

November 14, 1873 (Doc. 219)

Tilden was a chemist with a medical degree from Georgetown University. He was assistant chemist at the Department of Agriculture before being hired by Howard. Daniel Smith Lamb, comp. and ed., *Howard University Medical Department, Washington, D.C.: A Historical, Biographical and Statistical Souvenir* (Washington, 1900), pp. 26-27, 101, 119.

5. October 4.

6. We have not found such a statement by Clarke, who was an adherent of Darwin's theory of evolution. He was hired by Howard but left after a year to become professor of chemistry and physics at the University of Cincinnati. ANB.

219. HENRY DESK DIARY

No 14th [1873]^A Since the entry in april in this book¹ I have been elected a member of the Board of Trustees of the Corcoran Gallery and have taken much interest in the establishment.² I was not present at the meeting on which the election was made. Having been out of the city in attendance on the meeting of the national academy³ it was supposed I had not returned. Mr McCloud was elected director and assistant.⁴ The pictures are now about to be hung and the gallery will be opened in the course of a few days.⁵

Professor Baird presented to me yesterday a plan of two large cases on on either side of the entrance to the museum to place in the models of fishes which are being prepared by Mr Palmer.⁶ The contractor for these cases is Mr Bird⁷ who made the cases in the west wing and is for about 500 dollars for the two. I authorized this contract.

What has become of the duplicate books that were in the packing room?

See about the legacy which was left at Carlisle.⁸

Gave an estimate of the character of Dr Nott.⁹

Prepared letter to Mr Lick of San Francisco on the establishment of an observatory.¹⁰

Agent for the Rocker for pumping out Light ships by the rolling of the vessel called. Has just returned from England where he has introduced the invention to the Trinity House and other establishments.

Visited the Light House office concluded to fix the standard of oil at 9 candles burnig in a Franklin lamp of the 5th order. The number up to this time was 8 candles.

Also descided that the government was committed to the work accepted by an authorized inspector provided neither fraud nor collusion existed.

Called on Ex president Johnson left my card. He was at dinner at the time.

Called on Mr Clark architect of the capitol;¹¹ was shown the colossal Statue of Liberty in plaster which in bronze stans on the dome of the

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building.¹² I think it will be too large for the room of the corcoran art gallery for which I intended it.¹³ It would do well for the nitch in the mineralogical room. Mr Clark also showed me a number of articles of sculpture which would suit very well the art gallery: among the number a venus—a large head by Canova¹⁴ and two or three bas reliefs.

Mr Rudolph F. J. Bostelmann a German onc an officer in the German navy who visited America about 20 years ago to report upon our navy yards and made the acquaintance of Admiral Dalhgren and Capt Maury¹⁵ called in the evening and presented to me a new plan of steering a balloon. He had come from Bellvill New Jersey where he resids with his wife and a family of six sons. He appeared like a refined and intelligent gentleman quite young to have so large a family. I was interested in him and with sorrow gave him my opinion as to the value of his invention. He thought by making the balloon in the form of a double convexe concave vessel that it would obey the helm and move in an opposite direction to that of the wind. I endeavored to convince him that this was not the case and that a vessel immersed entirely in a fluid would move with that fluid what ever might be the shape of the vessel.

He left me very sadly and I fear but half convinced. His visit and long cherished hope of assistance from the Smithson was crushed. He wrote to me several months ago to ask an audience his secret was too valuable to be intrusted to a written letter.¹⁶

Alass how many fantoms of the immagination I have been called upon in the course of my life I have been called upon to dissipate. Unfortunately in many cases it happens that the delusion has been long entertained and sanguine hopes built upon it inregard to wealth and reputation and in these the wife and children have come to participate. In such cases it is too much to ask that the inventor or discoverer as he deems himself to be shall ever acknowledge himself in error. He may be silenced by the exposition which is given of his error but sooner or later his ingenuity will invent a plausible answer which will confirm him more and more in his delusion.

I yesterday addressed a letter to the Secretary of the Treasury Mr Richardson¹⁷ submitting to him at the request of the two secretaries of the Light House Board Major Elliot and Capt Walker¹⁸ the to settle the question as to which of them should sign his name the first on public documents. This at first sight might appear a very small matter but it really one which has and is now exciting considerable interest among different members of the navy and of the engineer corps. It involvs the question of subordination between the two branches of the Light House service. In my letter to the secretary I stated that I desired to keep the balance

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between the two branches on an exact equipoise and that this was the intention of the framers of the law of congress organizing the Light House service.¹⁹ The plan adopted was modeled on the organization of the coast survey under which officers of the army and the navy harmoniously cooperate as subordinates of the Secretary of the Treasury.

Day before yesterday Dr Parker and General Sherman attended at the Institution to look over the accounts and yesterday Dr Parker and General Poe (the latter as General Shermans substitute) came to finish the business. They examined the two last quarters and found the whole correct.

At the present time the following persons sleep in the building

Dr Meek
Henry Elliot²⁰
Mr Endlich
Mr

Henry Papers, Smithsonian Archives.

1. The last entry was that of April 29.
2. Henry was elected on April 24, 1873, and served until his death. Trustees' Minutes, Archives, Corcoran Gallery of Art.

3. The National Academy of Sciences met in New York City from October 28 to 30. True, *National Academy*, p. 42.

4. On May 26, Henry and fellow trustees James C. Hall and James C. McGuire had been appointed to a committee on creating the office of director or curator of the gallery. The committee reported at the October 23 meeting, which Henry attended. It recommended that the board hire a curator and an assistant curator. The curator had to be someone of "artistic education, technical knowledge and cultivated taste." The committee described the curator's responsibilities as caring for the collections, answering reference questions and guiding serious research, advising the trustees on acquisitions, keeping records and conducting correspondence and meetings, and eventually overseeing instruction in art. At the November 4 meeting, the trustees elected Washington artist William Douglas MacLeod (1811-1892) as the Corcoran's first curator. MacLeod was a native of Alexandria, Virginia, and had returned to the Washington area after studying in Glasgow. He remained curator of the Corcoran until 1888. Trustees' Minutes, Archives, Corcoran Gallery of Art (quotation on p. 47); Andrew J. Cosentino and Henry H. Glassie, *The Capital Image: Painters in Washington, 1800-1915* (Washington, 1983), p. 266; web site of the Corcoran Gallery of Art.

5. The Corcoran Gallery of Art opened on

January 19, 1874, with ninety-three paintings and five sculptures on exhibit. Holly Tank, "Dedicated to Art: William Corcoran and the Founding of His Gallery," *Washington History*, 2005, 17:38-39.

6. In the annual report, Henry wrote that Joseph Palmer, the Smithsonian's taxidermist, worked under Baird's direction to make "a series of several hundred plaster casts taken from fresh fish and painted to represent the colored appearance of nature." *Smithsonian Report for 1873*, p. 36.

7. John H. Bird. *Smithsonian Report for 1873*, p. 35.

8. James Hamilton (1793-1873), a lawyer and friend of Baird's from Carlisle, Pennsylvania, who died on January 23, bequeathed \$1,000 to the Smithsonian. In an 1868 letter, Hamilton thanked Baird for copies of the Smithsonian's reports and expressed surprise that "our liberal wealthy men have not increased your means to carry out your plans more fully." Although several other bequests had been made since its founding, this was the first from which the institution received funds. The money was deposited in the United States Treasury. Every two years the interest was to be applied "for a contribution, paper, or lecture, on a scientific or useful subject." *Appletons' Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (1887-1900); Hamilton to S. F. Baird, December 26, 1868, Baird Papers, Smithsonian Archives; *Smithsonian Report for 1874*, pp. 7-8.

9. Henry had been asked by Cornelius Van Santvoord the previous March to contribute

material for a biography of the late Eliphalet Nott (*Henry Papers*, 1:315n), president of Union College in Schenectady from 1804 until his death in 1866. Before becoming president of Union, Nott was pastor of the Albany church in which Henry had been baptized and was a founder of the Albany Academy. In his reply, Henry commented on Nott as a teacher, inventor, preacher, and student of "human nature." Van Santvoord published Henry's letter in his *Memoirs of Eliphalet Nott* (New York, 1876), pp. 375-376. Cornelius Van Santvoord to Henry, March 24, 1873, RU 26, Smithsonian Archives; Henry to Van Santvoord, November 14, 1873, RU 33, Smithsonian Archives.

10. Henry drafted a letter on November 14 but did not send a revised version until December 13 (Doc. 223). The draft, marked "not sent," is in RU 33, Smithsonian Archives.

11. Edward Clark had studied with Thomas U. Walter and then served as his chief assistant when Walter was architect of the Capitol. Clark succeeded Walter in 1865 and remained in the post until his death in 1902. *Henry Papers*, 10:464n; *Who Was Who in America: Volume 1, 1897-1942* (Chicago, 1966).

12. The *Statue of Freedom* was designed by Thomas Crawford in 1856 to crown Thomas U. Walter's new dome on the Capitol Building. Working at his studio in Rome, Crawford first created a full-size clay version, and then a full-size plaster model. After his death in 1857, his widow shipped both versions to the United States. Architect Clark Mills cast the bronze version that stands atop the dome. "Statue of Freedom," Inventory of American Sculpture, Smithsonian American Art Museum.

13. Henry was aiding the Corcoran "in the procurement of works of Art and their transportation," as agreed in a meeting of the trustees on May 26. He was asked to communicate with fellow trustee William Thompson Walters, who was in Europe, and "furnish him assistance, by letters of introduction, suggestions, or any other means that he may think advantageous." Trustees' Minutes, Archives, Corcoran Gallery of Art.

At the January 26, 1874, Board of Regents' meeting, Henry mentioned the Smithsonian's cooperative agreements with the Department of Agriculture, where it had deposited its plant and insect collections, and the Army Medical Museum, to which it had transferred its human skulls. He hoped to "enter into friendly relations with the Corcoran Art-Gallery, of which he had recently been elected a trustee." Because the gallery had opened to the public and had an endowment larger than the Smithsonian's, he thought it proper to transfer some of the art in

the Smithsonian Building to the Corcoran, "subject, of course, to the order of the regents." The board authorized Henry to do so upon approval of the executive committee and with the proviso that the works of art could be "reclaimed at any time." A list of the first transfers appears in *Smithsonian Report for 1874*, p. 65. Rhees, *Journals*, p. 425 (quotations); *Smithsonian Report for 1874*, p. 44; 1875, pp. 41-42.

14. Antonio Canova (1757-1822), an Italian neo-classical sculptor. Harold Osborne, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Art* (Oxford, 1970), p. 199.

15. John A. B. Dahlgren and Matthew Fontaine Maury (*Henry Papers*, 3:23n-24n).

16. Bostelmann had written Henry on July 21, 1873, to inform him that he had solved the problem of "discretionarily propelling and steering Aeronautic Engines (Air Balloons) in horizontal direction." He predicted that such locomotion "will soon be considered safer, surer, swifter, and more natural than ocean—and even railroad—travels." He requested an interview with Henry and hoped balloonist John Wise could be present, as Bostelmann's apparatus "might render his transatlantic trip perfectly safe and pleasant." The next day, Henry responded that he had forwarded a copy of Bostelmann's letter to Wise, who was as well qualified as Henry to judge the apparatus, and would be willing to meet Bostelmann in Washington.

Judging by a letter Bostelmann wrote the day after the November 14 interview, Henry had clearly found shortcomings in the apparatus. Bostelmann acknowledged Henry's authority in matters of science, as well as the possibility he might have erred in his calculations. He proposed to "fully and cheerily submit to your objection" and add a screw-propeller to his machine. He closed with the assurance that if Henry "launched" Bostelmann's ideas, he would revere him forever. He continued, "I dread the necessity of being driven into the hands of a humbugger like Barnum with an idea that probably will succeed to stamp it's features on the nineteenth century."

Rudolph F. J. Bostelmann to Henry, July 21 and November 15, 1873, RU 26, Smithsonian Archives; Henry to Bostelmann, July 22, 1873, RU 33, Smithsonian Archives.

17. Henry to William A. Richardson, November 13, 1873, Private Letterpress, Henry Papers, Smithsonian Archives.

18. John Grimes Walker (1835-1907), a naval officer who served with distinction during the Civil War; he began serving on the Light-House Board in May 1873. *DAB; Light-House Board Report for 1882*, p. 129.

19. In his diary entry of November 13, Henry wrote that Richardson decided to have the sec-

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retaries take turns in signing first. At the June 4, 1873, meeting, the board adopted the report of a special committee on the duties of the naval secretary and the engineering secretary. The duties of both secretaries were spelled out in much more detail than they had been previously. It was also explicitly stated that the secretaries were to carry out their duties "under the direction of the chairman." The 1871 *Organization and Duties of the Light-House Board* directed that the secretaries act under the chairman's direction when he was present, but in his absence they were to follow the usage and regulations of the board.

At the November 5 meeting, G. H. Elliot pro-

posed that the chairman be in charge of the office in Washington and that in case of his absence or illness, the secretary with the longest tenure would be in charge of the office. The proposal was rejected by a vote of five to three.

Desk Diary, November 13, 1873; Light-House Board Journal, June 4, 1873 (quotation), and November 5, 1873; *Organization and Duties of the Light-House Board* (Washington, 1871), pp. 52-53.

20. In his diary entry of the day before, Henry wrote that Henry W. Elliott had just returned from Alaska, where he had lived in the seal islands for two years. Desk Diary, November 13, 1873.

220. TO ASA GRAY

Nov 26th 1873

My Dear Dr

The last time I examined my personal account in the bank I found that the draft I gave you for the 200 dollars you advanced to me in Cambridge had not ↑been↓ presented for payment. As these are times of great uncertainty as to money matters and as I desire to make up my accounts for the year at its close I beg to request that you will send on the draft in question.

It is on Riggs & co of this city who will honor all drafts I have made on them. I have not personally lost any thing by the failure of the first national although the Institution has been a sufferer to the amount of about 6000 dollars. This sum is considerably less than what I at first thought would be the loss since we have been so fortunate as to secure a dividend on our deposit.

I kept the money of our semi annual income for many years in the bank of Mr Riggs but was directed by a resolution of the Board of Regents to transfer it to the care of the first national bank because this was an authorized depository. I made the transfer with reluctance and the result has shown the impropriety of the act. Indeed in almost all cases in which the Regents have interfered in the direction of the affairs of the Institution the results have been disastrous; this was especially the case in the reconstruction of the building after the fire.¹

We are all again [settled]^A for the winter in the east wing and I am at my post preparing for the meeting of the Board of Regents at the beginning of the year. We have heating apparatus put into the middle of the main building which diffuses heat over the whole establishment.² We