

May 5, 1854

is a matter in which I am not the responsible agent but only act under direction of the commission.

I am Very truly & faithfully
Yours
M C Meigs

Retained Copy, Letterbook 2: Capitol Extension Letters Sent, 1853-1854, Curator's Office, Architect of the Capitol.

1. William Shippen was conducting experiments at the Smithsonian on behalf of the commission that was examining materials for the Capitol extension. Charged with testing the strength and durability of the samples provided, as well as the effect of the atmosphere on them,

Shippen was at this time determining the specific gravities of the samples and measuring their absorption of water. *Washington Daily Globe*, April 21, 1854, p. 3; *Smithsonian Report for 1854*, pp. 18-19.

24. TO LYMAN COPELAND DRAPER

Smithsonian Institution
May 5. 1854.

Dear Sir,

Your letter of April 19th¹ has been received. The Smithsonian Institution will be pleased to receive the State laws, Legislative Journals & Reports you mention, from the Wisconsin Historical Society. We shall also cheerfully embrace any opportunity of facilitating the exchanges between your society and foreign institutions.

The system of exchange established by Mr Vattermare is principally confined to France and the United States,² while that of the Smithsonian Institution embraces every part of the world.

It is a part of the policy of the Smithsonian Institution to do nothing with its funds that can be equally well done by other means, and we therefore prefer to co-operate with Mr Vattermare than to interfere with his benevolent designs.

I ought perhaps to mention that the Smithsonian system of exchange is not based on that of Mr Vattermare, but is merely an extension of that which has been in operation for more than a quarter of a century by the American Philosophical Society Philadelphia, and the American Academy Boston. The basis of the whole is the periodical transmission abroad of the Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge.³

I am happy to gather from the tone of your letter, that your Society approves of the plan of publication and other active operations of the Smithsonian Institution, and you may perhaps be surprised to be informed that an attempt will be made in Congress to arraign the^A

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Regents^B for a violation of the law organizing the Institution, in spending any of the income otherwise than in establishing a museum and library and other objects of a local character.⁴

I am, very respectfully
Your obed't serv't
Joseph Henry
Sec^y S.I.

Lyman C. Draper. Esq.
Cor. Sec'y. Wis. Hist. Society.
Madison. Wis.

Draper Correspondence, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

In William Jones Rhees's hand, with signature and title by Henry.

1. Not found.

2. Nicolas Marie Alexandre Vattemare was a French ventriloquist and actor who had first come to the United States in 1839 to promote an international exchange of publications and specimens of nature and art. Although his energy and powers of persuasion gained him a certain amount of success, including being named an agent by Congress for the exchange of government documents, his system was already faltering by this time. *Henry Papers*, 7:331n; Nancy Elizabeth Gwinn, "The Origins and Development of International Publication

Exchange in Nineteenth-Century America" (Ph.D. diss., The George Washington University, 1996), pp. 92-163.

3. For an examination of the antecedents of the Smithsonian exchange system, see Gwinn, *Exchange*, pp. 92-163. See also *Henry Papers*, 8:417-418.

4. This is the first indication that the questions facing the Board of Regents concerning the division of funds between the collections and the active operations would ultimately be addressed in Congress.

25. SPENCER FULLERTON BAIRD TO GEORGE PERKINS MARSH¹

Washington May 6' 1854

My Dear Mr. Marsh.

I acknowledge with humblest penitence the receipt of the third letter from you this day (the last of April 10)² without a single line in reply. My excuse must be that, hoping from day to day that the vexed question of Smithsonian operations and policies would be speedily settled, I desired to write you in full on the subject. The business has however dragged on week after week until the present time, and nothing yet done. The committee on the compromise has had but two meetings on the subject.³

I do not know how far you may be posted up on this business, but the affair is now in an exceedingly complicated condition. The committee about two months ago called upon Prof. Jewett and myself to communicate what we might have to say, in writing through the Secretary. I made