

May 28, 1861 (Doc. 114)

early 1863. Mansfield, in his 1861 annual report on the statistics for Ohio, asserts that numerous measurements throughout the United States had been made of the physical characteristics of Anglo-Americans, and that "recently Professor Henry has multiplied these by the measurement of many thousand men in the army of the Potomac." *Fifth Annual Report*, p. 42.

Henry had evidently overseen the construction of some apparatus for making physical measurements. But once the Sanitary Commission began its investigations, the Coast Survey would begin constructing apparatus under the supervision of Bache (who was vice-president of the commission in addition to being head of the Coast Survey). The Smithsonian would then assume merely an advisory role, providing "active co-operation and assistance" (*Smithsonian Report for 1862*, p. 14) to the Sanitary Commission, whose investigations were conducted principally by their actuary, Ezekiel B. Elliott. Benjamin Apthorp Gould would take charge of the investigations in June 1864. Benjamin Apthorp Gould, *Investigations in the Military and Anthropological Statistics of American Soldiers* (New York, 1869), pp. v, 218, 234, 385;

E. B. Elliott, *On the Military Statistics of the United States of America* (Berlin, 1863), pp. 10-11.

Taking measurements of the body to determine distinct racial characteristics was the province of anthropometry, a field of anthropology that drew upon Adolphe Quetelet's studies of Belgian soldiers in the 1840s and that became especially active during the American civil war. "Body measurements collected during the war years," according to one historian, "marked the culmination of efforts to measure the various 'races' or 'species' of man and derive a semblance of understanding as to specific racial types." John S. Haller, Jr., *Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority, 1859-1900* (Urbana, Illinois, 1971), pp. 7, 19 (quotation), 21.

5. Joseph King Fenno Mansfield (1803-1862), a veteran of the Mexican War and a prominent army engineer with many years of experience in planning and constructing coastal fortifications. He was now commander of the military department of Washington. ANB.

6. Probably the 1859 or 1860 annual report of the commissioner of statistics for Ohio.

114. TO THADDEUS SOBIESKI CONSTANTINE LOWE

Smithsonian Institution,
Washington, May 28, 1861.

Dr Sir,

Your letter¹ and the printed communications² have been duly received, but a press of business has prevented my acknowledging the receipt of them before to-day. I have read with much interest the account of your aerial voyages,³ and regret to inform you that it is impossible to render you any assistance from the Smithsonian fund. No appropriation for this purpose was made by the Board of Regents at their last session, and since that time the political events of the country have rendered it necessary for us to be exceedingly cautious in attempting any new enterprises. I should think however that a considerable sum of money might be realized in the different cities of the Union by the use of the captive balloon in enabling persons to enjoy the rare pleasure of so extended a prospect as that given from your aerial car. It might even be of advantage

May 28, 1861 (Doc. 114)

to the Government in assisting their reconnaissance of the district of country around Washington.⁴

I am
very respectfully
Your obed^t servt
Joseph Henry
Sec. S.I.

T. S. C. Lowe Esq }
1504 Sansom St }
Philadelphia

Lowe Papers, Library of Congress.

In William Hinwood's hand, with Henry's signature.

1. Not found.

2. Not found, but possibly including some of the accounts of Lowe's April 20 flight published in the *Cincinnati Commercial*. The issue for April 30 published Lowe's own account of the flight. F. Stansbury Haydon, *Military Ballooning during the Early Civil War* (1941; Baltimore and London, 2000), p. 163n.

3. In addition to his April flight, Lowe made an ascent from Cincinnati in the *Enterprise* on May 8. Possibly his letter to Henry discussed this second flight as well as the earlier one. Lowe also ascended from Hamilton, Ontario, on May 24 and May 29 on the occasion of Queen Victoria's forty-third birthday. Tom D. Crouch, *The Eagle Aloft: Two Centuries of the Balloon in America* (Washington, 1983), p. 345; Haydon, pp. 167-168.

4. By this time, Lowe was already trying to convince government officials to enlist his services as an aeronaut. Murat Halstead, editor of the *Cincinnati Commercial*, had written on Lowe's behalf to Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase, a friend of Halstead's. On May 20, Chase wrote in reply that he had spoken to the secretary of war and other officials, but "there is some difference of opinion as to the balloonists to be employed." Chase agreed to "urge your man." Halstead then wrote Lowe on May 23, pressing him to take his balloon to Washington for a demonstration. Haydon, pp. 162, 167, 168-169 (quotation).

Lowe was in Canada and still unaware of Halstead's letter when he received a June 5 telegram from Halstead advising him to come at

once to Washington. Lowe hurried to the capital on June 6, bringing the *Enterprise* with him. He first called on Henry, who approved of his plans for balloon trials to demonstrate the value of aerial observation. Chase recommended Lowe's plans to Secretary of War Simon Cameron, and Cameron interviewed Henry on June 6, asking him to examine Lowe's apparatus and witness his demonstrations. Chase also arranged for Lowe and Henry to meet on June 11 with President Lincoln, who promised to consider Lowe's plans. By June 18, Lowe was given an opportunity to make his first demonstration. This chronology suggests a rapid acceptance of Lowe's proposal by government officials, largely brought about by Halstead's connection with Chase. Haydon, pp. 169-172.

Even so, Lowe credited Henry with much of his success, apparently because of what he described as Henry's "repeated interviews" with Lincoln, Cameron, and the topographical engineer corps: "Discouragement and difficulty attended every effort, however, to secure attention; but finally, through the influence of Professor Henry, to whose disinterested and persevering support is in a great measure due the introduction of aeronautics into the military service of the United States, I was enabled to make preliminary experiments with the balloon I had brought to Washington." Lowe to Edwin M. Stanton, May 26, 1863, printed in *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, 1899), series 3, vol. 3, p. 254.