

June 24, 1853

ask you to make is eminently a proper one. But even were I sure that it would immediately meet a favorable reception at the State Department I should much prefer not to make it myself as a private citizen, lest it be deemed to partake of the nature of a personal matter;—but to enlist your aid, that coming from the chief executive officer of the Smithsonian Institution it may be put upon the footing of concession for a purely scientific object, and of cooperation in a national enterprise. With this letter I send a couple of extracts from letters of Mr. Fay, and a few numbers of the *Astr. Journal* taken at random from the series,—as specimens to be submitted if you think proper, to the Secretary of State.<sup>5</sup>

With great respect I remain my dear Sir  
Your friend & servant  
B. A Gould Jr

Caleb Cushing Papers, Library of Congress.

1. Presumably while Gould was in Washington in April to lecture at the Smithsonian.

2. Theodore Sedgwick Fay (1807–1898) had been secretary of the legation in Berlin since 1837. *DAB*.

3. Daniel Dewey Barnard (1796–1861), minister since 1850. *DAB*.

4. Peter D. Vroom became the American minister to Prussia on May 24, 1853. Charles Lanman, *Biographical Annals of the Civil Government of the United States* (Washington, 1876), p. 605.

5. According to Gould's "private" letter to Henry of June 4, 1853 (Henry Papers, Smithsonian Archives), this June 1 letter was written "for showing to the Sec<sup>y</sup> of State as you [Henry] kindly promised."

Henry wrote Secretary of State William L. Marcy on June 20, 1853 (Miscellaneous Letters Received, General Records of the State Department, RG 59, National Archives), requesting that copies of the *Astronomical Journal* "be transmitted to Europe with the Government dispatches."

Marcy replied the next day (Copy, Caleb Cushing Papers, Library of Congress) that he would "cheerfully" forward copies to England, but that it was not "in the power of the Department to pursue the same course in regard to such copies of the publication as may be destined for the continent of Europe."

## 274. JOSEPH HENRY AND ALEXANDER DALLAS BACHE TO JEFFERSON DAVIS

June 24<sup>th</sup> 1853.

Sir,

The undersigned have examined as you requested<sup>1</sup> the principles proposed by Capt. M. C. Meigs of the Corps of Engineers with reference to the accoustics, heating, and ventilation of the Hall of Representatives to be erected in the Capitol Extension building and the plans which have been prepared by Mr Walter in accordance therewith.



June 24, 1853

They have also visited with Capt. Meigs, many of the principal buildings in Philadelphia, New York and Boston and have examined them in reference to their acoustic qualities.<sup>2</sup>

They propose to make a full report<sup>3</sup> to you on the subject with a descriptive memoir by Capt. Meigs, and to continue their experiments upon points of detail not definitely settled in their judgment. They are now prepared to report that the principles presented to them by Capt. Meigs are correct and that they are judiciously applied.<sup>4</sup>

They are of opinion that the plans should be provisionally adopted in order that the work may not be delayed subject to such modifications as may result from the further study of them by Capt Meigs or from the experiments of the commission.

This general adoption of the plans will not it is believed interfere with any changes of details, likely to be found desirable.

Very Respectfully  
Your obt. servt.

Hon Jeff<sup>th</sup> Davis  
Sec. War.

Retained Copy, Letter Books, 1853, vol. 1, "Departments," pp. 468-470, General Correspondence of Alexander Dallas Bache, Records of the Coast and Geodetic Survey, RG 23, National Archives. In an unknown hand. Published, with variations in punctuation, in U.S. Senate, 33d Congress, 1st Session, *Annual Report of the Secretary of War*, Senate Executive Documents, No. 1 (1853), Part 2, pp. 85-86. Copy of draft in Thomas U. Walter Papers, The Athenaeum of Philadelphia; in addition to minor variations in language and paragraphing, the draft refers to Meigs's plans for the House chamber without limiting them to "accoustics, heating, and ventilation" as does the first sentence of the final version, and doesn't mention Walter at all. Partial draft in same location as document, p. 473.

1. On May 20, 1853, Davis wrote Henry and Bache, asking them to evaluate Montgomery C. Meigs's "notes upon Accoustics and ventilation, in reference to the construction of the New Hall for the House of Representatives." Davis did so "by direction of the President, who is desirous of obtaining the best scientific authority within reach." Retained Copy, Letters Sent, Records of the Office of the Secretary of War, RG 107, National Archives.

2. Davis had ordered Meigs to accompany Henry and Bache on a tour of public buildings in the three cities, during which the men were to make

such experiments in regard to the acoustic phenomena of some of the public rooms in those cities . . . necessary to enable them to re-

port upon the proposed alterations in the plans for the South wing of the Capitol Extension.

Davis to Meigs, June 7, 1853, Retained Copy, Letters Sent, Records of the Office of the Secretary of War, RG 107, National Archives.

Henry would later apply the information he had gathered on this trip in planning the acoustics of the Smithsonian lecture room. Henry, "On Acoustics Applied to Public Buildings," *AAAS Proceedings*, 1856, 10:119-120.

3. No final report was presented.

4. Meigs presented the original of this letter to Davis on June 26. Davis endorsed the recommendation and immediately forwarded it to President Pierce, who also approved it that same day. Meigs to Henry, June 26, 1853 (two letters),



July 5, 1853

Retained Copies, Letterbook 1, Letters Sent, April 5, 1853–July 25, 1853, pp. 311 and 329, Curator's Office, Architect of the Capitol.

Among Meigs's recommendations was moving the congressional chambers to the center of the wings. Illumination would be by skylights,

while heating and ventilation would be accomplished through the use of steam-powered fans. Albert E. Cowdrey, *A City for the Nation: The Army Engineers and the Building of Washington, D.C., 1790–1967* (Washington, 1978), p. 20.

275. FROM LEONARD D. GALE

Copy.

Washington D.C. 5 July 1853.

Dear Sir,

I have not had an opportunity of inspecting the book containing your deposition respecting Morse's Telegraph case till quite recently; as I had loaned my copy of the book at the time of our conversation, and which has but just come back to me. I find on reading again my own deposition and yours in connection, there is a clashing of which I could not have been aware before, as I never saw yours until since our conversation last autumn at the Smithsonian building, and although I am unable after due thought and reflection to recall the conversation you swear to respecting Mr. Morse and his invention, as having occurred at the U.S. Patent Office between me & yourself & Morse & S.C. Walker & Bache, yet I am free to admit that such conversation may have occurred altho' I have no recollection of it.<sup>1</sup>

On looking over my deposition, page 441 of Complainants Evidence—I find two inaccuracies which I would have corrected—the first of those is against Mr. Morse and the second against you. The first occurs 31 lines from the bottom—where I am made to say, "Morse told me at the interview in the winter of 1836 that he had not before seen or known of the article in Silliman's Journal &c." It should read "He had not seen or heard of the article in Silliman's Journal," leaving out altogether the word before. The former reading indicates or implies that Morse examined the article at the time I first spoke to him of it, whereas he did not in fact examine it till sometime afterwards.

On the second point where my testimony comes in collision with yours. It is stated, line 25 from bottom, "I did not then publicly state he (Morse) was mistaken"—and other like negatives following in the answer to the Sixth cross interrogatory. To each of these negative statements should have been added the words, as well as I can recollect, or words to that effect.