass. He took up a good deal of my time.

\*   \*   \*

[MAR. 29 CONT.] I determined not to take the money for the dome out of the Treasury this month. It is so near the end of the quarter that I prefer not to make any accounts for that work in this quarter.

Provost and Winter have given me a letter which I have not yet read. They ask some more in allowances for work which they say does not pay.

The end of our rafters is completed and out of the shop. I hope that our progress will now be as the foreman says, like running downhill. Most of the work is out and ready to weld up. The welding of the tie beams is begun.

By the way, Mr. Reed told me that they would make a beam for floors of wrought iron, plate [?] iron, thus [Sketch]. Number 20, the thicker sheet iron, being by a machine put up into this form. They are to be put at distances of 12 inches, the tiles hollow, laid upon lower flanges, and the spaces filled with plaster of paris. This I do with a view of making a fireproof floor, the plaster of paris being a non-conductor. I told him that the plaster had the disadvantage of corroding the iron much more than water and lime and that I therefore should myself prepare a filling of cement; that it was the French plan of filling, and I had proposed to use it in the Post Office and Treasury if I was placed in charge of them. The boots [?] and wooden floor over this is used only as a non-conductor.

I was kept at the office till 7 p.m. and found a telegraph upon my table at home asking for an answer to a dispatch from Mr. Crocker, which I sent. I also found a letter from Campbell, saying that the Secretary desired to see me as soon as convenient, which will not be till tomorrow.

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<sup>87</sup>J.M. Reed was president of the Architectural Ironworks of New York.

<sup>88</sup>Henry Meigs.

[MAR.] 30TH. I went this morning to the office and read my letters. I saw Heebner there, and afterwards I went to the Department to see the Secretary of War, as he requested. I had yet some time for him, and I paid General Totten a visit in the meantime. I told the General of my visit to Mr. Huntington's studio and the opinion I had formed of him, in which he did not agree.

I forgot to mention, by the way, in this book that Brumidi has made a sketch—"skitch," he calls it—for the ceiling of the room in which he has painted the Cincinnatus. He has made a beautiful division of the work and put into the 4 arches the 4 seasons. I think that it will make a very beautiful room when finished.

\*   \*   \*

*[As requested, Meigs called on Secretary of War Davis.]*

[MAR. 30 CONT.] After this was over [a discussion of who should be the new superintendent of West Point], he asked me what I proposed to do with the dome this season. I explained. He does not like it. Says that he fears the effect of the great height above the present long, low building, etc. Wishes to have the lower part made first, as we may never get another appropriation. I told him we were remodeling the design and I hoped soon to have it in a condition to show him the drawings. He fears the charge of having asked for the money for a thing which has no utility but only ornamental.

I told him that I had not asked for it. It was a thing which originated with Congress itself, in the Members who said to me, "Ask for the money and we will give it." And I had then asked. I believe I will send to him a copy of my letters to Craige and to Pearce upon this subject.

Heebner wants more money for the columns; and after his positive promise that it would not interfere with the delivery of the outside marble, I agreed to pay for all the shafts which came with their caps before the first of July the sum of \$200 each shaft, instead of \$198 per cubic foot.

Our roof is getting on well. They ask me now for a slotting machine. This is wanted for the ends of the bars of the rafters. But I do not know of one which is of the right construction.

I told the President and Secretary today of the offers of bribes which I had received and of Mr. Reed's confession to me that without paying blackmail thus, they could in New York get no work.

\*   \*   \*

[MAR.] 31ST. I went today to the Department of the Treasury to make an attempt to get an order forbidding the drawing of checks to order revoked. I saw the Assistant Treasurer, Mr. Washington, who agrees with me that it ought to be revoked, but he said that he had been talking with the Secretary, Mr. Guthrie, and he found him very strong in his opinion. He saw it better not to attempt to change him at present. I tried to make Mr. McNutt, the teller, who is the cause of the order, consent to withdraw his objections, which are based solely upon his desire to save himself trouble. He said that some persons could not be got rid of when they refused to pay without identification, and this was disagreeable. I represented the danger and difficulty of leaving checks for large amounts to bearer in the hands of my clerk.

By the way, I am writing this part of the daily history upon Sunday, and I have this moment received my mail, in which I find a letter from [P.G.] Washington, the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, who says he has had a conversation with the Secretary, who consents that if I will furnish the Treasurer with a list of persons for whom I usually draw checks payable to order, so that he may become acquainted with them, I may have such persons continue to draw checks to order. This will be a great point gained. But the universal commercial custom ought to be the rule, which is to require the identification of the person receiving the money. . . .

I saw Eveleth in the Treasury. He still holds to his wish to be my clerk. He will, though, I fear, want more money than I can give. I told him that my argument in regard to Denham's pay for the aqueduct of \$30 per month had been considered satisfactory. So I am able to pay Mr. Denham at the rate of \$1,825 per annum.

I went in to see the Comptroller, Mr. Broadhead. He said that he thought there would be no difficulty in regard to the Lee Stone Quarries. He thought that that account would be passed, to my credit. They will settle the accounts for the Capitol up to the end of 1854. The aqueduct accounts will be passed over informally till the proceedings of the courts in the land cases can be examined by the Attorney General.

All this kept me till 12 [p.m.] away from my office, and when I got there, I found a quantity of business which occupied me incessantly till 6 p.m. I examined the cost of cutting the caps for the large pillars of vestibules in the basement and fixed their price, which is about \$520. This is a great cost, but they have cost that in work and expense with a moderate allowance for profits.

I allowed, also, another dollar per square foot upon the cost of cutting and setting the shafts of the pillars, making the price \$2.45 per foot. This is no greater than the contract price for some work which they have done and which is less costly. For the anta shafts of the

corridor in the basement, I fixed the price at \$1.45. The shafts of the fluted and reeded Corinthian columns in this same basement have been put at \$ [blank], the basis for them at \$50 each.

These works are very costly. I do not doubt that I could do them for less money, but I should not employ these people as foremen and managers. The contract is made, and I must so manage it as to enable them to do the work without loss. The mode of doing it is not under my direction.

There are 95 days' work of stone cutters upon the shafts of the columns in the corridor. At \$2.75 per day, including tools, this, without handling, rubbing, etc., costs near \$275. I hope to do better with the Post Office.

\* \* \*

[APRIL] 2ND. Paid the payroll for the Capitol extension, a check for \$7,320.

Masons	655.
Foremen and receivers	684.
Clerks, Draftsmen, Managers, etc.	584.25
Laborers	2,251.38
Carpenters	1,695.02
Blacksmiths	1,435.84

\* \* \*

[APRIL 2 CONT.] I had a visit from Mr. Stanton, Dick, this morning. He came to take another look at the painting of Cincinnatus, which he professes to admire very highly. He had met me at the hotel at New York. He was very cordial in his manner, admired the picture, and regretted that he had not been able to bring Mrs. Stanton to see it, as she had more taste in these matters than himself. He was to leave the city this evening for Kentucky and took leave of me as if he was one of my best friends and defenders. I do not know what to think of him. It would be a strange thing if he should now give up his hostility and turn out one of my advocates, after trying me by fire for so long a time. It would be a great victory to make a friend of him, the leader of the enemies.

I have spent in the past month for the government I know not how much, but a very large sum. My own pay has been—including the forage for one horse, which cost me to keep \$20 and for which I am allowed \$8—\$122.10, and for fuel and quarters \$41.33, making, in all, \$163.43.



APRIL 3RD. I find that my expenditures for the past month have been, for the aqueduct, \$902.04; for the Capital extension, \$38,562.50; for Fort Madison, \$615.38; making, in all, the sum of \$40,079.92. If upon this I received a commission of 1 percent only, it would make my pay for the month amount to \$400 and at the rate of \$4,800 per year. As it is, I get at the rate of \$1,800 a year.

\* \* \*

[APRIL 3 CONT.] I find by an estimate the number of words written these days differ, that I have written it at the rate of 30 words per minute. This is as fast as I can write in my most legible common hand, while I have written the above at a deliberate and easy rate.

\* \* \*

[APRIL] 5TH. I received today the order and instructions of the Secretary in regard to the dome of the Capitol. I had sent to him a draft of these instructions which I signed. They merely recognized the fact that I have been placed in charge and give me the same powers and instructions so far as they are applicable to the case which I have been acting under for the Capitol.

\* \* \*

[APRIL 5 CONT.] My correspondence is just now very heavy. I mailed 19 letters today. I need very much a clerk who could take charge of part of this correspondence. All these letters, except one or two which were mere letters transmitting checks, I wrote myself. All of them required more or less that, and the tax upon time and attention is great.

\* \* \*

[APRIL] 6TH. I believe that I had nothing of particular interest today. The usual number of letters to read and write. I sent in my accounts for the last quarter's expenditures, asking the Department not to send them to the auditor for a few days, as I understand that the accounts for the Capitol for the last quarter of 1854 are in readiness to report and will be reported in a short time if no new ones come in before they cut them off.

[APRIL] 7TH. I ordered today some popped [?] heads for the planers so as to be able to plane the nuts and rims, etc. They cost, with \_\_\_\_\_, wheels, etc., about \$30.

The lathe and drill which I ordered lately from Cumberland arrived today. They had not been unpacked when I left the office.

Miss Knower, with her brother, with some other persons in her train, came today to look at the fresco. I introduced her to Brumidi. Took

her to see the dome drawing as it is now. We then went to Brumidi's painting room to look at the cartoons he is making for the ceiling of the committee room of agriculture.

I have a most burdensome correspondence at present, but I suppose it will diminish as the work gets under way.

\*   \*   \*

[APRIL 9] I paid Messrs. Crocker Brothers and Co. \$5,555.70 for the second shipment of copper. This copper seems to be coming forward pretty fast. I wish I was ready to put it on the roof.

Brumidi's friend and companion<sup>89</sup> came to ask what prospect he had of employment here at his trade, which is that of a modeler and founder in bronze. He showed me a cast of the Ingraham gold medal made by a committee in New York for presentation to Captain Ingraham<sup>90</sup> for the Koszta rescue. It is, without perhaps being great as a work of art, very far superior to the design of Eastman which has been adopted by the government for its medal to him. The obverse represents the figure of America extending her hand towards the Captain, who is taking Koszta under his arm into a boat. Ships in the distance. The legend being, "Do you ask the protection of the United States? Then you shall have it." On the reverse is the eagle of America hovering over the Atlantic and Mediterranean, protecting the freedom of the seas. It is well done.

He says that he can make such castings in bronze as I saw in the Crystal Palace, New York. He seems an intelligent man. I told him to make me a sketch for the decoration of a door, and thus to let me see what he could do, and then I could give him an answer.

\*   \*   \*

[APRIL 10] I find in this day's mail, received on my return [from a visit to Great Falls to view progress on the aqueduct], a drawing of the foundations and masonry for the boilers and chimney of the new engine for the machine shop. I do not quite like the chimney, though it is a good one, but it is so much like a thousand others that I must make some little change in it.

I have read all my letters and written answers to such as can be answered at once.

<sup>89</sup> "Brumidi's friend" was Frederick Casali, an artist in bronze, who worked in the Capitol bronze foundry, 1855-1857.

<sup>90</sup> Duncan N. Ingraham (1802-1891) was a naval officer who in 1853 had secured the release of Martin Koszta. A Hungarian follower of Louis Kossuth who had emigrated to the United States, Koszta had been seized by Austrians while on a visit to Turkey. Ingraham was welcomed back to the United States as a hero in 1854 and awarded a Congressional Gold Medal.

[APRIL] 11TH. Mr. Nason<sup>91</sup> of New York, a person much engaged in warming and ventilating buildings, came to see me. He tells me that he has been lately putting up mechanical ventilators on a large scale. A fan 14 feet in diameter which makes 70 revolutions per minute and is driven by a direct steam engine. It requires about 8½ horsepower and delivers 80,000 cubic feet of air per minute. This quantity, at a temperature of 130 degrees, warms the rooms of the lunatic asylum to 70 degrees when the outside temperature was -20 degrees. This is a larger supply than I have ever heard of for a building.

Mr. Trimble,<sup>92</sup> an engineer of reputation and I believe a graduate of West Point, whose name I have been accustomed to hear as a leading engineer, called to see me. I received him gladly as being pleased to know him. He asked to see my roof and made an observation upon it which astonished me by the want of knowledge it showed. He said, pointing to the lower end of the rafter between the first bracing and the tie beam, that it was weak there. "Why? Because you know the whole may be considered as a solid and the strength is as the square of the depth." He has confounded a rule not correctly applied to bridges with a triangular truss, the strongest form of frame.

\* \* \*

[APRIL 13] I fixed the design for our chimney for the machine shop engine.

I have made an Italian cornice today which I think will have a good effect.

\* \* \*

[APRIL 14] We have got down to a foundation for the chimney stack of the new engine. It is some 10 feet below the surface. I think I shall have a pretty chimney tower. I remember, when a boy, wishing I could have a chance to build an obelisk or tower like some I had seen in the neighborhood of Philadelphia. I have now the opportunity to build a higher one. This will be 60 high.

I told Mr. [Zephaniah] Jones today to build it without scaffolding. He looked surprised at this. I found he had never seen one so built. I explained to him the mode, and it will be so done.

\* \* \*

[APRIL 14 CONT.] I sent to the printer today the specifications and proposals and contract forms for the aqueduct. Had a visit from Mr.

<sup>91</sup> Joseph Nason was a heating and ventilation expert. In July 1855 Meigs mentioned him as being with Nason and Woolworth and in 1857 with Nason and Dodge of New York, a manufacturer of heating and plumbing equipment.

<sup>92</sup> Probably Isaac R. Trimble (1802-1888), who graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and served as chief engineer of several railroads in the Baltimore area.

Valrio, the minister from Sardinia to this country. He was brought by Miss Grace Totten<sup>93</sup> to the office to look at the fresco and to speak in favor of an artist in New York whom he knows. Italian. I told him nothing could be done until I could see a specimen of his work. He could not, of course, show me a fresco but he might send, to be seen by me, a cartoon. This he will probably do.

Had drawing of the hinges for the gate of Fort Madison made. They will be forged by Ellis. I directed Mr. Slight to make me an estimate and drawings for a scaffold for the dome from a sketch which I sent to him.

\* \* \*

[APRIL] 16TH. Mr. Walter has gone to New York. I went into his office today at about 1 p.m. and found only August [Schoenborn] and [Emmerich] Carstens there, Carstens reading a newspaper and August at work. His brother, Henry,<sup>94</sup> was out measuring some things for the plan of the flues. \_\_\_\_\_ and the other young man had not been at the office today.

I had a visit from Miss Knower, Mr. Marcy's sister-in-law, today. She came with Mr. Bayard to look again at the picture, as she is going away. She is very bright and intelligent.

Laid the concrete foundation of the stack for the boilers of the smith shop. 11 feet square and about 4 deep.

\* \* \*

[APRIL 16 CONT.] Our work is generally going on satisfactorily, but we are delayed for want of marble. One of the roof trusses will be put together in a few days now. The tie beam probably will be welded up tomorrow.

I have lately bought a pair of heads with an index wheel and screw for the planer. It serves to plane out ratchet wheels and rims and taps and such things and is a most useful addition to our stock of tools. I bought for my table today a clock, one of the watch form. It cost \$3.75. It is set in an octagonal case about 8 inches in diameter. The case is in a vertical or horizontal position.

\* \* \*

[APRIL 18] I have got one of the roof trusses ready to put together, except the suspension rods which are not quite finished. It looks large as it lays in shape upon the ground.

<sup>93</sup> Grace Totten was a daughter of General Joseph G. Totten.

<sup>94</sup> Henry Schoenborn was a draftsman on the Capitol extension starting in 1853.

A man brought me a patented lightning rod today to show me and to get my opinion upon it. I declined giving any opinion, telling him that I could take no such responsibility, that it was none of my business and not my duty. I had no need of his rod. He seemed much disappointed at my refusal, for he had counted upon getting a puff from me which would sell his rods.

I went to see the work of Brumidi, and Casali, the former has made and finished the first of the half-size cartoons for the ceiling. He has one other nearly done and a third is begun. I do not think he works as fast as in the first picture. Casali has made a mold from the snake in the composition. He wished to cast it in silver, but I declined and told him to do it in zinc. It looks as if it would make a good casting.

I found letters and work to occupy me all day in the office. I have got the new chimney stack for the smith shop above ground and it looks vast. The day has begun very warm, 84 degrees in the shops down the avenue, I am told. This is a very sudden change, for yesterday it was rather cold.

\*   \*   \*

[APRIL 19] Casali brought me this morning the zinc snake most beautifully executed in zinc. This casting from nature is perfect; every detail of the sketches is to be seen even more perfectly than in a living snake.

I saw at the engineer office today confidential instructions to the engineer officers to push forward their works so as to bring them to the best state of efficiency possible with the means at their disposal. This with a view to the disturbed state of Europe.

\*   \*   \*

[APRIL 20] Mr. Walter returned from New York, where he has been this week.

\*   \*   \*

[APRIL 20 CONT.] The cargo of marble from Rice, Baird and Heebner inspected and paid for today. Near if not quite  $\frac{1}{2}$  of it was rejected. It was a very bad shipment.

APRIL 21. I went to the Treasury today at 9 a.m. and saw Mr. Eveleth, who wishes to come to me as a clerk. Then to the President's; he was out.

\*   \*   \*

[APRIL 21 CONT.] Professor Salaman came with some of his family to look at the fresco. He is just such a person as one might suppose from reading his book. Evidently without taste, his remarks upon the paint-

ing were absurd. One of the ladies with him showed an intelligent interest in the matter and thanked me cordially for my explanation of it. Brumidi is at work upon his cartoons, and Casali has made some progress with the molding of the door ornaments.

\* \* \*

*[Since early March, Meigs had been hoping to be placed in charge of constructing the new Treasury Department building and the General Post Office, in addition to the Capitol extension and the aqueduct. Although both President Franklin Pierce and Secretary of War Jefferson Davis had at various times assigned Meigs the task, the formal orders never seemed to get signed.]*

*[On April 25, Meigs noted in his diary that he had seen in the newspaper "a paragraph saying that ground was broken for the General Post Office Building continuation." Thinking that he had lost the chance to be in charge of the building, Meigs went to the War Department, where he learned that he was in fact to superintend the work under the direction of the War Department. Although pleased with this success, Meigs wrote: "The Treasury, I fear, I shall not get."]*

*[At this point, Meigs became extremely busy overseeing construction of the aqueduct and the beginning of work on the Post Office, as well as dealing with numerous individuals seeking contracts on these projects. References to work on the Capitol were thus briefer and less frequent.]*

[APRIL 26] One of our roof trusses is together. It came well together. There is a slight camber in the die made by the allowance for stretching which I made in its construction. I will look with interest at its shape when the weight comes upon it of the ceiling and roof. It ought to come down to a straight line.

\* \* \*

*[On April 27, Meigs traveled to Annapolis to visit Fort Madison.]*

[APRIL 27] I took with me Monty, who enjoyed his trip very much. I caught a couple of large black snakes, about 5 feet long. Monty felt very uneasy at their rushing about in the bushes in their endeavor to escape. I was surprised at the speed of one of them. He glided to and fro, so that I could not for a long time get a blow at him. They slid up into the young trees to the height of 5 or 6 feet with the greatest ease. One of them, having reached this height, seemed to think himself quite safe and remained there quietly while we chased his companion. I secured them both alive, though one of them was disabled by a blow which broke his back and disfigured him a little. Probably we may make them bronze door rings and handles.

\* \* \*

[APRIL] 28TH. I took my two snakes to the office today and turned them loose upon the floor. One of them, which had been little if at all harmed in catching, was full of life and of fight. He struck in the most vicious manner at everyone who approached him. He struck himself at one time by mistake, and he left upon his body a quantity of saliva, which surprised me. I directed Casali to make from these two snakes, which are about 5 feet long, rings for door handles for the extension.<sup>95</sup> He brought me today a lizard in zinc, which is well cast, but owing to the want of proper files and other tools, it is not well cleaned up, and he has soldered it upon a piece of tin.

I had many visitors who were surprised by the snakes and who, ladies and gentlemen both, behaved with more self-possession than I expected. Their habits are curious. They crawled about the room, and one of them established himself upon the shelves among the marble specimens. Here he supported his body on a 2-foot or 3-foot shelf and let his head hang a little lower, with a curved neck, and kept a bright and steady watch upon all that went on in the room. His vigilance was curious, his head elevated and motioning with his tongue part out.

\* \* \*

[APRIL 28 CONT.] A capital for the pilaster of the Senate vestibule, principal story, is modelled. It looks well; that for the outside pilaster is at last finished and promises well. The contractors offered some of the pilaster caps today for payment. I rejected them as they are not finished in such style as they should be and such as they have been ordered to be.

Maples has not followed the directions he has received from me and from Rutherford. I do not believe that he can by any means finish them for the price the contractors are paying him. But they must be well done before I pay for them.

One of the roof trusses is together. It fits well, showing that our dimensions are well calculated. Mr. Champion said that he had not taken it apart because many mechanics were coming and looking at it, and he wished to have it over Sunday for them to see.

\* \* \*

[MAY 1] I paid off today our men at the Capitol. Payroll: Masons, south side, \$340.62; north side, \$430.74. Foremen, receivers, etc., \$714.25. Labor, \$2,189.66. Carpenters, \$1,774. Blacksmiths, \$1,746.68. Clerks, draftsmen, messengers, etc., \$683.95. Total of this payroll, \$7,879.90.

<sup>95</sup>The snakes were cast in bronze for handles of the east doors into the House chamber. (See illustration on page 189.)

The bill of Provost and Winter is about \$15,000. At Fort Madison, about \$730. At the aqueduct, the payroll is about \$3,300.

\* \* \*

[MAY 1 CONT.] I have given for this month to Thomas<sup>96</sup> an increase of his pay to \$1.50 per day. He is here early and late and deserves by his attention some increase. But I fear that it will only do him injury by making him feel, however, wants which this pay will not enable him to gratify.

I had a visit from Mr. Randolph Rogers today with the proposed arrangement of his doors for the Capitol. He has a good set of subjects from the life of Columbus.

\* \* \*

MAY 3. My birthday. I went to the office and saw a number of persons upon business, answered my mail.

\* \* \*

[MAY 4] Mr. Rogers called to see me. He wished to begin one of the panels for the door, and for this purpose he asked me if I could furnish him with a room in which to study. I gave him a note to French, the Commissioner of Public Buildings, to try to get him one of the committee rooms in the old building.

I believe I was at my office for 2 hours or more before I could find time for that much conversation with him. I sent to Janes and Beebe the drawing of the window tracing of cast iron and asked them for an estimate or bid for their execution. The door tracings are nearly ready.

\* \* \*

[MAY 4 CONT.] Made out my monthly reports. Received from the Treasury drafts to the amount of \$70,000 on account of the Capitol extension.

\* \* \*

[MAY 5] Mr. Rogers was at the office. He was looking for the Commissioner of Public Buildings to find a room to make his model study for the door panel. I had given him a letter to French but he could not find him.

I found that the expenditures of the last month are about \$75,000 upon the Capitol extension, dome, Post Office, Washington aqueduct, Fort Madison. A pretty good list of works, all of importance in their

<sup>96</sup>Thomas was Meigs' servant, Thomas Allen.



\_\_\_\_\_ kinds except Fort Madison, which is a small affair. I have \$1,735,238.20 subject to draft. Such a sum is enough to give a great deal of power and influence if used correctly, but I do not see that it benefits me personally in any way except by giving me the standing as an engineer which gives me reputation, now to me here, to do me good in seeking other employment. I intend to send to my father a rough draft of the cash account for my monthly reports.

\* \* \*

[MAY 6, SUNDAY] Went in the afternoon to the Georgetown Cemetery<sup>97</sup> to visit our dear ones, and we found the sod green and white flowers blooming over their graves.

\* \* \*

[MAY 10] A letter from Crawford, who wishes to have the pediment raised 12 inches at the apex to give him more room for his statue of America. I answered that it was now too late, for the roof frame has been partly made and it would alter the whole of this work and change the angle of the pediment.

Mrs. Meigs went back to the office with me today after dinner, and we walked through some of the marble shop and I showed to her the columns for the corridor, which are very beautiful, and some of the caps for the vestibule of the Senate partly finished.

A cargo of marble is now discharging and another one or two are on the way from Bridgeport.

\* \* \*

[MAY 11] . . . I went to Baltimore and saw the work done by Hayward and Bartlett for the roof of the corridor in the basement of the south wing. The patterns which they had made for the decorations I did not approve, and I ordered some alterations in it. They cast it in two parts, so as to make each tier of leaves separate, which will enable them to give some undercutting. The architraves which are finished are fine castings. Very smooth and true in their edges and surfaces.

I returned to Washington by 3 p.m. train, reaching it at 5 p.m. Went to the Capitol for a short time and then home.

\* \* \*

[MAY 16] Two cargoes of marble have arrived, and the shop begins to look brisk again. I have changed the design of the capital for the column in the center vestibule and made the lower leaves more symmetrical and I think better fit for the material.

<sup>97</sup>Meigs' sons are buried in Oak Hill Cemetery on R Street in Georgetown.

\* \* \*

[MAY] 17<sup>TH</sup>. I was woke up this morning with the information that my father was downstairs. I found that he had come on, brought by a telegraphic dispatch, to see Mr. Dahlgren of the Navy, who is very sick. He arrived in the early train. I showed him around the Capitol and dined with him. He left in the 4 p.m. train. The visit was very pleasant, though he was too tired and stayed too short a time for me to have as much of him as I wished or to show him the aqueduct or, indeed, all my works at the Capitol.

\* \* \*

[MAY 18] Messrs. Samson and McCain, the agents for the serpentine, the green marble, were at the office today. They had come on to attend to the landing of the marble shipped by them and were disappointed at not finding the vessel here.

[MAY 18 CONT.] I ordered today 8 more forges to be built at the blacksmith's shop. We have so much smithing to do that I must have another addition of the shop. Some work comes for the Post Office, some for the aqueduct. And we have not yet more than begun the Senate roof. I begin to feel as if I had been too fast in my promise to have the House of Representatives chamber ready for use in the winter.

\* \* \*

[MAY] 19<sup>TH</sup>. Mr. N. H. Decker (Nicholas)<sup>98</sup> of Albany, New York, appeared today and signed his contract for the culverts and graduation upon the Great Falls Division of the aqueduct or, rather, for that part of it which we had indicated upon our plans to be laid. The amount of this contract is estimated at about \$35,000.

While I was seated in my office with him, waiting for the contract to be prepared, and Mr. Hall Neilson,<sup>99</sup> my old opponent, talking to me about his Great Falls Manufacturing Company, the President and Secretary Davis came in. They stayed a few minutes, and Neilson, who did not seem to be recognized by them, joined himself to the circle where we were talking together. They said that being at the Capitol, they had come in for a moment to see me and look at the picture. As it rained and was a disagreeable day, it did not occur to me that they might choose to go over the work and I did not offer to go with them. Afterward I heard from Mr. Winter that he had been around with them and they went through the shops on both sides of the Capitol.

<sup>98</sup>Nicholas H. Decker of Albany was a contractor on the aqueduct project.

<sup>99</sup>Hall Neilson was president of the Great Falls Company.

I signed the contract with Mr. Decker and was occupied at the office till 7 p.m.

The addition lately made to the smith shop in which the welding of the tie beams was carried on was burned last night. I discharged the watchman today, and I think I must discharge the other watchman upon that side of the work. There are 3 of them in all. Brown, whose particular duty it was to take care of the smith shop, is discharged. The others ought to have been able to detect such a fire before it could get such head as to be beyond their control. And yet I doubt whether I should get as good men in their places. I appointed a Mr. Mulloy,<sup>100</sup> recommended to me by Captain Dunnington of the Capitol Police. I suppose that I am safe in choosing him upon this recommendation and his good looks.

I told the President and the Secretary of the fire and that I thought I should dismiss all the watchmen on that side of the building, as it seemed to me to be a sufficient reason for dismissing them that they had failed to protect the property in their charge, though I believed they were attentive men and meant to do their duty. They said they agreed with me, but the President begged me not to appoint any of these miserable Know-Nothings, about whom he said his friends were now highly indignant.

I told him I thought I could manage to steer clear of them. But I find it is not so easy as I supposed. Dunnington tells me today that my foreman of the smith shop, Champion, is a leader among the Know-Nothings. I did not suppose he was such a fool. But Champion is, while an ingenious mechanic, one of those men who get carried away with such notions. And with a great flow of words, he has at the same time no great education nor no great stock of brains.

I had on Saturday ordered new forges put up at the smith shop, as I find that my roof does not progress as fast as I could wish. As this fire has cleared away the ground, I changed my plans and have ordered this part of the shop to be repaired and enlarged so as to hold about 6 more fires than before and to give room for another steam hammer. This I will order to be worked by a lever with no gearing.

\* \* \*

*[On May 22 Meigs traveled to Great Falls to examine work on the aqueduct.]*

[MAY 22] I reached home about 10 p.m., bringing with me a copper-head snake which some of the young men at the falls had got for me. This I shall give to Casali to cast in bronze.

<sup>100</sup>William A. Mulloy was a police officer and watchman at the Capitol.

\* \* \*

[MAY 23] I had a large \_\_\_\_\_ today and was so much occupied by the many persons who came to see me that I had difficulty in getting through my letters. Mr. Rogers I had some discussion with. I told him to let me have in writing an offer for a door and that he had better make a careful model of the principal compartment first and send me from Italy a photograph of it. I did not like to show the sketch which he had made to the Secretary, for I do not think it does justice to the ability of the sculptor. He seemed to think that his sketch was good enough to show, but I do not.

\* \* \*

[MAY 23 CONT.] At Casali's today, I saw the mold for the two door hinges made of the black snakes I caught at Fort Madison. They will be very beautiful.

\* \* \*

[MAY 24] I sent today a letter to the Secretary of War, enclosing one from Mr. Rogers. In this I told the Secretary that I believed Mr. Rogers had the talent to make a fine work of art from the life of Columbus for the door and that works of this style were among the most admired in the Old World; that he had made a sketch in clay of one compartment of the door which I did not find so spirited as I had hoped but that from the photographs of the other works which he had executed, I believed he had the ability, with proper study from the life, to make a great work. His price for the models when placed, delivered here, is \$8,000, to be done in two years. He thinks the cast in bronze will cost perhaps \$2,000 more, making \$10,000 in all. The work will contain some 150 figures, besides 12 portrait busts and statues.

The gates of the St. George's Hall, Liverpool, are of brass, small, and an emblem and coats-of-armor work. They cost, for the two pair, 6,000 pounds, or about \$15,000 each. So that these, which are about the same size, will not be dear, and if well done, the style is so much higher that they will be far greater works.

I was kept very busy today, so much so that I could not answer all my letters.

\* \* \*

[MAY 25] I do not find as quick progress with the rebuilding of the smith shop as I could wish, and I directed today that Mr. Veers be put upon it.

\* \* \*

[MAY] 26TH. I received today from the Secretary his disapproval of the project to fit up the rooms in the basement of the north wing for the Court of Claims. This disapproval I communicated to French, Commissioner of Public Buildings.

\* \* \*

[MAY] 27TH. Sunday. After church this evening, I went to General Totten's to see Mr. Huntington, the artist, who is staying there. He left his card for me yesterday morning.

\* \* \*

[MAY 28] At the office, Mr. Huntington, the painter, came to see me and the Capitol. I took him over the work, showed him Brumidi's designs and cartoons, with which he was pleased. Dined with him afterward at General Totten's.

Among my letters received yesterday was one from the Secretary approving the proposal of Mr. Rogers to make a bronze door.

\* \* \*

[MAY 28 CONT.] I gave Mr. Champion directions to push fast his work upon the roofs. They are behindhand.

\* \* \*

*[On May 29 Meigs inspected the portions of the aqueduct that were under construction.]*

[MAY 29] I took the boys up with me, John and Monty. While looking at the work on the Rock Run culvert or culvert number 7, I forget which, John appeared with a black snake, held fast, gripped by the throat, in his hand, the snake coiling about his arm, while he coolly untwisted him when he got too much pressure upon the arm. The Irish laborers and overseer looked at him with astonishment and wonder. The foreman declared that he should not catch such a snake for \$50. It was about 4 or 5 feet long, a black snake, what is called a horse-raiser. I put him into my handkerchief and took him home.

I stayed at the falls till 6½ p.m., and we then took Rackedge and rode home.

\* \* \*

[MAY 30] Mr. Rice was here today. He says that Heebner has put gunpowder into the marble streaked with yellow and blown up some 10,000 cubic feet of it. So that I hope that this material will no more come here.

Some of the fires in our new addition to the blacksmith shop are now at work.

\* \* \*

[MAY 30 CONT.] I looked at the green marble which has arrived from Vermont. Six of the pieces of the columns in the basement corridor have been set. The columns will soon be upon their pedestals.

Kept at the office today till after 6 p.m.

[MAY] 31ST. I received today from Mr. Crawford his design for the door of the eastern portico of the Capitol extension.<sup>101</sup> He has sent only one door, though I ordered two. He offers it for \$6,000, by which I do not at present understand whether he means to make the door of bronze for that sum or only the models. I must read over again his letter before I answer him. He has divided the fields thus: [Sketch]<sup>102</sup> Making upon each side, at top, perforated panels for light to the vestibule. At the bottom are circular reliefs of peace and war. The 3 large panels are filled with reliefs of war and peace subjects, thus, and on the right, Bunker Hill, Monmouth, Yorktown; on the left, Washington laying the cornerstone of the Capitol; Washington at Annapolis, I believe.

The group of the schoolboys [plaster models of the sculptures for Crawford's Senate pediment, *The Progress of Civilization*] arrived today. It was safely unpacked, except that the fingers of one hand were broken off. As the pieces remained, however, there will be no difficulty in repairing the finger.<sup>103</sup>

\* \* \*

1ST JUNE. I paid the payrolls of the Capitol today by a check for \$7,600, of the Post Office by one for \$4,600, and of Fort Madison by one for \$1,700. The aqueduct payroll I have not yet received.

I received yesterday, and found them open today, the models of the group of the schoolboys and the mechanic from Crawford. They are full of fire and life; the group well composed, the mechanic a very fine figure. They were slightly damaged, the head of the mechanic being broken off and the fingers of the boy. But the pieces are saved, and there will be no difficulty in restoring them.

I received also the design for the front door from Mr. Crawford. It is described on the previous page. I wrote to him tonight, acknowl-

<sup>101</sup>This was the Senate door.

<sup>102</sup>See illustration on page 348 of Crawford's door for the House wing, which follows the same design as the one for the Senate wing described above but with different subjects depicted.

<sup>103</sup>See illustration of Crawford's completed pediment sculpture on page 39.

edging its receipt and asking for the other door, as he has sent only one, that for the eastern portico of one wing. I also asked him why he had allowed his workmen to rub all the finish off the plaster models of the statues. They look like the casts which are sold by the Italian image-sellers. Rubbed out the delicacy; the finish is gone.

\* \* \*

[JUNE 1 CONT.] Mr. Huntington and Mr. Temple came to see me at the office, and I took them to the studio and showed them the figures.

The new blacksmith shop is at work at last, with 5 or 6 fires and the rest fitting up. We have ten forges in it now besides those in the old shop, making in all only 18 or 20 fires.

The slitting machine has arrived in Georgetown for the Capitol shop and the stone-cutting machine for the aqueduct.

Mr. DeCourcy,<sup>104</sup> the importer of French plate-glass, came today, to say that he had reduced his price for glass to  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the printed list of prices. This brings it down to the price offered by Roosevelt and Co., making a pane which cost formerly 14.70 to cost now \$10.50. I wrote to the secretary of the Lighthouse Board to ask whether there is any truth in the assertion that the British plate-glass does not keep its transparency as long as the French. Upon this answer will probably depend the selection of the glass for the windows.

\* \* \*

[JUNE 2] Mr. Bartlett<sup>105</sup> was here today to ask about the model of his foliage for the corridor. Mr. Walter and I do not agree as to the way in which this should be modeled, and I have given directions to have it done in the way which I think best.

I examined today the drawing of the south wing upon which I have had the flues recorded. There are well arranged flues for each room and hall. I believe the best way to warm the committee rooms will be to take in a current of air heated by steam pipes in the cellar, except in a few cases where coils of pipes should be in the room. Some coils will be needed in the halls, or under the floors of the halls pipes may be inserted. Legislative halls must be warmed by currents of air from the fan in the ventilating shaft. The water pipes also require study. I propose to carry a main upon each floor through the halls and have cocks in each room.

I made out partly my monthly reports today. There were 10,000 days' work.

<sup>104</sup>Mr. DeCourcy was with DeCourcy and Noell, the glass importers.

<sup>105</sup>Mr. Bartlett was with Hayward, Bartlett, and Co. of Baltimore, the iron foundry.

The expenditures upon the Capitol extension in May, \$72,330.07. Dome, \$162. Aqueduct, \$17,188.51. Post Office, \$2,401.84. Fort Madison, \$1,228.34. Total expenditure, \$93,310.76. There are in my hands, thus in the hands of pay clerk and in Treasury, subject to my check, \$144,297.44, which, with billings of appropriations not yet drawn, makes the money under my direction for application \$1,636,927.44. A large sum for which to be responsible. I ought to have at least 2 percent upon all these expenditures, which would give me for the month of May a pay of \$1,866, more than 12 times what I have.

\* \* \*

JUNE 4TH. This is the day of the city election. I found that I was not upon the poll, and I accordingly took the oath that I ought to have been placed there, paid my school tax, and voted the anti-Know-Nothing or Union ticket. The candidate for the office of the Collector on the Know-Nothing ticket is J. M. Macaulay, formerly an auditor, a man of bad reputation. The third is Mr. Roach, who has been Collector for 2 years past and has won a good reputation for honesty and ability. I was obliged to take my place in queue and wait for an hour to get in my vote. The utmost good humor seemed to prevail.

\* \* \*

[JUNE 4 CONT.] Sent to Miller, Coates and [Youle] of New York, agents for the encaustic tiles of Minton and Co., a plan of the western rooms of the north wing, telling them to send me sketches of the designs they would offer for the floors.

\* \* \*

[JUNE 6] I put the small black snake, which has been for some time in the office, today into the gas chandelier. The first time I put him there, he flounced off and fell to the floor. He stayed there and finally climbed up the stem to the gas till he reached nearly to the ceiling of the room. It was curious to see the ease with which he went up the pipe, tying around it so as to support himself. When I left the office, he was coiled about the stem, above the upper leaves.

Mr. Brumidi announced his completion of the cartoons for the room, and I have ordered the scaffold to be put up for him tomorrow.

Today I received a portfolio of photographic views of Rome with some of his works. Among them is a view of the Richmond monument of Washington. They are very beautiful, and I took secret delight to-night in looking over them.

I notice one thing, which is that all the columns, or almost all of them, are swelled, so there is hardly a straight-lined column shaft among them.



Mr. Roosevelt called, anxious to sell me glass for the windows. Thought no glass so good as the British.

\* \* \*

[JUNE] 8TH. Today I had a visit from Captain Woodbury,<sup>106</sup> my classmate. Captain Alexander of the engineers and Mr. Cooper of the firm of Cooper and Hewitt of New York came at the same time, and I took them all over the building and shops.

\* \* \*

[JUNE] 11TH. I have had a hard day's work. I called at the Post Office as I went downtown. Here I saw Mr. Clark<sup>107</sup> to give him some directions as to the more rapid prosecution of his work. Neither this nor the smithery of the roof of the Capitol goes on as fast as I could wish. Have written to Mr. Rives<sup>108</sup> to give him general direction of the iron work. He is to see what has been done already and give such orders as will secure a rapid completion of the whole work so that no part shall be delayed by waiting for winter.

I had to go to the engineer office upon some matter about the bonds of Mr. Decker. I also stopped at the Treasury to get a draft for \$50,000 which was ready for me.

Then to the Capitol, where I had many checks to sign and many small things to attend to. The scaffold is up in my room for the purpose of painting the walls, but it seems that some of the plaster has got loosened from the bricks by the driving of nails and plugs for the boards which I had put up to hang specimens upon. So that it will be necessary to take from the wall this part of the plaster. I have concluded to change my office into the back room till these paintings are finished.

Mr. Carr, the manager at the quarry, sent to me today a very stout black snake, the thickest though not the longest I have seen. He is a bold and quarrelsome fellow, struck at me when I turned him out upon the floor. I took him upon a stick and put him into a chandelier, where he still made fight, but finally retreated up the stem.

\* \* \*

[JUNE 13] Ordered from Gage, Warner and Whitney a lathe to turn for the columns of the dome.

<sup>106</sup>Daniel P. Woodbury (1812–1864), a classmate of Meigs at West Point, was a military engineer.

<sup>107</sup>Edward Clark was assistant superintendent of the Post Office extension. He had been Walter's student and came with him to Washington in 1851. In 1865, after Walter's resignation, he was appointed architect of the Capitol extension and held the post until 1902.

<sup>108</sup>Alfred L. Rives assisted Meigs on the aqueduct project and oversaw construction of the Cabin John Bridge. In the present case, he was also assisting with the Capitol.

I have two 80 and 81-foot sticks in the yard of the Capitol for the derrick to set the dome casting with. They are fine.

\* \* \*

[JUNE 14] I have received the new Nasmith hammer. 500 pounds. It is arranged to work with a simple lever and without the gearing which breaks so often. With this, each blow of the hammer will be given by the motion of the hand of the helper.

\* \* \*

[JUNE 14 CONT.] I promised to Thomas Gagliardi<sup>109</sup> \$160 for cutting in marble the wheat sheaves of Crawford's pediment.

\* \* \*

[JUNE 16] I gave to Mr. Thomas K. Copeland today a letter of appointment as an assistant overseer in the smith shop. He is an old man but a thoroughgoing workingman, and I hope that he will be able to help Mr. Champion to move more rapidly with the roof.

\* \* \*

[JUNE 18] I have seen the Congressional documents piled up in the rooms of the Capitol to a height of nearly, if not quite, 10 feet. I had a copy of the census report measured and weighed today. It was 8¼ pounds and is 1 foot square and 3 inches thick. So that 10 feet in height would contain 40 copies within 310 pounds. Adding to this the weight of the floor materials, we get for weight per square foot 458 pounds. I find that to make the floor safe against such a load as this, I can place these beams, of 30 pounds to the foot, only 2 feet 3 inches apart. I ordered today, also, some casting and bolts for the scaffolding of the dome. This is the first step, except the purchase of the timber for the dome. I have some beautiful sticks 80 feet long to make the derrick of.

\* \* \*

[JUNE 19] Mr. Symington came into the office, and I promised to go with him to Baltimore in the afternoon to visit the marble quarries in that neighborhood on tomorrow.

At 4½ p.m. or 3 p.m., I forget which, after having been prevented writing sooner, I make these notes in Philadelphia on the 24th

\_\_\_\_\_.

<sup>109</sup> Tommaso Gagliardi (1820–1895) was a sculptor who had worked for Thomas Crawford in Italy. He immigrated to the United States in 1855 and worked on carving Crawford statuary for the Capitol. He also created a bust of Thomas Crawford that is now in the Capitol.

[JUNE] 20TH. This morning, with Mr. Symington and Mr. Connolly,<sup>110</sup> I rode to the Baltimore County Marble Quarry. We visited first at Texas the quarries of coarse crystal marble used in the Patent Office Building. Texas is upon the Northern and Susquehanna Railroad, about 15 miles from Baltimore. The stone is what is called the \_\_\_\_\_ limestone. It is a very coarse crystallized stone, a tolerably pure carbonate of lime which makes, when burned, an excellent lime for building.

I think the stone looks worse in the quarry than in the building. It is very much stained by the weather wherever it is much exposed. I do not think the stone can be a durable one, for its loosely aggregated, large crystals admit the entrance of moisture, and they can not have sufficient adhesion to prevent their separation by the action of the frost.

These quarries lie upon the railroad, so that a track is laid from them to the depot. They have been extensively worked for lime as well as for marble for building.

The cranes are powerful but of the oddest construction. They are designed by Mr. Symington, who is not an engineer. A track from the bottom of the quarry, up which the cars are held by tackle and mules, enables them to get the marble out.

I observed here an extensive use of what they call \_\_\_\_\_ holes for blasting, as in the granite quarries. Two holes are sunk, thus: [Sketch]. Either round or triangular, the partition is then broken by a tool of this shape: [Sketch]. And when the holes are fired, they cause a crack in the stone which runs for 20 feet or more in \_\_\_\_\_ of the two holes. In the magnesian limestone quarries, I find each hole made generally triangular [Sketch]. In the coarse and pure limestone, the holes seemed to be round.

From Texas, we rode to the quarries of dolomite of Mr. Connolly. He has a large deposit of a hard magnesian stone, some of which is nearly as white as Lee marble. It seems more free from the soft specks in the Lee, and in the East Chester marble, decay on \_\_\_\_\_, yellow or black. I believe that it will be very useful to us and that I may get from it some marble for the interior of the Capitol. This will enable me to make more rapid progress with my building.

I returned to Washington in the evening, after having visited Mr. Symington's sawmill.

The impression I have from my visit to these quarries and to Baltimore, where I examined minutely the buildings and the steps of marble with monuments to Washington and the battle of Wynn [?] Point, was that marble for this climate, at least, is not desirable material

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<sup>110</sup>John F. Connolly owned the Baltimore County Marble Quarry, which ultimately supplied the monolithic marble columns for the porticoes of the House and Senate wings..

for buildings. It will not keep its color for many years. It decays as rapidly as most building stones, the pure marble more rapidly than the magnesian. I am satisfied that in order to preserve the Capitol in proper beauty, it will be necessary to clean it down frequently with sand and water, and I am satisfied that it is about the best marble we have for building. The Baltimore fine crystal stone of Connolly is not quite so good, upon the whole, as the Lee, but is not much inferior.

\* \* \*

*[On June 22 Meigs traveled to Philadelphia with his daughter Mary, leaving her there with his parents while he visited quarries and factories.]*

[JUNE] 23. I went today to the factory of Cornelius and Baker. They have the finest establishment for the manufacture of gas in the country. One large building only two years old was burned down lately, and they are now rebuilding it upon \_\_\_\_\_ Street. In this they use the Cooper and Hewitt wrought iron beams, placing them, for a 16-foot span, about 4 feet apart. The walls and floors are of brick. There is nothing about the building to take fire. The goods manufactured are fireproof material, gas fixtures, and I suppose they will never suffer again from fire.

The work shops they now have in operation are \_\_\_\_\_ down. Here I saw the various processes of manufacture: hammering, dipping in acids to clean off the rust; turning, boring, burnishing, coloring, spinning, by which a flat plate of brass is made to assume the proper form for a limb, body, and many other things. Casting in metal molds the small figures which are used as decorations for the chandeliers. These are cast in a moment, and the mold has a large orifice, being reversed. The liquid material pours out, except a small quantity which is chilled by contact with sides of the mold and which remains to make the figure. These figures, which are made of zinc, are afterwards colored by various processes and made to imitate bronze or gold, as needed.

They were modelling a large chandelier for the Nashville Capitol with Indians and buffalo, the Indians copied with some changes of raiment from a common French bronze. The buffalo are modelled rough from a drawing.

This factory has been going on for many years. It was first begun by the older Cornelius as a small shop. It now employs 12 clerks and 4 members of the firm—Cornelius and son and Baker and son—and about 500 men.

They are rich, public-spirited men, do a great deal of good by the employment they give to many men who could not find for themselves the means of employment. Such men are really public benefactors. I

was much interested in seeing some process they had, read of but had not seen.

The bank built in Chestnut Street of the Lee marble has been cleaned off since it was finished and retains its color. Still, it is without doubt the most beautiful piece of marble in Philadelphia, bright and clear in color. I must have the Capitol cleaned down upon my return.

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[JUNE] 25TH. At 10 a.m. I left Philadelphia for New York, reaching that city at 2 p.m. I called at Cooper and Hewitt's, and one of their clerks went with me to see the Harper's Building in Cliff and Pearl Streets. The front is of cast iron, the floors of brick, arches of about 3 to 4 feet span, supported upon iron beams of Cooper's make. These beams are carried by girders of cast iron with wrought iron strings [?], thus: [Sketch]. The frame of these girders is filled up with tracery.

The building is built deep upon Pearl Street. A courtyard divides it from the Cliff Street building. It is 6 or 7 stories in height, and it has no internal partitions, the floors being supported by cast iron columns which are of pretty good design for a manufactory. The only stairway I saw is a circular stairway in the court, with openness opposite each story and standing detached, iron platforms or bridges reaching it from each floor. Thus, the danger of its acting as a chimney when a fire breaks out in one of the rooms is avoided.

In Cornelius and Baker's new building in Philadelphia, this has not been observed. I rather think in Harper's it was not done for safety but in order to cut easy access from each building to it.

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[JUNE 25 CONT.] I went to Janes and Beebe's; saw a good deal of work for the House of Representatives ceiling.

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[JUNE] 26TH. I was up early this morning, and at 7 a.m. I took the Hudson River Railroad for Hastings in order to visit the marble quarry of Wilson.<sup>111</sup> This quarry would afford tolerably large supply of marble by putting a large number of men upon it. There is a good thick base of marble in the bottom of the quarry which has been uncovered. The waste is enormous, however. 50 or 60 feet of worthless stone full of sand lays over the workable beds. It is all coarse in grain, dull in color, and a very poor material. How Bowman could select this and reject the Lee, I can not understand. It is embedded in sand,

<sup>111</sup> James G. Wilson owned a marble quarry at Hastings, New York.

different from the Lee sand to which he objected so much, only in being of a less pure color and of a coarser grain.

Parts of the stone, too, are very friable, so that by his rules, as I understand them, this is a stone of little durability. Yet, he has taken it for the Charleston Custom House. It is being worked with axe like granite. This leaves a rough surface, which makes the stone, while fresh, look white.

The arrangements for taking the stone by railroad to the shore [?] are good. I saw, too, here for the first time a pair of shears used for hoisting and loading upon the cars the marble instead of a crane. A couple of large, rough sticks of timber are the shears, stayed by chains. A single cable chain is a tackle worked by a steam engine. They are putting up a large engine for hoisting by the same arrangement, which is very heavy, more so, I think, than necessary.

We rode up to Sing Sing,<sup>112</sup> where Mr. Wilson has a quarry of his own and one leased from the state, worked by the prisoners. Here I saw nothing which would justify me in giving a contract with any hope of getting a good supply of marble from here.

I was surprised to see the prisoners working in the quarries and walking about the grounds at liberty. They are watched by guards who sit upon the hills while armed, and this is the confinement. At night they are locked up. During the day they seem to have the same liberty that any workingmen do. Wilson has a contract for 15 years for the labor of 500 men from the state and is putting up a very large steam sawmill for sawing marble in the prison.

We returned to town in the evening. Mr. D.E. Sickles<sup>113</sup> and his father,<sup>114</sup> who are part owners in this quarry, went with me and Mr. Doherty. The country is beautiful, and our ride in a buggy with two good horses through this beautiful country was very pleasant.

Tonight I went to the opera to see the Academy of Music lighted up and in hopes of seeing some of the wonderful scenery of Allegro, but the opera was not one which brought out his work. The room is beautiful. The arrangement of close gas jets above the cornice produces a very beautiful effect.

\* \* \*

[JUNE 26 CONT.] A Mr. Wild B. Wicker of the Nashville Plate Glass Company called and begged me to go with him in the morning to see his store of glass which he thinks the finest in the world for thick

<sup>112</sup>Ossining, New York.

<sup>113</sup>Daniel E. Sickles (1819–1914), Democrat of New York, subsequently served in the House of Representatives, 1857–1861 and 1893–1895. From 1853 to 1855 he was secretary of the U.S. legation in London.

<sup>114</sup>George G. Sickles.

glass. He is the same who wrote to Mr. French that there was money in it for both of them.

[JUNE] 27TH. Wednesday. We went to Tuckahoe, the station upon the Harlem Railroad near to East Chester Marble Quarries. These quarries are 19 miles from the city hall. They are of the magnesian limestone, of dolomite, coarse in the crystallization, dull white in color, without life or brightness. I do not like the stone at all. Much of it is marked with seams of a dull gray, and they get white ashlar by splitting the blocks between these seams so as to give a layer of an inch or half an inch of white upon the face of the ashlar. All the stone is worked to be set upon edge. Large blocks can be got, though not so large as from the Lee quarries. They were getting out the column blocks for the New Orleans Custom House. Some of the blocks and some of the pieces were ready-cut, the cutting very rough. The quarries lie in a valley extending for several hundred feet along it, the layers inclined. They are worked extensively, principally to cut fronts for the New York market, the proprietors taking contracts for the fronts and cutting them upon the spot. These are the quarries from which the Post Office has been constructed. The stone is not so good as the Baltimore small crystal of Connolly's quarry.

\* \* \*

*[On June 28 Meigs traveled on to Pittsfield, Massachusetts, where he visited the Lenox Glass Factory, which, however, did not make the type of plate glass that he needed.]*

[JUNE 28] We reached Lee about 12 m. Dined at Mr. Heebner's and went to look at his quarry, which is the best body of marble (dolomite) we have seen, by many degrees. In fact, no other is to be compared with it. In the field to the south, we saw the opening made by the New York company of which he is the head. Mr. Levy is there. The management is bad. But they have the promise of as good a quarry as Heebner's and Rice's. There is a field of the same stone between these two quarries in which I think the marble for the Post Office could be got out. At south Lee there is another which Heebner thinks is as good as either. Doherty agrees in this opinion. They are now getting out columns for the corridor and trying for the pillars of the vestibule. He has been unfortunate with them, having lost several.

I talked with Heebner as to the chance of getting our building from either of these quarries. Levy is desirous of getting out the stone. Thinks it could be done. He is not a quarry-man. But Heebner says they will have a good one there. Heebner seemed inclined to listen to a proposition to lease his south Lee ledge. I told him to think of

a price for the marble delivered from the New York quarry and for the lease of his south Lee. He will be in Washington by the 5th of July, prepared to try.

\* \* \*

*[On June 29 Meigs continued via Springfield to Rutland, Vermont.]*

[JUNE 29] We reached Rutland at 2¼ p.m. Took the cars again to Sutherland Falls, the quarry of the American Marble Company. Here I found a large mass of solid rock of very good quality. It is sound, can be obtained in solid masses of large size, but it is a cloudy marble, not a white one. Some of it might be used in the Capitol for columns of the interior but not for the exterior work. It would do for mantels, for pedestals, and for such purposes generally.

\* \* \*

[JUNE 29 CONT.] The president of this company, Mr. Dunlap, went with us. We ordered a carriage to meet us there, and with it we rode over to West Rutland to look at the quarries of the Rutland marble. These have been much worked since I was here. They have opened more extensively and have done much quarrying. The blocks they get out are mostly sawed up within a few miles of this place. None of it is really pure white. It all contains specks or small veins of a bad color. By sawing between the streaks, they are able to get a white face for a headstone. I saw some large blocks upon the cars going to New Orleans Custom House contractors for the caps of their columns.

The derricks used here for the hoisting of their stones are among the best I have seen. They are roughly constructed but are simple and efficient tools. I noticed a cap upon them, which is new to me. Thus, of cast iron: [Sketch].

\* \* \*

[JUNE] 30TH. SATURDAY. I left Springfield [Massachusetts] early by the cars for Rouses Point [New York]. I met Mr. George P. Marsh<sup>115</sup> in the cars between Orlando and Burlington [Vermont] and was introduced to him by someone connected with the Sutherland quarries. He said he had left with Mr. Wilson of Hastings some specimens of colored marble which he had wished me to see, that he had some still in his trunk which he would like to show me, but that there was in Burlington a table-top made from the stone, and if I would ride with him, he would take me to the house of the person to whom it be-

<sup>115</sup>George P. Marsh (1801–1882), Whig of Vermont, had served in the House of Representatives, 1843–1849.



longed. I rode with him accordingly and found that it was a marble very much resembling the Tennessee marble of Sloan and Doherty.

He said that it existed in large quantities over a space of several hundred acres immediately upon the shores of the lake, so that it could be quarried and placed directly upon a vessel. He wished to know my opinion of its quality and the probability of its being profitable. He is to send me a few blocks of the marble which I am to saw and try. I believe it is the same marble precisely as Doherty's.

\* \* \*

*[Meigs visited Rouses Point, New York, on June 30, then on July 1 and 2 returned to Philadelphia, picked up his daughter, and returned to Washington.]*

[JULY 2] I met at the station of the railroad Mr. Walter and Mr. Rice. Rice said he had come upon some business with Mr. Corcoran. Would return to Philadelphia tomorrow.

\* \* \*

JULY 5TH. Today I went to the Post Office at 9 a.m., stayed there some time, gave some directions. The work does not advance as fast as I wish. Mr. Woodfall does not seem to be able to set his work in motion. Many men are walking about, asking for employment, and he does not take them. Tomorrow I hope to set him in motion.

I then went to the Capitol and was kept at work writing and giving directions till 8 p.m. I don't know when I have had a more steady day's work.

\* \* \*

[JULY 6] I tried today to make out a fair estimate of the cost and price to pay it of Provost and Winter for the cutting and setting of the jambs and other work about the eastern doors of the principal story of the Capitol extension, but I was so much interrupted by persons upon business that I did not succeed. Winter brings me a report of time spent in setting and in handling them, turning them over in the shop, etc., which amounts have been this part of the work only to \$90.47 for each jamb. This seems enormous, but I believe it has really cost him this much. Bad management alone could cause such an expense. With proper arrangements for moving the stone, it would not have cost  $\frac{1}{5}$  as much.

Our saws for cutting marble are at work at last. They move beautifully and work satisfactorily. The engine does not run, however, quite so fast as it ought. I directed it to be put to a higher speed. It runs now 65 revolutions per minute. It should run as much as 70 to 75.

I directed one of the fronts of the extension to be cleaned down. I wish to see the effect this will have upon the appearance of the building. The marble now has a dull and dirty appearance.

Captain Dunnington came today to hand me an affidavit of one John V. Russell, who declares that he has seen Watchman Smith frequently absent himself from his post between the hours of 6 and 10 p.m. But he does not wish his name to appear as an informer; for he is a member of the Know-Nothing order, and it is at the Know-Nothing meetings that he has seen him. He wishes to have him turned out but without appearing as a witness against him.

As this man, in order to be admitted to the meeting, himself must have taken the oath of secrecy, he, in taking this oath, violates that one. So, in any case, he is an acknowledged perjurer. I told Dunnington that I could not act upon this, that I must be able to give to Smith the chance to defend himself; that to turn him out upon such evidence, even if it were reliable, would be acting in an inquisitorial manner, would be acting as the persons who belong to the Know-Nothing party are supposed to act.

I received, also, a note handed to me by Champion, who denies most vigorously the charges of having been influenced by his Know-Nothing proclivities in hiring men upon the work. Thinks that it is a result of a meeting in a dark alley which resolved that he must be turned out, which caused this charge against him. He underscores dark alley, forgetting the secret nature of his own Know-Nothing society.

[JULY] 7TH. I went today to call upon the Secretary of War, but he was occupied, and I did not succeed in getting in.

The day was rainy, and little if any outdoor work was done.

The first block of marble sawed in our mill was cut through today. The mill works very smoothly, and cuts are true. I have no doubt that it will be a great economy in our building. I wish I had such a one for the Post Office. I can, however, use this, for it is able to do all the work for the Capitol extension and spare some time for the other. I ordered the ripping saws to be prepared.

\* \* \*

[JULY 7 CONT.] Looked over the plan of the dome foundation with Mr. Sonnemann and gave him some instructions as to the general system of support.

We will place upon the top of the masonry of the rotunda wall a heavy plate of cast iron with a wrought iron band running through it. This circle will be our foundation plate for the dome. The columns and base of the exterior will rest upon the outer walls. Where we have

a foundation under a column, it will be supported by a sub-column. Where there is no such foundation directly under it, I expect to put in a support of this shape: [Sketch].

A strut transferring the weight to the wall of the dome. Tied at top to the foundation circle plate. The stylobate and outer parts of the work will be a mere screen, so as not to interfere with the light to the courtyards more than necessary. I avoid throwing any great weight upon the sandstone columns of the portico, for I have no confidence in the stone.

I must draw up a set of instructions to Mr. Sonnemann upon this subject, for I have no time to go through the matter myself but must content myself with giving him general instructions and overseeing his detailed mode of working it out. He has had some experience in working in cast iron upon the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.

He gave me a letter today in regard to my having written over his signature to his drawing of the scaffolding. He says that he thinks I have misunderstood him, that he signed the drawing to take the responsibility of having worked it out; but that he did not mean or to assume any share in the credit of its design; that he must look for his credit through me, who am responsible for the success of the work; that when with Mr. Latrobe, he even made entire designs without any interference on the part of Latrobe, for which Latrobe got, as he thinks he had, the right of entire credit.

I answered him that his signature was in such a form that the master workmen would understand it as being his design; that I had given directions for the most minute details of the work, the design being mine only and entirely different from what he wished to make, and that I did not wish any misunderstanding about it. And that I would be glad to give him always all that belonged to him. And to give him, when I could, some things to work out entirely; when, if he made them, such as I could approve, I should write upon them, as I did upon the design for the building for the stone-cutting machine at the falls, made by Mr. Talcott, designed by Mr. Talcott, approved by Captain Meigs.

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[JULY 7 CONT.] I have a new desk, one of the school teacher's desks made by Ross' of Boston. It is very convenient and enables me to keep my papers and tools in such a shape that I can get at them.

My monthly report, which is late this month owing to my absence at the beginning of the month, shows the following expenditures:

Washington aqueduct

\$17,050.41

Capitol extension	64,159.91
Post Office extension	4,626.02
Fort Madison	2,608.34
Dome	1,515.34
	<hr/>
Total	\$89,960.02

The whole sum is rather less than last month, which amounted to about \$93,000. And good progress has been made in all the works under my charge. . . .

\* \* \*

[JULY] 9TH. Letter from Crawford today. He says that he has lost by exchange \$600 of the \$10,000 which I sent to him. I think he must have made a bad bargain, for I sent him a bill of exchange upon London for pounds sterling, which are equivalent, by the relative \_\_\_\_\_ value, to \$9,888, which is only \$112 less than \$10,000. And as the exchange is against Rome, I supposed that it would be, as I was told by the bankers here, that if he chose to sell the \_\_\_\_\_ upon London, he would realize quite as much as this from the premium. But his banker has given him a statement of his fees and charged him with a commission of one percent.

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[JULY 9 CONT.] Dr. A[aron] W. Miller, formerly a member of the city council and one of the committee which procured me the water kettle, came today with a petition signed by several persons stating and showing by affidavits that Champion, the blacksmith, is a Know-Nothing, requesting me to remove him and appoint someone who does not belong to this party.

I told him that was going a little beyond my province, that I was there to take no part in politics but to keep impartial billings; and that I would not remove a man for being a Know-Nothing, though I regretted that he should have been foolish enough to join this party. He said he understood my position and that [of?] the officers of the army and he had been to the President, as were [?] his papers, intending to free me from the responsibility. That he had by the President been told that I would not act upon political reasons if such a removal were sent to me. That he was to go to the Secretary of War also, etc. I told him that I would make no political removal; that if the President or the Secretary chose to remove any man under my direction, they had the right. But it must be understood that they did it and not I. That if they should insist upon my taking a political part, I should resign my charge. If they order a removal upon their own responsibility, I could not help it. Of course, they were my masters. I should obey.

Some of the affidavits state that Champion has relieved all the opponents of the Know-Nothing party from his shop, all except one or two. This, I told the doctor, must be false, and I showed him Champion's defense of himself against this charge, telling him that I had him up to answer it before, as I would relieve him at once for such a breach of faith towards me as making his selections from one party only.

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[JULY] 12TH. Today I have been at the office all day. I dined with Mr. Walter, who is living almost alone, as his wife and family are in Philadelphia. He says that his father, an old man of 74 years of age, is fast declining and that they have written to him that he wishes him to come to see him. But he cannot go yet.

We settled the decoration of the front of the gallery of the House of Representatives. We will make it of Tennessee marble panelling around large compartments for painting. The general design will be plain and will depend for its beauty and effect upon the color and polish of the marble and upon the beauty of the pictures which may hereafter be placed in the panels thus prepared.

I received today from Mr. Crawford a very graceful and beautiful design for the statue and crown on top of the dome of the Capitol. It is a figure of Freedom, triumphant in peace and war, a draped figure of a female. The height being 15 feet, it will be a large statue, to be executed in bronze. He says nothing of the price, except that if his design is approved, we can then enter into particulars. I think I must be able to get the Secretary to approve and adopt this design. Mr. Walter is making a copy of the upper part of the lantern of the dome to the same scale as the photograph in order to see how they fit.

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[JULY 13] Gave orders for employing men upon the framing of the scaffold of the dome. The model of the first story of this is completed, and I like it much for its simplicity and efficiency. It is triangular in plan, with a stairway, hexagonal in plan in the model of it. The ropes for hoisting lead down the middle of the stairwell. I have not yet quite determined how to arrange the hoisting gear, whether to put an engine upon the top of the scaffold, leading up a steam pipe from below, or to put a barrel up there, worked by a long vertical shaft from below, or to lead the rope down to a hoisting machine in the basement.

\*   \*   \*

*[On July 14, Meigs took his wife and the younger children to the train in Alexandria on their way to spend the rest of the summer at the foot of*

*the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia. His older son, John, remained with him in Washington.]*

[JULY 14] I believe it is about 100 miles from here. I hope that they may be successful in their search for health and strength. It seems dangerous to keep these children in town during the hot weather, this city being now large enough to be unhealthy.

I wrote today to Mr. Heebner to say that I thought his offer for the Lee stone for columns too high, that he might offer to furnish them at a lower rate. He asks \$5 per cubic foot if the shaft is in a single block and \$3 per cubic foot if in 3 pieces, while he offers all stones in quarry 100 cubic feet at \$1.90. If in 3 pieces, the \_\_\_\_\_ of the shafts will not exceed 52 feet each, so that he asks too large a sum to pay for the scabbling. The difference is still greater in the monolithic shafts, which will be, when quarried, of 152 cubic feet. I offered and recommended the acceptance of his offer if he would make the price for monolithic shafts \$3.50 and the others \$2.50, leaving the plain work at \$1.90.

The private secretary of the President [Sidney Webster] came to me today and said that a watchman Smith was talking in a very scandalous way about the President so that it had got to his ears, saying that he had been seen drunk, etc. I told him what had been done about Smith and the reasons for which I had not dismissed him long ago, which are that he was a relative of Stanton's and I thought it would be such a chance to accuse me of turning him out for a personal motive that I did not like to give the advantage, not so much for my own sake as because I think it might weaken my influence to be suspected of such a motive even unjustly.

I talked afterwards with Smith and told him that persons had been accusing him to me of neglect of duty. And the other things he denied, said he could prove his innocence, and I believe lied so straight that I did not feel as if I had the right to remove him, not being able to prove against him what he was accused of.

Tom [Allen] tells me that the watchmen on the north side all neglect their duty; that when he goes back at night late with the carriage, he does not see them at their posts at all. I must really make some examination into this.

\* \* \*

[JULY] 15, Sunday. I went to call upon Commodore Perry. He is living in Mr. Slidell's<sup>116</sup> house. I found him out of spirits, not very well.

<sup>116</sup> John Slidell (1793–1871), Democrat of Louisiana, served in the House of Representatives, 1843–1845, and in the Senate, 1853–1861. During the Civil War, he represented the Confederacy in France. Commodore Matthew C. Perry was married to Slidell's sister, Jane.

He showed me some pretty sketches of animals, birds and fishes made by the men upon his Japan expedition. I was surprised to find them so good. And I hope that in publishing them, justice will be done to them. If so, such report will be a noble work.

JULY 16TH. I went today to see Mr. Webster, the private secretary of the President, about watchman Smith. I met at the door the President, himself, and told him what I had come about. He took me into the house, and we had quite a long conversation about the Know-Nothing subject. He said that he had been amazed at the falsehood which had been shown by persons who had joined this society; that Ben French, as he called him, a man who had known him for years, one in whose word he had entire confidence, had lied to him, denying that he had any connection with the order. And yet he had written articles for the *Organ*<sup>117</sup> of the party. This he had seen in French's own handwriting.<sup>118</sup>

This man, too, Samuel York Atlee, had been to see the President and asked why he was removed and was told that he did not know, he did not know he was removed, and he supposed, as it was the case, that the reason was that Mr. Guthrie did not want his services. Atlee declared that he had been a warm friend to the President, had written and done more for him and for the support of his administration than any other man in Washington. Etc., etc. But yet this man was one of the most violent and proscriptive of the party. He is now a member of the city council, elected upon the Know-Nothing ticket.

Old Houston, my friend who comes to talk with me and tries to make it appear that he has asked information in order to defend me, and who I have never doubted was doing all that he could to injure me all the time, he, it seems, has been removed by \_\_\_\_\_ and he denied most vigorously that he was a member of the order. It shakes one's faith in man's truth and honesty.

I saw afterwards Webster and told him to send me some such information as to Smith's having spoken about the President in the scandalous way that he had heard of, some such information as I could refer to, and that he at once relieve the man from all his duties.

I had a visit from Dr. Blake,<sup>119</sup> the new Commissioner of Public Buildings, today to talk upon the same subject. He thinks I ought to turn out the Know-Nothings. I told him what Mr. Basil was and that if I had orders from the President or Secretary, that I would of course

<sup>117</sup>The *American Organ* was a Washington newspaper of the Know-Nothing party.

<sup>118</sup>French gave his side of the story at length in his own diary. See *Witness to the Young Republic: A Yankee's Journal, 1828-1870*, edited by Donald B. Cole and John J. McDonough (Hanover, NH, 1989), pp. 256-59.

<sup>119</sup>John B. Blake replaced B.B. French as commissioner of public buildings in 1855, after French resigned over the Know-Nothing matter.

obey them, but that I must be independent of party and give to persons whom they required to be removed information as to the cause of their removal, and that it was not done by me but by those above me.

I saw Champion this morning, who is a greater fool than I supposed. He actually believes that he is the author and originator of Know-Nothingism. I said something to him about the origin of the party, and after several circumlocutions about somebody whom people do not think of having as much to do with it as anybody else, etc., etc., he came out and said that he believed that a certain letter written by himself was the first start of the great movement. He had a copy of the letter written by him, he said, and he believed that it was the first move. I kept my countenance through it all. The man is beside himself with vanity, eaten up with self-conceit.

I wrote today to several foundries to tell them the drawing of the columns for the dome was ready for exhibition and to invite them to propose.

\* \* \*

[JULY 16 CONT.] Beginning today the framing of the scaffolding of the dome.

\* \* \*

[JULY 17] I received from the President a petition from Philadelphia, quite numerously signed, some 20 names I suppose, asking the removal of Champion, the master blacksmith. It accuses him of being a member of the secret political society of Know-Nothings and also of being proscriptive in his selection of men in the blacksmith shop. I have sent to him the petition to answer.

I directed today that the shears which we have at the Capitol and which are not in use should be sent to the Post Office to be used there; also that a boom derrick which belongs to Berry and Mohen<sup>120</sup> should be hired from them for a time, till our large ones can be made and set up.

\* \* \*

[JULY 17 CONT.] Today, Mr. Coates of the firm of Miller, Coates and [Youle] of New York, as agents of Minton and Co., of Stoke-upon-Trent, came to show me the designs proposed by Minton for the floors of some of the rooms in the north wing. These are designs made from their stock on hand, and I approved them and made a bargain for

<sup>120</sup>Berry and Mohen were quarry owners and, according to Meigs, "the contractors for the granite and carpenter work of the Patent Office."



putting them down. The cost will be, for the plainer ones, about \$1.12½ per square foot. For the most complicated ones, not quite \$2.00.

The old gentleman who promised long ago to make me a specimen of the Argilo, a siliceous material, has at length made his appearance and with some most beautiful specimens. He offers them at \$2.00 per square foot. He has specimens of different shapes and colors, some like doorknobs, some like handles for sills, many hexagons for flooring. Some of these are of the most beautiful white marble, taking a polish, and like that of agate. Indeed, the substance is a perfect imitation of agate. I have given him the drawing of the balusters of the stairways, to make an estimate of the value of these made of this material in white. They would be unparalleled.

Letter from Louisa, who arrived safely at her destination and seems to be pleased with it.

19. JULY. This has been a very hot day. The heat was relieved by a violent gust of wind and rain about 3 p.m. The dust flew as only in Washington it can fly. I was at the time in the new part of the blacksmith shop. It threatened to blow down the gable wall, which is of 4 inch brick nogging. I had it propped up in order to save it, for it bent and swayed to and fro, so that I did not feel quite safe in standing near it. I have ordered braces to be put to it tomorrow. The dust and smoke and coal flew so that I was covered with spots of black and on coming home was obliged to change my clothes.

Weightman,<sup>121</sup> formerly Delegate from New Mexico, applied to me lately for employment in my work till he goes out to Kansas. He expects to be here for about 6 weeks more. I have taken him to attend to some of my letter writing and to look at the out-of-door work in the foundries which is going on for me. I pay him \$4 per day.

The inventor of the Argilo, the agate, today said that he had a pavement of white hexagons with a blue or black center to each hexagonal figure, which he could sell at \$1.00 per square foot. This is cheap, and I shall probably use a good deal of it. I have never seen anything ever built to compare in beauty with the material he now offers to me for flooring. He is making an estimate of the cost of balusters for the stairways of this material.

I have begun to put the gas and water pipes into the extension. I find that proper care is not taken to allow for the expansion and contraction of these pipes and must tonight write a note to Mr. Thompson upon the subject.

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<sup>121</sup>Richard H. Weightman (1816–1861), Democrat of New Mexico, was a territorial delegate to the House of Representatives, 1851–1853. Starting in July 1855, he worked as a clerk on the Capitol extension and dome.

I wrote today to Mr. Nason of the firm of Nason and Woolworth, lately new in business on his own account in New York, to come to see me in relation to the warming and ventilation of the extension. I believe that he is the best man I can get to attend to this matter, for I have no time to elaborate the details of the system.

\* \* \*

20<sup>TH</sup> JULY. I had an interview with the Secretary today and told him of the attack made upon Champion and Smith. He supports me in my course of not admitting political proscription into the work. I told him that I did not think Smith a man for whom I liked to be responsible. He said he had taken an interest in him from having found him very poor and suffering and having been instrumental in relieving him.

He approved my accepting the offer for Lee marble from the Lee Marble and Quarrying Company.<sup>122</sup> And I wrote to Heebner and told him that I accepted their offer as modified in his letter received today. . . . I showed the Secretary the specimens of the paving of Mr. Pepper, with which he was much delighted.

\* \* \*

[JULY 20 CONT.] I told Champion today that there was too little industry in his forging shop and that he must make a reform. He said that he wished I would speak to Copeland to be more constant in his attendance in that part of the shop. I told him I would and saw Copeland. He says that there is a want of attention in consequence of the laxity lately prevailing and it is difficult to introduce a reform at once; that he found a young man, while his lathe was running, feeding itself, going over to the bench of the workman at the vise and talking with him, thus interrupting his work; that he asked Mr. Denham to speak to him about it, and Mr. Denham did so and was answered, Mr. Copeland says, "So does he. Why the hell don't he speak to me himself?" Upon hearing this, Copeland said, "Oh, well, I will speak to him, if that is his game."

So he called him to the side of the German \_\_\_\_\_, who is a very industrious man, in order to have a witness, lest, being a young man, he might lie about the interview, and said to him, "I hear you asked, 'Why the hell does not Mr. Copeland speak to me himself?' Now, that is not proper language. I asked Mr. Denham to speak to you kindly and gently because I did not wish to mortify you and believed you to be a good young man. All Captain Meigs wants of you or of any man is a fair day's work for his wages, and that he will

<sup>122</sup>The Lee Marble and Quarrying Company was in Lee, Massachusetts.

have. He has put me here to see that it is given, and I intend to see to it. It is my duty, as it is yours, to give it. I talked with him for some time in this strain and I presume gave the young fellow such a dressing as will last him for some weeks."

The German was frightened and afterwards asked Mr. Denham what was meant by this talk before him, that he thought it intended for him. Till he was told that it was done in his presence, as an industrious man, to have him for a witness in case the other lied about it.

\* \* \*

[JULY 21] Mr. Jones<sup>123</sup> of Harrisburg called tonight, after I got home, to see about the columns of the dome. He seems a rather intelligent man. Is very anxious to have the job. Said they must be cast in dry sand—that is, in sand baked in an iron flask—so as to dry it, which makes a better casting.

Letter from Louisa tonight. She is well and seems not very well pleased with her place in the country.

\* \* \*

[JULY 23] I had from Mr. Pepper today an offer to furnish the white tiles in hexagons for the pavements of the Capitol extension at \$1.50 per square foot; other quantities at still lower prices. I told him to make out his prices and put them upon paper and I would give him an order for some at once.

This evening I met, just before 6 p.m., as I was going into the \_\_\_\_\_ at the Capitol, Mr. Slight, our master carpenter, a most excellent foreman and one in whom I have had confidence and satisfaction. I had once or twice before met him in the same way; and thinking it was probably a habit of his thus to leave his work 2 or 3 minutes before the bell rang, I spoke to him, saying that I had noticed this and that he was giving to his men a bad example thus to leave his work before the bell; that the foremen ought to set an example to be followed. He seemed very much hurt and offended and said that he took it very hard thus to be spoken to; that he was often at his place at 6 a.m. and frequently at his work by 6½ a.m. He was angry. I told him that I valued his skill and diligence and had always treated him with confidence and respect, that I had on this occasion spoken to him politely and told him that I thought he was doing wrong, as it was my duty to do, and that I thought he had no reason to complain of his treatment. He said he had never been so kept at it in his life, that he had been here for 40 years and had never been so kept to it as by me, by my regulations. Had no time to himself. I told him that

<sup>123</sup>Meigs may be referring to Benjamin Franklin Jones (1824–1903) of Jones and Lauth (later Jones and Laughlin) iron company of Pennsylvania.

I only require of him the time given by all mechanics, 10 hours, and that I had not watched him. If he was kept at it, it was by his own sense of duty; that if he needed for his own business at any time a few hours or a day, he knew he had only to ask for it and he would get it, if he had a good reason for it; that he had never been refused, etc.

The old man, however, was not to be mollified. He left me, saying that he took it very hard and that he did not care if he never was at work again. He is growing old and independent and does not like to be under control of, I suppose he thinks, a young man who knows nothing of carpentry. I felt tempted to say to him that he was not obliged to stay if he was not pleased, but it would be so difficult to get as good a man in his place if he left that I refrained. He is in a position which for a young man, a carpenter, would be one of the best possible for him, the head of the carpentry of the first building in the country. But he is old and I suppose thinks he has reached the top of his profession and does not choose to be under control. I think that he will go home smarting under the rebuke and that he will not get over it but will before long leave me. I must look out for a successor. A difficult place to fill. Carpenters who are fit for this place have too much skill and business capacity to be willing to take a place by the day, generally.

Rutherford today complained that he was insulted by the stone cutters who have taken offense at his objection to their carving of some of the consoles. One of them followed him to the shop door, asking him if he had no consideration for his family, telling him that he was as good a stone cutter as himself and as good a man and that he must not tyrannize over them so, etc.

I went with him to look at some of the consoles, some of which are now being done on the job. This is the reason they are done so much more rapidly. They do that putting in much less time than they did before by the day, one man having finished carving one in 30 days, while the common time is about 70 days.

Winter tells me that he gives from \$110 to \$125 for carving them to different men. Only a few, he says, are working by the piece. Winter spoke to me about this matter before dinner. He was in a prime good humor, as usual with him after dinner. He said he could and would prevent this trouble, that I ought not be troubled with it, etc. I told him that one of these men had come to me today and wished me to go and look at his stone and decide between himself and the foreman. That I had refused and told him that if the contractors appealed to me, I would then look at the stone, but that I could not do it for every stone cutter whose work was objected to; that if I did, I should be appealed to by every one of them. He saw the reason of this and

thought that Rutherford was prejudiced against him and wished to give him trouble. Finally accused him of not knowing his business. And when I told him he was wrong in saying this, he offered to bet me \$10 that Rutherford could not lay a miter line upon a stone. At this, I turned on my heel and left him.

Champion, too, came this evening to report to me that Mr. Copeland had been engaged in a row at the shop. It seems that a man came in very drunk, and when he was ordered out, he took hold of Copeland in a drunken way, when he grew very much excited and, taking up a chisel or something of that kind, struck him a severe blow which drew blood. He had also in a rough way informed the president of the Board of Aldermen to come into the shop and speak to some of the men, that he could not be allowed to talk to the men on duty. The old man is a violent tempered fellow, and I cautioned him against his temper when I took him into the shop. Champion hates him, and I suppose there is no love lost between them; for they differ in politics, and he feels, I daresay, as if he was put there to watch the men and prevent his doing injustice to his party.

So, upon the whole, I have had a troublesome day. I had, however, a letter from Crawford in Rome. By the way, he rather takes me to task for saying that his plaster figures are too much rubbed. He offers himself for the whole sculptural decoration of the Capitol and tells me how a sculptor is able to do so much. Will make a project for the other door of the extension. Did not suppose that I meant to order both. His letter is interesting. I must answer it.

A letter from Louisa dated Thursday, 19th July. She writes in good spirits but does not think that John would enjoy himself there.

\* \* \*

JULY 25<sup>TH</sup>. I gave to Mr. Pepper today an order for a floor of his Chelisdon [?]. It is a most beautiful material, and I have ordered one room thus far in order to give it a fair trial. I hope to use much of it.

\* \* \*

[JULY 25 CONT.] I found some jarring at the Capitol today. Jones called me as I went in and said that two plasterers had refused to obey his orders and been discharged and that Flaherty<sup>124</sup> was about to take them upon the other wing of the building; that he objected to this, as, if men disobeyed him, and could go to the other side and get work, he could have no men to stay with him. I gave orders to Mr. McFarlan not to take these men. They afterwards came to me and appealed and

<sup>124</sup>Flaherty was supervisor of plasterers for the House wing.

said that Jones had done them injustice and told a falsehood. Their own account did not agree with Jones', and I did not believe it. They left me in high dudgeon.

\* \* \*

[JULY 26] The derrick for the machine shop is nearly ready. Mr. Rives expects to get the things ready for putting up tomorrow.

\* \* \*

[JULY 26 CONT.] Mr. Davis, the Secretary of War, was at the Capitol today before I got there, and Mr. Walter carried him around the works, with which he seemed much pleased. He went to look at the studios and into the blacksmith's shop.

When I look at all that I do, all the operations which I am carrying on, I really feel as if it was not right for me to be doing so much upon the poor little salary which I receive. I ought to be a great manufacturer, carrying on all these works and making money out of what I spend. Spending \$3,000 per day and doing 2 or 3 different things, each of which would be the business of a large manufactory. Most men who do as much and as important business make 10 to 20,000 a year for their labor.

I have a marble mill. A machine shop, quite a large, sunny blacksmith shop, an atelier for sculpture, a huge marble-cutting establishment, conducted by the contractors, to be sure, but of which a great part of the care falls upon me. A carpenter shop in which 40 to 50 carpenters are at work. All this for the Capitol. Then there is the Post Office, with its 150 persons. New shops about to be built for carpenters and stone cutters and marble cutters. And the Washington Aqueduct, with its complicated machinery of cranes, derricks, pumps, boarding houses, culverts, boats, scows, quarries, dams, and what not. I have all together about 1,000 men under my orders.

\* \* \*

[JULY 26 CONT.] Butti,<sup>125</sup> a sculptor whom I saw in New York, called today. Is desirous of getting the carving of one of the figures designed by Crawford in marble. I told him to make an estimate and a proposition for one of them. I have seen some of his work, and without being a great artist, he is a good sculptor. In decoration he is particularly good. He gives great praise to Brumidi. To see him, as well as to try to get employment here, he has visited Washington. I rather like his appearance and behavior.

<sup>125</sup>Guido Butti was an Italian sculptor who worked on both the Capitol extension and the Post Office.

\* \* \*

JULY 27. I had today a visit from Monsieur Etex,<sup>126</sup> French artist. He says he is painter, sculptor, architect, and that a man requires to be all 3 in order to do any one of these. He has come to this country to arrange the disputes between the New York Crystal Palace and the French artists. He had a large picture of the eminent men of America in the exhibition, which he has presented to the City of New York. Having come to Washington, he found the Capitol in progress and thought he would like to do something for it. I had been told by many persons that his design for his picture, of which he had made a small model in [plaster?], would make a fine \_\_\_\_\_ or pediment and he would offer it. I told him that if I were to give such an important work to a foreign artist, I should never hear the end of it from our own.

I was pleased with him, for he is a man of talent and energy, a French gentleman of fine education and taste. We had a long talk, of which, as it was carried on in French and he soon forgot my warning that if he did not speak slowly I could not follow him, I did not understand more than ¼. But what I did understand was interesting.

He surprised me by saying that pictures in fresco would not last, that they fell in time to \_\_\_\_\_. The \_\_\_\_\_ of Raphael, he said, were only now to be valued for their outline, the color being gone. But the Stanza, he said, were still in fine preservation. He is the sculptor of the groups of peace and war upon some of the fronts of the Arc de Triomphe, de l'Étoile. Of these he showed me photographs. The figures in these groups are 25 feet high. He showed me a photograph of a monument of Madame Raspail in which she is presented as rising, veiled, from the tomb and trying to visit him in prison.

\* \* \*

[JULY 28] I called upon Mons. Etex at Willard's Hotel. He was not at home.

I had a thick piece of slate, which was sent to me as a specimen, split so as to make it about 1½ inches thick, in order to give it trial under weight and see what may be its transverse strength. It is a curious material and splits easier than wood.

I hear that Mr. Jonas Bryan<sup>127</sup> is speaking in a very improper manner of me and my office. He is disgruntled, and instead of going away

<sup>126</sup> Antoine Etex (1808–1888) was a French painter, sculptor, and architect.

<sup>127</sup> Jonas Bryan was apparently a clerk for the Capitol extension.

like a man, he is grumbling and scolding and doing very little to earn his pay for the time he is staying with me.

\* \* \*

[JULY 28 CONT.] I had a visit from Mr. Saxton. He went with me and Mr. Talcott over the shops and to look at the figures of Mr. Crawford.

\* \* \*

[JULY 29] Louisa writes that she can hardly get enough to eat for the children and she is looking out for a place to move to. I have written to her that she went away for health for them and having found that, she ought, I think, to submit to some discomforts in the table rather than risk the more important object for which she went away. We are poor and cannot afford to pay for the luxuries that are bought at Saratoga or Niagara for \$100 per month. Where she is, she pays only \$24 per month, and she must not expect the same fare.

\* \* \*

[JULY 30] One piece of the Tennessee marble has been polished and looks very beautiful. It takes a very fine luster, and the color is beautiful. We are setting the washboard of the corridor in the south wing. This, by being sawed by our machine and rubbed upon our wheel, is being done with much economy.

\* \* \*

[JULY 31] Our sawmill is working very advantageously and is pushing on the work with speed. I must order the marble for the front of the gallery of the \_\_\_\_\_, and I think I will make the columns in the vestibule of the Senate of the same.

#### AUG. 1. Payrolls for the Capitol

extensions	\$10,653.11
For dome of the Capitol	579.25
Post Office	5,113.67
Fort Madison	
Washington Aqueduct	

I received today from Louisa a very nice letter. She writes in good spirits, though still dissatisfied with the food.

We got up today the mast and boom of the derrick at the machine shop. It is not yet rigged with blocks and tackle.

Mr. Bryan, Jonas, has left in high dudgeon. He demands an investigation of the charge that he has not been as zealous as he might have been in his work and assisting the other clerks. I have answered him



that I had no time to carry on investigations into the conduct of persons who left my office of their own accord and that I did not think it was incumbent upon me to take up my time and that of the office with such investigations. If I was about to remove him upon charges, I should be bound to give him a chance to disprove them, but he had gone away of his own motion.

\* \* \*

[AUG.] 2ND. Today, Mr. Nason, the maker of warming and ventilating apparatus, came to see me. I sent him through the building and had a good deal of discussion about the ventilation of the extension. He is to make me a proposition for doing the work tomorrow. He seems an intelligent man and I think will do the work well.

I received from the President a large package of recommendations for James Donnelly, an Irish blacksmith, who was a protege of Strong's at the Capitol. Strong tried to make him master blacksmith but failed, over Mr. Walter's opposition. The man has often offered himself to me and been refused, I think often enough to be satisfied that I would not have him. Yet here he makes another attempt. Colonel Hickey unites in his testimonials.

Etex, French painter and sculptor, came while I was out of the office, to say that the President wished me to see his bust, made by Monsieur Etex, tomorrow at 3 p.m., when it is to be finished. Etex is a good artist, I believe.

\* \* \*

[AUG. 2 CONT.] I sent to the Engineer Department some vouchers for instruments which I asked approval of, as they have been disallowed at the auditor's for want of that approval. To the Secretary also I sent some of the books disallowed and some of the medicines.

\* \* \*

AUG. 3. Today I had a card from Etex saying that he was to leave town this afternoon and that the bust of the President would be packed up at 1 p.m., and asking me to come to see it at noon. I rode up accordingly and found that the President was out but that Etex was finishing the plaster cast from a bust. He had attempted to give heroic proportions and expression to this bust, making it somewhat larger than life and had to make the face much narrower than nature. Thus, he had failed entirely in the likeness. He also had an unfinished portrait of Mrs. Fremont painted with much freedom. This I liked for its style, though I do not know the face of the lady.

When the President came in, my opinion was asked, and I said that the face was too much narrow. The President said he had told Etex,

while making it, that this was the case. He took it to heart, had the President, so as to compare the jaw with the bust and found that he had missed it. He said he regretted much that I had not been there to criticize while it was in the clay, that Mr. Cushing had spoken of details which always came, and that what was wanted was a criticism upon the \_\_\_\_\_, in which he saw that he had failed while striving for an expression.

I asked him whether he could not get the President to sit for another attempt, in which he said he was sure that he would succeed, as he had now the face before him and would make in a second trial a portrait of the natural size only. I told him I heard that the President had declared, as he came into the room, that he would never again sit for picture or bust to any artist, no matter from what distant place he might come, and that he had given him a good deal of time which was precious.

He seemed troubled, said he was \_\_\_\_\_, etc. He spoke to the President upon the subject, though the President does not understand a word of French, and I interpreted. Finally, the goodness of heart of Mr. Pierce prevailed, and he said that he would give him two sittings for a medallion, in which he thought he would be more likely to succeed; and it was arranged that he was to have a sitting at 3 p.m. today and another tomorrow.

After this was settled, he said that he would not take to Paris with him a bust which was incomplete, that he would send it to the Capitol, where he supposed I would be able to keep it for him, and I said I could do so. In the next breath, he said that I might put it into my cabinet. I told him I could not do so, that I would hold it, subject to his order. He asked me, as I left the room, to go away and come on Sunday to the hotel and he would make my medallion. I declined to sit, as I am not willing to put myself under any obligation to him or to other persons. I told him I was not yet a great enough man to have my medallion made.

I went to see General Totten from here and submitted to him some accounts which had been disallowed by the auditors. He approved them.

\* \* \*

[AUG. 3 CONT.] I came home to dinner, and after dinner found at the office Mr. Nason. We had a good deal of discussion about the form of the fans to be used and the subject of ventilation generally. He made a proposition for the putting up of the ventilating and heating arrangements which is meant to sell the fittings at a 15 percent discount upon the printed manufacturer's price and to be paid for the labor of their men at the rates of about 50 cents per day advance upon the wages

paid by themselves. He is also to furnish an engineer or draftsman to make the working drawings. For this purpose he is to furnish Mr. Briggs,<sup>128</sup> who has been with him for several years and who is, he says, a man of much experience and skill, for whom I am to pay \$6 per day.

I had a visit from Mr. [C.J.] Columbus of \_\_\_\_\_, one of the two plasterers who left in such a quarrel with Jones the other day and made affidavits that Jones had done them injury and tried to bring me to believe that Jones was a liar. He wished to know what I had done. I told him nothing but sent his affidavit to Jones, who had answered it and that I believed his answer. I read him what Jones said and said: "I believe this to be true. This you do not believe. I do not see that I am called upon to express my opinion upon that. I do not say that what you have said is inconsistent with what Mr. Jones says. That is for you to decide. You have tried to make me believe that Jones is false, and I think my own acquaintance with him justifies me in believing his account of this affair. I do not say I do not believe you, but I do believe this."

He asked me for the affidavit. I told him no, that it was mine. It had gone upon my files and there might be some further action upon it, and I must keep it to use. He said he intended that there should be some further action upon it. He left me, finally, in high dudgeon.

\* \* \*

*[On August 3, Meigs heard from his wife that she was ill and was considering moving to a place called Buffalo Gap.]*

[AUG. 3 CONT.] I have written her, sending her some \_\_\_\_\_ pills and telling her to decamp at once and go to the Buffalo Gap.

*[On August 4 Meigs' son John left to visit Mrs. Rodgers and her son Robert near Havre de Grace, Maryland.]*

[AUG. 4] I accepted Mr. Nason's offer for the ventilating and heating apparatus today. Writing to him with some remarks upon his offer.

\* \* \*

[AUG. 4 CONT.] Received also from Mr. Crawford a photograph of the designs for the bronze doors of the other wing of the Capitol. Very much the same arrangement as those received from him for the first door. He takes a different set of subjects from Revolutionary history

<sup>128</sup>Robert Briggs, Jr., a mechanical engineer, at this time was Nason's assistant in the heating and ventilation business. He later became assistant to Meigs at the Capitol extension from August 1855 to April 1859.

and treats them in the same way. He thinks that they ought to be cast in Munich, where alone he says they can be well done and where they can be done as cheaply as anywhere else. He hopes that I will consent to the bronze being the gilt.

[AUG. 5] Today I received from the Secretary of War a letter of Mr. Etex, of which here is a translation:

Willard's Hotel, Washington, 2 August, 1855.

Mr. Minister. I have had the honor of offering my services to the government of the United States as a sculptor and as a painter of history. Now that I have seen the works which are in course of execution at the Capitol, that I have been able to appreciate in other important cities of the United States the earnest attempts of considerable sacrifices made for the fine arts, I consider as a sacred duty that of my conscience and that, Mr. Minister, after 30 years of study passed before the greatest achievements of former ages in Greece, in Italy, in Germany, and in France, for a final result, for a lasting proof of my knowledge and skill, I point to the works of most importance executed in Paris since 1830 and where they decorated our monuments in \_\_\_\_\_ proportions. Without speaking of works in paint, in sculpture and in architecture which I have at this time at the exposition in Paris.

At an early age, Mr. Minister, I was impressed with an admiration for these people of America, so full of vigor, so active, so intelligent, so laborious, and so free. My voyage, entirely one of conciliation, had for its object to arrange the unfortunate affair of the World's Exhibition at New York. The giving of my great picture to America is the lasting expression of my sentiments for this great nation.

More than half a century ago, another Frenchman came to bring to you his sword to aid you in securing your liberty. The strength of his love for you, of his devotion to your sacred cause, have been enough to root the name of Lafayette in all truly American hearts. It is perhaps ambitious, Mr. Minister, but the passion for the beautiful has its exaggerations like all the other passions, and I would like to realize my project, that of bringing my part in the art in which I have become a master, my feeble part which should aid the young America to conquer art as she has known how to conquer liberty.

For this purpose, Mr. Minister, I ask of you to charge me with the model of the second pediment of the Capitol representing the glory of the United States. The portraits of her great men

would ornament this pediment under the aegis of Liberty, which crowns they bear the national flag, but the other principal figures in the style of the architect of the building, Commerce and Industry, would admirably complete the design of this pediment.

Be pleased to accept, Mr. Minister, the assurance of my profound respect.

[A.] Etex, sculptor, painter and architect, 80 rue Alewest [?], Paris.

To the back of this letter, which is in French, is "Endorsed by the Secretary, referred to the Superintendent of the Capitol extension, Captain M. C. Meigs, who will answer writer of the within. Jefferson Davis, Sec. of War."

I am sure I have no desire to answer this letter, which is written by a man of eminence in art but whom, as a foreigner, I have no idea of giving the field offered by one of the pediments of the Capitol. If a Phidias or a Michelangelo was to offer his services for this purpose, I should take the responsibility of advising that the offer be at once accepted, but for a Thorvaldsen<sup>129</sup> or a Canova<sup>130</sup> I would not. And Mr. Etex is, though a good artist, neither a Canova or a Thorvaldsen, still less a Phidias or an Angelo.

Unless such a one arises, as we seem to have no other artist than Crawford who is fitted to fill it, and it seems a pity to give both to him, I think the pediment should remain open, unfilled, as an object to be worked for by other sculptors, till one comes who can prove his right to the work.

AUG. 6TH. I have a letter today from Louisa. She is still suffering from sickness and has been compelled to call in a physician. I feel very much distressed about her and wish that I had gone on Saturday to see her. I did not feel as if there was any certainty of seeing her at Cox's, as she had been writing about going to the mountain some days since.

\* \* \*

[AUG. 6 CONT.] I had also a visit from Dr. Blake, the Commissioner of Public Buildings. He was very indignant that I had not at once, upon the report of watchman Smith's sticking up an article upon Dunnington, turned him out. I showed him Smith's defense. He thought his act was an indignity to the police, of which he was a captain and of which the Commissioner is the chief. I told him that I could

<sup>129</sup>Bertel Thorvaldsen (1768–1844) was a Danish sculptor.

<sup>130</sup>Antonio Canova (1757–1822) was an Italian sculptor.

not look upon it as so important as he did and that I thought [when] he had been as long in charge here as I had, he would think these things of less importance than he did now. He said that a satisfactory apology ought to be made to Dunnington and that he had spoken to the Attorney General to know whether he had not the right to exclude Smith from the grounds. I told him that I wished he would do so and that I would then appoint someone who had the right to enter. He said he did not know but he would be obliged to get the President to discharge Smith. I told him I wished he would, for it would rid me of a great bore. Finally, he calmed down and was quite agreeable. I promised to notify Smith that he must make a satisfactory apology for his conduct or go. This I did.

\*   \*   \*

[AUG. 6 CONT.] I wrote today to Mr. Etex, declining his offer to make a pediment for the extension. This letter I enclosed to the Secretary, but saying that I thought it would soften the disappointment to have a letter from the Department instead of from me.

\*   \*   \*

*[On August 10, having learned that his wife had been quite ill, Meigs traveled to where she and the children were staying in Virginia.]*

[AUG.] 11TH. Saturday. I took Mrs. Meigs to Buffalo Gap, which is a place in the valley of the North Mountain, about 10 miles west of Charlottesville, in Augusta County. Here we found a very romantic spot with a plain country house and board at \$20 per month. The fare good, though plain. Plenty of milk. Some mineral springs in the neighborhood, one with alum water, quite strong and, too, the sulfur water, which was quite disagreeable to the taste and therefore I suppose good.

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[AUG. 12] I think that the cool air and fresh water and the novelty and the exercise at this place can't fail to be of service to both wife and children. . . .

\*   \*   \*

*[Meigs returned to Washington on Monday, August 13.]*

[AUG.] 14TH. At office, where I had no time to do anything but work. I had a visit from Mrs. Davis,<sup>131</sup> the wife of the Secretary, who brought

<sup>131</sup> Varina Howell Davis (1826–1906).

a gentleman and his wife to see the Capitol. I took them around the work.

It is now 2 at night. I have sat up to write up my letters which have accumulated in consequence of my absence, on my visit to my wife. I have now written up everything.

[AUG.] 16TH. It is now 12½ a.m. I have been writing to get through my work. I have asked for orders to go to New York to see the patterns for decorations of the ceiling of the Senate. They are now ready to be cast, and it is proposed by Janes and Beebe to make them of zinc, for the same cost as of iron. They can be made for 12½ cents per pound of zinc and of iron for 4 cents, but the zinc is only ⅓ the weight of the iron.

Mr. Fowler is here. It seems that they have arranged the spaces of the brackets which support the ceiling differently from what we intended. It becomes, therefore, necessary to take down all that I had put up. I have told Mr. Fowler that I would take them down and leave it to him to put them up himself.

I paid Anderson for some railroad iron today. He came to see me last night. Not that he cared for me, I believe, but that he wanted his money. Anderson has been very successful in his career of a money-making manufacturer. And by building up a large work and employing many persons, he has done no doubt much good. But he seems to me to be a selfish, artless man, and I feel no cordiality to him. He shows none, I think, to me. Our paths have been different,<sup>132</sup> though we have lately been brought together by my needing in these great works iron, which he makes good.

*[On August 18, Meigs set out for New York and Massachusetts, stopping to spend Sunday, August 19, with his parents near Philadelphia.]*

[AUG.] 20TH. At 10 a.m. I took the railroad line for New York. Reached that city about 2 p.m. I went to Janes and Beebe's and saw the models which they wished to show me and which are well made, and I approved them with some little alterations in one of them. It was not quite clear enough. Raleigh,<sup>133</sup> their foreman and a man much experienced in making iron work, wished me to let him make a design for a skylight for the roof. He says that the ridge and furrow roof is never tight. He has been employed to work over some of Mr. Paxton's works to make right some roofs he has made and has designed in opposition to him. Is evidently jealous of his success. I told him I would send

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<sup>132</sup>Joseph R. Anderson of the Tredegar Works had been at West Point with Meigs. [See note 115 on page 109.]

<sup>133</sup>Michael Raleigh was foreman for Janes, Beebe and Co. at its New York foundry.

to him the tracing of our roof and let him make his suggestions, and if I thought them better than what I had thought of, I would adopt them.

Heebner was not in New York. At night I went to the \_\_\_\_\_ Gallery. It is still the most beautiful gallery I have ever seen.

[AUG.] 21ST. At 8 a.m. I took the cars upon the New Haven Railroad for Bridgeport [Connecticut], thence by the Housatonic Railroad to Lee [Massachusetts], which place I reached at 3 p.m. I found that Mr. Heebner had received my letter and dispatch, asking him to meet me in New York, only that day and that he had gone by the Stockbridge and Hudson to meet me only about 2 hours before I reached Lee.

I examined the quarries, which are not in as good a state as I could wish. The prospect of getting the columns of the Capitol porticoes in single shafts is less now than it was. It is, I fear, a doubtful matter whether we get the columns for the corridor alone in good and perfect blocks.

\* \* \*

[AUG.] 22ND. I took the morning cars for New York at 5 a.m. from Albany. Reached New York at 10 a.m. We were a little delayed by heating of one of the axle boxes. They had to wait to cool it off by throwing water upon it.

At New York, I could not find Heebner. It seems that as I had gone to Lee, he thought he would meet me at the dining place upon the Housatonic Road. But he found his wife there, who told him of the route I had taken. At 5 p.m., he was at the Metropolitan, and I went with him to the dock to see his marble. He has a large stock, and I agreed with him for the marble for the Post Office. It will come to about 16,000 or 17,000 dollars. I promised also to send to him the bill for the Senate Retiring Room.

[AUG.] 23RD. Took cars at 8 a.m. for Washington, which place I reached at 7 p.m. I passed through Philadelphia without stopping long enough to see my father.

At home, which is tended only by two servant girls, I found them very glad to see me back.

[AUG.] 24TH. At the office, absorbed in the immense mail I found awaiting my return. Mr. Nason, with his assistant, Mr. Briggs, came in to make the arrangements for the ventilation and warming of the building.

I read through the mail and then went around with them, showing them the general design which I had determined upon.



I sent to Heebner the bill for marble for the Senate Retiring Room and corrected an error in the bill for the vestibule.

A letter from my wife, dated on Sunday last. She wants some peaches which I have bought for her but which I think it doubtful whether she ever gets. There is no direct express route to Buffalo Gap.

[AUG.] 25. Today I discussed with Messrs. Briggs and Nason the subject of ventilation. This took some time, and we did not arrive at any conclusion. They propose a much greater quantity of air than I had thought of from my reading. I have been reading over some parts of Pecklet [?] upon ventilation. I do not quite understand how Mr. Briggs gets at his working power for the engine.

\* \* \*

[AUG. 27] I made some calculations of the size of the ventilating fan and engine this morning from Pecklet's [?] book. Mr. Nason and Mr. Briggs are to be here presently.

\* \* \*

[AUG. 27 CONT.] With Messrs. Nason and Briggs, I have discussed the fan problem and arrived at the conclusion that I would use for the House of Representatives a fan of 20 feet diameter and 1 foot face. It must have 40 revolutions per minute.

\* \* \*

[AUG. 29] Our proving machine is nearly finished.

A discussion with Mr. Nason and Mr. Briggs upon warming and ventilating. We have concluded to take for our quantity of air for ventilation in hot weather 100,000 cfs and for that to be heated in cold weather, 50,000, which is to be raised to the temperature of 100 degrees or so, the lowest to be found here. Thus we expect to keep the room at 90 degrees. Our room is an inner apartment, and the loss from radiation and conduction is small.

The quantity of pipe needed for this is 50,000 feet linear, which is equal to 16,666 square feet of heating surface. This is for the House of Representatives alone. The committee rooms will require a different apparatus.

\* \* \*

[AUG. 30] Today, Purdy delivered the new stick of timber, 80 feet long, for the mast of the derrick for the Capitol dome. It is a fine stick.

Mr. Symington asked for a talk with me. He wished to get from me a letter or to get me to talk to Bowman about his action in regard to my appointment at the Capitol. He said that someone had been tell-

ing Bowman that he had joined the intrigue against me and that he had not done so but had advised his partners, Provost and Winter, to let me alone, that I would be a defense for them and would do justice, which would be better than having some fellow appointed, they knew not whom, and having perhaps to pay all their profits out in blackmail. His information was of more intrigue upon the part of the partners than I had ever heard before, the fact being that I did not try to \_\_\_\_\_ anything of it but had done my duty quietly, without attending to this intrigue, other than to give the necessary explanations to the committees of Congress to whom the matter was referred. He said that Stanton was a bad fellow and was in the whole thing and that Provost and Winter were hand in glove with him.

Messrs. Nason and Briggs have gone back to New York to attend to some matters there which require to be finished before they can come here. The general arrangement of the warming has been settled enough to put the pipes in and two boilers, and the arrangements for the cellars remain for a future day. They will order before long.

\* \* \*

SEPT. 1ST. Our payroll for the dome amounts to \$951.18 for August; for the extension of the Capitol, to \$12,200. This is the payroll of those in my employ and does not include the pay of the men employed by Provost and Winter.

\* \* \*

[SEPT. 3] The monthly reports I have just written. That for the water works I left at the office, and I do not remember its amounts precisely. For the other, the balances are as follows:

Cap. Ext. Available	\$837,849.02	Spent in August	\$51,953.69
New dome	94,862.24		742.26
P. Office Extension	263,918.48		16,251.37
Fort Madison	4,953.15		1,245.72
Wash. Aqueduct above	165,112.07		24,912.32
Total available	\$1,361,691.96 <sup>134</sup>		\$95,105.36

Our proving machine is now completed, and I expect to set it to work in proving the parts for the roof of the House of Representatives at once.

No letters from my wife today.

I have given to Signor Butti the [plaster models of the] group of the merchants to execute in marble; to Gagliardi the group of the schoolmaster.

<sup>134</sup>Some numbers cannot be deciphered since they have been written over. The numbers listed here do not add to this total.

[SEPT.] 4TH. I have spent, I see, during the last month the sum of \$95,105.36. I have earned, in doing this fairly, the sum of 2 percent upon that amount, which would be \$1,902.10, and my actual pay is \$143.52.

\* \* \*

[SEPT. 5] I had a visit today from Mr. Colwell<sup>135</sup> of Philadelphia. He is the great iron pipe founder. He had written to me to say that he would like to come on and see my works and what was doing in the way of cast iron building. He made a bid for the columns of the dome, but it is too high. He said that he did not desire to get it, as it would be a troublesome order to fill.

\* \* \*

[SEPT.] 7TH. Today I was busy at the office.

\* \* \*

[SEPT. 8] The points of attachment of the guys for the derrick on the dome have been fixed upon at last. The cast iron foot for this stick is being fitted, and we will be able to begin the raising of the scaffold next week.

\* \* \*

[SEPT. 10] Mr. Heebner is here. He went around and changed many blocks of marble so as to get them passed for smaller pieces, having failed for the blocks for which they had been sent. I bought also some blocks to make steps of. For this we want a great deal of marble.

\* \* \*

11TH SEPT. Today I received a bid for the columns of the dome from Poole and Hunt at 3.4 cents per pound, which, being the lowest bid, I accepted it. They were nearly at the same rate as the bid of their rivals, Betts, Pusey and Co.<sup>136</sup> of Wilmington, Delaware, who bid at first the same as Poole and Hunt, 3.6 cents; and when told that they had bid the same and requested to bid again, they bid \$77 per ton of 2,240 pounds. Poole and Hunt's second bid is \$76.16 per ton.

\* \* \*

[SEPT. 11 CONT.] I studied tonight the ropes for the dome derricks and the other hoisting apparatus. It has been for some time upon the anvil, in the hands of Mr. Sonnemann, and I today took it up and decided it. I propose to put an inclined rope from the top of a set of shears

<sup>135</sup>Stephen Colwell (1800–1871) was an iron manufacturer and a political economist.

<sup>136</sup>Betts, Pusey and Company was an iron foundry in Wilmington, Delaware.

upon the roof rather than upon the cornice of the main building and the rung and castings from this upon a pulley or runner. Then, by a derrick with a mast of 80 feet, a boom of the same length upon the top of the scaffold in the center of the dome, to leave them and set them. These ropes I intend to make of wire. The derricks for the machine shop and for the railroad I have ordered made stronger than I at first intended. For the railroad, I will use a 14 inch boom and a mast of 18 inches. For the machine shop, I use a 14 [inch] mast and 17 inch boom.

To Heebner I paid about \$3,000 today. I suspect some difference between him and Rice. Rice is expected here on Thursday and wrote to ask me to retain the money for the cargo then due. Heebner has been getting some of the stone passed for smaller sizes and insisted upon having the money paid to him. As he is one of the partners, with the same share in the contract as the others, I could not refuse, though I thought there seemed to be something out of the way about it.

\* \* \*

[SEPT.] 12TH. The heat today has been very great. I was told at the Post Office that it had been as high as 93 degrees, which is nearly if not quite as high as at any time this summer. The rays of the sun have been very powerful.

Mr. B. Severson<sup>137</sup> has come with a letter of introduction from Mr. Colwell. He is a man of some experience in cast iron work. I have engaged him at \$5 per working day, the same as our other foremen, to take charge of the putting up of the roof of the House of Representatives. And I intend, if he turns out to be useful, to use him in the dome.

\* \* \*

[SEPT.] 15TH. Today I studied and ordered the stones for the derrick of the Capitol dome. I found that iron rods would be too heavy for their strength at such lengths and determined, upon calculating the strain, to use wire rods. These I have ordered from Copeland. They are made by Roebling.<sup>138</sup> I use for this purpose the rope number 2 of his table, which has a breaking strength of 60 tons.

\* \* \*

<sup>137</sup> Benjamin Severson was foreman for the roof of the House of Representatives.

<sup>138</sup> John A. Roebling (1806–1869) of Trenton, New Jersey, was an inventor and manufacturer of wire rope, as well as a builder of suspension bridges, including the design for the Brooklyn Bridge in 1869.

[SEPT. 16] I have been busy at the office all day. but I do not say that I can remember anything in particular which I have done except writing to the Secretary of War an answer to the resolutions of censure which I received yesterday by mail from the Union Association of Washington for employing George Wilson,<sup>139</sup> the mechanic who was turned out of the Navy Yard by the Secretary, having been accused of employing his former position to proscribe his fellow mechanics who were not Know-Nothings.

They also resolved that I have done wrong in keeping in employment Champion, whom they denounce as a Know-Nothing. I have written to the Secretary of War that I did not for a moment think of calling into question the propriety of the course of the Secretary of the Navy, that I did not doubt that Wilson was justly punished for his fault and that it was proved, but I did not suppose that the Secretary of the Navy or the Government of the United States wished to proscribe him or prevent him from earning his bread by his labor in the noble capacity of a journeyman mechanic at journeyman's wages. To remove him from a position which he had abused was just and proper; to do more was to persecute. The duty of the officer is to prevent abuse, not to inflict vindictive punishment.

I asked the Secretary of War to speak to the Secretary of the Navy, Mr. Dobbin.<sup>140</sup> If he has been persuaded by the misrepresentations of these people that I have done anything disrespectful to him, I wish him to be disabused; but I think the whole thing from small game.

*[On September 16, Meigs received a letter from his wife, reporting that she and the children were at Culpepper, Virginia, on their way back to Washington. Meigs hoped she would delay her return because of whooping cough at their neighbor's house.]*

[SEPT. 18] I received tonight from Mr. Davis an answer to my letter about the resolutions of the Union Association. He says that he read it to the Secretary of the Navy, Mr. Dobbin, who is entirely satisfied and whose own manliness had prevented him from believing when informed that I had given a man dismissed by him a better station, that I had done it without any intention of censure. He adds that Mr. Dobbin will be pleased to receive from me an unofficial note telling him of the facts, that he may be able to show to these people when they come again with their complaint how unfounded are their grumblings. I have written such a letter.

I have also written tonight to *Railroad Advocate* to put my professional card in their engineering column. It is said by all the business-

<sup>139</sup>George Wilson was a stonemason.

<sup>140</sup>James C. Dobbin (1814–1857) served as secretary of the navy, 1853–1857.

men that it is a good plan to advertise one's business, and I suppose that it will do me no harm to put into the way of public knowledge the fact that I am an engineer.

[SEPT.] 19TH. I ordered several pieces of iron casting today for the different derricks and other machinery I am putting up. I find that some progress has been made with the scaffold for the roof of the House of Representatives. The outer scaffold for the purpose of stripping the copper off the dome is in place, and I gave orders to begin this work and to begin putting up the interior scaffold, which is all ready.

\* \* \*

[SEPT. 19 CONT.] It rained this morning and has been quite cold all day. I had today a visit from the Secretary of the Interior, with whom I went over the works.

[SEPT.] 20TH. Mr. Walter tells me that today the President came to see the Capitol and went with him over the work. He left his compliments for me and said he was pleased with all that he saw. On Tuesday, too, Mr. Bayard of the Senate was at the extension and went with Mr. Walter through all the shops. He, too, said that he was delighted with all that he saw and that he would not be back here again till the meeting of Congress, when he would be ready for us. The upper blocks and two of the pilasters of the southeast corner of the south wing have been set today. I suppose that tomorrow we may get the caps set, so we will have a good specimen of the work to show.

Butti has arrived to take the merchant in hand.

\* \* \*

[SEPT. 20 CONT.] I ordered today from the house of Pitman and Prosser, Cincinnati, some paper to make a new volume of my diary, to be ruled in double lines.

\* \* \*

[SEPT.] 21ST. Set today the first pilaster capital upon the extension of the Capitol. It is the front cap of the south front of the south wing. We will have 3 or 4 up tomorrow, and it begins to look like some progress when we get these stones in place.

Mr. Briggs arrived today to begin to work upon the ventilation plans.

\* \* \*

[SEPT. 21 CONT.] The first sheet of copper was taken from the dome today. So this day is an era in both works, the Capitol extension and the dome.

SEPT. 22ND. Mrs. Meigs came home today with Mary, Monty and the baby, Louisa. All in fine health and much improved by their summer residence in the country. They have been gone over two months.

\* \* \*

[SEPT. 22 CONT.] . . . One pilaster upon the east front of the south wing is set and two upon the south front at the southeast corner. They are beautiful. Mr. Butti thinks that I might have given them a little more depth of shadow, but I believe they are very fine as it is.

Casali is making progress with the patterns for the foliage of the capital for the dome, and he is making the patterns beautifully. He has cast the snake I brought home on Tuesday and which was only prevented giving me a dangerous wound by the strength of my boot leather. It is a very successful cast. The marks come out finely. At the club tonight, I described it to Mr. Peale,<sup>141</sup> and he says it is a copper-head.

\* \* \*

[SEPT. 23] I received a day or two since a letter from my old friend Mr. Trowbridge, which I have been reading over again. He says that he counsels me to take, in the midst of my labor, some enjoyment; for, though he would not mind great labor if, like of old, it was to be recompensed by knighthood and wealth when finished, yet in this free republic that labor for the public is more apt to be paid by cuffs and kicks. He thinks it is not wise to work too hard. Pleasure cannot be rolled up into a ball and taken all at once by and bye but must be secured as we go on. There is truth in this. And I do not believe that this constant application is wise. Some recreation is needed by man. Something is due to one's family. And to wear out one's health in never-ceasing toil, a never to be rewarded toil, is unwise. Yet, I have the knowledge that I am doing my duty, and in doing this that I am doing much good by keeping many men employed and doing to them exact justice.

\* \* \*

[SEPT.] 24TH. Today I proved the first tie-bar of the roof of the House of Representatives. I found that my machine with 2 pounds just bal-

<sup>141</sup>Titian Ramsay Peale (1799–1885), the son of portrait painter and naturalist Charles Willson Peale, was a naturalist and artist who worked as an examiner at the Patent Office. He was a member of the scientific club with Meigs.

anced the 1,000 pounds pull, which is in the exact relation I intend. With 1,000 pounds upon the machine. I found that 10 pounds was perceptible when added to the pull. So that I have the means of making a very accurate measure of the force used in proving our bars. I have determined to subject each square inch of iron in our roof which is subject to tensile strain to a strain of 10,000 pounds to each square inch. Thus, the part of the tie-beam which has a section of  $1\frac{3}{8}$  inches by 4 inches will be proved to 55,000 pounds; that which has a section of  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches by 1 inch will be proved with 50,000 pounds, etc. The first beam I got into the machine this evening at 4 $\frac{1}{2}$  p.m. Arranged the weights and caused the pumps to be set going. In a few minutes, the lever flew up, showing that the proper strength was upon the beam.

\* \* \*

[SEPT. 26] I handed to Mr. Casali a small garter snake which I brought down from the falls yesterday to be cast as a specimen in silver. I wrote several letters, signed some checks, and told the office of my intention to go to Fort Madison.

\* \* \*

[SEPT. 26 CONT.] I received from the Secretary of War a letter from Mr. Charles S. Jones<sup>142</sup> to the President, in which he calls his attention to the fact that I am taking the old dome down. He thinks it very wrong to do this at this season and informs the President that he cannot forbear giving him this information as a part of his duty as an officer of the Senate, and that if he intends stopping the work, he must do it at once, as the work of demolition has commenced. He also informs him that it is understood that Mr. Walter is of opinion that this should not be done at this time.

I answered the letter by saying that Congress had seen fit to order the demolition, the work had been committed to me, and I had begun it. No alterations could be made in any building without some inconvenience to those occupying it. I should be careful to make the inconvenience as little as possible. That if the work was now stopped till after the session of Congress, it would be stopped till this same season next year. All this would have the effect of throwing the work into a time quite as near the meeting of Congress as this. And thus the work would be indefinitely delayed. I am sure, too, that the intention of those with whom I conversed upon the subject and who voted for the appropriation say that the work should be commenced as soon as possible. Dr. Blake, the Commissioner of Public Buildings, came in.

<sup>142</sup>Charles S. Jones was a Senate messenger in 1855. He later became assistant doorkeeper of the Senate.



I showed him the letter and my answer. He said that this gentleman is a man who offered the resolution about my want of respect to the Secretary of War. What has the man got into his nodder? An article in the [Baltimore] *Clipper* has also appeared upon the same subject of demolishing the dome. Dr. Blake says that he made a speech upon the resolution against me and succeeded in getting them to withdraw a part of it which was about military superintendence. He says he is sure that there is no want of confidence in me but only a \_\_\_\_\_ feeling about my being a military man. They all believe me competent, energetic and honest.

\* \* \*

*[On September 27, Meigs traveled to Annapolis to visit Fort Madison.]*

[SEPT.] 28TH. Today I examined again the arrangements for scaffold hoisting in the dome. The two large sticks for the derrick have been reset on end in the middle of the Rotunda. In doing this, I used the wire rope made for the Post Office derrick. The workmen having secured these sticks in a proper position to be lifted into their places for the scaffold which have been built around, they begin the raising of the sticks for the scaffold itself. The engine works well, and the work will go on without any accident, I hope.

One tie-beam of the roof of the House of Representatives is in place and the other parts of the same truss are on the scaffold ready to be put together. There was some delay made in consequence of not beginning the proving at the right truss, but this has now been arranged, and the proving will easily be kept ahead of the setting up.

I am much pleased with the working of our proving press. It is simple and quick and beautiful. Mr. Wetman<sup>143</sup> is in charge of this proving.

\* \* \*

SEPT. 29. Today I went to the Treasury, where they have got some maggots in their heads about the accounts for the Capitol. It seems that they did not know what a barrel of corn was. All the corn crop of the Southern states is sold by the barrel, a barrel being a measure which will hold as much corn in the ear as when shelled out will make 5 barrels of shelled corn.

Mr. Eveleth has also discovered an old decision of the Comptroller that vouchers for freight must be accompanied by the bills of lading. I told him that if he revived this forgotten rule, he would be the ruin

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<sup>143</sup>Mr. Wetman was apparently one of Meigs' assistants at the Capitol. He was also trained as a lawyer.

of me and that I had been disbursing for 20 years and had never heard of such a rule or been asked for a bill of lading; that many freights came to me and to all others without any bills of lading. He did not think that the carrying of things by railroad is to be called freight. I wonder what freight trains are for. He wanted the bill of lading for the plaster casts from Italy. I told him that I would look at them and if I thought they were of such form as would pass, I would send them to him, but if they were in a foreign language and currency and I had any doubt that if he got them, he would give a different value to the coins from what a merchant had charged me and that thus I would be called upon to pay for the service which was returned to the United States, this would be injustice, etc., etc.

I looked at the office for the bill of lading and found that none came from Italy. I suppose that the casts were shipped as part of a cargo on a manifest and without any special bill of lading. I found, however, bills of lading from New York to Washington, but without any price named. This I have enclosed to him.

A young man, a nephew of Colonel Hitchcock,<sup>144</sup> came to me today with a great desire to cut one of the statues for the pediment. He said that he knew, that he understood the process, and would do anything to get the opportunity to do one of them. If I did not give it to him, he would never get it. I at last consented to give to Calutti [?] another group of boys to be done by contract by him, upon his responsibility, and Hitchcock to be employed by him in pointing and doing the work if he proved to be agreeable. This pleased him very much, and he was loud in his gratitude.

\* \* \*

OCT. 1ST. Today I received from New York a truck wagon to haul stone upon. It is the only real truck in town. One of the trusses of the roof of the Capitol is nearly up, but they have been longer about this first one than they will be with the rest.

I was in the Rotunda today and heard that there are but two men who will go to the top of the second story of the scaffold besides Slight,<sup>145</sup> the rigger and carpenter. So I, too, set a good example, went up myself, and walked along the top sill, which is 14 inches square, 52 feet from the pavement. I must confess that it is a rather ticklish place but, still, with a little practice I could work there.

Below are the expenditures of the past month:

<sup>144</sup>The uncle is probably Ethan Allen Hitchcock (1798–1870), an army officer stationed in San Francisco, who resigned from the army on October 18, 1855, after a conflict with Secretary of War Davis.

<sup>145</sup>Robert Slight, the son of carpenter Pringle Slight, was a rigger.

Capitol extension.	Expended,	\$60,940.22,
	which is \$2,000 per day.	
	Remaining or available,	\$776,908.80
New dome.	Expended,	\$1,035.98
	Available,	\$93,826.26
Post Office Extension.	Expended,	\$15,177.54
	Available,	\$248,779.24
Washington Aqueduct.	Expended,	\$17,336.40
	Available,	\$147,790.52
Fort Madison.	Expended,	\$1,822.79
	Available,	\$3,130.26

The payrolls for the past month will amount to:

Capitol extension,	\$11,001.17
Dome,	\$822.97
Post Office extension,	\$7,863.80
Fort Madison,	\$1,100.

For the aqueduct, I have not yet received the estimate. These sums are not included in the statement of expenditures above, as the money is not yet paid. The payrolls for August are included.

Captain Bowman came to see me today with Colonel Ferguson of South Carolina. He wished to show him the fresco, and I took him also to see the statues. He says they will build the Treasury extension of granite.

Total expenditure in the month, \$96,312.93. Pay, \$150.00 =  $\frac{1}{6}$  of one percent.

I wrote tonight my monthly reports upon these works. I have spent \$96,000 for Uncle Sam, and he pays me \$150 for taking care of his works, employing a thousand men. About  $\frac{1}{6}$  of one percent.

[OCT.] 2ND. Today the rain prevented my going to the falls as I had intended. It rained hard nearly all day.

At the Capitol, they have got up two stages of the scaffold. The rain makes its entrance through the dome where the copper has been stripped off. I fear that it will be some time yet before I can do much about this, as the iron rope for the derrick has not been made. The order has been for some time at the foundry. I wrote tonight to Roebling, the maker, to urge upon him the necessity of haste.

\* \* \*

I had a visit from one of the firm of Cooper and Hewitt<sup>146</sup> today. I showed him the results of the trial of his beam and the Booth's [?] beam. He was much pleased and asked the loan of the papers to make copies from them.

\* \* \*

[OCT.] 4TH. Today at the Capitol and Post Office. We have two stories of the dome scaffold up. It looks already as if it reached the top of the dome. The third will be begun tomorrow.

I gave directions for a roof to be put up over the Rotunda temporarily. I shall make a roof, I believe the kind of conoidal floor that is rising from a circle at the bottom into a triangle at the top. The ribs of wood, trussed by iron rods, thus: [Sketch]. The whole covered with painted canvas.

\* \* \*

OCT. 5. Today they put up a part of the 4th stage of the dome scaffold. It reaches just within the circle at the top of the inner dome. At this height, with the necessity of moving the ropes used from side to side, it is rather slow work to raise it; and I suppose it will be several days before they will be able to get it finished yet. The details of the temporary roof are studied so far as to make out the bill for lumber and timber for it.

Mr. Tiffany, of the firm of Bottom, Tiffany and Young, of Trenton, was here today to see about getting some work to do for the dome in the way of casting. They have been doing something for the \_\_\_\_\_ in Philadelphia, and he brought me a letter from Captain Talcott recommending him.

\* \* \*

OCT. 6TH. Today I have had the temporary roof of the Rotunda studied. I am in some doubt whether to make a roof of rafters trussed thus: [Sketch] To make a simple \_\_\_\_\_ surface of light joists and boards would be self-supporting.

I have the iron work and framing of the first well-studied and must now make an estimate of the other two, which will be most costly. I signed about 40 drawings today which Mr. Walter had ready for me, most of them duplicates or working drawings of the stairways.

\* \* \*

<sup>146</sup>Cooper and Hewitt of New York supplied wrought iron for the Capitol from its works in Trenton, New Jersey.

[OCT. 6 CONT.] The 4th stage of the scaffold of the dome is up. It requires the support for the derrick yet to be finished. The stays have not yet been put in.

\* \* \*

OCT. 8TH. Today I have got finished the cast of the copperhead serpent which I got sometime since upon the canal. It is a beautiful piece of founding. Casali is skillful in these things. He has arranged it so as to represent the snake in the act of striking. Has concealed the defects caused by the breaking of his skin by his struggles as I brought him home. He will make a curious cigar lighter. The cast is so perfect that I can, I think, see some slight difference in the surface of his scales corresponding to the spots upon his body.

I found, upon estimating the cost of the iron work for the roof of the Rotunda today, that it would cost about \$1,100. The wood for the framing, without the covering, costs about \$300 only. And I have determined to make the roof without any iron. The construction is simply thus: [Sketch]<sup>147</sup>

The whole roof will be divided into 24 spaces and the principal rafters will be of 15 inch by 8 inch by 48 inch sticks of pine. These will be brought together upon a circle, resting upon the 3rd floor of the scaffold. The intermediate rafters are 24 in number and are 26 feet long. These are framed into pieces of 15 inches by 8 inches which are framed into the first at a distance of 26 feet from the base. They are 3 inches by 12 inches. At intervals, these short pieces of 2 inches by 12 inches are inserted between the principals to keep them apart, these pieces abutting opposite each other to make complete circles in horizontal sections of the cone and thus serve to separate the rods and keep them from sagging. Boarding will be nailed on horizontal courses and will serve as ties to keep the whole frame from spreading. I shall thus get a very light and very strong roof.

We have 3 of the roof trusses of the House of Representatives raised. Upon one of them they are now putting the secondary rafter. The bars are heavy, and this work does not proceed quite as fast as I had expected it to.

\* \* \*

[OCT.] 9TH. Today I was informed by Mr. Sonnemann that they had broken two of the iron ropes of the dome scaffold. These are the loops into which the stay rods link. The breaking of one after it was put up with a strain upon the other would cost some thousands of dollars and probably some lives. So lofty a scaffold could hardly fall without

<sup>147</sup> See illustration on page 190.

killing someone. When they examined this, they found that the iron was badly welded. When the first bolts were being driven in this work, they broke off the head of one in driving. I had directed that the bolts should be screwed up tight and then unscrewed a little, so as to put upon them a greater strain than would be likely ever to come upon them in use. I have now directed all the bolts to be taken out one by one and replaced by others which have been carefully tested, and that all these loops and all the iron work should be examined by Champion, the two rejected which he will not undertake to warranty.

This iron work was made not in our shops but by Mr. Buckingham,<sup>148</sup> a smith of good reputation here.

Vincenti today asked me for more pay. He says that I pay to Casali, who is not an artist, the same pay as himself, \$6 per day, and that Gagliardi gets sometimes as much as 15 dollars per day. I told him that I had engaged Casali as an artist; he was represented to me as such, as being able to model and as an artist in bronze; that Gagliardi, if he made such a [sum] as I supposed, did it by employing others in his work which he had undertaken by contract; and that his own cousin, Giambioli, had given his own work to Gagliardi. And that as for his pay, I had been giving him for a long time this pay in order to have to do the duty which is now ready for him, superintending these statues. And that it was more than I received, myself. He says that the Indian boy which he has made will not cost more than \$300, including his own work upon it. I doubt it. I have little from him besides the boy and the model of the girl and the caps, and for this I have been paying him \$5 a day for 2 years past.

\* \* \*

[OCT.] 10TH. I received this morning with my mail a letter from the Secretary of War enclosing some correspondence and a photograph of the Powers statue of the *America*. Mr. Everett has been writing to the President, enclosed some letters from Lord Mahoney and a Mr. Addison, a member of Parliament, giving their opinion upon the merits of this statue. The Secretary asks my opinion upon the value of this figure, particularly in reference to the effect of its price upon filling of the niches in the Capitol. The price paid to Crawford for what he has done and is doing, he thinks, should be of some effect in setting a value upon the other.

\* \* \*

OCT. 11TH. Today I answered the Secretary's letter in regard to Powers' *America*. I took to the department with me also the photograph of

<sup>148</sup>C. Buckingham was a blacksmith.

Crawford's sketch of a figure of America for the top of the dome. Also his sketches for the gates in bronze. After some discussion, the Secretary seemed to agree in my opinion that the best way to effect the will of Congress and to do entire justice to Mr. Powers without putting too high a price upon his *America*, or too low, was to give him notice of the appropriation and to say to him that this money had been appropriated by Congress for him and that it would be left to himself what work of art he would deliver in this city to fulfill the commission. His *America* might be a part of it, but the sum was such as to indicate the intention of Congress to get from him a group. Thus, it would be left for him to fix a price upon the *America* and to say what other figures he would make for the sum named.

The bronze doors were approved by the Secretary, and he adopted my suggestion that while one of them would be made at the Bavarian foundry, the other would be made here. So that while we should have the production of the best foundry in Europe, we might also see what we could do in America. They appear to be gilt in the best style and will be, in the opinion of the director of the Bavarian foundry, unique. In this, however, he is mistaken, as the doors of Ghiberti at Florence are gilt. It is probable, however, that we shall now have two of the finest gates in the world. It gives to Crawford a commission of \$12,000.

The Secretary seemed to prefer the sketch of Crawford for the top of the dome to the figure of *America* or Liberty of Mr. Powers. I read to him what Crawford said of the frieze in the Rotunda, but advised him that it was not time yet to move far in that matter as our appropriation did not yet suffice for it.

I have written to Mr. Crawford that I had got the above approval of his gates, with proviso that Washington's reproof of Lee should be omitted, as it is more generous to forget than to emblazon in bronze such parts of our history. I also wrote to him that if I lived and was not displaced by political intrigue, I hope certainly to see the beginning of the frieze of the Rotunda.

I have had to reject the iron work done for the scaffold of the dome by Mr. Buckingham. They are made of bad iron and badly made. Some of them have broken upon trial and inspection.

\* \* \*

[OCT. 12] At the Capitol, I was absorbed with business all day.

[OCT.] 13TH. I received today from Mr. Crawford at Rome a letter in which he says that Gagliardi is trying to impose upon me with his pretensions about being an artist; that he is nothing but a rougher-out, and that he is no more fit to finish a statue than he is to be President of the United States. He gives me also the cost of roughing out

the figure of the soldier as in Rome, \$250. Finished, it would cost there \$600 and the marble about \$500. All this without allowing anything for the labor and superintendence by the master artist for at least 9 months. He thinks I had better not give him job work, as he will require close watching. Though he has given him jobs at times, his wages were \$1 per day in Rome, and in his jobs he made about the same rate. Gagliardi told me that he had made as high as \$4.00 per day and that he had finished some figures for Mr. Crawford entirely. Crawford says he is no more fit for finishing a statue than to be President of the United States.

I have ordered the beginning of the scaffold for the roof of the Senate Chamber to be put up. The rough drawing of the Rotunda is finished, and a copy is being made for Mr. Slight. I have this simplified. I think it is to be a beautiful piece of construction.

I saw today a Mr. Shouper of this city. He keeps a little drugstore on the avenue. He has brought to this city a specimen of colored marble which excels in beauty everything I have yet seen produced in this country. I have engaged him to furnish some blocks of it for the Capitol, but I see that he knows nothing about the proper mode of quarrying it and that I shall not get it from him. The quarries are on the farm of his father-in-law in Frederick County, Maryland. The stone has been quarried for modernizing the roads, so I suppose it is upon the Frederick Turnpike road. He says the quantity is great, that it can be got in blocks of any size and that it is not far from a railroad. The specimen is very beautiful. It has white splotches, and the other colors, which are terrible—red, green and yellow—are so intermingled that it is impossible to describe them. But they are not in \_\_\_\_\_ of uniform color but are themselves like the veins of petrified wood in the delicacy of their arrangement. Indeed, the marble looks more like an agate than a marble. I shall send this specimen to the Secretary of War and ask for orders to visit this quarry, with a view to make some arrangement for getting a large quantity of it. A stairway of this would be far more beautiful than one of the Tennessee marble.

\* \* \*

*[Here and elsewhere in the diary, Meigs repeated and commented upon news reports of the fighting in the Crimean War. He also discussed at length the progress of the aqueduct.]*

[OCT. 17] We have now put up 7 or 8 of the roof trusses of the House of Representatives. They have so systematized the work as to put up one per day. The scaffold is erecting for the roof of the Senate hall.



\* \* \*

[OCT. 18] The newspapers have got hold of the story of the Frederick quarry of marble, and the *Star* publishes a long account of it, praising its beauty. Mr. Lee came to the office today to ask me about it. He is a member of the canal board and a native of Frederick County. He wished to know its exact location.

\* \* \*

[OCT. 19] I received today from the chief clerk of the War Department, Campbell, a note asking for my estimates of the next year. I told him I did not intend to ask for anything for the Capitol extension but wanted \$100,000 for the dome, 300,000 for Post Office, and \$1,000,000 for aqueduct.

\* \* \*

[OCT. 20] When I reached the Capitol extension, I found lying upon a wooden center of one of the arches upon the floor of the House of Representatives, the body of a man, Daniel Mahoney, one of the laborers assisting the masons. He had, by a misstep, fallen through the scaffold raised for putting up the roof and striking upon some of the putlogs and finally upon the floor of the hall, was instantly killed. Poor fellow, he is the first man killed in this work. One moment a single misstep, and from busy work he was in eternity. The coroner returned a verdict of accidental death. I learned today that the popular notion, as I had always supposed it, of its being illegal to remove a body before the arrival of the coroner is in fact the law. The coroner says that he has the right to punish any violation of it and that in many cases it is done. Generally, no notice is taken of it.

\* \* \*

*[On October 23, Meigs rode up the line of the aqueduct to Great Falls and back.]*

[OCT.] 24TH. Today it is raining hard. The temporary roof has been begun. The top meeting [?] curb is in place, and some few of the principal rafters have been set. I have not seen it, for it was done while I was absent at the falls.

The Frederick County marble has been delivered. There are several varieties, one not like the specimen first shown to me and with much more white in it, and a white of a less pure and beautiful quality. This is the best piece which Mr. Shouper has brought down. The other pieces are of a red marble of beautiful color but divided by veins of white quartz, which prevents its being worked with any facility. I fear that the quarry will not prove so good as I had hoped. He says that

he has leased the red and white quarries and that he will let me have the whole of them at a rent which he says shall be a fair one. I promised to go with him soon to look at the quarries.

The Secretary of the Treasury sent down, before I got to the office, to borrow the specimen. I did not get his message in time to show it to him today. Will do so tomorrow.

It rains hard today. I stayed at home in the morning and wrote out my annual report upon the Capitol extension. It takes a good many words to indicate the great number of subjects to which one's attention is directed in the course of carrying on such a work for a year.

\*   \*   \*

OCT. 25. Today I took the pieces of Frederick County marble to the Treasury for the inspection of the Secretary of the Treasury [Guthrie].

At the Capitol, the temporary roof of the Rotunda is going up rapidly. I found that they had not made the curb which resists the thrust of the roof as I had directed, but so much had been done that I thought as there was still left strength enough for safety, I would not remove it. It is made of 3 thicknesses of one-inch boards nailed together. These boards ought to have broken joints regularly, but instead of doing this, they break only one set of joints and the inside and outside boards joined near the same parts of the curbs.

The strength of the inch board which is left as the tie is about 130,000 pounds. The thrust is, by Mr. Sonnemann's estimate, 36,000 pounds.

The scaffold for the roof of the Senate is about ½ finished. The roof of the House of Representatives has 11 of the trusses up. The material for the other 3 trusses is nearly all in place.

\*   \*   \*

[OCT. 25 CONT.] The encaustic tiles are being laid in the basement of the north wing in the western tier of rooms. They do not come together as well as I could wish. The center piece, which is now being set, is a very beautiful one. The mode of setting is curious. The tiles are set in soft cement and rubbed with a straight edge till they all lay even and smooth. The straight edge is laid over them and moved back and forth, being at the same time beaten with a light hammer. This settles those which are too high into the cement, and the result is a very even surface. They are afterwards grouted with cement.

\*   \*   \*

[OCT.] 27TH. Today I went to look at the quarries of colored marble in which I have taken so much interest in Frederick County, Maryland. I find the beautiful stone which was first brought to me, as I feared, in small quantities only. It is a stone fit for the uses of the lapidary

and can be got in pieces suitable for table ornaments, vases, perhaps, and such things, but not so far as at present developed in masses for the use of the architect. A quarry is opened for \_\_\_\_\_ the turnpike road. In many places of this quarry, the colored marble shows but it is not, that I could see it, sound, and no large blocks could be got.

I went 2 miles further to \_\_\_\_\_ quarry of red stone with white veins. This is beautiful, but the white contains much quartz. This would make it difficult to work and polish, though the specimen I have had polished takes a very fine surface. Of this stone, however, under the name of calico rock, I believe there is a large quantity upon the canal, near the Point of Rocks.

The journey cost me \$4.55. I reached home at 7 p.m. The quarry is near the Monrovia Station upon the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, about 41 miles from the relay house. I left here at 6 a.m. and reached home at 7 p.m.

\* \* \*

OCT. 29TH. Today I ordered an increased force to be put upon the dome temporary roof. I also ordered the rooms over the office to be prepared for Mr. Walter. The glass was ordered from New York some days since.

\* \* \*

[OCT.] 31ST. I today received a letter from the Secretary of War in which he asks whether the sum of \$100,000 asked for the dome will be necessary for construction alone or for decoration also, as he thinks it will be necessary to cover in the dome to protect the building against the weather, but that as Congress inaugurated the affair, he would prefer that they should carry it on. I answered that we should need the \$100,000 for construction and that sculptural decoration and painting would be necessary to be added afterwards.

\* \* \*

NOV. 1. Today I drew checks for the payrolls for the Capitol dome and the Post Office. They amounted, for the Capitol, to \$15,027.44; for the dome, to \$1,210.97; and for the Post Office, to \$9,130.61. I have, upon the Capitol extension and dome, included the men employed by the marble work contractors, about 750 men; upon the Post Office, about 170; and upon the aqueduct, about 400—about 1,300 men in all. A pretty good body of workmen to be under one direction.

I made today a bargain with the rougher-out of the Indian girl for the sum of \$300, for he is to prepare it for finishing.

I had a visit from Captain J. W. Smith today. He commanded the engineer company in Mexico. He has resigned because, as he says, he

was starved out. Professor Henry, too, came in. We went over the building. Smith seemed to be much impressed with its greatness and said he did not see how I could have learned enough to carry it all on.

Mr. Ames<sup>149</sup> of Chicopee Falls, the bronze founder, came to see me today. He cast a bronze statue of De Witt Clinton. It is well cast but is a bad statue. He wishes to do some things in the Capitol in the way of bronze cast. I showed him the designs for the doors. He said he would be much pleased to make one of them.

\*   \*   \*

[Nov. 2] A report was made today of the cost of cutting one of the vestibule caps for the Senate yesterday. It amounted, with 33 percent added for profits and contingencies, to \$1,000.00. This makes these vestibules very costly, but they will be very beautiful. I refused to pay for this or to settle the price of some 24 of them upon a result of a single one.

We have set 2 or 3 of the caps in the south wing corridor. They are very beautiful. Judge Kane of Philadelphia was here a day or two since and much admired them.

Our statues make good progress. The merchant is well blocked out by the two men who are at work upon it; had so far made it as to show the likeness and expression.

Rutherford made a complaint to me today that his orders were not obeyed. I wrote to Provost, Winter and Co. and wanted to see Meade, who was the direct agent. Meade declares that he has enough stone to avoid the difficulty which Rutherford anticipates. I wish the two men could agree. I believe that Rutherford is getting a little too much dependent upon his importance and that he does not govern his temper as he promised to. Meade declares that he gets out of temper with his wife and then comes to the Capitol and blows off.

\*   \*   \*

Nov. 3. This morning at 6 o'clock, it was just 3 years since I arrived in Washington. Since then, I have done a good deal of work and spent a good deal of money. I have continued and begun and so far built, as to secure its ultimate [completion], the Washington Aqueduct. This will, I trust, be a monument to my memory, which will preserve my name in good remembrance. For there are few works of civilization which are more useful and of more benefit to mankind than this. I have built the Capitol extension from the ground floor up to its present

<sup>149</sup>James T. Ames (1810–1883), of Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts, headed the Ames Company, which manufactured textile machinery. About this time, the company began casting sculptures in bronze. The foundry later cast the Senate bronze doors designed by Thomas Crawford.

height, which is nearly the top of the walls. I began the new dome of the Capitol and the completion of the building for the general Post Office. I have built Fort Madison at Annapolis.

For all these works of which I now find myself in charge—the Capitol extension, iron dome, general Post Office, Washington Aqueduct and Fort Madison—I have been able to secure, I believe, justice to every man employed upon them. No man has failed to be paid every cent of his just earnings. But two men have, in the expenditure of the immense sums and in the great number of days work applied to them, suffered from any fatal accident. These two died by their own carelessness or misfortune—one by falling through a scaffold which he was making, another [on the aqueduct] by the explosion of a blast of which he was in charge.

The men under my command, now numbering some 1,300, have been quite contented and industrious.

The contractors, who at first were bitter enemies, have apparently come to the conclusion that even-handed justice from an officer of the army is better than favoritism and blackmail and stealing, from the kind of superintendence they have before had to deal with.

I have won the confidence of the Members of Congress, who have given appropriations with the conviction that they will be spent appropriately.

I have, I believe, done some good. I have learned of man and of the world a great deal. I have learned, too, to have confidence in my own powers. I have learned to put my trust in God and to fear no evil. I have handled millions and have accounted for every cent honestly and faithfully.

I have won a name among the engineers of the land which I believe places me above the necessity of remaining forever in the ranks of the corps of which I am a member. But as yet I prefer to continue in the employments which I have now, with no other pay than the pittance of about \$1,800 a year, less than I pay to several of my assistants.

When I get through these works, if spared to finish them and am not turned out by the intrigues of politicians or contractors, I think I shall be able to get from civilians employment upon terms which will enable me to support and educate my family and to place my later days beyond the fear of want. At present, I am straitened to live and support my family decently and in comfort.

In the midst of my employments, I have learned this art of shorthand-writing, one which it is a pleasure to practice and a profit to know in the saving of labor and time which it accomplishes. I have lost two of my little sons, precious trusts which the Almighty has taken to Himself. In doing this, he was merciful and taught in the sick cham-

ber of those patient darlings lessons of patience and trust and resignation to His will which will, I trust, lead me and my wife to His feet now and to his right hand hereafter.

Today I had an interview with the Court of Claims, which terminated in their requesting me to push forward the completion of the rooms at the west end of the north wing basement for their use upon the first of December. I have taken measures to try to get this done.

\* \* \*

Nov. 7. Today at the office, Mr. H. K. Brown,<sup>150</sup> the sculptor, called. He had with him daguerreotypes of two of his works. A statue of an Indian and panther in bronze and a bas relief from the base of the De Witt Clinton monument. He talks like an artist. Wished a commission. I told him I could not give a commission for a statue and that I might perhaps venture to give one for a bas relief in the stairway.

He is also ambitious of filling the pediment. He would like also to make a door. He asked if they were open to competition. I told him that the pediment had been offered to Powers and that he had been lately informed through his friends that it was yet open to him, but that I did not believe he would ever accept it, and that if any artist was to present a design for a pediment of such surpassing excellence as to make it evident that he ought to fill the pediment, I thought he would do it.

Nov. 8. Mr. Brown called today again and I showed him the size of the panels available for sculpture in the stairways. I also promised to give him a tracing of the stairs and one of the pediment. He intends, upon the answer which I made to him for a design of surpassing excellence, to probably secure a commission for the filling of this pediment, to study it out. There is a possibility of making a bronze door in the north end of the old building where it communicates with the Senate, and for this I have promised him tracings. He seems to be an artist of promise, but he has not yet the reputation of Crawford or Powers.

The dome roof is nearly finished.

\* \* \*

[Nov. 9] I had a visit from Secretary [of State] Marcy today. He came with Thomas<sup>151</sup> to look at the Capitol. The old man has a ready wit. I showed them the slab of Tennessee marble, saying to Thomas that it was a production of his native state. Marcy, with a merry twinkle

<sup>150</sup> Henry Kirke Brown (1814–1886) was an American sculptor. Four statues by him are in the Capitol's Statuary Hall collection: George Clinton, Nathanael Greene, Philip Kearney, and Richard Stockton. He also executed a bust of Henry Clay, which is in the U.S. Senate Collection.

<sup>151</sup>J. Addison Thomas was an assistant secretary of state.

of his eye, said that he had not known that anything from Tennessee was capable of receiving so high a polish.

I wrote today to Rossiter<sup>152</sup> at Paris in answer to his letter offering his services in painting the Capitol extension. I told him that I could not give him a commission, but that if he would study the art of mural painting and make himself a master and send for exhibition to Washington a study in small size of a picture study of the decoration of the Capitol, I thought that he would find no difficulty in getting commissions from the Congress direct; that the artists of the country ought to take this matter in hand and not leave the whole burden of it upon me.

Winter came in today to ask what I was doing for mantels for the rooms in the north wing which I am about to finish. I told him that I had ordered them from Philadelphia. He claimed the right to finish them under his contract. I told him that he had no right to finish a cubic inch of material, that he might perhaps make some colorable claim to do the work upon such mantels as were made here, but that it was a doubtful question whether he could do this, for mantels might be said to be furniture and not parts of the building. He might have his pound of flesh but not one drop of blood. He argued about the wounding of his pride in having any other person doing any of the marble work of the building. I told him I might as well claim the making of the statues for the pediment. He said he had waived that because I had desired to direct this myself. He reminds me of the old story that Nollekens<sup>153</sup> had undertaken to do the marble work for the English Government when he undertook a low price of their monuments.

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[NOV.] 10TH. Today I paid for the remainder of the iron casting for the ceiling of the House of Representatives. The whole of the cast iron of this ceiling was 263,000 pounds, and, at 4 cents, costs about \$10,500. I pay, in addition to this, 2 cents per pound for putting it up. We have the secondary rafters of the roof well under way, and Mr. Severson reports that he expects to get them done by the end of next week, and that then the carpenters may begin to put on the wooden purlins and the copper can follow.

I found part of the diagonal bracing taken off today, which I thought put the roof into a dangerous situation. I had the braces replaced and screwed up.

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<sup>152</sup>Thomas P. Rossiter (1818–1871) was an American painter. In the mid-1850s he was living in Paris.

<sup>153</sup>Joseph Nollekens (1737–1823) was an English sculptor.

\* \* \*

[NOV. 10 CONT.] It occurs to me now that I have not directed any change in the first fixed distance between these purlins, and I fear that I may have put them 2 feet apart and that this may not suit the length of the copper sheets which I have purchased. I must see to this on Monday.

[NOV.] 11TH. Sunday. I went to church this morning and evening. Strangers preached both times. After church in the evening, I went to General Totten's and borrowed the cast of the *Land of the Crusaders*, by Justin. This is in a composition which is an imitation of ivory. It is the best example of pictorial sculpture which I have ever seen. I want to send it to Mr. Brown to look at before he begins his study of a door.

I have had no letters from home for a long time now. Today, one from Mr. Trowbridge. He says that Kate will leave there about the middle of this month for Washington, under charge of her Uncle Henry.<sup>154</sup> Poor woman, it will be a sad pleasure to see her again.

\* \* \*

*[Omitted entries here contain extensive discussion of the aqueduct construction, as well as of family matters.]*

[NOV. 16] I received also today a design for the statue upon the top of the dome from Mr. Crawford. He has revised his first design since I sent to him the tracing of the dome and has made a light and beautiful figure of Liberty upon a pedestal, separated by fasces and [laurel ?] wreaths. The figure is lightly draped. It has upon it the inevitable liberty cap, to which Mr. Davis will, I do not doubt, object.

[NOV.] 17TH. Saturday. At the office, and I directed a floor of Minton's tiles to be laid in the painted chamber. They are to be the inlaid tiles with a border and to cost \$1.62½ for the tiles and 20 cents for laying. That is \$1.82½ laid.

Men are now engaged in putting up the windows in the basement rooms of the north wing. I have received a large number of window dressings from Janes, Beebe and Co., and their man has been upon the \_\_\_\_\_ putting them up. Mr. Clingman was in the painted chamber the other day and expressed great admiration of it.

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<sup>154</sup>Henry Hastings Sibley (1811–1891) was a maternal uncle of Kate Trowbridge Rodgers. He served as a delegate to the House of Representatives from the Territory of Wisconsin, 1848–1849, and from the Territory of Minnesota, 1849–1853.



*[Omitted entries here contain further discussion of problems with the aqueduct construction.]*

[NOV. 23] I received today from the Secretary the annual report for the dome, with a message that he thought I might with advantage enlarge a little more upon the difficulties and the machinery to be employed in its construction. I suppose he thinks that this will be proper in order to account for the comparatively little progress yet made and perhaps, also, as a little capital for myself in its future direction. I was too busy today to attend to it.

\* \* \*

[NOV.] 26TH. Today I went to the War Department to see the Secretary, who had sent to me my report upon the dome with a note that I might with advantage enlarge a little more upon the difficulties to be overcome in its construction and describe the machinery to be used.

I have also a note from Mr. McPherson,<sup>155</sup> the clerk, asking, by his direction, whether I still expect to finish the extension within the first estimate of Mr. Walter. I have written over again the report upon the dome, giving a longer account of its design and the means to be used in its construction. And I have written to Mr. McPherson to tell the Secretary that I began to doubt but that I had money enough to go on with it till the next session of Congress, and that I did not wish to ask for more, if more should be needed before I had finished many things which were now in hand and could tell with more certainty what would be the additional sum needed.

\* \* \*

[NOV. 26 CONT.] The canvas covering of the dome temporary roof is finished. The cover is nearly finished, and by the time we have another rain, I think we will have the Rotunda waterproofed. The dome is gradually coming down.

Getting down the lath and plaster of the upper part of the interior dome was a dusty job. It is happily over. Our men, as the railings have been removed, begin to creep about upon the dome. Some of them can hardly stand upright.

\* \* \*

[NOV. 27] I returned home earlier than usual, reaching home by 6 p.m. Here I found a note from Mr. Slight, the master carpenter, saying that there was an accident yesterday upon the dome. They had used, in making a temporary scaffold between the two domes, some joists which it seems were decayed. They broke, and 3 men fell a consider-

<sup>155</sup> John McPherson was disbursing clerk at the War Department.

able distance. No one was killed, but two were injured so as to disable them for a time. . . .

This must have been the result of carelessness. I have been very successful heretofore in avoiding such accidents, but I have now so many different things going on and so many men at work that I can only strive to impress upon them the importance and care and leave to themselves the taking care of their own lives. For this I shall inquire who is responsible. I fear it is the fault of young [Robert] Slight, who is in charge of this work and should have seen to it that no bad timber was used for such an apparatus.

[NOV.] 28TH. I found, upon going to the top of the dome and making inquiry, that I could not fix any appraisal of carelessness upon anybody there as to the fall of the scaffold. It seems that they used, in getting down the ribs of the outer dome, temporary scaffolds made from some of the timber of the dome. Most of this is sound, but some sticks are decayed. Dry rot, which does not always show upon the outside. Greater care certainly would have enabled a carpenter to detect the injury. There were 3 men who fell and were injured. Young Slight, himself, was upon the scaffold. He with some others slid down between the two domes, and one of the laborers fell to the temporary roof. Striking upon an inclined surface, he slid down to the gutter. He was bruised but not much hurt. The first thing he was seen to do when they ran around to take him up dead, as they supposed, was to take out his watch and say it was not injured. Some of the other men were more hurt and are obliged to be absent for a few days from work. On the other page I will put a sketch of the manner in which this old dome was built and the mode in which we are dismantling it.

I wrote for the Secretary on the 26th a report upon the progress upon the dome, later in date and fuller in detail than the one I sent in early in November.

The derrick we have been so long making at the machine shop is up at last. It will lift 20,000.

[Sketch] <sup>156</sup>

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ab Scaffold which fell.  
 cd Pulley for hoisting ribs of old roof.  
 ef-gk Temporary conical roof.  
 Timber and boards of scaffold.

<sup>156</sup> See illustration on page 190.

By the top of the scaffold will be placed a derrick of spars 80 feet long which will reach over the whole of the new work and serve to take down the masonry of the old dome.

[Shorthand immediately to the left of the sketch, at shaded portion:]

Stone face, brick filled.

Stone face, rubble filling.

Plan of scaffold.

NOV. 29. Today I ordered the men at work upon the dome to cease their work in consequence of the wind, which made it dangerous, and to take the moving of the stone in the eastern square which had been allowed by the contractors to accumulate to such an extent as to seriously interfere with the use of the place by carriages. I had ordered the contractors to remove, but they did not do it in time.

We have one of the derricks at the machine shop up tonight, quite ready, rigged for use.

\* \* \*

[NOV. 30] I drew today my pay. It amounts to \$112.50 and my fuel and quarters to 40, making in all \$152.50 pay for my month's work, in which I have directed the labor and the pay of some 1,200 men and have provided them with material to work with and upon. Spent in all, I suppose, some \$90,000. Determined upon my own discretion and judgment the price which shall be paid for work amounting to \$20,000. Built a roof over the Rotunda of the Capitol of the United States, 96 feet in span, and done many other things which it was a pleasure to do as exercise of the creative power or faculty. And also as giving healthy employment to hundreds of my fellow men and securing to them exact justice.

\* \* \*

[NOV. 30 CONT.] I have written tonight to H. K. Brown of Culpeper to send him a tracing of the dome in the north end of the old Capitol building. I have also sent him a tracing of the box front of the city Post Office delivery. With this there are 9 keystones 2 feet in height, and I have proposed to him to make for them masks upon a large scale of the \_\_\_\_\_ which are to be seen at the delivery of the letters. This I propose to make in bronze.

A German from Brooklyn came today and brought me some admirable specimens of casting in bronze from nature. He had flowers and leaves and snakes and beetles and bugs and grubs, all cast from life.

A perfect cast, he says, in sand and without destroying the animal's body.<sup>157</sup>

\* \* \*

[DEC. 1] After going to the office, I received a letter from Mr. Trowbridge, dated at New York, in which he said that he should have the unexpected pleasure of bringing Kate with himself, that he would leave New York in the 8 a.m. train of this day.

\* \* \*

[DEC. 1 CONT.] On returning to the office, I found a note from Campbell, chief clerk of the War Department, asking me for some information as to the parts of the Capitol extension which are finished and to which Members of Congress may be referred as examples of the mode of finish proposed. I wrote an answer and took it up to the department, as I was told that they wished it soon in order to make some reference in the report of the Secretary of War. I there saw the Secretary, himself, and had some talk with him on the subject. He feels very kindly towards me and said that he wished to claim for me all the credit which he thought I deserved for my work here. He had claimed in a previous report the credit of my doing the work in a better style of finish and yet within the original estimate. He said that it would be better for my individual reputation for me to do the work within the estimate in an inferior style than do it better at more cost. But he wished the style to be the best. I showed him in what the change of style which would increase cost consisted and told him that I thought of making the floors and window dressings of wood in the upper story attic as it would be much cheaper, would not cause any risk of fire, and would be much pleasanter for the use of the Members.

\* \* \*

[DEC. 1 CONT.] After supper, Mr. Trowbridge and Kate came. Trowbridge and Mrs. Hal Rodgers. It is good to see such an old friend as Trowbridge again and to take his hand. He is one of the noblemen of this country. Kate looks better than I had expected to see her. Her cheek is rosy and she is happy, I think, to be again among her husband's friends. Poor woman, hers is a sad fate, to lose so soon after her marriage such a husband as Hal was. [We] can but tend her kindly.

\* \* \*

[DEC.] 3RD. I took Mr. Trowbridge to the Capitol with me this morning, showed him my work. After having gone over the building, he bade me farewell. He left this evening. His visit has been very pleasant to

<sup>157</sup> Bronze leaves and insects were cast for the House chamber.

us. Leaves Kate with us for the winter. She is more cheerful than I expected to find her.

I have been making out my monthly reports today. The last seems to be the best month we have had. I have spent \$125,000, or \$4,000 a day for every day in the month. As follows:

Cap. Extension	\$ 78,226.75	No. of men about	750
Aqueduct	27,932.45		300
Post Office	14,116.45		160
Dome	3,911.60		50
Fort Madison	1,235.45		1
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	\$125,422.70		1,26[1]

For all this work which I have directed and for covering all these men, I have been paid by the United States the liberal sum of \$152.50, which is at a rate of 12 cents per month for each man, or at the rate of  $\frac{1}{8}$  of one percent upon the expenditure.

\* \* \*

[DEC. 3 CONT.] Our dome begins to look like that of the Pantheon of Agrippa. The external dome is removed, and it now shows the lower internal dome.

Congress met today. I have not heard the result of the contest for the Speakership.<sup>158</sup>

\* \* \*

[DEC. 5] The whole of the outer dome is down and about  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the ribs of the inner dome. The Rotunda looks well, being much lighter under our new temporary roof than it was before.

\* \* \*

[DEC. 6] I took up today the study of the dome construction. I find that the level of the cornice of the whole wall is only about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  to 4 feet below the basis of the columns of the peristyle, and I believe that this will simplify our construction, for we cannot demolish the inner part of the wall and dome which are stone masonry and preserve the outer facing of the stone. But I fear the masonry is not good enough for that purpose. If it be, we can place the colonnade upon brackets of cast and ridge iron behind, thus: [Sketch]<sup>159</sup> This will put the whole weight upon the wall directly.

<sup>158</sup>The hotly contested election for House Speaker at the beginning of the Thirty-fourth Congress was not completed until February 2, 1856, when the House elected Nathaniel Banks of Massachusetts on the 133rd ballot by a plurality, rather than a majority, of the votes.

<sup>159</sup>See illustration on page 190.

[DEC.] 7TH. Today the last rib of the inner dome was taken down safely. Then the circle into which all these ribs had been framed was taken apart and lowered, thus completing the demolition of the woodwork of the old dome with no serious accident. The falling of the scaffold, which was caused by the breaking of the worm-eaten plank, came near being a serious one, but thanks to a gracious Providence, even this, caused as it was by insufficient care upon the part of some of those employed, was productive of no serious results, the two men who were slightly injured having returned to their work, or at least being out again. The ropes of the derrick have not all arrived, but I expect them daily.

The interior of the Rotunda looks lighter and better than it ever did. The increased light from the larger windows which I have put into the temporary roof gives the whole a much more cheerful air, and the paintings look better than I have ever seen them.

I directed the top of the masonry to be cleaned off and the platform for the engine and crane to be begun. We have received the first casting for the dome, one of the bells for the capitals of the columns of the peristyle. This I intend to have fitted as soon as possible for the \_\_\_\_\_ of the foliage.

I went up the 96 feet of ladders today and saw the last piece of wood carried off from the dome.

\* \* \*

[DEC.] 8TH. Today I received an answer to my letter to Mr. Brown in which I sent to him sketches of parts of the Capitol extension and also the front of the Post Office delivery. I wanted to get masks modelled to be cast in bronze for the keystones to the arches in the Post Office delivery representing the \_\_\_\_\_. He replies that he thinks they would have a good effect and give a good opportunity for expression and that he will model them for \$300 each, his price for a life-sized bust. As there are nine of them, this would be \$2,700 for the modeling alone, and I cannot think of putting them up at any such price.

The whole design of the building of the Post Office is made by Mr. Walter and would be by the best architect in the United States for less than \$1,000. Indeed, Mr. Walter made it without pay, his salary as architect of the Capitol extension being unchanged. For the designs for the Capitol extension, he gets \$4,500 per year. For building these two works and the water works and Fort Madison, I get \$1,800 per year. Mr. Brown asks, for designs for 9 blocks of granite in the building, \$2,700. As long as American artists ask such prices, they must blame themselves if they do not find much patronage. I must try Butti, the Italian, who is now modeling the decorations of the gate of the Post

Office court. I think he would make the models each in 3 days at \$6 per day.

\* \* \*

[DEC.] 10TH. Monday. Today Mr. Rives informs me that the derrick at the machine shop is finished and that it was tried upon a stone weighing 11,000 pounds, which one man was able, by a double gearing, to lift from the ground, two men thus being able to lift the heaviest stone we propose to use it upon, 20,000 pounds. It is a beautiful machine, with wire ropes for the falls, iron and blocks.

I found today that I had been paying to the watchman in the blacksmith shop extra pay for Sunday watching. This I did not intend, and it had not been brought to my notice that such a charge was put upon the payroll. I have directed it to be discontinued.

I received a present yesterday from one of the overseers upon the aqueduct of two boxes of snakes containing 3 or 4 black snakes and a striped snake and 4 copperheads. I turned the whole of them this evening into the box with the rattlesnake. It looks like a pandemonium.

I directed today the covering of the roof with copper to be begun. I have made Mr. Duffy the foreman of this work and put the whole of it under the charge of Mr. Severson. I have also directed him to take charge of the putting up of the iron door and window frames.

I made, also, some little study of the dome frame and decided upon the mode of framing the principal bearing parts of the work. Also to put another row of windows in the base of the dome, just above the springing line of the dome itself. There was no light in the outer shell to give light through the upper row of windows in the inner shell. This change will make this all right, however.

\* \* \*

[DEC.] 12TH. All mason work stopped in town. Hard frost found not very much below the freezing point.

I signed today the checks for the aqueduct estimates and many other payments. Our disbursements are now very heavy. I have been pouring out money like water lately.

I have now in the office, in the box of the rattlesnake, 7 other snakes—2 black snakes, 4 copperheads, and the striped snake. It looks like a pandemonium.

I went this evening to the Smithsonian lecture by Professor Snell of Amherst on architecture. Not a very interesting lecturer. Professor Henry asked me to lend for the lectures the models of the Capitol, and though I thought it rather heavy and not worth the labor of moving, for this purpose I consented.

[DEC.] 13TH. The Senate has appointed its committees on public buildings. We have Mr. Bayard, James, Hunter, Thomson of N. J., Pratt and Hale.<sup>160</sup> District of Columbia: Brown<sup>161</sup> of Miss., Pratt, Allen,<sup>162</sup> Mason,<sup>163</sup> Reid.<sup>164</sup> Library: Pearce, Cass, Bayard.

The House of Representatives still wastes its time in monotonous votes by viva voce for Speaker. The country is getting heartily tired of this farce.

I have not today resumed our masonry, though this day it does not freeze. I have a large force employed upon the Capitol, putting up door and window frames of iron, making the roof, preparing the copper, etc. Our derricks are models. With that at the machine shop, with one hand I raised 8,000 pounds, and it works smoothly and beautifully. The one at the depot is now in use, though it is not quite finished. This has a capacity of about 15 tons, which has put the guys to a strain of about  $\frac{2}{3}$  of their total only.

Louisa continues to be unwell. She is now suffering from small ulcers upon the legs, and she is threatened with them upon the scalp. Mrs. Rodgers, too, is not well. She has had fever and I believe a chill.

\* \* \*

[DEC. 14] I appointed a new watchman today, Mr. J. N. Ball, in place of Allen, who declined taking upon himself the night watch under my new arrangement.

A young man, too, about 18 years of age, Wolfe,<sup>165</sup> came today with a letter from Professor J. S. Hart,<sup>166</sup> to whom I had written asking him to send me a pupil of a high school with a knowledge of phonography and of bookkeeping. He is to take a place as assistant clerk in the office, to make out bills and accounts and to write some letters for me. This will enable me to write my drafts in phonography. I hope in this way to save myself some trouble.

<sup>160</sup>John P. Hale (1806–1873), Democrat then Free Soil then Opposition then Republican of New Hampshire, served in the House of Representatives, 1843–1845 and in the Senate, 1847–1853 and 1855–1865.

<sup>161</sup>Albert G. Brown (1813–1880), Democrat of Mississippi, served in the House of Representatives, 1839–1841 and 1847–1853, and in the Senate, 1854–1861. During the Civil War, he served in the Confederate senate.

<sup>162</sup>Philip Allen (1785–1865), Democrat of Rhode Island, served in the Senate, 1853–1859.

<sup>163</sup>James M. Mason (1798–1871), Democrat of Virginia, served in the House of Representatives, 1837–1839, and in the Senate, 1847–1861. He was president pro tempore of the Senate from January to March 1857 during a period when there was no vice president. In that capacity, he assigned some of the newly completed committee rooms in the Senate wing. Mason was expelled in 1861 for supporting the Confederacy, then represented the Confederacy in London, 1862–1865.

<sup>164</sup>David S. Reid (1813–1891), Democrat of North Carolina, served in the House of Representatives, 1843–1847, and in the Senate, 1854–1859.

<sup>165</sup>Frank Wolfe served as an assistant clerk to Meigs, 1855 to 1856. He was particularly valuable because he had learned the phonography shorthand.

<sup>166</sup>John Seely Hart (1810–1872) was the principal of the Central High School in Philadelphia.



It rains this evening, and I trust that this warm weather will enable us to get some more work done upon the waterworks and upon our masonry in town. We began setting marble again at the Post Office today. We are now setting upon the 7th Street front.

I have had also a visit from Tom Florence, who wished to speak to me in favor of Hollohan, a stone cutter, who had applied to me for the place of foreman and then the watchman. He is the son of Hollohan who cut the [pilaster cap] for the Capitol with no authority. And he is also the man who tried to get up in the stone cutters' society the other day and quarrel with me. He wished to insist upon an answer from me to their note stating what would be their wages for the winter. I told Mr. Florence the facts in his case, and he said he did not think I could be expected to appoint him.

[DEC. 15] Louisa is getting rather better. The doctor thinks the ulcer is healing.

Mr. Walter thinks the dome will cost \$1,500,000, making it 6 inches thick and cost 10 cents per pound.

\* \* \*

[DEC.] 17TH. Today I had a visit from Senator Hunter. He went with me over a part of the building. I undertook to take him up to look at the roof, but his head swam, and I did not get him to the top of the second ladder. He was pleased with what he saw done and asked me what it was all going to cost, whether the extension would be built within Walter's estimate. I told him fear not, but that we would be nearer to the estimate than most such buildings were.

Brumidi brought me a design sketch in pencil for the decoration of the Senate anteroom.<sup>167</sup> It is beautiful. He is full of innovation, and this, if worked up with skill, will make a beautiful room.

Went up to the top of the dome. Think I will put upon this 4 guys instead of 3 only, as at first proposed. I can get 4 into good positions.

\* \* \*

[DEC.] 19TH. Today I had a visit from Miss Knower, a sister of Mrs. Marcy. She went over the shops of the sculptors. I showed her and Mrs. Marcy<sup>168</sup> the model now making for the Post Office door. She is an intelligent woman, with taste. She says that her friend Palmer tells her he does not desire employment upon the government work,

<sup>167</sup>The Senate Reception Room.

<sup>168</sup>Cornelia Knower Marcy was married to William L. Marcy. She and her sister, Miss Knower, were occasional visitors to the Capitol extension.

that he has now as much as he can do in two years and he wishes to go to Italy, that he has been very successful.

I had thought she was dead, having heard of the sickness and death of her sister, but she has been attending to this sister, which prevented her from going to Europe. She is to go now, in a short time. Mrs. Marcy is a very young and handsome woman to be the wife of so old, rough-looking a man as our Secretary of State.

I was invited with all the other officers in town tonight to the President's, to meet the \_\_\_\_\_ Veterans, a body of volunteer militia. But as the invitation was to come in uniform and I do not possess a uniform, I could not go.

\* \* \*

[DEC. 20] At the Capitol, we have now begun to lay the copper of the roof. It looks well, lays very smooth, and I think is to be a very tight and good roof.

Mr. Cooper [of Cooper and Hewitt] was here. He went upon the roof to look at it. Says that he thinks it is the perfection of a roof.

\* \* \*

[DEC.] 21. Today I find in the *Star* a reported decision of the Secretary of the Treasury that under the act of September \_\_\_\_\_ 1850, a person cannot receive the salaries of the two offices which he holds, but that he has the right to elect which he will take. If this be the law and the practice, I do not see why I may not receive a salary as superintendent of the public works here and decline to receive my pay as Captain of Engineers. I must look into the laws and lay this case before the Secretary of War.

[DEC.] 22. I could not find today any copy in my office of an argument which I addressed to the clerks of the auditor about the pay of Mr. Denham. Denham is paid upon the rolls of the extension for his service to that appropriation, and upon the aqueduct rolls for his service in charge of the books of that work. To this they object as being a receipt of extra compensation. I argued the matter and succeeded in getting a decision in his favor. This argument will refer to the laws upon the subject, and I desired to see it in reference to the case of a person holding two offices, in order to use it in a letter to the Secretary of War.

\* \* \*

[DEC. 22 CONT.] Casali has brought to me a cast from the head of a rabbit. Not so good as that of the bear in the Crystal Palace, but the subject is much more difficult, the softness of the rabbit's fur pre-

venting its keeping in shape. I have had some specimens of wooden flowers made of small pieces in the parquetry style by a patented process. I have promised to have some of them laid down as an experiment. I have thought that I could perhaps make them cheap by the irregular cutter, by making both sides grooved and meeting in a tongue. Thus: [Sketch]. This could be made by the cutter.

\* \* \*

[DEC.] 24TH. MONDAY. At the office. Mr. Brown (Brown, H. K.)<sup>169</sup> brought today his sketch in photography of the design he proposes for the tympanum of the Capitol extension. I was not much pleased with it. He has united the photograph in sentiment and action. He has upon each end of the composition a figure of an animal. Upon one, the hunter; upon the other, the trapper. Next to the trapper, upon the left, as you face the building, is a negro upon a cotton bale, sitting in a very sad and doleful attitude, which at once suggests a slave lamenting his fate. He has one hand behind him, with no reason for its being there. The next figure is a boy with a toy ship. The next, a sailor with a globe upon which he is pointing with one finger, while in the other hand he holds something which looks like holding up his clenched fist. He is showing a piece of coal to a capitalist, who is presented by a stout man in a great coat, with a shawl hanging from one arm in the hand which carries a stick. The other hand is placed in the bosom of his coat. The middle figure is America, looking rather stout and buxom. She has a cloak, bright and starred, which she is spreading abroad, as protecting all who come to her. One naked man kneels at her feet in despair and tribulation, not having found out yet that he is safe. Next, upon her right, or rather her left, is a group of two figures, very commonplace, representing an army and navy officer, the one saluting the America, the other offering his sword. Malicious people might say that he was resigning it.

Next stands a farmer who stands with one foot upon a plow which is idle in the furrow. He is doing nothing particular. Next to him is a fisherman mending his net. Next comes a hunter spearing a bear. But all these are figures which may be separately treated well, though I do not think they have, as now sketched in the clay from which the photograph is taken, any such action as can be considered of much merit. They have no connection with each other. They merely fill up spaces as so many separate statues.

I told Mr. Brown that his negro must absolutely go out. The feeling of the country at this time is such as to lead to innumerable squibs if it is put in. The army and navy should also be eliminated. These

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<sup>169</sup>Meigs' parenthesis.

figures to be replaced by some others, and that when he had perfected his design, I would lay it before the Secretary. I do not believe that I can recommend its adoption. However, I think I must write to Crawford and ask him to submit a design for all others, that I may have some things to fall back upon.

\* \* \*

[DEC. 28] I have from Provost and Winter a statement of the grounds for their claim for payment for the cornice as though it were cut in four courses. They say that the drawing furnished them did not show the division into courses and that they found the specification referred to the old building as being a guide, that the architectural features were to correspond with those of the old building and that in this there are 4 courses. I have looked at the cornices of the old building and find only the 3, I think, but I must look at other parts of the cornices, for it is not likely that it will be made in the same manner.

The difference in the cost of the cornices, if they are paid as if there were four courses and as if there were only 2, which is the way in which I am making it, will be between 50,000 and 100,000 dollars.

I have had a piece of the wire rope of Roebling tested. By his table, showed break with 73 tons, say 140,000 pounds. It broke with only about 80,000 pounds. Mr. Sonnemann, however, thinks that there was some defect in the rope caused by its being clasped in a vise in putting on the shackle. I have directed that it be put into a new shackle with care in this respect and tried again.

\* \* \*

[DEC.] 29TH. Today I went to the office late. Mr. Heebner was at the Capitol today. He says that he has two cargoes of marble ready for shipment to the Post Office. He will send them—it is winter—but has had difficulty in getting vessels. He seems in good spirits.

I showed him the claim of Provost and Winter for the cornice. I went up with him to the top of the building to look at the old cornice with a spyglass. We concluded that upon the south front of the old building there were only 3 courses in the cornice.

\* \* \*

[DEC. 30] The House of Representatives still votes for a Speaker, giving its votes aloud, and refuses to adopt the plurality rule, by which a Speaker would be elected upon the first trial, or to vote by ballot when the result would be equally certain. The members persist in voting without change. If relieved from the responsibility of declaring their votes aloud, there would be changes enough to elect at once. As it

is, Mr. Banks,<sup>170</sup> free soul and renegade Know-Nothing, is within 3 votes of enough to elect him. Mr. Richardson,<sup>171</sup> the Democratic candidate, has about 75 votes. Mr. Fuller,<sup>172</sup> who is, I believe, a pure Know-Nothing, has about 36, and some 11 are scattering. How it will end, no one knows. Banks is thought to have the best chance, I believe. He has at present the largest vote, but the opposition to him is bitter. He is well qualified personally to fill the Speaker's chair, being ready, a good speaker, a good voice, but I do not believe that he is much guided by principle. His own district, which gave him a majority of 7,000 at the election by which he holds his present seat, has since gone against the will of the party to which he belongs by a very large vote.

Horace Greeley<sup>173</sup> of the *Tribune* is here, moving all that he can for the election of Banks as free soil, into Nebraska, etc. I think, myself, that the Kansas-Nebraska Act was a mistake and a great wrong to the course of freedom, giving as it does the entrance for slavery into new regions and thus tending to perpetuate it. But I do not believe it can be repealed for the present.

\* \* \*

[DEC. 31] I made a careful examination of the old building today in regard to the claim of Provost and Winter for the price of the cornice as if made in 4 courses. I find that the old cornice is made up of 3 courses only. The lower course is like the one I have made. It includes the ocula, the dentils, and the [egg and dart] molding. The next includes medallions, the fascia, and the 3rd is the sima reversa. This is a contradiction in the contract and the old building and specifications which it is difficult to interpret.

I have made the two upper courses in one, so that I have made only 2 courses instead of 3, as in the old building, and 4 as they have bid for it. [Sketch]<sup>174</sup>

As one joint put in and measured at the rates which they get for this work is worth about 46,000 dollars, it is a point of much value to them and one the proper decision of which is of great importance to both the contractors and the United States. I suppose that the con-

<sup>170</sup>Nathaniel Banks (1816–1894), Democrat then American party then Republican of Massachusetts, served in the House of Representatives, 1853–1857, 1865–1873, 1875–1879, and 1889–1891. In 1855–1857, when he was Speaker of the House, Banks was a member of the American (or Know-Nothing) party.

<sup>171</sup>William A. Richardson (1811–1875), Democrat of Illinois, served in the House of Representatives, 1847–1856, 1861–1863, and in the Senate, 1863–1865.

<sup>172</sup>Henry M. Fuller (1820–1860), Whig then Opposition of Pennsylvania, served in the House of Representatives, 1851–1853 and 1855–1857.

<sup>173</sup>Horace Greeley (1811–1872) was founder and editor of the *New York Tribune*. He had served in the House of Representatives as a Whig from New York, 1848–1849.

<sup>174</sup>See illustration on page 190.

tract should in this case govern. The old building, upon whose analogy they have been relying so much, fails them here.