



[Illustration of U.S. Capitol]
Engraved by J.Steel – the original by T.U.Walter.
North East view of the Capitol at Washington.

With the New Extension as it may become.

My Dear Father,

To describe as much as possible of my affairs and experiences
which may be of interest to you in connexion with my journey to Washington and
visit here hitherto, I will adopt the form of a diary -

Saturday morning Feb. 26th - I left Portland for Boston, in the first train,
with Hon. Geo. F. Shepley; with whom I dined in Boston at the Tremont Hotel
and after 3 hours and a half in that city, I took passage for New York
by R.R. to Stonington, and thence by steamer - Shepley & I occupied a
stateroom together, passed a comfortable night; arrived in New York
City at 5 o'clock on Sunday morning and reached, about 7 o'clock,
the St. Nicholas Hotel, a new inn on Broadway, the most like
a palace in the magnificence of its decorations and luxury of all its

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Date: Feb. 26 - Mar. 4, 1853

Description: Josiah Pierce on Pierce inauguration

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- Mr. Shepley and I went up to the Croton Reservoir to see the shabby-looking frame-work of the glass building designed for an Exhibition of manufactured articles like that last year at London - The frame of iron of the lower story and a part of the second story are the only parts yet put up, but they show signs of a grand edifice to come, and of a busy industry in their structure which has heaped materials and flimsy boardinghouses "y'cleft" "Industrial Hotels" - "Refectorys" and the like, in great abundance about the formerly vacant fields on the Western side of the great reservoir -

Sunday evening, I left New York City for Philadelphia - where I arrived between 9 & 10 o'clock by an Express train - and stopped at the fine & extensive new Marble Hotel, the "Girard House" in Chestnut Street - Monday, Feb. 28th I passed the rainy forenoon in walking down Chestnut St., and up Market St., and back again, looking at the shops and their showy display of merchandise - and passing an hour or two in the Courts assembled in the glorious old Independence Hall. At half-past two - took the Cars for Baltimore - Cars very crowded - Rode in a smoking-car all the way - when cigars & pipes were allowed.

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Reached Baltimore at half-past six - Took a room at the comfortable Eutaw House (the best in Baltimore) kept by a Portland man, Henry F. Jackson, son of the late Schoolmaster Jackson - He is an excellent and very popular landlord and was very civil to me - I went to the Theater in the evening - a mean theater - poor company - and shabby furniture scenery etc, and saw the notorious Mrs. Forrest (alias Sinclair) act Beatrice in Shakespeares Play "Much Ado about Nothing" -

Tuesday morning - March 1. at 9 o'clock. I left in the car for Washington - The train was long and overflowing with passengers for this center of political attraction - Arriving at half-past eleven, I went directly to the National Hotel, where Shepley (who remained till Tuesday in New York) supposed he had engaged a room which he made over to me. I had not been there 5 minutes before I met Lewis, and Mr. Bradford, and my classmate Crosby, and finding Shepley had not a room saved for him after all, I rushed about so, that within an hour after reaching Washington I had explored the Capitol, visited the House of Representatives, examined the Rotunda, seen John Appleton, and various men from Maine, become familiar with the names and order of the streets the location of the important public buildings - the general geography of the country - around, and the interior of a Washington boarding house, and most important of all, secured comfortable lodgings at the National Hotel - After dinner I made further explorations -

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went into the U.S. Senate, and heard short speeches from Soule
Chace, Hunter & others - and in the evening went to the Theater
and saw some curious and nationally-characteristic performances
by a company of adroit Chinese jugglers, who regaled us also
with some "celestial" music such as they ~~said~~ old professor
at the Chinese Museum in Boston used to show the people with,
and show us how ate their dinners with chop-sticks -

- Wednesday, March 2^d - Lewis and I went to the Capitol - examined
the great Historical paintings in the Rotunda - ascended the dome and
studied the grand display from thence of thronged streets, and scattered
cities and houses, and the river Potomac, and the hills around Washington.
The grass in the Capitol grounds was quite green, and the air warm, and
sky a little clear for the first time since Sunday - Then we came
down through the busy and broad Pennsylvania Avenue to Willard's
Hotel, almost as near as from the White House, and paid our respects
to Gen. Pierce in a brief call - The Gen. looked pale and rather
sad - but better than I anticipated - He received us politely,
inquired for you, and your health, and spoke of his visit to George,
and asked us to call again before leaving Washington -
- Then I called on Mrs. Chas. Abbot, daughter of Judge Nicholas Emery,
to whom I had a letter from Mrs. Cha^s. L. Davies - who received
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Joseph Pierce (March 6, 1853)
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Wednesday afternoon - I went to see Hon. E.K. Smart (confined to his room by sickness) and Hon. T.J.D. Fuller, both members of the House of Representatives from Maine, who were very polite to me, and gave me sufficient encouragement that they would support my application for a Consulate - In the evening, I went with Mr. Bradford to the Masonic Hall, where we found the Royal Arch Chapter holding a meeting, and of course I retired, being only a Master Mason - Mr. Bradford introduced me however, and we left together - I went then to the great fair held in the new wing of the Patent Office by the Metropolitan Mechanics Institute, and saw there a very great collection, of clothes, machines, Daguerotypes, leather & iron fabrics, and curiosities from many parts of the Union, chiefly however from New England, New York, Baltimore and the District of Columbia - Jim King's washing-machine was conspicuous - The fair was crowded with a perspiring and astonished multitude of such folks as are usually seen at fairs, who have not seen much out of their own little world and are astonished at such displays - After this I went to the Capitol, and getting into the ladies gallery, facing the speaker, remained till about midnight, viewing the

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hubbub and constant changing of seats and walking about and rushing in and out of side-apartments, and hearing the din of cries of "Mr. Speaker!" "Mr. Speaker!" "point of order" - "Sit down!" "Hear! Hear!" - "Go on!" "Sit down!" "I move we adjourn!" "What's the use!" "abomination!" "public money!" "Maine liquor-law!" "Treasury watch-dogs!" "Can't hear!" "Tellers!" "Tellers!" - "Yeas & Nays!" "What are we voting about!" &c &c, and the frequent raps of the Speaker's hammer, and the calls to order, and the small-talk of the ladies about the members personal appearance - till I was tired and went home if not full of reverence for our "National bear garden", yet with very vivid impressions of its activity (which lasted in my dreams) and certainly with no great ambition to become a member of it -

- Thursday morning - March 3^d - I called on Hon. Moses McDonald who promised to support me in my Consular aims; on Ex Gov. Hugh J. Anderson, who agreed to do the same - on Mr. Chas. Abbot (before referred to) at the State Department, who gave me information of where to look for some statistics regarding Consulates - and then I went to the Library of the House of Representatives and ascertained and noted such particulars of those

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Statistics as I thought would be useful — At half-past-three,
(my dinner-hour since I have been here) I went to Mrs.
Commodore Wadsworths, who received me very kindly and by
appointment gave me a fine dinner, and urged me politely
to come there often and make myself at home at her
house as much as possible — The evening I passed in the
galleries of the Senate and House of Representatives, where the
confusion and excitement attending the discussion upon the
many amendments to the appropriation bills was greater
even than on the preceding night — as it was the last
night — and the House refused to agree to some of the
Senates' amendments, and the Senate would not join
in a Committee of Conference, and the House was at last
obliged to back out of its position and concur — The session
lasted all night — At 6 o'clock this morning, they took a
recess till 10 o'clock — and then meeting again, just barely
finished business and adjourned at noon, the last moment
of the legal existence of this 32nd Congress —

Some of the members were very much exhausted — They
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Mr. Stanley, of N. Carolina, a Whig member of the House, made an able, manly speech - Mr. Hamlin spoke very well in the Senate - saying that he would stay here till doomsday (Extra Session or not - (for an Extra Session was at one time last night anticipated as it was thought the appropriation bills would not pass) rather than that the U. S. Senate should submit to and be brow-beaten by the House of Representatives - all went off well at last however - the House surrendered to the Senate entirely - before adjournment -

The crowd here is immense - between 1000 & 1200 people are staying at this Hotel - sleeping any where - 5 or 6 beds in a room - gentlemen parlors occupied with cots &c - 1500 people took breakfast here this morning - more than that number were at dinner - Other places are proportionally full - and most of them not so comfortably arranged - I have a quiet room to myself - in the second story - Excursion-trains from as far as New York City, two or three times a day, have brought thousands here in each train, the last two days -

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March 4. Friday. You have doubtless read the accounts in the papers (that given by the New York Herald was fullest) how at daybreak on this day, cannon began to thunder, and bands of music to play and soldiers to march through the streets and crowds of people to press through Pennsylvania Avenue towards the Capitol - ^{and of all the ceremony of inauguration} That all sounds very grand when talked of - but the real display was not very showy or impressive for any qualities of magnificence - for the soldiers were the usual shabby looking fellows, tailors, loafers &c of all sizes heights and appearances that make up the citizen train-bands of an ununiformed militia - and the spectators were rough in manner, hurrying along, staring, uncomfortable, without real gaiety or mutuality of enjoyment, like those usually seen at American festivals - the weather was unpleasant - the walking bad, being ^{melting} snow and thin mud - There was no apparent regularity or system about the arrangements, but all seemed to happen as it best could - The Members of Congress were sleepy - and the great body of politicians were wearied, boozy, anxious, selfish, and indifferent to the moral beauties of the spectacle of the day - which I became considerably impressed with, and perceived with more clearness than before, the advantages of our Democratic government - the real equality of the people - the high ^{degree of} realization of the greatest good

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of the greatest number - the simplicity - the plainness and selfishness even which were exhibited in the free and easy manners of the occasion - the security of individual privileges and the sovereignty of the people, strong and conscious of its strength and protection from dangers which other lands (where I had seen far finer spectacles in regard to pomp and outward show on far inferior occasions) must guard against, by with trembling and eternal insecurity at best, by all the claims of ranks in society, of standing armies, of privileged orders civil and ecclesiastical - which make up quite a display -

Lewis & myself with one or two acquaintances, by the advantage of a little previous information, and after waiting on a door-step for an hour and more in the snow were admitted among the few of the general public to the Reporter Gallery of the Senate-chamber, where we had a very convenient place for seeing the closing acts and the adjournment of the Senate - the organization, as the clock struck twelve, of the new one, the administering of the oaths to the new members, (Edw. Everett &c.) - the entrance of the Judges of the Supreme Court - the foreign Diplomatic Corps in their gaudy uniforms - Gen. Scott - and other spectators of note - and afterwards, the ingress and speedy egress of the

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the Mayor of the Dist. of Columbia - The members of the old
Cabinet and the new one - &c - After a short period of quiet
the functionaries moved with dignity, and the spectators tumultuously
and disrespectfully rushed to the East front of the Capitol where the
oath was administered and Frank Pierce became President Pierce,
and delivered his inaugural speech - I was present, but did not
see the forms of the oath - and I heard only parts of the
speech - observing rather to see the manner than the matter -
which last I expected to digest at leisure when printed -

The new President looked pale and very earnest - he used more
gesture than I anticipated - but in the delivery of the first sen-
tence referring to his recent affliction, he stood still, facing the
people, with his hands clasped on the balustrade -

His voice was clear, his articulation distinct, and he was probably
understood by some thousands of the crowd - but his bearing and
appearance was so pleasing and commanded such respect, that the
people at a distance where they could not hear him, applauded
and shouted often and loudly - particularly when he made a
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Filibusters, and fanatics generally will not like it -

The arrangement of the Cabinet is not yet publicly known - Every-body assents, almost to the distribution made in the N. Y. Herald - The members of Congress are beset from morning to night with the importunities of office-seekers - Our delegation give me quite as much encouragement as I expected - I do not trouble them much as yet - believing that my chances will be vastly improved after the discomfiture of the applicants from my State for the more important Consulates - and being, in truth, not very eager for success -

- Saturday - March 5 - I did very little - examined various books in the Congress Library - rode over to Georgetown - walked to the high ground there and saw the view - walked back to Washington - called on the Johnson family in the evening - I began this letter on March 4th - and now close it in the afternoon of March 6th - Sunday - I am sorry there is not more substance in so much show of a letter - and you must get by questions from Lewis what I have omitted - I can't tell when I shall leave for home - perhaps in a week - perhaps in a fortnight - and will write again if I stay long -
Your aff son,
Josiah Pierce Jr -

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