

TO George Ticknor*

(2 June 1856)

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Dear Ticknor

I need make no apology I suppose for not having attended at the authorised time to be presented in due form to your daughter Mrs. William Sohier Dexter*

The occasion was too public & ceremonious for a recluse like me besides, I would have found myself, probably, in a crowd of entire strangers

As necessary absence or some other circumstance may, possibly, prevent me from taking leave of you personally, on your embarkation for Europe I embrace this occasion to tender to you & to Mrs. Ticknor & Miss Ticknor all manner of good wishes Your old & faithful friend

S. THAYER

Mr. George Ticknor

So. Braintree 2d June 1856

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TO George W. Cullum *

South Braintree June 23d '56 (1856)

My dear sir,

Your letter of June 16th has just come to hand while I am making up my pack to be off to Newyork whereby an order from the Secy of War (Jefferson Davis*) recd. on the 18th the Board of Engrs is directed to assemble "with the least possible delay" without any apparent urgent necessity as far as I can see. Thus you see I am "headed off" & hamstrung. The Board will probably be in session several weeks, during which the Bill, if it can pass at all, will be pushed through in hot haste. But suppose I went to Washington what could I do there que dialbe vais - Je faire dans cette galére At no time since Genl. (Joseph G.) Totten* came to the head of the Corps has ever a word passed between us directly or indirectly, verbally or in writing touching the Mily. Acady, We have scrupulously avoided the topic I from delicacy he doubtless for other good reasons. He evidently does not wish me to meddle with the subject. Moreover if I go I must report myself to the Secretary, tell him why I came & then after a few angry words be ordered back to my Post or be put in limbo. _____ bano? If I can do no good I must at least to care not, by indiscreet conduct, to mar the good cause. If my station were at Washington or I were there in the line of my duty, If I could act in concert with other officers of the Corps including the Chief Engineer then indeed I might hope to effect something. The time was when I knew all or nearly all the leading & influential senators & representatives & corresponded with some of them but that time has long past. All those individuals have disappeared from the scene Senator (John) Bell* of Tennessee alone axcepted. Now under these circumstances what is to be done? Say what you think for really I am at an utter loss. You know me well enough to believe that nothing I can do to defeat the Bill will be left undone from fear of displeasing "the Powers that be" The only question is, or will be, whether the thing proposed promises to be useful & then whether it is consistent with duty propriety & self respect. "To be forewarned is to be forearmed" is a good maxim which I hope Genl Totten has not lost sight of. For the last two years at least he has known that the present measure was brewing & I can hardly suppose that he had not matured his plans of counteraction long before he was taken down. If he had, then all may be well. If not the chances are much against us for Jefferson Davis is an able tactician. As to the consequences of the measure if carried I entirely agree with you. They will be ruinous to the Academy. In fact I regard the scheme to be merely an entering wedge, a first step, a means & not an end. The thing aimed at is to upset the "system" at West Point - this can be more easily & effectually accomplished by selecting an instrument or tool not to be found in the Corps of Engineers. That other motives & causes are combined with the one named is not improbable. Let me see you if you come North. Very respectfully & truly yours
S. THAYER

Captain Geo. W. Cullum
U.S. Corps of Engrs.

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TO Joseph G. Swift*

South Braintree August 6th 1856

My dear General

Yours postmarked August 1st reached me on the 4th. I have endorsed the one hundred dollars. The bal. viz \$150 you need not remit till you can do so with perfect convenience.

Genl. (Joseph G.) Totten* & Mrs. Totten were with me at Fort Warren yesterday & day before & left this morning for Conway (White Mountains) where Mrs. Telford (Susan) (Totten)* is staying. Thence they go to Rouses Point & then up the Lakes as far as Mackinaw. The Genl. has been getting along finely & looks as well as previous to his illness except that his legs are still weak.

I had the pleasure to see your three sons together in Newyork. Any father might well be proud of such sons. James I thought resembled his uncle Walker. McRee is a perfect facsimile of his father. Of his abilities & skill as a civil Engineer there can be no question. Foster seems devoted to the profession he has adopted & will, I doubt not, if he lives attain to eminence in due time.

Altho' you do not speak very encouragingly I am not without hopes of seeing you here with your daughter before the warm season shall have passed. If you come give me early notice so that I may not be absent. I too under all the circumstances am for (John C.) Fremont.* I was a (Millard) Fillmore* man till I saw that foolish speech of his. As to (James) Buchanan* I detest his "platform" & have a poor opinion of him as a man & always have had from the time the "hue & cry" was raised against Mr. (Henry) Clay.* Ever faithfully your friend S. THAYER

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TO Joseph G. Swift*

South Braintree Oct 8th 1856

My dear General

Yours of the 8th is at hand I knew not of your brother's (William Swift*) return from the Springs till he was off on the Sea. I had called at his office many times during his absence.

I concur with you entirely on the slavery question. Rather than submit to its extension I declare for War; War to the knife with all its consequences. Nothing astonishes me more than the strength of the party here in the North which sanctions all that has been to force slavery into Kansas. To be sure it consists entirely of office seekers & their blind & deluded followers but then it gives the measure of the corruption & degeneracy of the Times.

Don't forget to give me timely notice of your coming so that I may not be out of the way. Your friend
S. THAYER
General Joseph G. Swift Geneva

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TO Joseph G. Swift*

South Braintree Decr. 1st 1856

My dear friend,

I recd the other day from your brother Wm. H. Swift* one hundred & fifty dollars completing the payment of your note dated Feby. 26 1837 for \$500 which I return herewith. This small sum was then my All & more than all for I was not out of debt. I have never reminded you of the debt & never should unless compelled to so by absolute want. Nor would I have consented to receive it when voluntarily offered had you not told me that you could pay it without inconvenience to you & yours. It will be satisfactory to you to know that every cent of the \$500 recd. from you will be (soundly) applied to a poor widowed sister. As to my own circumstances they have undergone a great change for the worse within the last three years; still I have enough left to supply my own wants. My rail Rd. stocks constituting most of my property are worth not more than half what I paid for for them. I have met other losses a recent one of \$4250 which 18 months ago I loaned to Ben V. French* of Braintree who was generally supposed to be wealthy. All his property will go to pay debts (believed to be fictitious) to his brothers. The other creditors will get little or nothing. Truly & affectionately yrs. S. THAYER
Genl. J. G. Swift

N. B. Please present my kindest regards to your daughters & sons & to Mr. (Peter) Richards*.

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FROM Joseph G. Swift*

22d. Jany. 57 (1857)

My dear friend,

I expected to have been at my Brothers (William H. Swift*) by this time but the condition of Jose (Swift Richards)* has delayed me & will till 1st Feby. as soon thereafter as this Vast Storm may have calmed down to good Travelling, Sally (Swift)* & I go to Boston, - & soon after hope to meet you & when we have done our Personals give some Words to Mr. (James B.) Buchannan*, & So. Carolina, & the China War; - By the bye I suppose you have seen Dr. (David) Livingston (e)s* Letter on his African explorations & noted his notions on British dependence on African growth of Cotton, - he has no faith in it & seems to think if the horrors of the "Middle Passage" were avoided by comfortable Berths on Ship Board - Slavery might be tolerable! - The Charleston Mercury has no faith in the coming Cabinet, & indeed Mr Buchannan will find it a hard matter to sustain Slavery in Kansas, or Plans to conquer Cuba! poor man I doubt his firmness & capacity to secure future fame - Hope I may be disappointed in this?

Genl. (Winfield) Scott* is well & getting to windward of the Hyenas at Washington - This family & my two Boys unite in Respects to you, Yours ever

J. G. SWIFT

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FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Boston 17. March '57 (1857)

Dear friend,

Yours of Saturday reached me Yesterday on my return from Milton, - I am to leave earlier than I expected because of a summons from Hannahs sister in New York - & we set off to-morrow at 8 a.m. So I may not see you until you come to New York on the Board - of which please advise me - This puts an end to my going via Taunton etc, Sally(Swift)* joins me in Remembrance to you & I am ever Yours
J. G. SWIFT
Colonel Thayer

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FROM Joseph G. Swift*

New York No. 36 Barclay Street
25. March 1857

Dear friend,

I have yours of 19th & you found mine of 17th at Braintree - & I am sorry that we cannot meet here for I must go Home to see to my garden. Any point of consultation that you may imagine my mind able to enlighten, please jot down & send me, there is use in the exchange of thought even 'tween unequal capacities - The right mode of discussing Designs for Fortification & the Right mode of giving them permanent place in the Archives of the War Department may cure the evils of which you spoke to me; As to the past which deem lost, a Review of the past Thought & design may be discussed at the next meeting of your Board, & Remodeled & Recorded, & as to the opinions of former members of the Board, or of Local Members, they may be recovered by correspondence; - an Essay to so much of Remidy seems to me to be very desirable as Bases of Criticism on the constructions that may have been made in accordance with, or in omission of, the Plan that was commended in those past designs? Sally (Swift)* & Jose (Swift Richards)* & the Boys unite with me affectionate Remembrance to you As ever your J. G. SWIFT

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FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 27. Augt. '57 (1857)

Colonel Thayer,

Dear friend,

McRee (Swift)* tells me of some wish of yours that Sally (Swift)*, you & I should go to Europe - we may just as well end our days there as here - Pray how much money must be spent, say at some nice point of Temperature & a now & then sojourn to Naples, Rome, Venice & Florence etc - aye my Worthy Sir, I fear we two cannot pay as equal shot with you - but please think it over, & tell me the Rationalé?

But first & foremost, if it may be convenient to you, when next you go to Boston do take your Portrait that is with Mrs. Shattuck* to the Photographer & send me per Express a good Transcript.-

I have been busy ever since 1. May in Remodelling all my Papers, save the Diary of the past 60 Years, & shall leave them to my Family & Engineer & Academy friends, to do just what they may deem judicious, I conclude not to Print in my life time, and they may come to the same conclusion when I am Departed. - The Diary is too much to Copy & amend, & may be spoil the small Value it may contain of my Notions; The Introductory part to it or otherwise is comprised in the following Essays etc -

1. West Point from 1776 to 1817.
2. Origin of British Colonies.
3. Origin of Military Schools.
4. U. S. Mily. _egulation.
5. Origin of the War of 1776.
6. Origin of the War of 1812.
7. U. S. (Internal Inspt.) a note.
8. Organization of Militia
9. Journal of President Monroes Tour 1817 & his Auto Biography.
10. Biography of my Friends.
11. Excursion to Canada &c 1841.
12. Excursion to Europe '51 & '52.
13. Diary 1792 to 1854.
14. Letters
15. Index of Names
16. do Places, Things & Events.

These are all done & Filed save the Letters & Indices. - Sally, Willy (Swift)* & Belle (Swift)* Unite with me in affectionate respect

J. G. SWIFT

Do send me a note of your genealogy & all the prominent acts & events in your life & if I find need will Rewrite my Biogy of you, J. G. S.

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TO Joseph G. Swift*

South Braintree Sept. 14th 57 (1857)

My dear General,

There is no more charming vision or more beautiful castle in the air than that which is figured in my mind by the mention of a trip to Europe with you & your daughter. I cherish the idea & if you seriously entertain it will do all in my power to make it a reality. My memory calls up a hundred spots on the continent equally delightful where we could live within our means & costing little to move from one to the other. Whenever you tell me that your mind is made up to go or is strongly bent in that direction I will if need be present a program for your consideration. I am now very busy on projects for works on the Kennebec, Portland, Portsmouth & New York & have two officers of Engineers at work on the drawings. but I hope to finish with these before the close of my fiftieth year of service, that is to say, by Feby. next & then to be released from further servitude. It is not possible, my dear friend, for you to conceive how much I am disgusted at the manner in which the affairs of our Corps are managed. They have been growing worse & worse & are at length to me intolerable. There must be a blow up one of these days after I am dead perhaps. At all events I shall have no hand in it & mean to be out of the way. You cannot employ your time better than in putting your papers in order & recording what you have done & seen with your comments. If you persist in thinking that I am worthy to be mentioned in them I will not decline to furnish such facts as you may desire to have. You dont allude to Politics as formerly. Have they ceased to interest you? For my part I don't see that the sky is any brighter than it was on the 4th March.

My best regards to your daughter. Ever affectionately
yours S. THAYER

General Jos. G. Swift Geneva

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FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 21. Sep. '57 (1857)

Colonel Thayer

Dear friend, I have yours of 14th & my daughter & myself have _____ over your Remarks on our all three going to the South Europe - If you think our (measure) \$1600 a year in all, may meet our expenses, & yield the comfort which, without which we had better not go - we deem it best to go so far as we have light, - My son (Peter) Richards* & Jose (Swift Richards)* wish to go next Year if circumstances permit, - my Brother (William H. Swift)* & wife go in November next. Sally & I are tired out with the wretched plague of servants; - So please send me your Programme as soon as your Bastions may permit - Nay I think the Programme may be a part time occupation for Rest - for no one can be poring over Forts all their time.

To be sure your Biography is a very important item in my Sketches - please therefore help me to yours, as soon as you can, to Rectify what I have done - & tell me of your peculiar mode of Construction to save your Work from Ruin by Water. I consider your Walls the best now standing.

I Read with pain what you say of leaving the Corps - I have in the rough, for the Secy. War (John B. Floyd)* or Mr. (James) Buchanan*, my views of the Harbor Defence, & Depot & Arsenal defence & of the administrative Dept. of the Corps of Engineers - Will send you a copy before I send it, unless you refuse it, - Your mind is the only one to which I defer on the subject, & I see no Reason why we should not confer on so grave a matter - When you leave the Corps the Govt. should have your thoughts & this as fully as fearlessly expressed - Your friend J.G. SWIFT

P(lease) T(urn) O(ver)

I say nothing on Politics, not that they do not interest me, for they do deeply - but because you are so busy J.G.S. It is my purpose to send my letter to Genl. (Joseph G.) Totten* to Read & present, or send his P_____ with it, to the Secy and Mr. B. so he may _____ my thoughts if he deem it proper to do so. -

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FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 26 Oct. '57 (1857)

Dear friend,

What Ruin among Banks & merchants - it must be so again & again 'til Some Regulation of State action be found; Fund is declining with all other stock! - -So mine & may be your' ability to leave Home is (overted), & when the Country is in danger neither of us could enjoy any other Residence.

I have concluded to address the Secy. war (John B. Floyd)* through the Chief Engineer (Joseph G. Totten)* - the Basis of my opinion upon a Chief Engineers Responsibility is that the plan of the Board of Engineers is unalterable in any thing save by Revision, & that it should be Executed as soon as Congress appropriate the Means, - That the Chief Engineer should be the President of the Board of Engineers, - that Responsibility for work & Expenditures must Rest with the Engineer in charge of the work - Because the Chief Engineer must Rely for all material facts upon the Report & accounts of the Engineer in charge - who in order to good Progress of the Work & for his own Improvement & Emulation must have such a Responsibility conferred upon him, & without it there would in reality be no tangible Responsibility in anyone, - The Chief Engineer in such a Country as ours can see the Works only once a Year.

On the subject of Your Retiring from the Corps of Engineers it seems to me that after a devoted Life you are entitled to go upon the Retired List both as an Example of Justice & for wise selfishness. Holding the place you do, it seems to me the government should have the benefit of all your thoughts on a subject of such importance as before stated - Col. (John Lind) Smith* approves of my writing to the Secy. War, but cannot do so himself? False ideas of Rank are common in all our Army - In the Engineers ability must confer Professional Rank, - on duty with any part of the Army the Rights of Rank should maintain, I am inclined to think that Army Regulations are not all applicable to Engineers - of course Engineer must have military authority to enforce his Plan, & Work.

My family unite with me in every sentiment of Respect & affection to you you & I am Yours J.G. SWIFT

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TO Joseph G. Swift*

South Braintree Oct. 28th '57 (1857)

My dear General

I have yours of Oct. 26th & regret to find that you have given up the idea of going abroad for the present. Well, I must follow suit, for I cannot go without you. The organization of the Engineer Service, the distribution of the duties - the administration of the Department are all wrong but to point out these defects, with their causes & remedies would require more time than I can now spare from the duties pressing upon me. I will only allude to a few of them under the following heads. 1st. Chief Engineer (Joseph G. Totten)*. The office under the present incumbent has been declining in dignity & importance 'til it has become a mere Clerkship & that by his own confession. He cannot assign an officer to any Post or duty or do a single act without the formal sanction of the Secy. of War (John B. Floyd)*. It is needless to tell you that this degradation of the office is a serious public evil in every point of view. selfishness - a very short sighted one is at the bottom of it. A high sense of duty, or due self-respect should have prevented it. Genl. T. is laborious able, devoted, writes an admirable report but is nevertheless wanting in some essential qualities. I am speaking of the officer, not of the man. As a private individual - a specimen of humanity - there are few more perfect & estimable. - 2d Bd. of Engr. It should consist of select officers, from 3 to 5, who should be released from all other duties except perhaps such as relate to Inspections or some general supervision of works. It should have a permanent location & office, (say either at Washington, Newyork or West Point) & connected therewith all necessary books of reference, plans & descriptions, as far as they can be procured, of all the works that have been constructed in every country for maritime defense & it should moreover be kept au courant with all new improvements by means of one of its members kept abroad for that purpose. At present the Bd is deprived of every one of those advantages & I am the only member of the Bd who can bestow any time on his proper duties as such & I only since last Spring. The other members (René) De Russy* & (John Lind) Smith* have no time to spare from their all absorbing duties as Superintendents of Works Civil & Military. How efficient they would be if freed from those extraneous duties you can judge quite as well as I. S. is as noble a fellow as ever lived & has native genius of a high order, but his views are all sui generis. When the Bd is in session he is all the time occupied with his own plans & takes little or no part in the proceedings of the Majority except as Recorder to put them on record. Nevertheless, altho' with other views he might be more useful, I would be very sorry not to have him on the Board. As to the question whether the Chief Engineer should be President of the Bd I am compelled to differ from you for several strong reasons which I cannot, however, now stop to develop. 3d Distribution of duties. bad for the service & unjust to the officers in the higher grades. In fact all grades are pretty much on the same level except so far as regards pay. There is little or no distinction as to consideration or importance of commands. 4th. Supervision of the Works. Every Work is, in theory, under the immediate charge or supervision of some officer

but in fact there is no proper supervision any where & rarely an instance in which a work is conducted under the eye of any officer, even a second Lieutenant. As a general thing the officer in charge lives at a distance from his work & visits it only occasionally & confides the immediate charge to a mechanic or other civil overseer. The consequence is half work & bad work. I am firm in the opinion that the works are costing on an average twice as much as they should & would cost with proper management under the eye of an officer on the spot.

5th. The same officer who commences a work should finish it, so as to be identified with it, but this rule so obviously important has been entirely disregarded for the last twenty years except in two or three instances. In some cases there have been a dozen or more superintendents. In very few less than half a dozen. Consequently no officer can be expected to take pride in his work or to feel much responsibility 6th. Inspection of the Works. Merely looking on the visible surface of Work for an hour or two once a year at a fixed time is a mere useless formality & is in fact no inspection & might just as well be omitted. An inspection to be worth any thing should continue some days & be repeated each year at several & unexpected times. Such thorough inspections cannot of course be made by the Chief Engr. but might be by another or others under a different system. 7th - Under a proper system every officer superintending a work would have the benefit of the experience, or a portion of the experience of every other officer in the Corps. whereas under the present system young officers are placed in charge of works before they have acquired any experience themselves & are then left entirely isolated & unaided by the counsels of their elders. All or most of the evils I have pointed out are admitted by Genl. Totten but he parrys them by saying that there is no remedy & indeed there is probably no remedy while he lives. So I have given up. I did not mean you to understand that I intended to resign. but only to retire from active service on or soon after the completion of my fiftieth year of actual service which, as you rember, will occur in Feby. next. When I began this letter I designed to touch some other matters but cannot for want of space. My best regards to your daughter etc Yr. old friend S. THAYER
Genl. Jos. G. Swift

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FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 14 Nov. 1857

Dear friend,

I have your reply of 20th Oct. to my sorrow for the suspensions that delay my going - but am glad to see your feeling on the subject, & hope we may go next year. - My Brother (William Swift)* sails today for France, as you know, for he writes me you are well. - Of my letter to the Secy. War (John B. Floyd)* I send you a transcript for your private eye 'til he may show it to Genl. (Joseph G.) Totten* - You will see that I have condensed many thoughts - viz - "Sir, Having served many years in the U.S. Corps of Engineers I have retained, in my retirement to Private life, an Interest in that Corps. The Fortification purposes for which it was Instituted have been retarded, although Congress has in past years appropriated many millions of dollars for Forts. _____ With this view & without further reference to causes, I take the liberty to offer some thoughts upon a Remedial course. - Harbour defence constitutes our system of Fortifn. the Plans for which have been well (digested), but from causes that I do not discover in the Reports, very few of these Forts have been finished. -- The Laws of Congress require that the Fortifn. fund be expended under the direction of the President, who of course must rely on Properly Educated Engineers for Plans, Location, Construction & Expenditure. -- Under a judicious System of accountability for the money & Responsibility for the workmanship, the purpose of Congress may be as safely attained as human means may permit. -- So far as my experience in this subject, & my relations with the War Department had extended, I come to the conclusion that a safe & successful & Legal organization of the existing Corps Engr. can be made to ensure the purpose of Congress, & that for which the Corps of Eng. was Instituted. - Namely, by the Services of a Board - conductors & Inspectors; - The Board formed of the Experienced officers to (devise) Plans & Estimates which after being adopted by the President shall be Executed unalterably save by Revision of the Board - the Plan to be executed by officers of Engr. as conductors & without interference save for mal or non feasance - subject to frequent scrutiny as to material construction & Price by - Thirdly - competent Inspectors who shall at frequent & unexpected times during the whole season of work visit & minutely examine & Report their actual State. It is evident that no one officer can do this Inspection. - for it is not in the nature of things that the chief can attend to Details, & cannot be Responsible for what he cannot do; The Chief Engineer will find full as much as one officer can possibly perform, by so far examining the sites for Forts, the condition of the Works, & in giving the Initial orders to the Conductors, & in conserving the Elements upon which the works are planned & Located, & in such (cursorly) visits to the works of the Conductors as the space of Country may permit, to enable the Chief to give a general supervisory control. It is also essential that the conducting Engineer should, if he live, finish the work he commences, & it is also Essential that the Engr. graduates of the Academy should serve under these Conductors, the requisite time, to prepare them to become Conductors.

Such a System of Responsibility involves the necessity of an Independent & Free action of the three Bodies in order to elicit the best efforts of Mind & Execution & thereby secure to the Country good work without delay & also It is only by some system similar to that now mentioned of an Independent action of the mind of a Board - the Conductors the Inspectors, that there can be found a Basis of a Just Responsibility, & of an Emulation that may secure to the Country the best Results of the Talents & Genius of its Engineers. - In such a System the Chief Engineer who is professedly by Law Selected for Merit & not for Rank - the Rank has its claims, - He becomes the Counsellor not the Clerk of a Ministerial Executive, He becomes the Recipient of the Argument of the Board, & is the officer who is to expound to the Minister the course of mind whereby the Board has adopted a Plan & its Estimates, & suggests what points may require Revision of the Board, He becomes the Recipient of the Reports & Accounts of the constructors & to give their Rationale to the minister, & to Counsel on orders to the Conductor, - (His) becomes the Recipient of the confidential Reports of the Scrutiny of Inspectors, & Explains them to the Minister. He examines Surveys & Sites & takes a general view of all the Works to enable him to condense an annual view of the Harbour Defences, for the Information of the Executive & Congress; & directs the conservation of all the Properties of his Department" - J.G. SWIFT

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FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 7. Dec. '57 (1857)

Col. Thayer

Dear friend,

About a month ago I wrote you of my proposed letter to Sec. War, (John B. Floyd)* delaying to hear from you, the General (Joseph G. Totten)* & I got into a good toned correspondence on the subject, & shall await a due time his Reply to my last before sending my letter to the Secy. - In fact the more I think the more I am convinced that the opinion of the elder officers is essential, & whether asked for or not, it should not be hid under a Bushell, - I am very aware you are busy. -- Have not yet heard of my Brothers (William H. Swift)* arrival in France & am as ever Your

J.G. SWIFT

P.S. I shall modify & strengthen my letter to the Secy. -

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TO Joseph G. Swift*

South Braintree Decr. 8th 1857

My dear General,

Ever since I recd your letter of Nov. 14th I have been waiting for a little leasure to answer it having much to say but have not yet found it every moment of my time being necessarily occupied on fortification projects preparatory to the meeting of the Board appointed for this day. John L. (Smith)* you probably know is in Newyork & will be here today.

I concur in every word & syllable of your letter to the Secretary of War (John B. Floyd)* but my dear friend there are (wounds) & (sores) (deep) & (inveterate) that you have not probed or alluded to as I will show when I can find time for it. I glanced at some of them in my last letter but in such a general & vague manner that you could scarcely understand what I (me).

Genl. (Joseph G.) Totten* has a furlough for six months with permission to leave the Country. Now you may perhaps think that I shall be called on to supply his place for the time being no such thing. Thanks to the bad odors about my name in Washington. Why I have not much difficulty in divining. It does not grieve me much; I am already bad enough without breathing that corrupt atmosphere. nor have I the least desire to step down & assume the duties of a Clerk a humbler station than I have ever yet filled & I shall say so plainly to the Secretary, the opportunity occurring No more today, so farewell & god bless you & yours As ever

S. THAYER

Genl. Jos. G. Swift Geneva

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FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 12th Dec. 57 (1857)

Dear friend,

I have Recd. yours of 8th. Remedy for the future is better than to obstruct it by Recurrence to past error; - The Reasons why an officer is impugned of his Rights can be better set forth by an officer, than by a looker on - You have Jno. L. (ind) Smith)* with you, show him my letter - which may soon become an improper one to send if the Genl. (Joseph G. Totten)* be absent?

How is a Chief Engineer to become familiar with all the Reasonings of a Board, unless he be of the Board - & not being on, he is, as now organized, enabled to suspend i.e. enable the Secy. War to suspend - My Theory is a Responsible Board for the final & unalterable Plan, - Responsible Constructors & Responsible Inspectors.

The "Leave of Absence" that you mention is entirely new to me- But how, unless a Vacancy exist, any other officer can be called to Command than the next in Rank - I do not see. Save he request excuse.

But you are busy & I will write no more at present than to say this Plan of Secy. Wars (John B. Floyd)* Interference to favour favourites to arrogate all (merit) to himself must be met by You! as yet I presume Gov. Floyd hands are clean & I hear he is a very honourable person, - But when Congress vote favoring to themselves where is the venality to stop? Remember me to Jno. L. & tell him I wrote him recently to meet him in the City on the foregoing
Yours ever J.G. SWIFT

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FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 18th Dec. '57 (1857)

Dear friend,

The correspondence with the General (Joseph G. Totten)* is assuming what I never intended, a personal character - But as the Genl & his Daughter Susan are just going to Europe I have written him that I shall let the matter rest until his return; -

The General imagines me under some influence, - I have written him his mistake 'tho I am not ignorant of (William H.) Chases* views nor of the opinions of Thayer, (John Lind) Smith* & (John G.) Barnard* - all of whom Respect him Personally 'tho they do not approve of his mode of Command.

There is a feeling in Human Nature that tends to give a Sort of Personal Property-Character to an official Position - Whenever even a clever fellow has been long at the Head of any thing, he is apt to look upon it as his own?

Do if you please write me your views of what a Corps of Engineers was instituted for, & this to enable me to correct any Personal tendency of any Argument I may use in this matter - As I now view it the matter is awakened, & justly treated may lead to very good results to every one who may be now or then in the Corps of Engineers. Ever
your J.G. SWIFT

_____ Just got a letter from Col. J.L.S. at New York

P.S. The General deems my letter both unjust and unfriendly - I had written him the substance of my programme for the Secy. War - My reply repudiates both of his impressions - because in fact my view is the opinion of one having (some) right to form one, & in my opinion, to which I have an undoubted right, without being charged with unfriendly purposes, & an opinion that I had given him more than a dozen years ago _

*See Index

TO Joseph G. Swift

South Braintree Decr. 20th 1857

My dear General,

I have yours of the 12th. You say "remedies for the future are better than to obstruct them by recurrences to past error". True, but how is one to prescribe without knowing what the disease is & how is one to know that without a "recurrence to the past" You say "The reasons why an officer is impugned of his rights can be better set forth by himself" True but the rights of officers have not been "impugned" as far as I know. At all events I have made no complaint & shall make none directly, or indirectly, so far as relates to the past. The thing requiring a remedy is the bad system of administration resulting in bad constructions, waste of public money & delay in completing the important works necessary to the defence of our harbors & cities. but any arguments or intreaties you may address to Genl (Joseph G.) Totten* or Secy of War (John B. Floyd)* will tend in the least to bring about a reform. You will have your labor for your pains. That is all. You say "How is chief Engineer to become familiar with all the reasonings of a Board unless he be of the Board" answer. by means of the Memoir accompanying every plan & if he be so dull as not to comprehend them, then, let him send for the President of the Board or whosoever drew up the plan. You add "and not being on (the Board) he is enabled to suspend" I dont see that he is enabled to "suspend" in the one case more than in the other. but I have not probably caught your idea. You say, "My theory is a "respectable, a respectable Board for the final & unalterable plan" etc. There lies the gist of the question. To be consistent, you would have for a government, a House of Representatives without a Senate to concur, or a President to veto or Judges to adjudicate. While I am for a government of checks & balances, I deny utterly the infallibility of any Board of Engineers however "respectable" it may be. pray tell me what is to be done in cases when the Board don't agree as has happened many a time & would happen just as often, probably, with Chief Engineer as its president unless he over awed the members so as to prevent free discussion. "Who is to decide when Doctors disagree" Suppose there are two plans, the one being the plan of the President of the Board, i.e. of the Chief Engineer, he standing alone as its advocate, the other the plan of the other members. Now who shall which of these is the infallible plan? answer that & then I will bring forward some of the main arguments against your "Theory"

On the subject of the command of the Corps during the absence of Genl. Totten I entirely agree with & have accordingly taken a stand & shall maintain it if I can but more about that in my next As ever yours
S. THAYER
Genl. Jos. G. Swift Geneva

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 28th Dec. '57 (1857)

Dear friend,

I have yours of 20th about my Responsible not "Respect-able" Board, whose Plans when Approved by the Executive, are to be unalterable save by Revision of the Board - these three qualifications annul your notion of my Essay to have an Infallible Board; -- I have no belief in the Infallibility of any Human Institution, from the D(icastry) that gave the Hemlock to a Wisdom beyond Ba (cons), down to a Congress that tampers with Freedom.

As to the composition of the Board I am content with Your idea, & I admit that a Chief might Retard its functions, - so that answers you about the disagreeing Doctors & so come on with your promised Argument against my Theory - all my Theory is that a Board shall make a Plan that shall be final - by Executive & R(evising) Means, & Constructors with Discretion & Inspectors to Keep Work & Accounts as they should be. I am surprised that you know of no officers whose Rights are Infringed or disparaged - is not want of discretion a disparagement of Rights, & tho' it may not have touched you, it has others -

My opinion is that if the three items I have mentioned be rightly used, all the small Interferences at Washington that makes your Chief a clerk would gradually disappear? But having a Respect for your opinions I am almost giving it up, as you say I can produce no good with the Secy. (John B. Floyd)* or Chief - Surely trying to do good had better, in this case, be given up as it cant succeed - than to break up old intimacys. -

I admit that to correct an Evil the Evil & its causes should be pointed out, - I wish to avoid being the exposor of faults, & yet prescribe a Remidy which in its action may cure the evil & am Ever your J.G. SWIFT

Our friend Col. Jno. L. (Smith)* tells Mr. (Peter) Richards* you take Command of the Corps on the Generals (Joseph G. Totten)* absence.

*See Index

TO Joseph G. Swift*

So. Braintree Decr. 31 1857

My dear General,

Yours of the 28th is at hand. You say "As to the composition of the Board I am content with your idea & I admit that a Chief might retard its functions" etc As we now agree on the main question it would be idle to say any thing more about the "theory" even had I time to spare for it but I have not. The report that reached you through Mr. (Peter) Richards* was correct. The order is as follows.

War Dept. Adj. Genl. Office Washington Dec 20, 1857
Special Orders No 183

During the absence from duty of Bt. Brig. Genl. J. (oseph) G. Totten* Colonel of the Corps of Engrs. the command of the Corps devolves upon Brevet Colonel S. Thayer
By Command of the Secretary of War

S. (amuel) Cooper* Adj. Genl.

By permission of the Secy of War (John B. Floyd)* further orders I establish the Head Quarters of the Corps at Boston. This of course is only a temporary arrangement & may continue only to the time when I shall have completed certain projects of fortifications which I have in hand & which can be finished only by me. Appropriations were made for them at the last session of Congress & all must be ready for commencing operations next Spring. I have other reasons however for not wishing to establish myself at Washington during my probably brief command. I must not take advantage of Genl. T.'s absence to change his system or to disturb any of his arrangements & it would be folly to attempt it.

You say "I am surprised that you know of no officers whose rights are impugned or disparaged" I am not less surprised that I was understood to say that or anything like it. Whatever wrongs had been done to individual officers of the Corps were the necessary results of a bad system & not proper subjects of personal complaint against the Chief of the Corps. That is what I meant. If the system has been hard upon others it has been still harder on me. Yet I have not made any personal complaint or even grumbled Let the system become what it should be & then the rights of officers will be secure. pressure of business compels me to close. Wishing you & yours a happy new year I am as ever Yours S. THAYER
Genl. Jos. G. Swift Geneva

P.S. The Bd of Engrs convenes here next Wednesday Jany 6th. As we are discussing public matters this letter will go free

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 2d. Jany. '58 (1858)

Dear Colonel,

The half centuries pleasant relation between (Joseph G.) Totten* & I he has ruthlessly Shattered by Insult beyond reparation - His selfishness & Presumption have no respect for any Relation of Reciprocity - You know I had proposed to give up the fruitless Essay, - I had said to him my entire Respect, that I would suspend my ^{opinion} purpose during his absence; - I have temperately Replied to his Insult, & shall not allude to it save thus to you & Col. (John L.) Smith* & I desire no notice of it from either of you, & now with sorrow as

Ever Your J.G. SWIFT

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 7th. Jany. '58 (1858)

Dear Colonel,

It is proper that I should in reply to your last tell you exactly what I said to (Joseph G.) Totten* - in reply to his deeming my opinions Influenced by others - that neither you nor (John L.) Smith* had influenced me, that I knew both of you had a Respectful opinion of him, but neither of you did approve of his mode of Command - nothing more, The truth is that the justness of my opinion is the real occasion of his Insulting tone, & this grows out of the "Short Sighted selfishness" to which you alluded, & the truth is also that the Secy. War (John B. Floyd)* should not be left in ignorance that holding back Discretion to officers is a great Evil, it has produced an Incubus from which the officers have not awakened - & will not until a proper view become a matter of Record,

My Brother (William H. Swift)* & wife are now in Rome they left Paris in December As ever your J. G. SWIFT
Col. Thayer Actg. Chf. Engr. U.S. Corps Engr

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 21. Jany. 1858

Dear Colonel,

I have applied to the President (James Buchanan)* & Secy. War (John B. Floyd)* for an Appointmt. at large for my Gr. Son Fitzhugh Swift* in his 17th Year & in every way well Instructed & qualified; - If your official functions do not forbid - may I ask your aid in this very important matter? & am brief - considering your business, & am nevertheless Yours J. G. SWIFT

P.S. The selections "at large" are made tween now & 1. Feby. JGS

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 23d Jany. '58 (1858)

Dear friend,

Mrs. (Christopher) Vandeventer* is in deep affliction (Domestic) & loss of her Property! & wants a Pension What is to be done? I have written Gen. (Winfield) Scott* about the Quebeck dungeon¹ etc, & to Jno. L. (Smith)* for Counsel - no more at present but that I am as ever - Your J. G. SWIFT

P.S. Have you been to see Susan* & Silena Roberdeau*? am trying to get documents to sustain their Claim to their Aunts Estate.

*See Index

¹Christopher Vandeventer was confined as prisoner in Quebec 1813-1814 during War of 1812.

TO Joseph G. Swift*

South Braintree Jany. 24th '58 (1858)

My dear General,

In reply to your note of Jany. 21st just recd I send the enclosed to be disposed of as you may think proper. I find it very difficult in a letter for such a purpose to observe the "Juste Milieu," saying neither too little or too much but aiming to avoid Charybdis I may have have foundered on Scylla If so I will set sail again profiting by any suggestions your may favor me with. In reference to the principal subject of your two last letters I may have something to say whenever I can find time for it. I have a long story to tell on the subject of my relations with (Joseph G.) Totten*. The scales have fallen from my eyes as they have at last from yours. Ever faithfully Yours

S. THAYER

Genl. Jos. G. Swift

P.S. I am busy as a bee

*See Index

TO Joseph G. Swift*

South Braintree Jany, 28th 1858

My dear General,

I was very sorry indeed to learn from your letter of Jany. 23d. that Mrs. (Christopher) Vander Venter* has lost her property & is in distress & would do all in my power to help her if you or she will point out the way. I have not called on the (Susan and Silena) Roberdeau's* since I went with you but will endeavor to see them soon.

You have recd, I hope, my letter with its enclosure in reply to yours of the 21st on the subject of the application for Fitzhugh (Swift)*. Yr. ever S. THAYER
Genl. J. G. Swift

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 29 Jany. '58 (1858)

Dear Colonel,

Whether you have over done the matter or not cant say, but can say it will not be forgotten by this family You will be pleased to know that Mr. (James) Buchanan* entertains the application & your letter is by this time before him. As to Fitz (Fitzhugh Swift)* antecedents - My Father (Foster Swift)* was a Surgeon in the Continental Navy & a Prisoner of War a year to Admiral Rodney. He was the Son of Saml. the "Brother Swift" mentioned by Jno. Adams* to William Wirt* etc - & He the Son of Col. Saml. of Milton, and He the Son of Deni___ Thos. in Dr Thatchers Journal of 1680, & He the Son of Thos. of R_____ a first settler of Dorchester. _____ de its History. _____

You mention "Scales falling from our eyes" - (Joseph G.) Tottens* Insult to me is I confess to you one of the greatest sorrows of my life! - He bids me not to try to Influence your command! Ever your J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

TO Joseph G. Swift*

South Braintree Feby 5th 1858

My dear General

I regret my forgetfulness touching the early portion of your father's (Foster Swift)* life & the lives of his ancestors. I say forgetfulness for I must have known in former days some of the facts you mention. They should & doubtless will be carefully treasured up & handed down from generation to generation.

I shall feel anxious to learn the result of the application for Fitzhugh (Swift)*. As ever yours S. THAYER
Genl. Jos. G. Swift

*See Index

(March 13, 1858)

(This document is a rough copy in Joseph G. Swift's* handwriting of the document sent to him by Thayer in March 1858, subsequently referred to in their correspondence as Nos. 1,2,3,4, and a contributing factor to Swift's repudiation of Joseph G. Totten* after a friendship of many years. Exact transcription is impossible because of illegible handwriting and abbreviations.)

No. 1 Washng. Nov. 22, '57 - Hon. J. (ohn) B. F. (loyd)*
Sec War Sir, I have been waiting the arrival of my Col-
league Hon. Ch. (arles) Scott* in connection with him to
present the name of Ch (arle)s. Murphy* for the appt. of
M: Mason & Overseer of the Govt. Works at Alcatara (Alcatraz)
Isld. I am authorized by Mr. Scott to use his name &
therefore urge upon you the propriety of the Appt. I have
known Mr Murphy intimately for seven years four of which
he has been in the Mason Dept. Mare Isld. I will be
responsible for his Integrity, his competency for all the
requisites that will be required in the position for which
he is applying - He is a thorough Democrat & is applying
for a place held by one who has no identity with our Party. -
I shall have the honor to wait upon you personally in this
matter & Remain Yr. Obt St. Jos. C. McKibbin* - Endorsed
I wish this arrangement made (signed) J.B.F.

No. 2 (Jany 58 no date) Hon. J.B.F. Sec. War Sir We have
the Honour to recommend Chs. Murphy for the appt. of M.
Mason at the Fortfns. on Alcatara (Alcatraz) Island Cal.
Mr. M. is a mechanic of high order & for three years has
been in the Masons Dept. at U.S. Navy Yard Mare Island -
He is an efficient thorough democrat & in this connection
it is proper to Remark that the present appointee has never
been identified with the Demo Party & has used his position
to oppress & discharge those whose loyalty induced them to
adhere to its fortunes. We assure the Dept that in the appt.
of Mr Murphy they will not only secure a competent &
practical mason but also a correction of these abuses.
Respy. J. C. McKibbin

Ch. L. Scott

Endorsed "I have no doubt of the will & capacity of this
man for the duties of the place & wish the officer in
charge of the Work to give it to him. War Dept. 14 Jany.
1858 J. B. FLOYD Sec. of War

No. 3 Lt. James B. McPherson Corps Engr. (San Francisco)
Sir Engr. Dept. Washg. 24 Nov. '57 - Sir, I send herewith
a copy of a letter from Hon. J. McK. asking the appt. of
M Mason or overseer at Alcatara_ Isld. for Chs. Murphy
with a Copy of the endorsement of the Sec. War thereon in
these words "I wish the arrangement to be made. J.B.F." -
You will carry this order of the Sec War into effect without
delay

I am etc Jos. G. Totten Bt. Brig Genl. & Col. of
Engineers

(copy of McK letter above referred to sent to Col. Thayer
herewith)

No. 4 Alcatraz Island San Francisco Harbor Cal. 1 Feb. 1858
Bt. Col. S. Thayer Comg. Corps Engr. U.S.A. Boston Mass. Sir
Having in a previous letter advised the Dept. of the appt.
of Chs. Murphy to the position of M. Mason & overseer in
obedience to the order of Hon. Sec. War - I now deem it my
duty to inform you that after giving him a fair trial of
nearly a month I became satisfied that he was not competent
for the position & that I could not in Justice to myself
regarding the best interests of the Work retain him any longer
& accordingly discharged him at the end of the month. As
far as his branch of the trade goes Viz. Stone Masonry &
Stone Cutting I have reason to believe that he might do well
enough though much better on Rough than fine work - But he
is not a good practical Brick Mason & consequently not well
qualified to oversee a Gang of Brick Masons & to judge not
only when they are doing their work well but when they are
doing a fair honest days work. I became fully satisfied
of this while he was here from the manner in which the
Masons received his directions & as more than 9/10 of the
masonry remaining to be executed is brick, I want for my
overseer a man who understands the business & in whom I can
have confidence that the work is going on properly. - While
awaiting the decision of the Chf. Engr. I have taken one
of the most intelligent mechanics who has been employed on
the works for some time & who is a good Stone & Brick Mason
& have given him the position of acting M. Mason increasing
his Pay from \$5 to \$6 per day - I have a very good sub
overseer of the Laborers who was employed previous to my
assuming charge & with these two I can get along satis-
factorily I trust, though it would relieve me of a good
deal of care & anxiety could I have a man for Master Mason
& overseer with the Capacity energy & experience of the one
who was superceded by Mr. Murphy. I am very Respy. Yr ob st
Jas. B. McPherson 2d Lt. Engr.

Endorsement - Engr Dep. 1 March 1858 Respectfully forwarded
to Col. Thayer with Copy of the instr. of this Dept. to
Lt. McPherson on the subject under date of 24 Nov. 1857_____
H. (oratio) G. Wright* Capt. Engr. in charge. H.Q. Corps
Engr. Boston 5 March 1858 - The undersigned sees nothing
in the within requiring or admitting of the action of either
the Chief Engr. or of the War Department -

The matter submitted lies entirely within the Compe-
tency & Sound discretion of the officer in charge whose control
over it is not limited either by the Army Regulations or
by the usages of the Service & cannot be without relieving
him of the high Responsibilities that are inseparable from
his proper function. The officer in charge must be supposed
to act with a single eye to the best interests of the
Service. He has no right to enquire into or to know the
Religious or Political opinions of the Agents he employ

(signed) S. THAYER

18 March 58 Dear Col. I have your note of 13 with enclosures 1.2.3.4. now returned, exhibiting conduct far worse than any thing I had known - The Corps Engrs. owes much to your sense of Right & Duty, Honourable to yourself & awful to Floyd & Totten. Whether Floyd may (persist) or abandon interference may be influenced by the (Pretended) Democracy of Congress that outrages all Sense of Political Freedom - If these Papers are not published will (it) not involve you. The Sec. will find it hard to conceal them & if he (annul) your endorsement it only makes matters worse - if he be cunning he will drop it. I have transcribed 1.2.3.4. but of course I shall do you no injustice. I note what you say of J.(ohn) L. S.(mith)* being in Washgtn to testify in the Willets Pt. purchase & what Totten knows of the matter - \$200,000 when Shell (Augustus Schell)* could have bt. it for 100,000 & its value 25,000 - every officer who knows anything of this purchase & that of New Bedford is in a (critical) position etc. J.G.S.

*See Index

TO Joseph G. Swift*

South Braintree March 13th 1858

My dear General,

You know of course the result of your application for your grandson (Fitzhugh Swift)*. I am not less disappointed than indignant for I thought such a claim as yours could not be resisted or set aside after making due allowance for the selfish calculations of such men as Pres. (James) Buchanan* & Secy. (John B.) Floyd*. Col. (John L.) Smith* is summoned to Washington to give testimony before the Committee on Willetts Point. The principal witness Genl. (Joseph G.) Totten* is out of the way. Were he put on the stand he would swear that at the very time Floyd agreed to pay two hundred thousand dollars held in hand the proffer of the same land for one hundred thousand. It might have been worth \$25,000. The New Bedford affair was quite as bad but I will not trouble you with the details.

In a former letter I told you how degraded the office of Chief Engineer had become under Genl. Totten. The proofs are innumerable but the instance exhibited in the papers enclosed herewith is sufficient of itself, only bearing in mind that this outrageous interference of the Secy was quietly submitted to My endorsement has been laid before the Secretary. How he may regard it I care not a fig. Please return the papers. Your friend S. THAYER
Genl. J. G. SWIFT

(Scribbled on the back page of this letter in Genl. Swift's handwriting are the following notations:)

The Papers sent viz Col. T. were 1,2,3,4

No. 1. a letter from (Joseph Chambers) McKibbin* M.(ember) C.(ongress) asking Chs. Murphy to be M.(aster) Mason -
Endorsed

I wish the arrgt. made J.B.F. (James B. Floyd)*
No. 2 (The same Mr K & Ch.(arles Lewis) Scott* also M.C. -
endorsed - " _____ of Ch. M - & wish the officer
in charge of the work to employ him as M.(aster) M.(ason)
J. B. Floyd Sec War"

No. 3 Gen. (Joseph G.) Totten* order to Lt. (James B.)
McPherson* to obey Sec War 1st. Endorsement on No 1

No. 4 Lt. McPherson appeal to Col. Thayer that trying
C.(arles) M.(urphy) found him deficient & discharged him,
asking further orders & had ad interim employ an acting M. M.
(Endorsed) - nothing (requiring) or admitting action of
Chf. Eng. or W. Dept. it being entirely in the competency &
(Sound) (Discretion) of the officer in charge - which
officer has no Right to inquire into or to Know the Religious
or Political opinions of Agents he employs S. THAYER"

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 18 March 1858 -

Colonel Thayer

Dear Colo. I have your note of 13th with enclosures 1.2.3.4. now returned, exhibiting conduct far worse than anything known to me - The Corps of Engineers owe much to your sense of Right & duty, Honourable to you, & awful to (John B.) Floyd* & (Joseph G.) Totten*, - Whether Floyd may persist or abandon interference, may be influenced by the Pretended Democracy of Congress that outrages all sense of Political Freedom; - If these Papers are not published will it not involve evil to you - The Secy. will find it hard to conceal them & if he annul your endorsement it only makes the matter worse - if he be cunning he will drop it - I have transcribed 1,2,3,&4 - but of course shall do you no injustice -

I note what you say of Col. J. (ohn) L. Smith* being in Washington to Testify in the Willetts Point Purchase & what Totten knows of the matter \$200,000 when Shell (Augustus Schell)* could have bought it for 100 000 & its value 25 000 - every officer who knows any thing of this & the New Bedford purchase is in a critical position - But packed Committees in Congress, with such cooperators as Floyd & (James) Buchanan* may hush any evil, while Democracy is up!

So you to whom the Country owe much for the progress of West Point, & your old Chief who used to Dispense Cadetships, cant together get a Warrant for my Grandson (Fitzhugh Swift)* - ha, ha, -

We all unite in Respect & Warm Regard for you Your ever
J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 19. March '58 (1858)

Dear friend,

In my note Yesterday about 1,2,3,4, I said I would not in using them treat you unjustly - I mean to say I will not refer to you, - But Lt (James B.) McPhersons* modest & very sensible letter & your Endorsement are not "lights that can be kept under a Bushell" & in its coming forth you will be put on the stand - Heretofore you had deemed the foolish use of the Corps as more in the System than in its chief - maybe so - but there is no System & its therefore an abuse of an existing state of things lacking a System - for years I have believed that the lack of Legal existence of the Bureaus was a vile means of abuse, - Be all that as it may you and McPherson have put the Ball in motion - & where you may be in the Public Eye, you (need) no (mans) suggestion to point out - I look on your Endorsement as the entering wedge that is to Rive the Log of Iniquity. - When small men meddle with Edged Tools they often cut their fingers & my once, but never again to be intimate - (Joseph G.) Totten* may be among the proofs of this old Saw, & if I were in Public life I might not be over wise - but hope to see the Corps Renovated if Providence permit. Your friend

J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

TO Joseph G. Swift*

South Braintree 22d March '58 (1858)

My dear General,

Your letter of the 19th this moment recd. frightens me & I shall not recover from the fright till I get your answer to this. The papers in question were of course for your own private inspection alone. I did not occur to me as possible that you would not so understand otherwise I would have so said in express terms. I am very sorry that you took copies lest by chance they fall into indiscreet hands & must enjoin it upon you to destroy them. There must be no allusion to the matter, directly, or indirectly, in any newspaper it would do a deal of mischief which neither you or I could undo. A little reflection will I think convince you of that, if not I will explain when there is less pressure upon me than at this moment. Yr. friend S. THAYER
Genl. J. G. Swift

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 25th March '58 (1858)

Dear friend,

Today came yours of 22d - While you deem those Papers confidential I shall, - no use has been made of them nor will be without your consent, - If I should Die my daughter will hold them, sealed up as they are & subject to your order & so Endorsed by me to her. - But do you imagine (James B.) McPherson* & the officers at Washington will conceal your endorsement that frees them from a nightmare of a Dozen of years endurance - The Secy (John B. Floyd)* may Require the silence of the Bureau! - it's the only way he can delay an exposure of his vile folly; - were I chief Engineer I would make this Vile Interference the subject of an "Official Protest" to the President of the United States, & thus clear my skirts of the (obliquity) of participation, - Do you deem it enough to have told the Sec. "that he has no right to know the Religious or Political Faith of the Mechanics on the Fortifications - Will you be excused when the officers gradually become acquainted with the History of this rascally proceeding - (Joseph G.) Totten*, as you see by his letter to McPherson, tried to evade participation - nay even the Secy. himself was ashamed of his words & afraid to Order! - But again I say what you have confided to me will not by my agency be used until you use it yourself & permit me to do so also. Ever J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 26 March '58 (1858)

Dear friend,

Yesterday I replied to your letter of 22d. that I should hold 1,2,3,4, in entire confidence - & beyond any accident. -

I am much inclined to defer to your Judgement - but it seems to me that your having knowledge of the course pursued toward (James B.) McPherson* involves a necessary action on your part to avoid the aspect of conniving at the wrong - Suppose the Secy (John B. Floyd)* puts McP. Letter & your endorsement into his desk & directs Capt. (Horatio G.) W. (right)* to write McP that he McP had decided justly & that there was no design to interfere with his Responsibility in employing suitable mechanics etc, etc, etc -- thus placing the Young Officer in Dread of the Secy wrath & no officer of his Corps to sustain him! - for the letter of McP. is one of the most severe rebukes of the course of the Secy. that could be p_____ed?

In my judgement the very _____ - delicacy of not changing in a Tempy. Command, the will & purposes of your predecessors permanent Command, has its limits, & that those limits have been transcended in the McP. case? Before Gen. (Joseph G.) Totten* dissolved all friendly Relations between us by his unseemly letter, I had written to him that in his absence I should not send my letter to the Secy. War, - but now, since this McP. development, I shall not trouble that functionary with any opinions, of mine on any subject, - You were much in the right last Fall in telling me my letters would be in vain, 'tho you did not tell me why, now so plainly told in the Secy. Endorsements -
Yours ever J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

TO Joseph G. Swift*

South Braintree March 28th 1858

My dear Genl.

Your letter of the 25th is at hand. All is as I wished. If those papers find their way to the Newspapers or get before the Public otherwise than through some act of mine either of commission or omission, then, I would not regret the publicity. The time may come, perhaps, when I may deem it my duty to bring the matter before the public, but that time is not yet. You say were I chief Engineer "I would make the vile interference the subject of an official protest & thus clear my skirts of the obloquy of participation. - do you ~~not~~ see deem it enough to have told the Secy. (John B. Floyd)* that he has no right to know the religious or political faith of the mechanics etc on the fortifications?" Now here is a hasty judgment which your more mature reflections will not sanction. In the first place do you not see that what a Chief Engineer ought to do & what a mere locum tenens holding the office for only a few weeks ought to do are two very different things. In the second place you did not consider that the interference in question was with General (Joseph G.) Totten*, not with me and was therefore a thing I could not properly take cognizance of or notice otherwise than the indirect manner in which I did notice it. If my endorsement did not fully meet the case, If it were not all that could have been done with propriety or with a prospect of useful effect or if such be the opinion of any considerable number of my brother officers then am I totally unworthy of my position. but I will venture to say that if you could sound all the officers of the Corps on that question you would not find a single one to agree with you.

This is by no means the first interference of the kind. How many similar ones there have been no one but General Totten can tell. A gross instance perpetrated more than seven years ago is exhibited in the paper herewith enclosed which please return after taking copies if you desire them. This is the only instance of resistance on the part of Genl. Totten to any interference whatever. It was as you will see a very feeble one indeed and even from that he fairly backed out. If you fancy that this with the other interferences & intrusions so long submitted to can be reformed by any thing I can do or even by any thing Genl. Totten can do you have greatly deceived yourself. The evils are too deeply rooted for that. There is but one remedy if any. Let every Chief of the Corps after making resistance in every possible legal way, resign or be dismissed. Then let his successor do the same & so on till the whole Corps have gone over board. It is barely possible that when ten or a dozen have left in that manner public opinion will be aroused to force a remedy. For myself I am ready for the sacrifice & was so at the time Genl. (Simon) Bernard* was appointed Asst. Engineer. Ever faithfully yr. friend S. THAYER
Genl. Jos. C. Swift

*See Index

(March 28, 1858)

No. 1 To Major Jno (John) Sanders* Engr Dep. 30 Dec 1850 - You were (lately) directed in conformity with Instrn. from Sec. War (Charles M. Conrad)* to dismiss Mr. (Corkain) from the employt. of chief overseer - a place he had long held at Fort Delaware - Appoint Mr. (McElroy) in his stead. - supposing He has been kept in that Responsible & Confidential for his character & qualifications I fear the change may involve injury to the Works - (I suppose the Sec. imagined it could be changed without Injury). Then directg Sanders to avoid Generalities & go into Detail of Reason for keeping (Corkain) in - Signd J. G. Totten

Brig. Genl. & Chf. Engr.!

No. 2 - Major Sanders Reasons why Mr. (Corkain) is so good & important a man & so important to the Work at Fort D. & that his own efficiency was improved by his aid & then an ex _____ pargrph for the Sec. that if he be allowed to retain other aid he may get on with the Secy. man.

No. 3 - Gen. Totten to Sec. War - I lately had the Honour to receive your directions to replace (Corkain) by (McElroy) - It was executed without delay _____ however that in the operations of Engr. officers its of great importance that subordinate hands be persons of tried Integrity & I find the Change would be an Evil & with Major Sanders (enclosed Copy above) I do not ask your further action but want to show the nature of the Duties of Engineers & Employees _____ a system _____ that through a long course of years been greatly beneficial to Public Interests - Ignorance _____ would inflict injury in spite of all an officer can do -- To which Secy Conrad Replies by an Endorsement on No. 3 Thus - _____ "The within Correspondence having been laid on my table with a Mass of other papers did not meet my eye until yesterday - If the Chf. Engr. will refer to the order given him on 14th Decr. he will find that it did not call either for a Report from Major Saunders (Sanders) or for advice from himself - The Sec. War needed not to be informed by the Chf. Engr. that in his Dept. as well as in all other Dept. Civil & Military of the Govt. the Employment of persons of Ignorance & Inexperience & Uncertain Character would inflict serious Injury on the Public Interests & Hopes that hereafter the Engr. in Chief will refrain from proffering to the Secy. gratuitous advice in relation to the proper mode of discharging his duties -- It is deemed unnecessary to take any other notice of the letter of Engr in Chief than simply to return it with this endorsement to be Recorded together with the Original letter & that a copy both of the Latter & the Endorsement be immediately transmitted to Major Saunders (Sanders) C.(harles) H. Conrad* Secy War
30th January 1851

No. 4 Genl Tottens Humiliation & that of the whole Corps as far as it could disgrace that Body.
Engr. Dep. Feb. 18th 1850 shd. be '51 - to Hon. Sec. War Sir, In reference to the Endorsement of the Hon. Sec. War on the subject of the appt. of Mr. (McElroy) as overseer at Ft. D. I beg leave to disclaim utterly any purpose of objecting to the action of the Secy. in the premises or offering any advice - If under the impression that the peculiar character

of those subordinate Employments on the Fortifcns, might not be known to the Secy, I was wrong in venturing the Information communicated in that Letter. I must nevertheless assure the Secy. that I had no thought of criticising his action or of obtruding advice or of saying or intimating anything disrespectful - I do not ask any Reply to but merely the perusal of this letter - It will of itself accomplish my two fold purpose, namely to lay my disclaimer before the Secy. & to enter my justification upon the same Record with the Rebuke." Jos. G. Totten
Brig General & Chief Engineer

*See Index

TO Joseph G. Swift*

Boston March 31st '58 (1858)

My dear General,

Owing to the pressure of my official duties I can only write a hurried reply to your letter of March 26th. You think I did not go far enough in the (James B.) McPherson* case. Well, tell me, what should my endorsement have said that I did not say. On the day I made it I sent a copy of it to McPherson - directing him to "govern himself accordingly". From the moment he receives that order the Secretarys (John B. Floyd)* interference is nulified, and McPherson is reinstated in his just rights & free to employ whomsoever he may prefer as Master Mason or overseer etc etc or to reemploy, if he wishes to do so, the overseer whom the Secretary's interference compelled him to dismiss. But you say this was not enough. I was bound to protest against what? Any interference with my rights or duties? not at all. The interference was with General (Joseph G.) Totten*, not with me, and I shall leave him to fight his own battles. It is no affair of mine. If I were to act as you advise I should justly forfeit whatever little influence I otherwise might have & would wish to use for the correction & prevention of abuses. You say this further action is necessary in order that I may not be suspected of conniving with the wrong. I cannot think that I have rendered myself liable to any such suspicion. No, my dear Genl. you have formed a hasty judgment which I am sure you will retract after due reflection. I sent you some additional papers with my letter of the 29th. These like the others are for your own eyes alone.

As ever your friend
General Jos. G. Swift Geneva

S. THAYER

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 1. Apl. 58 (1858)

Dear Colonel,

This comes mainly to say 1.2.3.4 are safe at hand, & will soon be returned to you. Tho you & every Officer of the Corps would condemn my hasty mode of procedure, & tho the act be (Joseph G.) Tottens* & not yours, - Yet the act came under your cognizance however temporary your command, & Recd. virtually an incidental Rebuke both of Secy. & Chief - & yet I am willing to defer to your prudence - the acts must come to Congress by & bye & be condemned. - I see now what I only had a glimpse of - namely that the Evil has been gradually permitted to become a (Depart^l) System of Corruption - ! How is it to be cured, certainly not by Resignation but by (Resistance) & Trial - for if the President interfered & dismissed the opposing officer, Congress could & would examine & defend etc -

The apology of Totten to (Charles M.) Conrad* seven years ago - unavailing & a humiliation of the whole Corps, & sad-sad! This Conrad I once asked to correct an Error in a War Dept. Doct. about (Simon) Bernard,* he refused & said the Govt. had done Right - My Reply was "I neither ask for your opinion nor heed it, - what I demand is my Right as a Citizen"

Your Position is one of Dignity, & your endorsement so Just that they dare not bring it to light - & in this concealment is the point of my Remarks -

You do not mention having Recd. 1.2.3.4 sent 24th. but I suppose you have them & I remain Every yours J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

TO Joseph G. Swift*

South Braintree April 4th 1858

My dear Genl.

Yours of April 1st came to hand last evening. You say in substance that albeit you stand alone against the whole Corps of Engineers & the rest of the world besides yet you will not give up but be of the "same opinion still" Well! that is brave! but which is most likely to be right, the one? or the many? You commend my prudence! The word being taken in its true sense I accept it as a compliment. If in a different sense I would ask. Do you really think that in this instance, or in any other in the course of my life I have deviated a single hair from the line marked out by a sense of duty? or that I am capable of swerving from it to avoid any apprehended evil to myself, or to obtain any desired good or from any selfish motive If you really think so, and I am sure you do not, I would not say a single word with a view to remove that idea from your mind.

You once thought I made a very bad Superintendent & perhaps think so still. I had & have no objection to that. I was never angry with you for it, never tried to bring you over to my views & was perfectly reconciled to the idea of leaving that matter to be settled by Old Time who generally comes to a right decision in the end altho sometimes rather slow in making up his judgments, but I never supposed however much we might honestly differ in opinion that my disinterestedness & purity of motives were ever doubted by you and I am quite sure they never have been. You say referring to my endorsement "and in this concealment is the point of my remarks" What do you mean by concealment" pray tell me. I had informed you that the endorsement had been laid before the Secretary of War (John B. Floyd)* and that it had been officially communicated to Lieut. (James B.) McPherson* for his government. Do you call this concealment? What would you have me do that I have not done? Have the kindness to explain & be explicit so that I may know precisely what your views are & what steps you think I ought to take for I am somewhat in the dark as to your meaning. Your friend S. THAYER
General Jos. G. Swift

P.S. Your idea that the President is responsible to Congress or the people would have been correct enough before Genl (Andrew) Jacksons* administration but never since

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 5th April '58 (1858)

Dear Colonel,

I have your letter of 31 March & certainly I do not understand the subject & must be in deep error.

I did not know, until your last but one, that these Vile acts had become a System - nor until your last that a Remidy might be expected from Lieut. (James B.) McPherson* - Is his position equal to it?

A course of Error is pursued by the War & Engr. Dept deeply injurious to the Corps of Engineers, no Remedy whatever is expected from those who have done the evil - You became officially acquainted with these Errors, But you deem them to be no affair of yours & this is the part of the matter that I do not comprehend, - from whom do you expect a Remidy to be applied in case a Young Subaltern should fail to take the Bull by the Horns - certainly not from those who have inflicted the Evil? - But there are things in this matter that I do not as well understand as yourself, & therefore I'm in the wrong. -

Shall in a few days get through with some Work & will then return you - 1.2.3.&4 - No. 2 Your friend J. G. SWIFT
P.S. You say its a business of Gen. (Joseph G.) Tottens,* & you leave him to fight his own Battles - what Battle? - he has given up Resistance - the letter to (Charles M.) Conrad* is the Entire giving up! You say its no affair of yours - If you do not find it by & bye to an affair of yours I miss my guess J.G.S.
P.S. No. 2 - You say "the fault is in the System" - in my opinion the fault is in the abuse of a very good thing & no System at all, & if it be a System of Evil who is to begin the Remidy

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 7 Apl. '58 (1858)

Dear friend,

I am excessively pained by your letter of 4th 'tho I hope my succeeding letter may have chased away the main mistake, - But "concealment" is a word I never thought applicable to you 'tho I forget what word I did use, certainly not that, & as to your Purity or Honoured purpose, why in my mind the man does not live who is your superior in either, - You "swerve from Rectitude", why you will make me run mad if you can imagine me to do any thing but to hold you in the highest Honour & Respect, - Nay if you can find an idea in any letter of mine to or about you that smacks of the smallest disrespect - cancel the Word, - If by chance I have said a wrong of you, blot it out for ever such was never intended, & Rather than wound your feelings in the least I will sacrifice every opinion that I ever have expressed about this cursed War & Engr. Dept. Stuff. - Why you are of more importance to my happiness than the whole Corps of Engineers saving a Cornor for Jno. (John) L. Smith!*

I return 1.2.3.4. such shallow insulting fallacious exposure as is Secy (Charles M.) Conrads* Endorsement, & such a humiliation as is Genl. (Joseph G.) Tottens* disclaimer is past credence!

As to your question what would I have you to do that you have not done, my last letter is all that need be said in Reply
- Yours ever

J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 8 April '58 (1858)

Dear friend,

I was so much Distressed by the Tone of Yours of 4th that did not reach me til Yesterday that I omitted to note your Remarks on the word Prudence & about West Point - That word was never used by me in reference to you in any sense but its best - As to my temerity in facing the Corps & the World I intended only to seek a Remedy for what you call an Evil of System - if so & you expect no Remedy from the Chief Engineer or Secy. War Who is to begin - Do you deem your letter to the Secy. War (John B. Floyd)* & to Lieut. (James B.) McPherson* a sufficient Lever I hope it may be but I fear they will the Secy. evade & the Lieut. fear to face the Rascality -

It is not my province to dictate in this matter, while it becomes me to Respect Experience of one to whose Judgement I am in the habit of deferring - but never was in the habit of adopting servilely any mans opinion & so Rest in Reply to your query, "What could I have done that I have not done" -

As to West Point 'tho your administration there transcended my Honest wish for your Success - & your modifying the "Rules & Articles" better to suit Boys than I apprehended & left my Strong Patriarchy far behind & introduced Science beyond any other Institution - All that grand Result is not a sufficient Reason for me to sanction a course which in my Judgement must take a much stronger lead If the Corps is to be Restored to the mental state in which it was incipiently when Col. (Jonathan) Williams* left it - Yet there is no man on Earth for whom I have so strong an attachment as to yourself & close to you Jno. (John L.) Smith* & I will not belittle my Regard for both of you by naming any other Man forever

J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

TO Joseph G. Swift*

Boston April 9th 1858

My dear General,

I have your letter of April 5th in which you say "I did not know until your last that a remedy might be expected from Lieut. (James B.) McPherson* - Is his position equal to it?" Why my dear General, you must have dreamed that, surely. If you can find in any letter of mine any passage saying that or conveying an idea of the kind or resembling it in the remotest degree I hereby bind myself to make you a present of my library. "Remedy" of what? Did I not inform you that I had in effect countermanded & annulled the Secretary's (John B. Floyd)* order transmitted to McPherson by Genl (Joseph G.) Totten* and the MCP. has now the same unrestricted control over his employees as he had before the Secy gave the aforesaid order. In speaking of the interference of (Charles M.) Conrad* in 1850 & others under General Tottens administration you say, "It is no affair of yours, you say, if you do not find it by & by an affair of yours I miss my guess" perhaps you are right. I could judge of that better if you would have the kindness to explain how it can become an affair of mine unless it be in cases submitted for my action as in the case of McPherson, the only one that has come before me officially or in a manner admitting of my action. The only question, therefore is whether I have dealt with that case in a proper manner. I thought I had but am open to conviction - you think that something more remained for me to do but I have in vain endeavored to draw from you what that "something" is. If you will only tell me precisely what you mean, that is to say the precise steps you think I should take, then, I will take your advice into respectful consideration. All of your letter except the passages above cited consists of generalit¹ allusions which I have tried very hard to comprehend but cannot for the life of me which you may ascribe, if you please to the bluntness of my understanding. Your friend

S. THAYER

General Jos. G. Swift

*See Index

¹Manuscript term.

TO Joseph G. Swift*

April 12th 1858

My dear General.

Yours of the 7th & 8th reached me on Saturday. They were exceedingly gratifying & consoling and altogether more than I deserve. I am very sorry that what I wrote gave you pain. Have I doubted? never. To doubt would make me the miserable of men. A friendship that has stood the test for fifty years may be presumed to last during the remainder of our lives but enough of that.

Your letter of the 7th says "To your question what would I have you to do that you have not done my last letter is all that need be said in reply" Now, I can find nothing at all either in your "last letter" nor in any preceding letter that points out "what you would have me to do" That is the very thing I have been trying to draw from you. If you would tell me precisely what it is, then, we might reason about it but if you will not come to the point Then, in that case, I see no use in saying more on the subject. On the 8th you say "Do you deem your letter to the Secy of War (John B. Floyd)* & to Lieut (James B.) McPherson* a sufficient lever" That is the very thing I want to lay hold of an have been trying to get you to describe in a clear & explicit manner Again on the 8th you say "it is not my province to dictate in this matter and never was in the habit of adopting serviley every mans opinion & so that in reply to your query what coud I have done that I have not done Now just look at it & say whether you consider that an intelligible description of what you would have me to do that I have not done - or in other words, the precise, definite step or steps I should take. I again wait for a reply. Your friend

S. THAYER

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 14. Apl. '58 (1858)

Dear Colonel,

Your letter of 9th reached this place yesterday; - I regret that my letters do not convey my meaning; The sum & Substance of all that I intended to say is that I approve of every iota of your Endorsement, but fear you have not gone far enough in omitting to amplify to the President (James Buchanan)* the Evils of this System of Interference; - You do not understand my use of the term Remidy - my meaning is that if Lt. (James B.) McPherson* acts upon Your Endorsement, a Remidy is commenced, But if by any Interference he is prevented that action, what is to be done? - Why you must pursue it or the Evil will be perpetuated. - that is what I mean by your being "called on for something more" than your Endorsement - that is, the Evil becomes an affair of yours in consequence of that Endorsement being thwarted by the Secy. (John B. Floyd)* - What are you to expect from men who have done such things as Floyd* & (Charles M.) Conrad?* - Why that your Essay to give a free & just action to one of your subalterns is obstructed by a Secy. War!

When your command ceases those who have infixed the Evils will come again to the place to Repeat & sustain them; - I may be wrong, but if I were Chief Engineer they never should have the Power to Repeat the Evils -

You have undoubtedly placed on Record your condemnation of these Evils, But I very much doubt whether that Record may see the light by any action of your Secy. or Chief, & if they do not see the light on whom will censure fall!

I may have become senile, & may not understand the matter, but as far as I can see, You are the person upon whom a call will by & by be made; - it may be that it is proper for you to await that call? such however is not my opinion, - You may smile at my earnestness & banter me on my Courage & Indefiniteness of my opinion, - But if I know what I am saying, my idea is that you will have to correct the Evils - When I wrote (Joseph G.) Totten* I had no knowledge of 1.2.3.4. & only asked him wherein my Notions were not practicable? - He flew into a Rage & said my conduct was childish, - but I could have borne that, but could not bear his accusing me of treason to our long enduring Relations! & wrote him "he had passed the line - but for various Reasons I could not challenge him to the Field & should try to forgive the Insult," - O his heartlessness has been a severe pang & can never be cured. - I'm as ever Yours

J. G. SWIFT

P.S. I again say 1.2.3.4. No. 1 & 2 are safe & will not be used by me - Do you suppose Secy. War will tell all this story to Mr. Buchanan? --No,

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 16. Apl. '58 (1858)

Dear friend,

Two hours after my last was mailed came yours of 12th & was quite refreshing - after my pertinacity - the only merit of which is that it can do me no personal benefit - One thing is sure You & I do not mean to flatter one another. -

I have Read the defence in the Herald of the Secy. War, (John B. Floyd)* the sum & substance of which is that a vast deal too much money has been paid, or is to be, for the Sites; - one Secy. castigates one Engineer for presuming to give good advise, while another lauds another Engineer for advising to a wrong - bah!

I have recently returned from the Funeral of Mr. Greig at Canandaigua he was 78 & we had been intimate friends for 30 years - He Departed Thanking God that he had had a pleasant life & a good wife & in full Faith of Salvation in the coming life - leaving his wife a Fee simple Estate of \$80,000 & \$10,000 a year for life, - He was an uncommonly worthy Citizen & man of Refined Taste & good Judgement - I suppose there were many hundreds of the Poor at the Cemetery; - the bulk of his Estate - acquired in U. S. Now goes to Scotland - no legacy to any one out of his family but to two grand daughters of the great Robert Morris* \$20,000 each. When you see Jno. (John) L. Smith* you can tell him what I say of J.G.T. (Joseph G. Totten)* Yours ever
J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

TO Joseph G. Swift*

April 17th (1858)

No 2 April 17th

I have just recd. your letter of April 14th but am too busy to reply to it as I could wish. Je vous comprend, enfin, mon cher ami - I must address Mr. (James) Buchanan* you say. Very well I cannot say but the time may come for that although as to any good it can do by any possibility one might as well whistle to Northwester. a thing you would understand if you knew him as well as I think I know him. You say I must "amplify" on the "evils of the system" But how am I supposed to know & what right have I to speak of the acts going to constitute the "system" except such as come before me officially. Now there has been but one such act viz the one in question. You say "you do not understand my use of the word remedy My meaning is that if Lieut (James B.) McPherson* acts upon your endorsement a remedy is commenced but if by any interference he is prevented that action what is to be done?" "If Lieut MCP. acts" upon my endorsement! He has been ordered by me to act upon it Why should he not obey? What motive can he have for not obeying? "If by any interference he is prevented that action"! Whose interference? The Secretary's (John B. Floyd)*? What thing more improbable considering that the endorsement was laid before the Secy two or three months ago & that there has been no adverse action upon it but supposing there may be such action or interference am I to anticipate it & to act on that future contingency. You cannot by any possibility think so after a little consideration. Success is most sure when one not only selects the best means but also chooses the proper time for their employment.

The above in much haste S. T.

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 22 Apl. '58 (1858)

Dear friend,

Yesterday I Recd. your 1 & 2 of 17th - Engagements of business keep me at Home til Summer - otherwise I would be with you two.¹ -

As to writing the President (James Buchanan)* I mean of course at a suitable time & no other.

Your note of 17th is the first intimation that I have that your Endorsement is an Order to Lt. (James B.) McPherson* - If the Secy. (John B. Floyd)* & Chief Engr. (Joseph G. Totten)* submit to that Endorsement I shall be mistaken. Your friend

J. G. SWIFT

My daughters (Sally Swift)* very best Respects to you - cant you visit Avon this summer with J. (ohn) L. S. (mith)*?

*See Index

¹ probably refers to Col. John Lind Smith, by whom letter was delivered to Thayer.

FROM George W. Cullum*

New York, May 14, 1858

Bvt. Col. S. Thayer
Comdg. Corps of Engineers
Boston, Mass.

Colonel,

Agreeably to appointment I will meet Lieut. (Edward B.) Hunt* at Fort Adams on the 19th proximo, as you desired, after which I think it important to spend a day at New Bedford, as there is a public horse there, purchased by Capt. (Henry W.) Benham,* and a man employed to keep him, both of which I think had better be at once dispensed with by selling the former and discharging the latter. After performing these duties I propose to return to New York immediately and with Major (John G.) Barnard* prepare the project for Sandy Hook defenses to be submitted to the Board whenever again assembled by its President - Maj. (Henry) Brewerton.*

My present orders will cover my transportation to New Bedford, but to return here and, after the completion of my duties with the Board to go back to my post will require further authority from you, directed to me at New Bedford, which I have now the honor to request. Very respectfully Your most Obedt

GEO. W. CULLUM

Capt. U. S. Engrs.

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 18 May '58 (1858)

Dear Colonel,

Lest Gen. (Joseph G.) Totten* may imagine me by silence to subscribe to his absurdities, I have written him as follows through Capt. (Horatio) Wright.* - "To Gen. Totten, Sir, as I have done nothing to Justify your assumption at Forgiveness as contained in your Letter of 7th May Instant, I repudiate all Right on your part to offer It & also your marking that letter & others on the same subject as "Private".---As a Citizen of the U.S. I have an unquestionable Right to form & express my opinion upon the acts of Public Officers; - I had been ~~effiecially~~ conversant with the acts of the Corps of Engineers & with the Degrading & Expensive Interferences of the Secy. War; To Yourself - without the remotest purpose of unfriendliness - I had written some Remarks on your mode of Conducting the Service & my ideas of Improving the same, - they may have been inapplicable, - You chose to turn them aside with erroneous constructions of them, in Sarcastic & Invidious & Contemptuous Expressions & doubts of the Integrity of my sentiments towards you - Justifying my letter to you of New Years day; - Lest you may imagine me to acquiesce in your Reiterated Injustice, Error & assumption of Exclusive Knowledge & assumed Forgiveness of what I have not done (of 7 May) I make this Rejoinder & am your obdt. Svt.

J. G. SWIFT"

In matters "Quadrate" as Capt. Thompson* used to say at West Point 50 Years ago - My daughter (Sally Swift)* & myself propose to see Nantucket in the course of the Summer on our Route we may come near to you - Please inform me where you may be 20th June to 1 Sept. Do you see how cheap Travelling in Europe has become? As ever Your
To Col. Thayer.

J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

TO Joseph G. Swift*

Boston June 2d '58 (1858)

My dear Genl.

Being very busy when I recd. your last letter I merely glanced at & then laid it aside to be answered at my earliest leisure which has just now arrived but the letter has disappeared. burned up probably. Its principal contents, if I remember right, was your response to (Joseph G.) Tottens* Parthian. We were both in Newyork six days preceding his departure without seeing one the other or interchanging salutations in any way. The last letter or note from him was that of last December which has remained without answer. Thus ends our private intercourse for life, I doubt not, but it troubles me little. better so than to have been a dupe any longer I wish him no harm & have idea that he wishes me any You & I are to him as squeezed oranges. He can get no more Juice out of us. Why should he care for the peels.

I was glad indeed to be informed that you & daughter (Sally Swift)* design to visit the "fatherland" in the course of the summer. I rely upon your giving me due notice of your movements so that may see you as much as my official duties will permit. Your friend
S. THAYER
Genl. Jos. G. Swift

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 2d June '58 (1858)

Dear friend,

I am glad to hear from my son "Dr. Foster Swift"* that our friend Col. J. L. S. (John L. Smith)* is much better of his bruises from slipping down on an orange Peel, producing Swelled Knee that extended to the groin & ankle - The Army Surgeon advises Avon Spring Water; - many of my family are to be there this Summer, Jose (Swift Richards)* going up on an Air Bed next Week, & Sally (Swift)* & I, after seeing her there, hope to jaunt to Nantucket in July, as I told you of in my last. - I am chockfull of the Folly of England the U.S. our neglect of Treaty, & her usual arrogance - She can have a War very easily if she desire such a curse? - but I say no more because of your Vacation, 'tho fear you are not well? Your

J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

TO Joseph G. Swift*

Boston June 4th '58 (1858)

My dear Genl.

I this moment recd yours of June 2d. You fear I am not well! If you knew the pressure of duties upon me you would excuse me for not always promptly answering your letters. I see you are full of fight - That is the right feeling & spirit but we must play the bully with a nation such as Great Britain. Suppose we execute our threat by sinking one of her vessels of War might she not take (& occupy permanently) Fort Warren, Fort Adams & all our most important forts without receiving, or being under the necessity of firing a shot? Our bravado is ridiculous & disgusting.

I have advised our friend John L. S. (mith)* to be off to Avon where I would be delighted to meet you but that is out of the question & my only hope is to see you & daughter (Sally Swift)* in this neighborhood Yrs ever
S. THAYER
Genl. Jos. G. Swift

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift

Geneva 8th June '58 (1858)

Dear Col.

I have your Notes of 2d. & 4th. & hope that Letter is
Burnt or otherwise beyond the reach of gossipping eyes -

Very glad you have written Col. J. L. S. (John L. Smith)*
& hope he will embrace the (chance) at an early Day.

"Casemate Embrasures" came to me recently with the
"compliments of Genl. (Joseph G.) Totten*! endorsed -
Compliments & Jesuitism are now too late. Your Respy.

J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 15. June '58 (1858)

Dear friend,

I am glad to know by yours of 10th that my Reply to (Joseph G.) Tottens* strange missle is not exposed to the (Danger) of a Gossips Eye; He has escaped to Europe, but under the maxim of Horace he cant escape the odium of being a Tool, & for the sake of his family I am sorry it is so. (nor) (as) (as) My "Champions of England" are not in Bloom (now) (or) near it (or) my "Charltons" tho planted in April - but my Limas & Corn & Tomatoes are fair - I am glad your official pressures have not cut you off altogether from your (merited) enjoyment of the Garden, that used to give you joy at West Point! We are all pretty well here, & you will hear from me when you are ready for it. - Capt. (Horatio) Wright* advises me of my letter to Totten having gone to him across the Atlantic, As ever Your

J. G. SWIFT

Colonel Thayer U.S. Engineers Boston

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 16 June '58 (1858)

Dear Colonel,

I have just Recd. a letter from Washington saying that without my consent the Secy. War (John B. Floyd)* had been informed of my opinion that there was not a Fort in the U.S. So finished & armed as to be able to be defended against a formidable Naval Assault one Hour & that there is no Remedy for such Public Neglect & Vast Expense so long as a Secy. War & his Principal meddle with the Responsibility of Construct: _ Engineers - save by frequent & thorough Inspections That the Bureaus at Washington are existing without Legislative authority, & consequently are not Responsible agents, & therefore are calculated to be tools for Executive Dispersion of the Public Money.

Whether this may go any further I know not, but am ready to sustain my opinion before Congress & am your friend
& your st J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

FROM Quincy A. Guillmore*

Unofficial

New York June 21 1858

Colo. S. Thayer
Commdg Corps of Engrs.
Boston

Dear Sir

I have the pleasure to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 16th Instant.

I look upon my experiments with litumeus, thus far, as simply initiatory, & only successful to an extent sufficient to justify a continuation of them. -

This I purpose doing from time to time, as my other official duties shall allow, after I shall have received other samples of the California litumen, which I have requested Major (Zealous B.) Tower* to send me. -

I desire in particular to watch the effects of time & exposure, upon the specimens of mastic containing the Trinidad litumen, that have been applied as a roof covering, under conditions thought to be peculiarly favorable to the development of any prominent characteristics whether good or bad. - The roof covers a portion of a wooden shed belonging to the mastic depot on Governor's Island, and is well exposed to the effects of high winds, from which considerable sudden motion may be expected, and also to the extremes of temperature natural to this climate.

A small quantity will also be applied as a pavement in a position where the test will be severe. -

It appears to me desirable that the best of these compounds should be thoroughly tested with a view to ascertain their tenacity, hardness & flexibility, under the various degrees of temperature to which, in practice, they would ordinarily be submitted, & it would afford me pleasure to carry out any instructions or suggestions which you might think proper to give upon the subject.

My impression is, that it will be practicable to replace the imported mineral tar used in our mastic, by the California or Trinidad litumen in combination with the proper solvent, while I have doubts if any solid substance now known, can with economy, be introduced to any great extent, in place of the Switzerland asphalte, for the simple reason that an additional quantity of the matrix would be required, as an equivalent for the mineral tar of the asphalte.

Col. (John L.) Smith* informs me that it is your wish that should visit the cement works in Virginia, and at such time as I may select. - There is no prospect of my being more at leisure for such a duty, than during the balance of this month.

Orders covering my journey to Balcony Falls, Rockbridge Co: Virginia are therefore respectfully requested. -

A form is sent, which, it is thought will meet your approbation, & save you the labor of writing one. - I am with great respect & esteem Your most obedient Servt.

Q. A. GILLMORE
Lt. Engrs.

*See Index

FROM George W. Cullum*

New Bedford, Mass. June 24th 1858

Bvt. Col. S. Thayer
Comdg Corps of Engineers
Boston, Mass.

Colonel,

In obedience to your orders of the 31st Ult., and the accompanying instructions of the Secretary of War (John B. Floyd)* of the 28th ult., respecting the "propositions and enquiries" made, under his instructions, by Captain (Henry W.) Benham,* on the 16th Feb. 1858, to the Mayor of the City of New Bedford (a copy of which, marked A, is enclosed) respecting the relinquishment, on certain conditions, of the City's rights to the roads lying within the limits of the tract of land at Clark's Point, recently purchased by the United States, I addressed a letter to the Mayor of New Bedford on the 14th inst., marked B, to which he promptly sent me, on the same day, his reply, marked C, and a copy of the action of the City authorities, of March 5, 1858, upon Capt. Benham's proposition of Feb. 16. 1858, marked D. - On the 22nd inst: Wm. W. (Crapo) Esq, City Solicitor, furnished me his opinion, marked E. "that the fee of the land now occupied by the old or center Road, within the Government tract, is in Edward W. Howland.*" On the same day Mr. Howland made his proposition, marked F, modified by his after communication, marked G, upon which he would relinquish his claims to all the roads within the government purchase, and execute a deed to the United States for all title, interest, and estate he claims therein.

From this correspondence and the accompanying papers, it will appear:

First - that the United States on the 16th Feb. 1858, by authority of the Secretary of War, offers to give up to the City of New Bedford, for the free use of a public highway, 33 to 35 feet in width of land along their northern boundary. Mr. E. W. Howland, the adjoining proprietor, contributing an equal amount of land for the same purpose, over which the United States further agree to complete a good road, 66 to 70 feet wide, across the Clark's Point peninsula from the branch of the "New Road" near Clark's Cove to the branch on the Eastern or Harbor side, on condition that all claims for any rights whatever to the roads south of the northern line of boundary of the government land shall be yielded to the United States without any compensation or consideration, other than that above specified:

Second - that the Mayor of New Bedford proposes, "with a view to reconcile the wishes of the U.S. Government and the City, and to harmonize their interests", to recommend to the favorable action of the City Council" that the City yield up to the United States the control of the Point Road with liberty to occupy the same or such parts thereof whenever required by the exigencies of the public service," and discontinue and release all rights and easements which they now have in the old Road crossing the center of the Government tract", provided "that the U.S. Government build, at its own expense, a road 70 feet in width upon the north line of their land - one half of the land to be taken from the premises of Edwd. W. Howland, who will furnish the same, and the other half from the premises recently purchased by the United States", and "in the event of any buildings or Fortifications being placed upon the (Point) Road

bed as now established or any such occupancy as to interfere with the present Road, the United States shall, at its expense, build a suitable drive around the same and outside of any such buildings and Fortifications, in order that the citizens may have as now a continuous drive around the Point, and which shall be obstructed only when necessary for purposes incident to the Fortifications", and further provided "that Mr. Howland, the owner of the fee in the land covered by these roads, assent to the changes necessarily made by this arrangement."

Third - that Mr. Howland, who claims the fee of these roads south of the United States northern boundary line, will relinquish all right, title and estate in his reversionary interest in both roads and execute a quit-claim deed to the United States for the same, on condition that the Government "throw out seventy feet upon their North line, adjoining his land, and build a good road for public travel over the same," and otherwise conform to the propositions of the Mayor of New Bedford above cited.

Though the "propositions and enquiries made by direction of the Secretary of War, have not been responded to as favorably as the government could desire, whose wish and interest it would doubtless be to have the unlimited right and control of all the roads and lands within the limits of the public domain, yet, in view of the earnest desire of the inhabitants of New Bedford to continue to enjoy their beautiful drive in which they take so much pride and so justly prize, and, in consideration of the liberal offer of the Mayor to place the control of the Point Road in the hands of the United States with authority to occupy any part of it for the site of the fort, and to close it in whole or part whenever required by the exigencies of the public service, and further to discontinue and release all rights and easements over the old road through the middle of the government tract, I would respectfully and earnestly recommend the following compromise of this vexed question which will I think promote harmony, save a large expenditure of government funds, and secure most of the essential rights and conveniences of all parties concerned.

First - that Edward W. Howland and all other claimants, if there be any, relinquish all their rights, title, interest, and estate in all the roads within the public domain south of the northern boundary line of the government tract, and execute a quit-claim deed to the United States for all their interest and reversionary rights, the deed to be submitted to, and approved by the Attorney General of the United States.

Second - that the City authorities of New Bedford "discontinue and release all rights and easements which they now have in the old road crossing the center of the Government tract", and that they "yield up to the United States the control of the Point Road", south of the government northern boundary line, "with liberty to occupy the same for the purposes of erecting defenses or fortifications thereon if necessary, and to close the same or such parts thereof when ever required by the exigencies of the public service", of which necessity the War Department shall be the judge.

Third - that the United States, in consideration of the full and faithful execution of the above conditions, will deflect, at their own expense, the Point Road where occupied by the fort by a turnout, twenty five feet wide and about sixty rods long, outside of the fortifications, thus securing a continuous public drive around the Point, which turnout shall be subject to the

same control and conditions as before specified for the Point Road. Further that the Government, to provide a passage way when the Point Road is obstructed from any exigencies of the public service, will grant a right of way over a strip of their land, adjoining their northern boundary line, of seventy feet in width and extending from the Cove to the Harbor branch of the Point Road, for the purposes of a public highway to be made and fenced, where necessary, on the southern or government side at the cost of the City of New Bedford, it being expressly understood that should this highway be ever discontinued the land will revert to the United States in whose possession the fee will remain. And, to prevent any future misunderstanding, the United States declare that no expenses whatever will ever be defrayed by them in maintaining and keeping in repair this highway and the Point Road including the turnout to be constructed around the fortifications.

The above three propositions I consider an equitable and advantageous compromise for all parties concerned, and I accordingly urgently recommend them for the adoption of the government, believing as I do that they will be promptly acceded to by the City of New Bedford and all claimants in the fee of the roads; that all angry controversies and litigations will thus become unnecessary; that great expenses will be saved by the government for damages and fees, possibly amounting to the whole balance, about \$70,000, of the present appropriation for the "Fortifications at entrance of New Bedford Harbor; that the United States would secure what is most essential to them by a trifling expenditure for the turnout around the fort, and equal to one sixth of the outlay which would be required for constructing the road and fencing the highway along the government boundary offered in Capt. Benham's proposition with the Secretary of War's sanction; that, except when the exigencies of the public service forbid, the citizens of New Bedford would continue to enjoy their find drive around Clark's Point; and that the defenses of this important harbor would be inconvenienced at an early day without much further diminution of the balance of the appropriation now available, instead of being exhausted in paying exorbitant road and land damages profiting neither the government nor the City of New Bedford, the former remaining in the end the possessor of about sixty acres of unoccupied land, and the latter continuing in her present defenseless condition. I have the honor to be

Very Respectfully Your Most Obedt.

GEO. W. CULLUM

Capt. U.S. Eng'rs.

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 29 June '58 (1858)

Dear Colonel,

A letter from my Brother William (H. Swift)* in England the last of May Requests to be Remembered to you & Col. (John L.) Smith* - He met (Joseph G.)* Totten who had the indelicacy to allude to me & the "cool words" - Aye unthawing Ice! -- When you wrote me of Tottens leaving the U.S. without seeing you, it reminded me of his impertinent Letter requiring me "not to disturb Col. Thayer" for he Totten doubted not his ability 'tho you might differ from Totten! My Brother has a just estimate of the Jesuitical Selfishness of that perverter of the Interests of the Corps of Engineers; - But to return to William, he & his wife have been very industrious from Naples to Dresden - have seen many things - are passing a month in England & go to Belgium & Switzerland in July & back to Paris by the last of August, & home in the Arago 21st. Sept: -

My daughters & my jaunt East - has been some what modified by the crippled condition of Jose (Swift Richards)* - She can't leave Home yet, & may not get off to the Springs at all this Season? if not - the children may be sent to Geneva - So our Eastern jaunt may be postponed 'til William gets to Mt. Vernon Place.

Our Respects & best wishes attend you Yours as ever
J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

FROM George W. Cullum*

New Bedford, Mass. June 30th, 1858

Bvt. Col. S. Thayer
Comd'g Corps of Engineers
Boston, Mass,

Colonel,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 28th inst:, and, as therein directed, will immediately take the necessary steps, through the legal council heretofore employed by the United Staes, for "making application for the calling of a Jury for the assessment of any claims for ownership or easements of the land (at Clark's Point) withing the limits of the boundaries designated in the award of the referees."

As requested, I enclose a copy of your letter of the 28th inst: and one of Capt. (Horatio) Wright's* of Feb. 4, 1858, written by direction of the Secty of War (John B. Floyd)*, and presumed to be that referred to in the Secretary's instructions, of May 28, 1858, to you, none from the Secretary himself of that date being on file in this office.

Yours very respectfully GEO. W. CULLUM
Capt. U.S. Engineers

*See Index

FROM George W. Cullum*

New Bedford, Mass. July 2nd 1858

Bvt. Col. S. Thayer
Com'd'g Corps of Engineers
Boston, Mass.

Colonel,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt, under your frank, of a copy of a communication, of the 8th ult., from Capt. W. (William) B. Franklin*, Sect'y of the Lighthouse Board, to the Hon. Howell Cobb*; and the authority of the latter, contained in his letter of the 23rd ult: presumed to the Sect'g of War, (John B. Floyd)* for the War Department to occupy, on certain conditions, such portion of the Lighthouse lot at Clark's Point as may be necessary for the fortifications proposed to be erected for the defense of this harbor. Very Respectfully Your Most Obedt. GEO. W. CULLUM

Capt. U.S. Eng'rs

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 6th July '58 (1858)

Dear Colonel,

I hasten in Reply to your note of 2d to say that from what (Joseph G.) Totten* writes to You, his mind must be weakened; He had time to write me that letter of 7th May & surely could have snatched a moment to "implore a Blessing" on him who had succeeded him in Command during his flight out of the Country!

But Jno. L. (John L. Smith)* thinks you & I prejudiced, & that I do not understand Tottens innocuous Letter of 7th May!

If Jno. L., Wm. H. Chase* & Col. Thayer & one J. G. Swift were to meet at Geneva, Brutus & Cassius would have been fools in comparison. Ever your

J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 26 July '58 (1858)

Dear Colonel,

I wish you to know that from an impression that Col. (John L.) Smith* might think I had given an officious opinion to (Joseph G.) Totten* - I have advised him that Tottens admission that he would Read my opinion Respectfully, & that Engineer officers did not pull together, was Recd. by me before I gave him my opinion, & therefore it was not unduly officious on my part. -

To you I will say that its not my purpose to say anything more on this useless subject, save in self defence & I am as
ever Your
Col. Thayer

J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

FROM Horatio G. Wright*

Washington Aug 16th 1858

Dear Col -

The order assigning you to the command of your brevet will be issued today -

In announcing this gratifying intelligence I take pleasure in saying that the result was accomplished thro' the intervention of the Actg Adjt Genl. Major (Edward D.) Townsend,* who took an active interest in the matter, and who presented the propriety of the assignment to the Secretary (John B. Floyd)* so forcibly that he assented to it without the slightest objection - I also understand from Major T. that the assignment was not authorized with any reference to a possible question of rank between you and Col (Richard) Delafield*, but for the reasons indicated in your letter to me.

I hope you will think with me that the proposition came with peculiar propriety from another branch of the Service, and that the compliment conveyed in this prompt acknowledgement of your claim is the more flattering on that account.

Genl (Joseph G.) Totten* has never served under his brevet, I believe - Yours Very Respectfully

H. G. WRIGHT

Col. S. Thayer
Comdg Corps Engrs
Boston, Mass.

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 20th Aug. '58 (1858)

Dear Colonel,

The admirers of (Queen) Victoria* have been chagrined by Her Vapid message to the President, (James Buchanan)* - It is disgraceful to England that such an occasion should have been marred by an aspect of Conduct & Exclusive Interest! --- I have not an idea that the Cable is going to work wonders - It may (arrest) Monopolies - fix with accuracy the Longitude - aid the Diplomat, & convey news of Disaster or of threatened evil? - What may be the Acidifying influence of Salt water 10,000 feet deep, & which permeates grass at a less depth, is to be known by & bye, - It may require a heavier Battery than any yet known to keep up intercourse & not melt the cable?

Col. (James D.) Graham* has sent me a description of (detecting) a very small (increment) of Time by Touch that has determined the Diff: of Long: tween Quebeck & Chicago a line on the (Wires) of Twelve Hundred & Ten Miles (1210) in which the Spark flies in Eight Hundredths of one Second of Time - tested over & over again; - but this flight is through the air & not through the Depth of 10,000 feet of salt water.

The delays in my going East with Sally (Swift)* have been owing to family affairs, & I cannot now say when I may go, - it was my hope to meet William (H. Swift)* on his arrival early in October but I cannot get away 'til November. - I have a letter from him of 18 July at Coblenz; In London he left your Chief (Joseph G. Totten)* with ague & Fever - & with an enquiry for his (Ws) Brother! I expect to see (William H.) Chase* & his family here soon, unless his "Stumping it" in Florida may keep him at home?

Our love to you & I am As ever Your J. G. SWIFT
To Col. Thayer Comg U.S. Corps Engineers H.Q. Boston

P.S. The subsidiary to the Queens message is I am glad a very great improvement upon the Introductory - but far below my notion & far below Mr. Buchanans Reply - Commonplace both of them!

*See Index

TO Horatio G. Wright*

Headquarters, Corps of Engineers
Boston, September 15th. 1858

Capt. H. G. Wright
U. S. Corps of Engineers,
In Charge of Engineer Bureau,

Sir,

I have the honor to transmit herewith to be laid before the Secretary of War (John B. Floyd)* the following papers, Viz:

1st Proceedings of the Academic Board had in pursuance of instructions from the Secretary of War relative to a change in the Course of Studies at the Military Academy from five to four years. Contained in the Proceedings are two Reports: - the one concurred in by nine 9 members: - the other signed by one member only.

2d. A Programme for the proposed course of Studies for four years adopted by the Board. Ayes 9. Nos 1.

3d. Proposed Plan for carrying into effect the four years Course with present classes.

4th Programme of the Course of Studies for five years submitted to and adopted by the Board in connection with the Report recorded in the proceedings of Decr. 5th 1856.

5th. Programme of the Course of Studies for four years as pursued previous to the adoption of the five years Course.

Entertaining the same opinions still in regard to the Terms and Course of Studies at West Point as I have ever entertained since 1817, when, on the recommendation of the undersigned the four years course was established; and concurring, moreover, in the reasonings and conclusions of the Majority Report, deeming them to be, in the main, sound and incontestable, I have pleasure in recommending in concurrence with the Board that the Term be changed from five to four years and that the change be carried into effect without delay, in the manner recommended by the Board.

It has been affirmed and indeed is admitted by the Academic Board in their Report, that the studies as arranged for the five years course over tasked the Cadets requiring from them more than they were capable of performing in the time allowed. Hence in shortening the Term it becomes necessary to curtail the Studies, in an equal or still greater ratio by eliminating some of the branches, or by giving a less development to a part, or all, or by the application of both processes. Whether this necessary curtailing or contraction of the studies is accomplished by the new Programme is at least doubtful, but whether it be so, or not, I cannot but think that the Programme would be vastly improved by further curtailing the English Studies in the first year(s) and especially, by lopping off the Spanish in the fourth year. The time thereby gained in the first year might be assigned to French and Drawing which stand in need of it. That gained in the last year would be restored to the course of Military Engineering and Science of War which, even then, would have less time assigned to it and, consequently, less development than are due to its importance, or than are given to the same studies in the Military Schools of Europe. I am the more free to Express these views from feeling assured that they are concurred in by a majority of the Academic Board who, in consenting to retain the Spanish, and perhaps, some other branches, did so, I doubt not, partly from a spirit of conciliation and compromise, and

also partly, from policy, in deference to the supposed opinions and wishes of the Government and of many respectable citizens. It is scarcely necessary to remark that the Programme so called is but a meagre skeleton exhibiting only a ^(faint) ~~(first)~~ outline of the proposed four years course, leaving undetermined the time the Cadets shall devote to study in quarters, as well as the extent to which the studies and instruction shall be carried, and fixing no standard of proficiency in any branch - deficiencies that are to be supplied by detailed Programmes," such as were contemplated by the 35th par. of the Academy Regulations published in 1857, which is identical with par. 38. of the Regulations published in 1853 - and with par. 37. of the next preceding Regulations published in 1832 - and also with a par. in every edition of the Regulations that has appeared since 1817; and yet, this regulation of forty years standing remains a dead letter. In view of that fact and of the pressing want of the long desired programmes - a want more felt of late & now than ever - I beg leave to offer the following suggestions for the consideration of the Secretary of War.

1st. Let the Professors be required to prepare as speedily as possible - each Professor a Programme for his own Department specifying the subjects of Study and instructions in minute detail with a calculation of the time in hours a pupil of fair abilities with proper diligence will require to master each subject.

2d. The sums of the hours in all the Programmes will, probably, exceed the sum of the hours appropriated to Study and instruction in the entire Term of four years requiring that the Programmes be reduced to their proper proportions and reconciled with one another, which as it seems to me, can be better done by a Special Commission than by the Academic Board, provided however, that it shall consist of persons possessing the highest qualifications for the office and as such having the confidence of the Army and the Country, as for example Professor (Alexander) Bache,* Colonel (Joseph K. F.) Mansfield,* Colonel R. (obert) Lee & Major (Alfred) Mordecai* -

3d The prepared Programmes to be submitted by the Inspector to the Secretary of War and by him referred for revision to the special Commission composed, if the Secretary thinks proper, of the Superintendent

(note on cover)

(2)

Sept 15th '58 (1858)

To the Secy of War
recommending

- (1) Charge of the Term from five to four years
- (2) Detailed Programmes to be drawn up & submitted to a Special Board
- (3) The appointment of of a Permanent Board of Improvement
- (4) Competitive Examinations for admission
- (5) Raising the standard of admission

TO Joseph G. Swift*

South Braintree Decr. 12th 1858

My dear General,

Although you probably know the situation of your & my noble friend John L. Smith* still as it is possible that you do not I write to communicate such information as I have. A fortnight ago I had a letter from Major (William H.) Chase* then & probably now in Newyork saying that the Colonel's health was such as to require that he should spend the winter at the South in the performance of some active but light duty such as the inspection of works. - I at once wrote to the Col. requesting him to pack up & repair forthwith to Washington where he would receive an order for such duty as he might desire. To this I have recd. no answer which must be ascribed to his being too feeble to write. Capt. (Jeremy F.) Gilmer* now here went with Major (John G.) Barnard* to see him last Wednesday (Decr. 8th) but were prevented from seeing him under a general prohibition by his physician Doctor (Charles Henry?) Crane*. In a letter from his landlady Mrs. Ellen Robinson* dated Decr. 8th she says. "Doctor Crane who attends him considers his situation a critical one"

I would go to see him instantu were I not kept here by indispensable duties. On the 22d instant I cease to command the Corps Lt. Col. (René) De Russy* assuming the command.
As ever yours S. THAYER
Genl. Swift

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 14. Dec. '58 (1858)

Dear friend,

I hear Col. (John L.) Smith* is down sick - have asked Major (John G.) Barnard* for facts - The time is coming to look out a Hospital for that Independent Spirit for he declines coming to a Private Family - I know you will see into this - would he were here & Content. -

The Secy. War (John B. Floyd)* Report is sound about one Chief for the two Corps - I hope soon to Read yours. As to the heights East of Brooklyn one of them looks upon the point of Debarkation in Jamaica Bay 5 miles only from the Navy Yard & there are three fathoms of Water at high Tide on the Bar at the entrance of that Bay; Generally U.S. want Forts only for Ship Channels & for Road Steads - But it may be well to U.S. to own a Spot on the Back Bone of L.I. as above - Did you ever see my Report on moving the Navy Yard to Harlem River & opening that River to the Hudson & so have a double exit & entrance to & from sea etc. etc. Ever your

J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

TO Joseph G. Swift*

South Braintree Decr. 17th 1858

My dear General & best friend,

I wrote you a hasty note yesterday from my office in Boston under great affliction and distraction of mind and that is my apology (if it needed any) for having made you (on paper) (see superscription) what you once were. I wish it were a reality and no lapsus penna.

I have recd letters from many persons in reference to the death of our friend. From Mrs. (Ellen) Robinson* his landlady who says (Dec. 14th) "He died yesterday evening" x x I would have been glad that you had been with him during his last moments" xx I will feel happy to see you when you next visit the city as I will then be able to give full particulars of his death." 'Major (William H.) Chase* Decr. 13th says. "He died this evening at 10 minutes past 6 o'clock calmly & quietly & in possession of his senses; His indomitable spirits deceived us for we did not believe his end was so near. He must have been aware of the near approach of death & only spoke of it at the moment of his departure to his nurse who was the only person with him. Lt. Gilmore (Quincy A. Gillmore)* arriving at his lodgings only 5 minutes before his demise" etc etc. but all this you have had doubtless from Major Chase himself. Major (John G.) Bernard* on the 13th gives the same account of the event & again on the evening of the same day resumes "Our excellent friend & faithful brother officer Col. (John L.) Smith* has gone, - I have feared this result ever since his illness commenced but have never been authorized by the Doctor (Dr. (Charles Henry?) Crane* U.S.A. who attended him) to say that he was hopeless. & hence have not expressed such an opinion in writing to my friends. He has recd. every attention that could be rendered him" xx "He passed off quietly today before any of us expected it" Again, Decr. 14th he dwells on the subject. It is too long for citation & I send you the first sheet containing all he says on the subject except the following sentence on the next sheet "I have not learned that he said anything during his last mement" I also send his letter of the 15th a telegraphic dispatch. It was a good thought to take his remains to West Point for interment with the highest funeral honors & most gratifying it will be to you & his other friends. I have also a letter from Capt. J(eremy) F. Gilmer* at Newyork who was at the moment starting for West Point to attend the funeral, but only respecting what was said by others. I retain the Command until Lt. Col. (Rene) DeRussy* relieves me which may be on the 22d or possibly not until a few days later, but your letters will come free until you see the order for the change faithfully your friend
S. THAYER
General Jos. G. Swift

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 17^l Dec. '58 (1858)

Dear friend & I may reiterate with increased solemnity your valued Epithet - Best Friend - in Yours of 17th, that probably crossed my last to you? I expect to hear soon from Gen. (James) Gadsden* to whom I have written about an Inscription for the Cadets at the Point & I trust a Tablet will be inserted in the Wall over the Gate way of Fort Schuyler - when it comes I will send you my idea. - The Son of Dr. Russell went to West Point by our friend JnoL's (John L. Smith)* aid, & to him & the Daws family of Charleston S.C. may go the Property of Stocks & Books, - If the Col. left a Will - If not - I would advise that Major (John G.) Barnard* administer & sequester the Proceeds at West Point until some Heir appear - The Inscription at West Point may be an appeal to the Cadets to emulate the Virtues of a good Son & good Soldier & good Friend & Faithful Public Officer
I am Your

J. G. SWIFT

I would like a Block of the Pallisade Trap, if it could be had? the form no matter what if symetric - marble does not last long in Northern Climes.

*See Index

lThis apparently is an error in date.

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 17 Dec. '58 (1858)

Dear friend,

The same day brought yours, & (William H.) Chases* & (John G.) Barnards* - The Death of the Colonel Jno L Smith* was calm - his last words "Its all right" - "I hope I shall be sustained"

West Point is the right spot for a Record of his example to Cadets, & Fort Schuyler a Cenotaph - I have written to (James) Gadsden*, he & I knew more of the origin & Life of Jno. L. S. than any men living - & you & William know much - Shall send you what Gadsden says - he may write direct to you - J.L.S. had not much Respect for Epitaphs but the Truth can never be injured nor as Chase says (Humanity) either by a Record of anything of Him.

Your brief two lines are all that I have heard of your turning over the Command to (René) DeRussy* - in due time you will say more to me about it. - They were going to Inter the Remains at Gov. Island - near Fort Columbus a Work that does His memory little credit, in fact its not his Work but (Stephen) Rochefontaines* a little bettered by (Louis) Tousard*, & West Point the useful & becoming. -

O what a breach is this upon our - the few here & there still floating on the Surge of Time - But Death is a Release & in the case of our friend it would be Selfish to wish him again on Earth -

Yours while I am there & may we meet again where no Sorrow is - your J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

TO Joseph G. Swift*

South Braintree Decr. 22d '58 (1858)

Dear friend,

Yours of the 17th (post marked 18th) came to me here last evening. When written you had recd my note of the 16th but not that of the 17th. Col. (René) De Russey* was to be in Washington to assume the command yesterday & I am now on leave of absence & off duty for the first time since I recd my first commission fifty one year ago in two months from this date. If you doubt, say so & I will explain & remove your doubt. It will take me several weeks to "clear the dockett" & finish up & then I can devote more time to friends. During the last 12 months thirteen hours of every day, without excepting one, I have devoted to public duties including those devolving upon me as commandant of the Corps & those as member & Presdt. of the Bd of Engrs. Indeed I have been the only _____ member of the Board. I had no desire to cast off any of those duties. They were perfectly agreeable, & were not prejudicial to my health. Why then did I ask to be relieved? The story may fill a hogshead or it may be compressed within a nutshell. I will now give you the nutshell, leaving the hogshead for another time. About the middle of Nov. Capt. (Horatio G.)* Wright informed me confidentially that the Secy (John B. Floyd)* told him he intended to order me to Washington & that the order would be issued before the meeting of Congress. Well, to prevent the issuing of the order I applied for a leave of absence to the 1st of June next. It was granted, I will venture to say, with the greatest pleasure, but for his own gratification, not mine. Here hangs a tail which you will find in the "hogshead." The nut-shell won't hold it. I have told you all along that I should not go to Washington & my reasons why I would not, so that I need say nothing more on that point. Desiring to be kindly remembered to Miss Sally (Swift)* & all the Swifts I am ever faithfully Yrs

S. THAYER

Genl. Jos. G. Swift

P.S. Hereafter direct to South Braintree

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 29 Dec. '58 (1858)

Dear friend,

I have your greeting to all the Swifts of 22d - it crossed mine of the same date. -

Of your 51 years of U.S. service I know somewhat, & I believe you have never had a "clean leave" & am glad you applied for one at the exact time when the Secy. War (John B. Floyd)* found out that so far off he could not so evilly defeat the endorsement in the St. Francisco affair etc. (René) DeRussy* is Honorable, Brave & Generous & without small selfishness - I hope he may see this matter in its true light, & be able to sustain it. -

To avert a short-sighted abuse, of a most expensive & delaying sort, by the Politics of Master Mechanics, it is worth while interesting such a man as (John J.) Crittenden* about it who through a committee may show up all the Channels & Practices of abuse & Print & Distribute - If it do no more in these wretched days of money seeking - It would lay a Basis for action by & bye & ad interim Keep the Corps alive? -

Our beardless Country man young Se(re) ll (Edward W. Serrell?)* has convinced B _____ l of his superior skill & also Napoleon & the British Board of Engineers of his ability - but he declines a Chieftain ship if had at the expense of his U.S. Citizen ship

Mr. (James) Madison* was advised to place (Robert?) Fulton* at the Head of our Corps on the Resgt. of Col. (Jonathan) Williams* his Reply was "there is a difference between Civil & Mily. Engineering" - The world is much changed & changing since that day. -
Our Departed friend Jno. L. Smith* said to me "(Joseph G.) Totten* has I think discovered his error" - If he has, & I doubt the fact - could he renovate the Corps? - of course I shall not lose sight of the Corps while Life remains. -

All the Swifts up here wish you a happy year & may be, when all the Papers are "turned over" you may come & give me a (benefit). I have not yet heard from (James) Gadsden*, - have finished my Memoir (brief) of the Colonel, & an Epitaph -
What think you of the latter on 'tother side Ever yours

J. G. SWIFT

am not sure I spell (Serells) name accurately

1. Colonel J.(ohn) L. S(mith) major in the U.S. Corps of Engineers Born in So. Carolina, Lieut. of Engr. 1813 - died in New York 13 Dec. 1858 Aged 72 years.
- 2d. He was a good Son, a Faithfull Officer a Firm & Safe Friend & generous to the Poor
- 3d. He won the Brevets of Lieut. Colonel & Colonel in the Mexican War 1847
- 4th. He was the Constructing Engineer of Fort Schuyler N. York Harbor & a member of the Board that planned the Work.

Do go to Boston & see Wm. (H. Swift)* to be sure he may with more propriety be told to go to see you, - He likes what you have done & so does (James W.) Ripley* J.G.S.

*See Index

TO Joseph G. Swift*

Jany. 1st '59 (1859)

Dear friend.

You know now why you had no reply from (James) Gadsden.* Alas! we must again close ranks presenting now a narrow front & soon none at all. Let me know as soon as you hear the cause & circumstances of his death. I recd. on yesterday yours of the 29th in which you refer to your letter of the 22d. I may have received a letter of that date. If so I have mislaid it. I have two of your letters of the same date viz Decr. 17th. I like your Epitath & have no alterations to Suggest. I have not seen Wm (H. Swift)* since I applied for my "Leave" but shall call on him the next time I go to the city, probably, next Wednesday I have not seen (James W.) Ripley* since his return from California altho' he has called several times at my offices when I happenéd to be out. I have been too busy to look him up. He is a man after my own heart. Nothing but physical inability shall prevent me from passing a week with you at Geneva in the course of the next six or eight months. Altho' nominally free I am not so in reality & shall not be for some weeks. There are three officers at my office in Boston employed under my direction in finishing drawings relating to projects of fortifications While I am myself occupied in drawing up the descriptive memoirs Estimates etc & there still remains much writing to be done on other official matters. I say this by way of apology for this hasty note as well as for past delinquencies

Happy new year to you & Miss Sally (Swift)* & "all the Swifts
Ever yours
Genl. Jos. G. Swift

S. THAYER

*See Index

FROM Joseph K. F. Mansfield*

San Francisco
California 3d January 1859.

My Dear Colonel.

I wish you a happy new year & many returns of the year: and may God spare your life, & make you an instrument in his hands, and under the guidance of the holy spirit direct your steps, to the attainment of the great object of your creation & to your everlasting peace & happiness.

I arrived here on new years eve, having left Olmpia on Puget Sound on the 29th Dec. I have now completed the inspection of the Department of Oregon: and in about 10 or 15 days shall have completed all my reports accordingly. I reached fort Van Couver on the 20th Sept just one month from the day of my Departure from New York: and I immediately left for the Dalles & then for Walla Walla the neighbourhood of the War. I inspected Col (George) Wrights* Troops as they came in from the field. I returned to Dalles - Then went to fort Simcoe - then to fort Cascades - then back to fort Vancouver. On the Columbia river as far up as the Dalles there are Steamers constantly running excepting only a portage of 5 miles up thro' the Cascade Mountains. The Dalles is 200 miles above the mouth of the river. Here there is a portage of 15 miles around the Dalles & the Des Chutttes falls of the river to the Des Chutttes landing. Here supplies are sent up the river in sail boats, during the time of the Trade winds, which blow all Summer up the river thro' the mountains, to a locality 100 miles above the landing to old Walla Walla (an old Hudson Bay trading (mud) fort where there is no population now). Here goods are landed & transported 28 miles by land following the Walla Walla stream to the fort situated in a beautiful & productive valley. I went to this post by land from the Dalles say 172 miles & it took me 7 days. On my return I took a row boat & in 44 hours reached the Des Chutttes landing, sleeping two nights on shore. There are Sundry rappidts to be passed over, & we passed about 100 Indian lodges in different localities where they were fishing for salmon.

I inspected forts Yamhill & Hoskins in the Willamette Valley & then took steamer round _____ & entered the Strait (Juan) de Fuca. Stopped at Victoria & inspected fort Townsend - Billingham Bay¹ - (Se _____ ah _____) on the 49th parallel & lastly (Fort) Steilacoom. At the last place I found Lt Col (Silas) Casey* in command & his family there consisting of his wife & two amiable Daughters & a Son. I also had the pleasure to make the acquaintance of the Niece of Col Thayer, a very accomplished young Lady, a Miss Abby Davis,* who was on a visit at the Colonels. She sung & played delightfully & was quite a favourit with all who knew her. She informed me she had a brother in California & it was her intention to return to San Francisco by the next Steamer. You see Colonel I have the good luck to meet your friends sometimes. As soon as I learn of her arrival in this City I shall call & pay my respects.

This City is the wonder of the World. It was commenced about 1847. It is now full of wealth & luxury & covers an extent of area almost incredible: & has more than doubled in size in the last 4 years. There are elegant churches, dwellings, stores etc etc., and it is fast filling up with a society that will compare favourably with any part of the U. S.

But I have written more than I intended at first I am tired for I have been obliged to work hard for the mail that closes tomorrow night.

I am glad that West Point 4 years course is now reestablished. I have seen enough of these appointments to the Army without previous military knowledge. It was a hard thing to bring about, but it is a good thing & I am content.

I will now close. May God bless you. Truly & sincerely
your friend

JOS. K. F. MANSFIELD

Col. Sylvanus Thayer,
U.S. Corps of Engineers
Boston, Mass

*See Index

¹ Probably "Boundary Bay" now.

TO Joseph G. Swift*

Jany. 5th 1859

Dear friend,

You say (Decr. 29th) " (René) De Russy* is honorable, brave & generous" Yes, but with all that he at Washington can be only the Secretary's (John B. Floyd)* Clerk & instrument. Of that you will be convinced sooner or later. You will understand certain things better after reading the following extracts from a letter marked "confidential" dated at Washington Nov 18th 1858. "Day before yesterday (16th) the Secy. sent your annual Report to me with a message directing me to alter the amounts asked for the respective works so as to make them correspond with the fortification Estimates as amended by him. (My Estimate ignored the Secretary's debt on account of the Willett Pt. purchase etc) "This I of course declined doing on the ground that the Report was not mine & that I had no authority to change anything over your signature He then sent for me when I told him the same thing. After quite a long interview in which many matters pertaining to the Corps were brought up, he directed me to prepare a bureau Report in which the Estimates should agree with those of the War Dept." (I had previously cautioned the writer of the letter not to make any change in my report, or himself to make any report or estimate purporting to be a report or estimate of the Engr. Department or liable to be so considered or represented) "This Report which is now in preparation will be so drawn up as to relieve yourself & the Corps in regard to the Estimates" (A gratuitous service I had not solicited, or authorised) "It is proper however I should say that the Secy would not agree to the return of you for alteration (knowing I would not alter it if sent back)" as I proposed. The Secy. was not in the best of moods" (i.e. towering passion) "as you may suppose, yet it seemed proper as he opened the general subject of the Corps to meet rather than avoid it & as the general tenor of the conversation may be of interest I will briefly detail it. He commenced by expressing his dissatisfaction with the "arrangement by which the Hd. Quarters of the Corps was in Boston & the Bureau here (not the true reason as will soon appear) "and his positive determination to break it up & of at once combining the two. On this point he was immovable. He at first directed me to prepare a letter inviting you to come to Washington & take charge of the Bureau in connection with the command of the Corps, but afterwards said the letter might be deferred 'till toward the time of the meeting of Congress. Why this delay he did not explain" (He knew I would not go to Washington if I could help it & would, therefore, as the only alternative, would apply for leave of absence which he was quite ready to grant on the principle of making a golden bridge for a retreating enemy) "He charged" (here the cat comes out of the bag) that a disposition had been manifested to conduct affairs in opposition to his views & so as to thwart his policy" (true as the gospel. I have been a real thorn in his side & the pricks have told as I intended they should) "stating" (mark this) "that he was determined hereafter to correct this & to administer all the affairs under the control of the War Dept. (meaning the Engr. Dept. inclusive) "so as to advance his own

policy." (What that policy is I leave you to form your own opinion) "The result on my mind is that he will persist in requiring you to come here - that if you decline he will either take the next in rank & so on down the list of the Corps, or that he will at once make a selection for the head of the Bureau who shall exercise the entire functions of the Chief of the Corps." (That is to say, he will, if he think proper, appoint a Captain or even the youngest Lieut. to command the Corps! ! What an idea!) Who he has in mind I have no idea. (We know what sort of one he would prefer) "I trust, however, that the opportunity to make such a selection will not be given him - that you will proceed at once to Washington on receiving the letter above referred to "You will pardon me for again (referring to a former letter of his) expressing my conviction that the best & indeed the only effective way of supporting the interests of the Corps & service is for you to come here &, as I believe, this is the sentiment of the Corps" etc etc In a letter from the same dated Nov. 24th he says "That Col De Russy ought to be ordered here in the event of your being granted there can be no manner of doubt That he will be so ordered, or if ordered That he will come, is not at all certain in my mind" He did come however (much to the chagrin of the Secy as I have reason to think) & assumed the command by the following order "Hd Qr Engr Dept. Decr. 22d 1858 In the absence of Col. S. Thayer Lt. Col. R. E. DeRussy assumes the command of the Engr. Dept." etc That the wish & the design was to suppress in effect the office of Chief Engr there can be little doubt. It might as well be suppressed as to be what it is. It was once an office of dignity & honor, It was so while you held it & long afterwards but of late years it has ceased to be so. Located at Washington its duties differ little from those of a clerk - duties to which an officer of my age & length of service cannot well accommodate himself. I might have tried to do so however & have gone to Washington for the purpose but for the peculiar character of our present Secretary. I am now free for the first time since I met you at West Point in 1807 I a cadet, you the commander of the Post. My commission of Lieut. of Engineers bears date Feby. 23d 1808 fifty one years ago next month which is the date of Genl. (Joseph G.) Tottens* service commission. Whether I shall enjoy my freedom I cannot say 'till after a longer trial. I may feel like the emancipated slave who asked his master to take him back Your old friend

S. THAYER

Genl. Jos. G. Swift Geneva N.Y.

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 10 Jany. '59 (1859)

Dear friend,

Your New Year greetings to the Swifts, & your more acceptable purpose of coming to see them that live here, came duly, & we hope the latter may not be delayed beyond your convenience, - I Read with gravity your (apostrophe) to the "thinned ranks" - all the departed being my Juniors save "Archy Henderson*" - one of the most cheerful of Chirstians. -

When J. (ohn) L. S. (mith)* was ill some years ago he sent a message through me to (James) Gadsden* to dispose of \$300 a year, - I have said to Col. (René) De Russy* that that induces a belief that a will, or some disposing Paper, may be found among Gen. Gs Papers; The South Carolina obituary of the Genl. is unjust to others - but I shall take no Public notice of four ^(parts) ~~(facts)~~ of that (bearing), I hope the Stone at West Point may be inscribed & set up before the next graduation. I have written Col. (Richard) Delafield* about it & shall tell you of the Reply when it comes It is a sorrowful thing that the Books etc - I suspect but little else is left - should come under the Hammer of the Pub. Administrator - I shall try to get a Catalogue & have by purchase one or two of them for my Boys; - Could not the City authorities justify the Pub. Adm. in defraying the Expense of the Stone at W.P. & at Ft. Schuyler? -- I am Reading (Josiah) Quincy's* J. (ohn) Q. (uincy) A. (dams)* & find it Dry - My Brother (William H. Swift)* & my Son, both sent me the Work, - Mr. Q. never got over J. Q. A. turning Democrat - an act that made both him & Mr. (James) Madison* Presidents!

Our best wishes for your comfort - pretty cold up here Therm near Zero & on Saturday fell 28° in 12 Hours Your friend
J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 14. January 1859

Dear friend,

On 11th came yours of 5th - it developes the suicidal purpose of the Sec. War, (John B. Floyd)* & if the President (James Buchanan)* sustain him - the only Redress is to show to Congress what an Engineer should be - If the fortif. fund is not to be, by consent of Congress, wasted on interminable Repairs - Congress may be made to Know that Walls cannot be permanent without an entire Drainage at their Foundation & over Casemates, & that if Walls are not permanent a Fort Costing a Million will Swallow annually Millions to sustain it by Repair -

Mr. (Thomas) Jefferson* & Col. (Jonathon) Williams* looked to the Corps of Engineers to Economise Money - In reference to Rights & Duties - (Belshazzar Ayalo) (Baltasar Ayalo?)* formed a Code of Military Jurisprudence for Charles 5th.*¹ defining the Reciprocity of Rights & duties, - Charles adopted it - hence good Spanish Engineers & the high tone of Castilian officers in former times, - does a Republic require less than a Monarchy such a Code? - You see I venture to "trouble you with my puerilities" the (Joseph G.) Totten* forbade me in his letter that made two of us. -

I look to see some "unpledged subaltern" writhe against the Interference of the Sec. War at the risque of his Commission - Not such a risque as is or was going on at W. Point - & yet a Court Martial may show up the true function of an Engineer - a good Engineer is a good Architect, - it cannot be a hard matter to show to Congress that a Secy. War or a President are neither.

But when your six months are out, I do not think you will be tired of your Liberty of doing Right, - before that time you & I may see each other & go into this matter ever your

J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

¹If Gen. Swift intended to refer to Baltasar Ayala, Philip II*, not Charles V, was the king in question. However, in his Memoirs, Gen. Swift writes that in 1836 on "March 7th, sent a memoir to the chief engineer on a new organization of our army in reference to the reciprocal rights and duties of the government and the army, and on promotion by seniority as the only safe rule - first established by Charles V. of Spain and Germany, as his civil author, Azalon*, lays it down in his treatise, The Precursor of Grotius."

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 21. Jany. '59 (1859)

Dear Colonel,

You will learn from William (H. Swift)* that my daughter Jose (Swift Richards)* has gone to Rest - one of the most attractive & devoted of Children & Christians. -

Agreeably to my promise I tell you of Col. (Richard) Delafield* He likes my views & will try to carry out etc, He also wishes that as there is neither Will nor Heir - the, as he estimates \$20 000 in Stocks, should be appropriated to a Building at West Point with two objects, one to Honour Col. (John L.) Smiths* Memory, the other to give a Museum of Arts - The Col. S. was a Benefactor to the City & its authorities should unite in such or some mark of Honour - As the Law gives the conservatism of the Colonels Property to the Pubc. Adm. It may require Law to divert the amt from the City Treasury to the purpose I have mentioned, - I shall write at once to Gov. (Edwin D.) Morgan* to solicit his attention, & I should like to know Yours & my Brothers thoughts on the matter & am ever your

J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 31 Jany '59 (1859)

Dear friend,

Your kind feelings on the loss of our Dear Jose (Swift Richards)* have a just & wise reference to the Mercy of God in the goodness of those five out of twelve that Remain¹ - most true, & I hope to appreciate it - Poor (Peter) Richards* - Sally (Swift)* writes me, is sorely struck but resorts to business to keep his mind & time engaged. -

I note what you say about the application of the 20,000 of our Departed friend Jno. L. (Smith)* & shall be glad of every thought of Yours - whether a School or a Museum or Hospital - I have written Col. (Richard) Delafield* there will be many opinions - Nothing can be lost by any action of Gov. (Edwin D.) Morgan* in the matter, & the (more) it is _____ the stronger the Claim on the Gratitude of the City will be created.

I thought I had told you that Col. J. L. S. told me in November last that he had no Blood Kin on Earth, & so no Heir, & as to friends - the Law finds them in the Same Relation that all the rest of the World are in. I hope no official relations between you & Delafield may retard a free interchange of opinion. - The Library & other curious things should be placed in a Dry Room & Kept locked until this matter is arranged. - Delafield to whom I sent my notion of an Epitaph says he approves & will do all he can to see it used. - I do not wish to do any more in this matter than may become me. I shall send you a transcript of my Letter to Gov. Morgan & my Biog. notice of our friend & am ever Your

J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

¹ Reference to Swift's surviving children.

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 5. Feb. '59 (1859)

Dear friend,

Yours of 31 Jan. asks my idea of your Charleston plan for a Memorial to our friend (John L. Smith)* - I should be well pleased with it, or anything to sustain the memory of one of the best men I ever knew. But my Dear Sir the money is in the clutch of the City Authorities - possibly it may be got thence for a N.Y. memorial, but for one in So. Car. the essay might lose the whole for any object we would like. - I supposed Col. Smith the best informed as to whether he had any Heir or not = he told me not, - & as to a Will Major (John G.) Barnards* search among all the Col. Papers finds none - Both an Heir & a Will might by & bye grow out of hard searching! So let us be prompt to do this which can do no evil to any just claimant. - I transcribe below my letter to Gov. (Edwin D.) Morgan* - please let my Brother (William H. Swift)* read it. - "Geneva 24th Jany. 1859, To His Excellency Governor Morgan - Sir, As a friend of 45 Years duration & as the former Chief of the late Col. Smith, I request your consideration of the following facts & purposes: Col. Jno. Lind Smith of the U. S. Corps of Engineers died in the City of New York on 13th ulto. & was interred at West Point with Military Honours - leaving a Character Exemplary in Moral & Professional Worth, - He left neither Will nor Heir. I have a letter from Col (Richard) Delafield* Supt. U. S. Mily. Academy at West Point asking my thoughts on this subject, & as to requesting your aid in commending to the Legislature the propriety of diverting the Property left by Col. Smith from the custody of the Public Administrator & from the City Treasury, to the erection of a Building at West Point to serve the double purpose of a monument to Worth & as a Museum of Military Arts, - to be constructed under the Responsibility of the Supt. of the Academy & the Quarter Master of the Post of W. Point & without any expense beyond the cost of materials & Construction, - Col. Smith was a Benefactor to the City of N. York having devoted years of his life to the Works for the Defence of its Harbour or at Forts Columbus & Schuyler both of which he constructed; - The Mayor therefore & other Authorities would cooperate in the purpose indicated - Col. Delafield will no doubt solicit your consideration & aid in carrying out this laudable design, - I have the Honor to be your Excellence Respectful & Obt. Svt."
"JG Swift"

Your letter of 31 begins by saying Major Delafield - I intended to say Major Barnard says no will etc - I am doubtful if my last has reached you - it was written in much haste under pressure of some calls Ever yours
J. G. SWIFT
Col. Thayer

P.S. I learn that its said Col. "Genl. (Joseph G.) T. (otten)* will not return to Washington because he cant cooperate with Gov: (John B.) Floyd* & Col. Thayer declines going there for similar Reasons - this was said to me to show that you had followed the lead of Genl. T., who, the same says, left & (went abroad) to get clear of Floyd, - also that Capt. (Horatio G.) W. (right)** had altered a Report which Col. Thayer refused to alter!?

*You said he said he had not done so?

*See Index

TO Joseph G. Swift*

South Braintree Feby. 9th '59 (1859)

Dear friend,

The more I consider Major (Richard) Delafields* scheme in relation to our friends (John L. Smith's)* property the more I dislike it but as I see your mind is made up I have no more to say. only hoping that a legal heir will yet appear & make good his claim.

I have myself heard the report you mention in relation to Genl (Joseph G.) Tottens* reasons why he left & has not returned but they are mere conjectures as far as I know. In relation to myself I have fully explained to you my reasons for not going to Washington. No man who is not himself corrupt can "cooperate" with Gov. (John B.) Floyd.*

Capt. (Horatio G.) W(right)* did in effect alter my report altho he did not do so in form. By referring to the extract from his letter I sent you it will be seen that he refused to alter my report yet the alterations required by the Secy were made in another Report over his own signature which report was substituted for mine as appears from the Congressional Documents. Ever yr.

S. THAYER

Genl. Jos. G. Swift

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 15. feb. '59 (1859)

Dear friend,

Your last is rather shorter than previous letters had induced me to expect, & maybe I am not quite as pertinacious as some may imagine me? - but of the School in So. Carolina I may say with the Deans saying about the Irish Insane Hospital - no State requires it more.

I am advised from Albany that my letters go before the Judiciary Commee. so your hope for an Heir may have time enough for one to arise. - In my letter to Col. (René) DeRussy* about the (James) Gadsden* Papers!! I also included my hope for his success against Executive Error.

I'm sorry to read what you say of Capt. (Horatio G.) W.(right)* course; - By the bye in a recent paper for Gen. Stewarts (Charles Beebe Stuart)* Book I have said "Politicians found in the Fortification Fund an Element of Patronage that has been used detrimentally to the Progress & Expense of the Forts, & injuriously to the Emulation of Engineers, that while the President by Law directs the expenditure of the fund, neither that officer nor the Secretary of War are by their offices created Engineers, Nor was the Corps of Engineers created to become Clerks in the War Office". -

A memorial to Col. (John L.) Smith* in So. Carolina would be seen by few & the most prominent of them had condemned the Col. for Colonizing every slave he had - Eighteen -

I have an idea that I know more of the tone of Col. Smiths mind than any other intimate - The subject of no Heir was several times mentioned but I never alluded to a Will, fearing I might appear selfish - I am now Sorry I did not, - so if we ever see any authority for diverting the Stocks from Paving BroadWay all may come to agreement as to the disposal of the Fund - what 'tho the Corps of Engineers, be foremost in devising the best - (William H.) Chase * & Wm. (H. Swift)* & I have some claim to be heard. - As to your Hopes that an Heir may turn up, I think we have a more Just claim than any 40th Cousin who knew not & Cared not for him, whether by fact or false pretense such a Cousin should rise - however the "Law is founded in justice" & to that we must submit - farewell

J. G. SWIFT

P.S. You wrote Major - is the Superdt. not Colonel (Richard) Delafield* locally?

P.S. No. 2, You have never replied to my request for the Photograph of the portrait at Mrs. (Amelia) Shattucks,* - fear not you shall not appear in Gen. S. (tuart's) Book against your inclination, & why not let me give him a Memoir of S. T.?

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 28th feb. '59 (1859)

Dear friend

I have yours of 23d, & you ask who is General Stewart (Charles Beebe Stuart)* & what is he writing, - He is Chief Engineer of several Western Rail Roads, has been 30 years at it, - was U.S. Chief Engr. of the Navy & afterwards Surveyor General & Chf Engr. of New York, & by Courtesy of Mr. Fillmore (Millard Fillmore)* & the Gov. of N.Y. from the Example of Genl. (Simeon) DeWitt*, is called by his numerous Engineer friends - Genl. He is writing a History of Civil & in some instances Mily. Engineering in the U.S. has been collecting his Material for many years, & the work¹ is to come out in size & aspect as his 2 Vol. 4to on "Dry Dock" & "Ocean Steamers" - which is decreed by European Magnates a very useful and superb Work; - He is my next door neighbour, & like all self taught persons is conceited & has many who dislike him, & to judge from his Letters from Engineers, many more who do like him, - In my opinion he is a very intelligent person & has great natural ability. -

Our disgust is mutual at the Filibuster Speeches, & (James) Buchanan* & (Lewis) Cass* men of capacity very inferior to my former estimate of them; - common sense demonstrates that (John J.) Crittenden* & (John) Bell* are sound in opinion on the subject of Cuba - & so is our old friend Gouv. (eneu)r Kemble.* I know all about the antecedents of (John) Slidell*, & think him the most dangerous man to send to Spain - & believe that War is his object. - But my little Napo. the third,* has made a strong impression on my mind in favour of his design to make France (communal) manufacturing; as to his & Englands designs about Cuba they will of course do what they think best for their National Interests, - England has never got over the loss of these States -

"It was a foolish thing
For Parliament & King
To (quarrell) about a Dish of Tea
And lose this fine America"*

Her course has ever been arrogant & overreaching towards us, - But She has done many great things - & will not quarrel with U. S. til it be her Interest to do so As ever Your

J. G. SWIFT

* You know Walpole* said not taxing America would insure to the British Exchequer double any amt. of tax, (towards) Keeping the Peace! He said further that Geo. 3d* & (North)

*See Index

¹"Lives and Works of Civil and Military Engineers of America," published in 1871.

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 7, June '59 (1859)

Dear friend,

I am (wea ing) to hear from you - May be you are engaged on some important History? or as you used to do in 1808 at your maps following another Napoleon*? I am rejoicing that he has opened a Battery of a World wide purpose, & no man more cordially wishes Italy success than myself, nor a more condign justice to the house of Hapsburgh than is hoped for by your friend

J. G. SWIFT

Colonel Thayer

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 18th June '59 (1859)

Dear friend,

Is anything the matter to cause you to be so long in Reply to my letters? - While so reflecting up turns the Intelligencer with "Col. Thayer has leave to go to Europe"--as you & I had been cogitating upon such a Travel i.e. Sally (Swift)*, You & I - this paragraph surprised me? You were to come this way you said - & I am begin to fear you may be ill? - I have on hand some of my ideas on paper about you, which I wish to dispose of as I am about doing about my Brother (William H. Swift)* in a Published Biog. Work of Genl. Stewarts (Charles Beebe Stuart)* & I wish to know if you are willing to trust your fame to my pen? So please see my Brother & he will tell you of my purposes, & tell me at once if you are in health & mean to see me before you go to the Battle fields of Italy - as ever & for life Your

J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 4. July '59 (1859)

Dear friend,

I enclose you all I mean to say save a few Words on
Personal relations - am not yet determined whether to say a
Word on that or not -

Please return with your notes - I wish it to go to press
in a few days As ever Your J. G. SWIFT

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 13 July '59 (1859)

Dear friend,

Your shrinking from a few of the actual & undeniable facts of your life would (mar) Justice if indulged, - Your respectful submission to expurge the last Paragraph - caused me to probe the facts that probing touches several that are omitted; - a Reader of the Record of Public Acts desires to know of the private & quiet & to see his _____, - But why expurge a Jewel from your modest Crown - the refusal to be the agent of illegal error - In deference to your judgement I shall remodel that Paragraph - certainly not expurge it & this at the risque of adding to your idea of my being obstinate - If you will give me a sound reason for expurging I will Re & Reconsider the whole - Now I do not mean to blazen your Religion nor your Politics - but I do mean to allude to both in a that fastidiousness cannot carp at. Whatever devil may have been assailing your morality - you have at least given a fair example to the Youth whom you have set forth - is that a truth that the world will set down to friendship - very well let it set - I know you & as I think appreciate you justly - time will test my words & my words about you are those of conviction from facts -

By the bye I have written my own Biography _ I claim having done nothing but trying to aid others, - In it I purpose to be Just to Wm McRee* & John L Smith* - two honest men & good soldiers - If Austria had had their equal - on the (Ticino) Napoleon had effected its passage in their face before bringing on the Battle. can it be possible that G---l-'s (Gyulai?) did not understand the Russe - Well they had a fair chance at Solferino - They opened the Battle! I have an idea that Nap. 3d.* will not do as Nap. the 1st.* did - but surround & leave the "Golden B _____" in the Vally of the Adige As ever J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Stony Point¹ -
Geneva 16th July - 1779¹ - 1859

Dear friend,

Substitute for the Paragraph you _____ to exclusion -
"When the Public acts of a Citizen have been such as to deserve commendation - the Reader of their Record may desire to know of those points in his private character that may have influenced his conduct. -

Therefore the moral & Political opinions of Col. Thayer, even tho' he desire them to be omitted in the Record, should not be deemed as obstrusive or irrelevant - His morals are Christian & his Politics that Republicanism which flows from Christian precepts - we shall not blazon details, but content ourself with one fact, namely, that when Genl. (Andrew)* Jackson evinced a disposition to substitute his Will for the Law of the Military Academy Col. Thayer told him he could not be the Instrument but could Resign his Commission - the Genl. had the good sense to see that it was not wise to pursue his purpose."

Of the nine Biogl. Notices that I have prepared for Gen. (Charles Beebe Stuart)* Stewarts 4tos (4) remain not quite finished, - namely yours, Wms. (William H. Swift)* & (William) McRees* & (John L.) Smiths* a short Sketch, - I had written (Joseph G.) Tottens* - but our Relations are unalterably fixed - & my motives might also be mistaken. I have unalterably declined. -

I have recently written Major (John G.) Barnard* what course I think the Corps of Engineers should at once pursue, & hope he will show it to you - or any one else, - To do nothing is suicidal - Before a Committee of Congress any six or Ten officers of Engineers may tell them what a Corps of Engineers should be - & what is the duty of Congress in the Plainest terms at any risque - I think you will do that thing yourself in Extenso - My papers show my mind with as little dread now as I wrote the Secy. War in 1816 when I was Chief Engineer. I have done with the subject unless summoned before a Committee of Congress - If I am so summoned, Congress & the Executive shall know all I think & feel up to the Hub - In my opinion the Corps of Engineers may point the way to a Reform of Public abuses, in a Republic where Law & not Personal will must Rule, or the Republic must fall. Your

J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

¹ Reference to Revolutionary battle in which, on July 16, 1779, Stony Point was taken by Gen. Anthony Wayne.

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 9th Sep. '59 (1859)

Dear friend,

I was glad to hear by my Brother (William H. Swift)* of the fair condition of your health, & it had been a good thing if you had been here at the time - I wish you & he would see each other oftener - the meeting of honest minds is among the best boons of this Life -

Have you - that Scrawl came from my GrandDaughters jumping at my arm - Read the very remarkable Article on the "Invasion of England" in the Tory London Quarterly - Showing how it may be done & that it cannot be prevented It reminded me of the vast National folly of England insulting France by sending the great Napoleon* to St. Helenena - But a successful Invasion of England by France would not be good for France etc. -

As to the late war, the enormities of Austria justified it - & the subsequent acts of Prussia & Germany made the Villa Franca Peace needful - If the Italian Provinces be united to Sardinia - that State would be able to resist Austria & sustain all Italy & then Papal Nonsense would die the best death - a gradual Death by (Conviction) -

Yours of 22d July - your last - says my Brief Biogy. of you will be deemed partial - its not so, nor can an iota of it be gain said - My allusion to your morale is very brief - save that it tinges the whole.

When you came to West Point in 1807 you found that Col. (Jonathan) Williams* had instituted the Reading of Blair* to disabuse the minds of Cadets of the Deism that had been inculcated by Geo. Baron* I was influenced by Barons Sophistry to contemplate Man - rather than Him who had made man a living Soul etc - When I became Chief I had, as I supposed, better views, & in 1813 gave a Christian form to Sundays, in which each Cadet had something to do - I am as ever

J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 16 Dec. '59 (1859)

Dear friend,

My wonder why you hadn't written since my last is at an end by yours of 13th commencing with a happy touch at our earlier day - & an account of your feet troubles - Sally (Swift)* says do make my best Respects to the Colonel & say she hopes soon to hear of further improvement & so say I also. - The account you give of Genl. (Joseph G.) Tottens* going to California is painful to me, & wrong in Principle even if He wished it - Its long since I have had any thing about the Corps do Post me up. Col. (Richard)* Delafield, & my wish can't be, so I fall back on yours for a true Heir; - Major (John G.) Barnard* sent me some old letters & Certificates about Capt. John Smith & his wife Agnes Lind of Dundee - the Father & Mother of J. (ohn) L. (ind) S. (mith)* - I am now writing to Dundee, of the results you shall hear - I have through Major B. got one of the Colonels Camphor Trunks that he got in China & Mr. Kirkward sent me his Eye Glass it suits my focus.

The Portrait of Mr. (John C.) Calhoun* was sent to West Point while you were there, it was painted in Washington by (John Wesley) Jarvis* 1820 where he painted another for me of Mr. C. By the bye where is my Photograph of that Portrait at Mrs. (Amelia) Dr. Shattucks?* I expect soon to have your Biogr. Sketch in Print to send you & Wm. (William H. Swift)*

You & I stand by the Constitution while a Schred or Patch of it Remains, & I guess it will be found exceedingly difficult to put it out of action, Mr. (Albert) Gallatin,* no great authority in my estimation for the Union - used to say it would stand more Battering than any compact on Earth, - I guess the West will soon have a Potential Voice in this matter. Do not be so chary of your letters I am yours as of old & while Life Endurs the same

J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

TO George Ticknor*

S. Braintree Decr. 24th 59 (1859)

Dear Ticknor,

I enclose a letter from Emma Leslie* in which you will find a reply to your enquiry touching her Uncle Charles (R. Leslie)* letter from Abbotsford.

I have not been in the City since I went last at your house owing to lameness It is getting better & I hope to be soon again on my feet when I shall call to see you. Your old
classmate & friend

S. THAYER

Mr. George Ticknor

*See Index

FROM George W. Cullum*

(1860?)

Col. De Russy says that he lived in the same house with Francis D. Masson till Dec. 1807 After that was about most of his time on fortifications New York, Boston etc. with Col. Williams

Col. Loomis says he went to West Point in Aug. 1808. That Francis D. Masson was then there teaching French & giving lectures in Engineering. That he was there in 1809 to the winter vacation, and thinks also in 1810, but cannot be sure of the latter. As he has some recollections of seeing Florimond (that) year

P. S. Col. Loomis has doubts as to whether Francis D. Masson was at West Point in 1809.

*See Index

TO George W. Cullum*

South Braintree Feby. 25th '60 (1860)

My dear Captain,

In my present feeble state of health I can only reply in part & very briefly to your letter of Feby. 21st which came to hand last evening. I have examined the tabular statement & remarks headed "Command of the Mily. Acady" & do not see how they can be altered for the better. As to Francis D. Masson* & his brother Florimond I could only repeat what I said in former letters to you. As therein stated I left W. P. the first time about the 1st May 1808, returned about the 1st Nov. 1809, was Commandant from that time until about the 1st. May 1810. Then Adjutant or Asst. Professor or both until I left again in May or June 1811. & went to Newyork as Asst. to Col. Williams whom I accompanied on his visit to W. P. the same year. After making the foregoing statement I affirmed & reaffirm, & would be willing to do so under the solemnity of an oath if there were occasion for it, that I never saw the face or person of Francis D. Masson after Nov. 1807. This testimony notwithstanding, you say "My impression would be that Francis D. Masson was Teacher of French from July 12th 1803, or March 27th 1804 to March 31st 1812 when he resigned "If you meant that he or his substitute Floremond recd pay as Teacher during that period I will not contest the fact but such is not the question. As to the Authorities you cite as conflicting with my testimony, what I have to say must be reserved for my next letter. I will only add here on this subject that in case you can name to me any one who has said or will say of his own personal knowledge that Francis D. Masson was Teacher of French at any time after Nov. 1807 I will debate the matter with him, & if we cannot agree, shall ask you to judge between us.

I rejoiced to see your name mentioned as a member of the Bd to revise the programmes & also most glad but not surprised to be informed that so far as your vote goes, the Board "will keep steadily in view that the objects of the Institution are to give Cadets a theoretical scientific & mily education with just sufficient practice for illustration & to supply healthful exercise." The true objects of the Institution could not be better defined & are in danger of being defeated by late attempts to make the Institution a school of Practice & by crowding in of new studies. professors Mahan, Bartlett, Church you & I all understand each others views pretty well & agree in the main, but if there any points in regard to which you would wish to have my opinions you will point them out in the form of questions. I am very respectfully & truly yours

S. THAYER

Captain Geo. W. Cullum
U. S. Corps of Engrs.

*See Index

TO George W. Cullum*

South Braintree Feby. 27th '60 (1860)

My dear Captain;

Fortunately, I have found in my library "State Papers Military. Affairs Vol. 2 refered to in your letter of the 21st. I say fortunately as the extract I am going to make may, perhaps, serve to account for some of the discrepancies noticed in other statements. On page 380 is a letter from Mr. Calhoun to the Mily. Committee April 2d 1822 transmitting Genl. Macombs Report March 30 furnishing certain information called for by a Resolution of the House of Representatives. Statement C. accompanying the Report is in reply to "Query 6th. The expense of maintaining "the officers & instructors of the U.S. Mily. Academy each year since 1802": The following is a transcript verbatim et literatem of so much of it as relates to the French Department.

1803 D. Masson \$312.26	1809 D. Masson 868.40
1804 D. Masson 666.15	1810 D. Masson 868.40
1805 D. Masson 666.15	1811 D. Masson 868.40
1806 D. Masson 666.15	1812 D. Masson 869.20
1807 D. Masson 666.15	1813 D. Masson 868.40
1808 D. Masson 869.20	1814 D. Masson 875.45

The name was doubtless written as above on the Payrolls & Muster Rolls in the paymaster Genls office from which the "statement" must have been furnished yet Masson senior called himself De Masson & was so called by every one & so he signed his name without any other prefix than De so written, probably, as to be mistaken for D. Florimond, probably, wrote his name in the same manner. The resignation of Francois March 31st 1812 & the appointment of Florimond bearing the same date is ignored, & it is a fair inference, I think, that the change of person was not known, at least officially, at the Paymaster Generals Office or elsewhere in the War. Dept. & it would be unjust to Mr. Calhoun & to Genl. Macomb to doubt that the "statement" was as correct as it could be made from records in the offices at Washington Yet, we know that the Teacher Masson or De Masson of 1804-5-6 & 7 was not the same person as Teacher Masson of 1813 & 1814. & I never denied or doubted that the elder Masson did resign March 31st 1812 & not earlier & yet that fact is of itself no proof that his brother Florimond had not been acting as his substitute even for many years prior to his resignation. The idea suggested that there might have been two teachers at one & the same time, viz. the two brothers - The one as principal & the other as his Assistant, would seem to me not a little absurd, considering that the number of Cadets under instruction in French at any one time never exceeded, I will venture to say, half a dozen during the period in question. The study was entirely voluntary prior to 1817 It was "unpopular" besides, few even if so inclined could study it without neglecting more important studies so short was their stay at W. P. The elder Masson left W. P. Nov. 1807. The question whether he ever returned & resumed the duty of Teacher is not settled by the Authorities to which

you have referred me. Col. Williams letter may settle it perhaps but not the extracts from them in your letter where he only speaks of "Mr. Masson". Roswell Park correctly states (from information derived from me as I believe) that Frances de Masson did prepare a treatise on fortifications not in "1810" however but before he left W. P. in 1807 or earlier still In that year his lessons on fortification consisted of readings from his treatise. respectfully & truly yrs

S. THAYER

Capt. G. W. Cullum U.S. Corps of Engrs.

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift

Geneva 1. March '60 (1860)

Dear friend,

I have yours of 24 Ult. & sorry to hear of the trouble you have with your feet. ---

According to my Mems. Francis De Masson took Quarters at West Point in the Summer of 1802 with two young Sons of Lord Bolinbroke* - he came at the instance of our Chief but was not official Teacher til June 1803. - In Oct. 1803 I left West Point & spent the winter in Washington & Alexandria & Returned to West Point in the Spring of 1804, & soon went in April to Carolina & did not return to West Point until Spring of 1807 when I found Mr. De M at the Point as I left him in 1804 In Nov 1807 (I) went Home & in 1808 '09 You & I were in Boston & I went to Carolina in Novr 1809 & did not see West Point again until 1813 when Florimond (Masson)* was Teacher. -

If I find any further facts I will write to you of them & am as ever & well Your J. G. SWIFT

P. S. I see Mr. (Gouverneur) Kemble* & Genl. (Joseph G.) Totten* & Proff. (William H. C.) Bartlett* arrived recently from Aspinwall

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 23d March '60 (1860)

Dear friend,

Have you seen the Secy. Wars (John B. Floyd)* Proclamation on conferring a Brevet Col. upon Lt. Col. (Joseph E.) Johnston¹ without the least reference to "By order of the President? Pray what authority has the President to dismiss any officer who has passed the Senate, & Pray what authority is there for the words in Mily. & Navy Commission "during the pleasure of the President of the U. S. for the time being"? - If Brevets are not Empowering Commissions they are unconstitutional Titles. -

That indefatigable Mr. (Benson J.) Lossing* found my Report & Plans of Harlem & Brooklyn Heights 1814 loose in an open chest in a Dark Garret of the City Hall & at his instance they were bound together; My Report too on the Fire of Decr. 1835 is lost - where my acts saved Millions & when the Mayor was panic struck! for a similar service two years thereafter a British officer at Quebeck was Knighted - so wags the world -
Your friend
J. G. SWIFT

P. S. at _____iths 167 Broad way a Life-like Photograph of Jno. L. Smith* can be had for \$1.

I have a letter from Dundee in Scotland saying J.L.S. has left highly respectable Blood Kin there - shall hear again, & the City may yet have to disgorge the Illegal effects of the Sale at Fort Schuyler - Our friend J. (ohn) Lind Smith was the son of Capt. John Smith & Agnes Lind his wife of Dundee who moved to Charleston S. C. before its surrender to Sir H. (enry) C. (linton)* -

*See Index

¹ War Department Adj. Genl. Office General Orders 1854-1860. General Order No. 5, 6 March 1860.

TO George W. Cullum*

South Braintree 23d March '60 (1860)

My dear Captain,

We know that Francis Masson was teacher of French up to the close of the Term (Nov.) 1807 & you have my testimony uncontroverted by any evidence I have yet seen that he never taught at West Point after 1809. You have my testimony that Florimond was the Teacher from & after 1809. But who was the teacher of French in the interim? Was it Frances, or was it Florimond? Neither your notes from Col. Williams papers or any of the Authorities to which you have referred me help to settle the question. I am still in hopes that you will be able to obtain direct & positive testimony from some one or more of the fourteen graduates still living who were Cadets in 1808 & 1809, but in default of such testimony or of other evidence my own convictions will continue unshaken. It is strongly impressed on my mind & has been from the period in question or as far as I can trace back the impression that Florimond was the teacher of French in 1808 & 1809 in place of his brother who was probably absent on leave. The latter on leaving West Point went to Saint Domingo with a view, as was currently reported, to prosecute claims to property. I do not think that he ever saw West Point or the U. States afterwards. You ask "Is it best to put down Francis also as teacher of drawing" I think not. His instructions in drawing were confined to a very few individuals & consisted only in teaching the use instruments for drawing lines. He was in no proper sense a teacher of drawing.

Your letter to Capt. (Charles H.) Bigelow* with the order of the Secy discharging him was shewn to me on the day he recd it. It was a cruel act. Whatever the pretext, private malice or party spirit must have been at the bottom of it. For professional ability or moral worth no man stands higher in my estimation. most respectfully yours
S. THAYER
Captain Geo. W. Cullum
U. S. Corps of Engineers

*See Index

TO George W. Cullum*

So. Braintree 2d April '60 (1860)

My dear Captain,

Considering that De Russey lived* with Francis Masson at West Point & that the latter was a dear friend of De Russey's father is it not strange that he cannot remember whether he ever saw him after that year as he doubtless must have done had Francis been at W. P. Col. Loomis (I infer from what he says) cannot have known more than one of the Massons & is not sure that he saw him "after the winter of 1808." It is beyond question that one of the Massons was the Teacher of French during the Terms of 1808 & 1809. & also that Francis was not & Florimond was at W. P. during the entire term (from April at latest) of 1810. Loomis himself at W. P. from Augt 1808 to Oct. 1810 & must have seen Florimond every day for at least six months. It follows that if he never saw more than one Masson That One must have been Florimond. If he had known both brothers is it probable that he would remember the one without being able to remember the other? He thinks the one he knew was Francis, but, of the Cadets who knew only one Masson, how many, think you, if all were now living would be able to say whether his first name was Francis, or Florimond? Some evidence more reliable than the Colonel's memory is still wanting to establish the fact that Francis ever taught at West Point after 1807. There was one incident in the Colonel's West Point career what I fear he remembers only too well. I refer to his dismissal by sentence of a Court Martial of which Lt. Thayer was President & sole member & of which Cadet Abert was recorder. Most respectfully yours S. THAYER
Captain Geo. W. Cullum
U.S. Corps of Engrs.

*He says "until Decr" Nevertheless I still think that he & Masson left before the end of Nov. Mais n'importe

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift

Geneva 4th April '60 (1860)

Dear Colonel,

Just as I was about asking you to file among your Papers some remarks of mind, came your letter of 29th ult. on the Brevet - an anomalous & overbearing & as I think a very vicious act of the Executive. But to my main purpose at this time; Mr. (Benson J.) Lossing* the author of the "Field Book of the Revolution" is about publishing a similar work on the War of '12 & he has asked me for some facts about Chrystler's Field in 1813, & about Harlem & Brooklyn Heights in 1814, & about the Corps & Academy; I have responded to them all, - & as to the first my authority for saying any thing is the fact of my presence there & of Genl. (James) Wilkinsons* Report of my doings at that time to the Secy. War, a copy of which Report is in my diary & of the second Mr. Lossing found my Report & Plans loose in the garret of the City Hall, & at his instance the authorities caused them to be bound! I have responded & included similar doings at Norfolk, Charleston etc. If the Biography of Genl. (James) Gadsden* has met your eyes, you will have seen an Essay to place Gadsden in my shoes at Harlem & Brooklyn. The fact was he was then a 2d Lieut. my aid deCamp & did his duty well then as he did at all other times, --I have set that matter right. - In reference to the Corps & Academy I have given Mr. Lossing the main facts of the Origin & progress of both, & have done justice to Col. (Johathan) Williams.* --You may have seen in the Records of the Corps my Remonstrance & the Secyr Wars Reply thereto, upon my views of the impolicy of the mode of Interpolating Genl. (Simon) Bernard* in 1816, that led to my & (William) McRees* Resignation & to (Joseph G.) Tottens* letter on my files regretting that he could not follow the example; --My personal feelings may have misled my judgement in that matter, I will give you some facts not found in my remonstrance; --Count Molé* had mistakenly said Gen. Bernard created a new Fortn. System for the U.S. & it was also said that I had approved the Interpolation, --I had said to Mr. (James) Madison* that all the benefit that could be derived by employing Genl. Bernard could be best done by placing him in the Mily. Academy - as Mr. (Claudius) Crozet* had been at my Request. A Result of Genl. Bernards being placed in the Corps was that the Executive found that his Plans & Ideas were too large to suit our wants, & that he never recommended the occupation of any site for defense, that had not been commanded previously by our Corps of Engineers. -- My opinion of Genl. Bernard was formed by official intercourse with him, & from his own account of his services at Antwerp, & in the Alps with Napoleon, & especially in argument between him & McRee & myself on the Board as to occupation of Soller's Point Baltimore - this formed an acute angle on the shore of that Harbour, --McRee & myself were for a Horn Work across the Point by which both faces of the half Bastions & the curtain could not be Infiladed Bernard preferred a course of two fronts exposing both to this sort of fire in the attack In these arguments I saw that Bernards mind was inferior to McRees, - But I deemed

Bernard an highly Educated officer of Engineers, & especially accomplished as a Bureau officer. --On my way to West Point in 1824 with La Fayette* he told me Bernard acknowledged my uniform courtesy & attention to his official Wants, & the good old Marquis likened Bernards coming to U.S. to his own coming, --I said in my estimation the cases were very widely different, & that it was not to Genl. Bernards talents that I objected, but to the mode of his employment, --I told the Marquis that the Corps had been distinguished in the War of '12 & its officers deemed competent themselves to do what Mr. (Thomas) Jefferson* & Col. Williams had deigned them to do, & this self respect had been needlessly wounded by the mode of the Interpolation. -- Gen. Bernard, when he left our service to become the Secy War of Louis Philip,* wrote me a friendly adieu, now on my files; -- But it seemed to me queer that an Engineer who had been Sixteen years studying our weak & strong points of defence, should become Secy War to a Power with whom Genl. (Andrew) Jackson* was then at points? I am dear Colonel as ever Your friend

J. G. SWIFT

To Colonel Thayer
U. S. Corps Engineers

P.S. You keep me in ignorance as to what is the matter with you. Some time ago your feet troubled you but not too much to prevent your being abroad, which I was glad to know; now you are constrained into a position painful to write, & I am sorry to have been the occasion thereof. Sally (Swift)* & I have a plan for the summer, in all such plans you influence our purpose --can you go to Taunton Bedford & Nantucket with us when the warm weather comes on? Do tell me all about your plans etc.

JGS

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 13th April 1860

Dear Friend,

Your response of 9th to my recent letter on the (Simon) Bernard* matter is the first knowledge on my part that you & (William) McRee* in Paris in July 1815 knew of the Bernard plan -- I had no knowledge of that plan until Nov. 1815 when a friend in Washington wrote me of it & also that Mr (James) Madison* had been informed that I approved of the plan! I immediately disabused Mr. Madison of that slander & said that if he had determined upon it, it could be best done by placing the Foreign officer in the Military Academy. In Feb. 1816 on the passage of the Importing Resolution I consulted Hon. Jeremiah Mason* & Hon. Mr. Wm Lowndes* as to my course, their letters are on my files; On Mr. Secy. (William) Crawford's* letter advising me that the Fortifications would be suspended until this Foreign Officer had been consulted, I drew up my Remonstrance against the Plan & Read it to Hon. Rufus King* & Hon. Oliver Wolcott* both of whom approved of it -- it was of Four pages, Mr. Secy. Crawford took Eight pages to Respond.

The secret mode pursued in this Bernard Plan turned my mind to think on what I should do - I saw that with a family of young children & a Poor man I must move with caution; I was informed that LaFayette* & (Albert) Gallatin* were advisers to the Plan/ I ^{no doubt Crawford also} applied to Mr. (James) Monroe* for a Civil Office. He & Mr. (John C.) Calhoun* advised me not to Resign - the result was the Surveyorship of New York.

In the Fall of 1816 I was informed by Geo. Graham* that the Law of 1802 required my presence at West Point, this sudden discovery I obeyed - Genl. Bernard came to see me there, I placed in his hands, my Remonstrance & Mr. Crawford's Reply, saying "take them with you to Rouses Point & on your return see me here," He did so & said he "was sorry I had taken such a view."

I then wrote Secy. Graham that I perceived his purpose in getting me out of the way at West Point, that I would not submit to his wrongdoing, He replied scolding me for interfering with Genl. Bernard & with the Presidents purposes, I rejoined that I should leave West Point to see him & the President in Washington -- I did so & had a scene at the War Office in which I imagined I had the best of it.

When Bernard was imported we of the Corps were all young fellows, but had won some repute in the War of '12.

In the Year 1808, when the Corps was first sent forth by Col. (Jonathan) Williams* to show what it could do, the War Department rediculously & viciously interfered by making Plans of "Burbeck's Redouts" & sending them to Engineers with orders to apply them to Sites!! thus causing the very lack of confidence which Col. Williams was trying to create - so when Genl. Bernard came prominent Army Officers said we shall now have some Forts - & Genl. Bernards coming gave an impetus to the Corps that should have made it rise ambitiously to what it should be?

Some few years ago on the appearance of Major (William H.) Chases* Pamphlet in a Committee of Congress I requested Sec. (Charles M.) Conrad* to advise the Committee of an error in it in reference to Gen. Bernard & myself. He replied that the Executive had done right in the matter of Gen. Bernard, I rejoined that I had not asked his opinion on that subject, but that he should do a simple act of justice to a citizen who had been a member of the U. S. Corps of Engineers. It was at this time that Genl. (Joseph G.) Totten* wrote Secy. Conrad that his domestic affairs had prevented his following the example of McRee & Swifts resignation - these papers are on my files; Please place this letter with my last on your files. Your friend

J. G. SWIFT

P.S. Shall send you, to place with the two last, a few lines to show the exact relations of (Alden) Partridge* & myself. Swift to Thayer 13 Apr 1860

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 17 April 1860

Colonel Thayer

Dear Friend,

In Pursuance of the P. S. in mine of 13th I commence by asserting that the only officers of Engineers who ever said anything to me before 1816 adverse to the merits of Capt. (Alden) Partridge* were Col. (William) McRee* & Proff. (David B.) Douglass* -- the last I esteemed as personal, the former were of more import namely that the Corps did not understand the cause of my confidence in Capt. Partridge - my reply was that Col. (Jonathan) Williams* had placed him P. where I found him, and I asked McRee who of you are willing to take his place, his reply was not I--- The President Mr. (James) Madison* asked me I think in 1816 what were the merits of Capt. Partridge, my reply was he is an industrious & good teacher, tho in merit not equal to several officers of Eng. of superior Rank, none of whom however would voluntarily take his place; Mr. Madison referred me to Mr. (William) Crawford* for some facts personal to myself. I immediately called on Mr. Crawford, he said "that (awkward) Capt. Partridge might be better employed than as Superintendent" I replied his manner is by no means attractive, but he is an attentive & industrious officer & unless some charge of misconduct is made against him I shall not disturb him. no such charge was made, Mr. Crawford said "he is not your friend," I replied I have no evidence of that, - This evident preference for another Superintendent on the part of the President & Mr. Crawford I gave a hint of to Capt. Partridge without using names. The Professors at West Point disliked him - But matters rubbed on until President (James) Monroe* went to West Point the following year, when he said to me. "I do not think much of your Capt. Partridge & would prefer to see Major Thayer in his place" my reply was your wish will of course be obeyed - I then told Partridge of his unpopularity & that he must go on other service giving him choice of works, he preferred leave for a few months, I readily assented, - soon after this you were ordered to West Point, you obeyed promptly tho not as I believed in accordance with your inclinations, tho your subsequent conduct of that Institution at West Point amply justified Col. Monroes estimate of you. Some time after Capt. Partridge called at my quarters in Brooklyn from a Barometrical excursion in the Green Mountains & Breakfasted with me, He requested my approbation of his going to West Point for a few days to look after his Books & affairs, he had been many years at West Point, I said to him I cannot approve of your going there & besides it might lead to evil to you, he urged the matter no further & left me to expend his leave in the Harbour & in Vermont; - In a day or two after this Col. McRee called at my quarters & Reported that Partridge had come suddenly to West Point and assumed the rights of his Rank - thus displacing you, with some silly acclamations of Cadets -- I ordered Col. McRee to return to West Point and place Capt. Partridge in arrest & Restore you to the Superintendence - which he did, I was detained a day in New York on official affairs & went to West Point the day but one after- Capt. Partridge immediately called on me, I told him of his most unmilitary error & that I should

request a Court Martial to try him; He was tried & condemned & sentenced to be dismissed from the Army - at my request he was permitted to Resign; Partridge immediately commenced a slander against me that I had been making money by collusion with Contractors who had built the Academy & Cadets Quarters these slanders were proved to be slanders by the Inspection, Measurement, Prices of the City Builders, upon whose certificates I made the payments to the contractors, a course that was approved by the President who authorized me to take from the War Dept those vouchers for my Private Files, & there they remain to this day.

The conduct of Capt. Partridge towards me his Chief may be of little other Public Interest than to show a state of mind in the Superintendent of the Academy that evinced a mistaken estimate of him by his Chief - be that as it may, I aver that no selfish consideration influenced my treatment of, or relation to, Partridge, - The character of his conduct to me was evinced by his reply to the query of Col. A. "What induced you Partridge to accuse Swift of criminality, you did not believe them to be deserved" -- Partridge replied "that is Swifts look out"! -- Partridge, after his reprieve, at my instance that reprieve was gained, continued to accuse me & yourself and my A.D.C. Lt. (George) Blaney* of vice & crime - to which neither the Executive nor either of us three, paid any attention. Some twenty years after his trial Partridge met me for the first time on the narrow deck of an Erie Canal Boat. I saw by his countenance that he expected rough words - some were used, he left the Boat at the next loading place and walked the bal. of the route to Rochester - He was a good pedestrian. I have been informed that on the approach of death he regreted his conduct to me. In the days of his trial by a Ct. Martial, of which Winfield Scott* was president, I heard of speculations on the cause of my sustaining Capt. Partridge - there was only one cause, my sense of duty to all subordinate officers of my Corps.

My purpose in asking you to place this & other letters of mine on your files, is influenced by an idea that you have or may write a History of the Corps & Academy, If you do not do so, & you find no better acceptable for Your Papers, allow me to suggest my son Dr. Foster Swift* or some one of my grandsons as safe keeper - after I & you depart this life. Your friend
SWIFT

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TO George W. Cullum*

South Braintree April 23 (1860?)

My dear Captain,

In yours of the 15th I see nothing that surprises or puzzles me excepting the following sentence "You do not seem to attach much importance to the united testimony of De Russy & Loomis." "United testimony" Where is it, pray. I find it nowhere in any letter of yours. On the contrary, De Russy tells you (see your letter of March 29th) "he cannot say that Francis de Masson was at West Point after the 1st Decr 1807." As to the testimony of Loomis, it goes to prove to my mind that the Masson he remembers was Florimond, not Francis. Although "he would not venture to be sure that he recollected his being there after the winter vacation of 1808." Loomis came to W.P. in Augt. 1808 & left in Oct. 1810. During the term of 1810 if not before he must have seen Florimond every day & if he can remember only one Masson it seems to me reasonable to conclude that the one he remembers was Florimond & not Francis. If you would question Loomis closely he would not, probably "venture to be sure" that the first name of the Masson he remembers was Francis. If he can thus venture, he must have a most remarkable memory - a much better one than mine, for it would have been impossible for me, had I known only one Masson, to say whether his first name was Francis or Florimond. You ask "how it happens that Francis D. Masson is put down by Col. Williams himself as a Professor in the Mil. Acady. & is made Recording Secy. of the Mily Phil Socy for 1808 & 1810 if he had gone abroad never to return"? You here assume something not admitted. He did not go abroad with the expectation of never returning. On the contrary, he declared that it was his intention to return & Col. Williams & the Cadets were expecting his return from term to term 'til he resigned in March 1812. Florimond being regarded as his temporary suppliant. Hence his name was kept on the rolls & for the reason he continued to be elected Recording Secy of the M.P. Society. I will here remark on passant that he was not a "professor" nor was he addressed by that title even in courtesy. As to the addresses before the Society delivered Jany. 30th 1808 & Decr. 29th 1809, they must have been delivered either in Newyork or Phila. probably the latter. Col. W. was not at West from Nov. 1807 to May 1808 nor from Nov 1st 1809 to May 1810. I say this from personal knowledge being there myself during both periods. Nor was Francis D. Masson then or ever seen by me after 1807.

Respectfully & truly Yr. S. THAYER
Capt. Geo. W. Cullum U.S. Corps of Engr.

*See Index

TO Joseph G. Swift*

South Braintree April 23 '60 (1860)

My dear General,

Your letter of the 17th with the two preceding ones shall be disposed of as directed in your last. I never wondered that you were deceived by (Alden) Partridge.* He was a bundle of deceit & hypocrisy Artful & plausible as he was revengeful & malevolent. Under like circumstances he would have been another Tartuffe of Moliere. The story of his death-bed repentance I regard as doubtful. His removal from W. P. was determined on by Presdt (James) Madison* as early at least as 1815. So I inferred from the correspondence of the War Dept with you of which a copy was furnished me on assuming the Superintendence. In Nov 1816 at Paris I recd a letter from the Adj. Genl. (Daniel Parker)* purporting to be written by direction of the Presdt. requesting me to return to the U. States soon as practicable in order to take charge of the Academy on or before the commencement of the Term in 1817*. My arrival at New York being reported to the Dept. you recd. an order to assign me to the Superintendence of the Academy. This was in May 1817. As you then regarded Partridge as the right man in the right place & as I did not wish to take his place we deemed it best to let matters remain in status quo until the President (James Monro)* should visit W. P. & then judge for himself of the necessity of the change You went with him & accompanied him on his Eastern tour & on arrival at Portsmouth N. H. sent me the order to relieve Partridge which I did on the 27th July. Your friend

S. THAYER

Genl. Jos. G. Swift

* I supposed at the time that you had been consulted that the step was taken on your suggestion, or at least with your approbation.

*See Index

TO Alfred Mordecai*

South Braintree April 30th 1860

My dear Major,

The act of the Secy. (John B. Floyd)* in dissolving your Board did not astonish me, for it is not unlike many other of his inconsistent & absurd proceedings relating to the Academy. Had the Bd. been permitted to finish its task the probability is, judging of the future by the past, that the resulting programmes would have annulled or spoiled by the Secy. Nothing but harm to the Academy is, I fear, to be looked for under his administration.

The revision of the Programmes is an important & necessary work, but also one of extreme difficulty. of the graduates personally known to me I could name very few indeed who seemed to me well qualified for the task. In fact you were the only one outside the Academy of whose fitness in all respects I felt perfectly sure. Presdt. (Horace) Webster* would perhaps stand next until it is certain that persons perfectly qualified will be selected & that their programmes will be approved by the Dept. it would seem to me best that the desired revisions be postponed. I am very anxious to see your Report. Is there not a prospect that I shall have that satisfaction sooner or later? & now, dear Major, accept my heartfelt thanks for the kind expressions & good wishes in your letter & be assured that they are all warmly reciprocated on my part. Make your calculations to visit me on your next trip to Boston With affectionate regard
Your friend
Major A. Mordecai
U. S. Ordnance

S. THAYER

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 3rd May '60 (1860)

Col. Thayer

Dear friend,

Accept my thanks for your two notes on placing my Corps & Academy Histories on your files.

The determination to which you allude of Mr. (James) Madison* in 1815 to oust (Alden) Partridge* was not communicated to me, tho power to oust & of extinguishing my action about both Partridge & (Simon) Bernard,* was in Mr. Madisons hands -- Yet those two purposes were kept secret from me, 'tho your name had been mentioned I was not consulted, as you imagined I had been, Neither my files nor my diary nor my memory afforded any allusion to the _____ sent to you in 1817 said to have been copies of those sent to me, - true I knew of Mr. Madisons & Mr. (William) Crawfords* opinion of Partridge, & I knew that Engineer officers deemed the superintendance of the Academy as a species of School Masters place - the same sentiment that destroyed the Provost of West Point in 1794 which I heard Genl. (Alexander) Hamilton* mention to Col. (Jonathan) Williams* at Albany in 1802.

Whether a desire to prevent disruption of the Corps from the Contempt of Congress in Feb. 1816 - or whether my sentiments sustaining Partridge was attributed to vicious motives on my part, were enigmas to me, tho it seems not so to others, to me it seems that the secret courses in these two matters towards me were neither candid, nor necessary, nor friendly; - as soon as I could I left the Corps & that without collusion or imposing my notions upon any of my subordinates, (Joseph G.) Totten* met me accidentally 'tween Wash. & Bladensburgh on my way to the Surveyor Ship Nov 1818 & asked me why I had not advised the Corps of my purpose, my reply was "to avoid the aspect of collusion" which Mr. Geo. Graham* had alluded to in our bout in the War Office Decr. 1816 when I told him "the unjust allusion was a mere reflex of his own mind" his chf. Clerk Daniel Parker* was his prompter. On the Resignation of Col. Williams the (Henry) Burbeck* influence revived that had sent us nonsensical Battery Plans in 1808; When Dr. (William) Eustis* in 1809 invited me to go with him to Washington to aid in inducting him to the War Office, he spoke highly of me to Mr. Madison - but soon after the Burbeck mania revived. A short story _____ I was dining with Capt. (Richard Whiley?) Wiley* at Fort Columbus 1807 with Col. Williams, Col. Burbeck & Major (Moses?) Porter,* a subject of conversation was the practice of promoting sergeants, it was condemned by both Burbeck & Porter both of whom were promoted from sergeants, by Wiley also who had been a British Sergeant - Col. Williams & myself sustained the practice in case & of merit. -- In reference to your doubts of Partridges Repentance, it came to me from Newton Partridge* & Lieut. John Wright* on their visiting me at Geneva, & and the widow of Major (Oliver G.) Burton* heard it - the widow of Alden Partridge wrote for me to aid in her sons getting a cadetship.

I think this closes my reminiscence for your files on the score of Partridge & Bernard, & as far as I can see on the whole subject of Corps & Academy & I am Your friend SWIFT

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 29 May '60 (1860)

Dear friend,

If you have seen my Brother (William H. Swift)* he will have told you I have found a first Cousin of John Lind Smith* in Dundee Scotland - The Genealogy is in the hands of the Public Administrator New York & when I hear further shall again break in upon your silence & let you know of our chance to have some suitable honour done to his Grave - (William H. C.) Bartlett* writes me nothing done there yet; I suppose (Richard) Delafield* is waiting for subscription from the Corps? always
your
Colonel Thayer

J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 20th Sept. '60 (1860)

Dear Colonel,

The last accounts from you were last Spring, & of you from William (H. Swift)* last July of your being at Work with 11 men on your Farm - so I am ignorant of your present functions; Wm. Says you have been troubled with Boils - I judge from the briefness of your lines & from some other intimations, that writing may be troublesome, & so I avoided worrying you with my thoughts on the Corps & of the anomalous abuse of its functions. - I purpose going with Sally (Swift)* to Brooklyn next month, & as locomotion has become rather irksome, hope to see you there, & it may be about the time when I may be before the Surrogate on the subject of the disposal of the Estate of Col. J. (ohn) L. Smith*, now some \$32,000 & increasing by Dividends, I presume it will go to the Scottish 1st Cousin the only one & living in Dundee, an aged Widow Elizabeth Gray - She hopes to enable me to erect a memorial to our departed friend. - My Brother will tell you of Col. (Richard) Delafields* intentions to get out a Slab of Granite of Six by four by two feet to lay on the grave, & I hope also to see a suitable Inscription over the Gate Way of Fort Schuyler?

I have several subjects of discourse, but for reasons before stated refrain from a longer epistle, & am with the Remembrances of my Children here as ever Your J. G. SWIFT

P.S. My Brother may tell you of Fosters (Swift)* engagement with Miss (Alida C.) Fitzhugh* a niece of Willys (Jonathan William Swift)* Wife. (Isabella Fitzhugh Swift)*

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

100 Remsen St. Brooklyn 27 Nov. 1860

Dear friend,

My family arrived here three weeks & all pretty well.

By decree of the Surrogate \$1000 One Thousand Dollars have been placed in my hands at my discretion to erect a Memorial on the grave of Col. (John L.) Smith* at West Point - The Bal \$24000 was decreed to the Heiress Mrs. Gray of Dundee No Britain & will be sent to her in a few days - She is 75 years of age & has five nephews & nieces living in Canada; Claimants from S. Carolina failed to prove any Claim & Mrs. Gray established clearly her Heirship at Law. - of course its my wish to fulfil this decree to the approval of the Corps of Engineers & I suppose a consultation with the Chief Engineer (René De Russy)* & Yourself & my Brother (William H. Swift)* & Col. (Richard) Delafield* & Majors (William H.) Chase* & (John G.) Barnard* would be a sufficient body to decide. Col. Delafield purposed to Quarry a Slab of (Greis) at West Point to lay upon the Grave - I propose for your consideration to place upon that Slab a Cube of Two feet of Marble & on the 4 Faces of the Cube cut deeply the Origin, Services Character & Death of the Col. & upon the Cube place an Urn of Bronze having the Semblance of Flame issuing from the Mouth of the Urn; - Be pleased to propose any other design & at an early Day.

My going to Boston in some degree depends on when my Brother may come to New York - Will any business call you hither & to pass Some days with me & Mr. (Peter) Richards* - How are your Legs etc. I am as ever Your friend J. G. SWIFT
To Col. Thayer

P.S. I say nothing of the Folly of North & South, - But should like to know what possible form of Govt. the South could, if Tolerated, adopt so good as the present Union.

J.G.S.

I have written Col. DeRussy to ask the Executive to consider my or other Design & to see Genl. (Joseph G.) Totten* also about the same.

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

100 Remsen Street City of Brooklyn
9th January '61 (1861)

Dear friend -- No doubt the suicidal course of So. Carolina & its contagious dangers have many of your thoughts; - When causes are generally Known Remedy may commence - the No. 1 of them is departing Power of the South in Congress - masqued by Negro Runaways & Abolitionism & encouraged by a treasonable delay of manning the Forts & Securing in them the Arms etc of the Arsenals & in distributing with gross inequality the arms from U.S. Armouires

From the first my faith has been in the Constitution & Union, strengthened in that Faith by the fact that the contiguous States Free & Slave - could not long exist as Separate Governments & therefore that mutual Interests would conserve at least a growling Peace to which the coming Power of the No West would add a great strength -

Major (Thomas J.) Leslie* & his Daughter have been to see Sally (Swift)* & I - the Major tells me of the Direction he had to find you in So. Braintree "Go round that corner & You will see a sort of Fortification there lives Col. Thayer."-

I am still confined by Gout & Rheumatism while glad to learn that you are better of the trouble in your Thigh.

Sally & I join in every sort of good wishes for you. Your friend

J. G. SWIFT

To Colonel Thayer U.S.A.

P.S. Leslie will be a great help to me in getting up the J. (ohn) L. S. (mith)* Memorial - upon which I shall set the Sculptor at Work as soon as I can go out comfortably -

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Brooklyn 100 Remsen Street
18 Jany. '61 (1861)

Dear friend, I have your response of 14th & agreeably thereto advise you of my continued improvement, but may be not as rapidly at 77 as might be in earlier life; - That I am worried by the insane doings at the South - You will not wonder at, & outraged by the vicious folly of (James) Buchannan*, - the late imprisonment of the Collector of Geo. Town S. C. on top of the capture of Forts & Firing upon the U. S. Flag - may wake up Rip Van Winkle & East of "Sleepy Hollow" - I hope not in a Rage & in a March upon the South - for Conquest by Arms can make Union only a Curse, & I am not Sure it has not become an Evil to remain any longer allied to the South? - If it were not too grave a matter I might say to the South - as old Eben (Dorr) of Boston said of Gov. (Thomas) Gage* - when he "refused to let the people go" - He "deserves to be Severely talked to." - How long it may be before Southern people see their position of Rebellion I cant say - but I hope it will before Northern embodiment takes place !! -

I have accidentally seen a most suitable "Scotch Granite" monument, much like the idea I gave you, & am thinking to adopt it & get it ready to Set up as Soon as Spring opens, - its about 12 feet high & 4 feet at the Base & a beautiful Stone, deep Red & White & Black Specs & a fine polish Shall advise you further upon it, & ask your opinion of reducing & simplifying the Inscription - Sally (Swift) & I & Mr. (Peter) Richards* unite in every good wish for you Your friend J. G. SWIFT
Colonel Thayer

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

100 Remsen St. Brooklyn
19 Feb. '61 (1861)

Dear friend,

Major (Thomas J.) Leslie* & I went recently to see the monument of J. (ohn) L. S (mith)* that I have mentioned to you, - he approves my choice & (Richard) Delafield* writes me all things shall be ready when the Frost is out of the Ground. - I send you a transcript of the Inscription that will be commenced next week - If you see any thing to alter or Insert do write me anon - 1st. Face - "Here Rest the Remains of Colonel John Lind Smith, U. S. Corps of Engineers - Who died 13th December 1858 Aged Seventy Years (and was here Interred with Military Honours)¹ (He was) greatly Respected/^{and Lamented} (by His Brother Officers & other Friends.) 2d Face Born in Charleston S. C. the son of John & Agnes Lind Smith of Dundee in Scotland - a dutiful Son - a Steadfast Friend - a Faithful Officer and ^a Benevolent ^{Man} (to the Poor) - (He colonized all his Slaves in Liberia.) 3d face - In the Mexican War he achieved two Brevets. He was constructing Engineer of Forts Schuyler (& Columbus) in New York Harbour and of (many) other Forts in the United States. - 4th face - This Memorial ^{was} (is) Erected ^{at the request} (by the wish) of Elizabeth Watson Gray of Dundee N.B. and ^{sanctioned official} by the Degree of the Surrogate of the City of New York 1861"

As you & I rejoiced in the Constitution & Union as they were - we cant be far apart in our estimation of the Inaugural of Jefferson Davis* - O that any who were Educated, Clothed & Fed by the Union could turn their backs upon this Union - its monstrous! - But I believe that both Sections could be happier Separate than United by Law - if two large communities, the one Free the other Slave, could keep quiet along side of each other? - May be if border States intervenc a longer peace might Ensue? Sally (Swift)* joins with me in respects Your friend

J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

¹ The parens and added words appear to have been inserted, in pencil, at a later date, possibly by S. T. upon receipt of letter.

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

100 Remsen St. Brooklyn
11th March '61 (1861)

Dear friend,

I deem your opinion/^{22d feby.} upon omitting "other friends" in the Inscription to be just, & they are omitted, But I retain the "Constructing Engineer of Forts Schuyler & Columbus in N.Y. harbour" - If you go to Boston do show the Inscription to William, (H. Swift)* or Send it to him. - You do not say what your opinion is of Mr. (Jefferson) Davis* but I guess we are not far apart - tho' he be an angel compared with that Beast of a (David E.) Twiggs* who came near ruining the Battle of Cerro Gordo? - I presume we agree in opinion of the Innaugural - the reference to the Supreme Court means as I suppose that the Dred Scott case was perverted to foist in an opinion upon the African Race! thus transcending the Power given to that Court by the only Govt, we have - the Constitution - a transcending that if pursued would distroy the Power that created the Court, - I am for every Citizens understanding the Constitution & I find very few who have read it & some lawyers who do not understand its wisdom, - I have deep Respect for the Mind of (Daniel) Webster* but believe he went too far in his opinion of the Power of Congress in Territories - they involve more Power than is conferred by the words of the Constitution, the exercise of which construction of W's would promote feud & not peace: - Mr. Lillncoln (Abraham Lincoln)* also means that an African not a Slave is a Free Man & entitled to the Respect that pertains to a Free Man - & so I believe.

The Southern Congress says they are soon to have 50,000 in the field & Dolls. 15 Millions from foreign Loan, - I doubt both, for of the \$675,000 voted by So. Carolina not a Dollar was in their Treasury on 4th. March.

I remember Montesquieu* says "No People ever long submitted to a Government adverse to their Interests" - in less than a Year, if I know any thing of the South, they will act their discontent with their new Regime - The Slave Trade cannot ease the error of setting Europe a Cotton Seeking!

I was surprised at (Samuel) Coopers* Resignation - 'tho long knowing of his deference to The Masons* - I wish the Army & Navy purged of Secessionists but have no objections to a Proclamation offering all of them & all other Secessionists an oblivion of the past. I have been to see Mr. (Cropsy) & his 3 daughters & never met one more glad to see me - Sally (Swift)* & I had a charming day at (Thomas J.) Leslie's* last Thursday. They Report Ft. Sumpter to be evacuated. Your friend

J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

100 Remsen St. 9th. Apl. '61 (1861)

Dear friend,

I have this day yours of 6th - post Mark Boston 8th. asking me about the Stir in this Harbour - I Reply at once that I know only what you see in the Papers - save that Yesterday I met a Navy officer just from Washington who said "I am forbid to say what is going on - but no doubt Fort Pickens is to be reinforced, & Texas Forts occupied to aid (Samuel) Houston*" - "I saw the President (Abraham Lincoln)* Yesterday looking as calm as the Morn & as firm as a Rock". - This letting alone is fatiguing but the only way to Sustain the innagural "so long as we are not Fired into" - I presume the Northern (Govrs.) & the President understand each other about Keeping the Powder Dry. - My Brother (William H. Swift)* may have told you of my diclension of the Geneva Post Office!!
Your friend

J. G. SWIFT

One of my strongest reasons for letting alone is the doubtful aspect of Communal Men in our Cities & they sustained by Democrats & Boston Federalists!!!

*See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

100 Remsen St. Brooklyn
19th April 1775¹ (1861?)

Dear friend,

(Thomas J.) Leslie* & I had a nice time yesterday & both of us staunch alike for the only Government that is worth having - namely the Union. I have tendered my services as Consulting or Resident Engineer wherever the President (Abraham Lincoln)* may require them, & I presume my two sons James (Swift)* & Foster (Swift)* will soon be a Corporal & a Surgeon in some New York Regiment. - In a letter to the President, in reference to my opinion of officers who have qualities of Generals, I have begun with Col. G. (James) W. Ripley* & Jo. (Joseph K. F.) Mansfield* & Rt. (Robert E.) Lee* etc & in reference to yourself have said these words & no more "If Col. Thayers health permit him You could not have a safer Counsellor & in my opinion his is the best Military Mind in the Union Save only Genl. (Winfield) Scotts*" -

I am going next week to West Point with the Memorial & today to hunt among Col. (John L.) Smiths* Books & Papers at Majr. (John G.) Barnards* for some token to send to his Heiress Mrs. (Elizabeth) Gray of Dundee who has recently sent me a beautiful Gold Headed Cane in token of her feelings.

What can I say of the Plunge into Hell that the South has made & the Borders are making! Only this - every Man who loves the Union must buckle on & obey orders, & as for the rest I say nothing. - In my letters to (William H. C.) Bartlett* - up to the Hub of Course - do not meet the Kind of Response I expected, Not Secession by any means, but not to my mind - I like him greatly & have today written him a plumper, & to Genl. Scott my idea of strategy (West) & So. (West) & said to Genl. S. thus "When I resigned it was the Colonelcy & not my Brevet in the Line of the Army & Mr. (James) Monroe* agreed with my views & said "When opportunity offers I shall recall you to service" - If Brevet be a Reward for Meritorious Services it was intended for something - a Shadow only it was (or) Inconstitutional Title? -

Tell me what you are doing & do not be so long in responding
ever Your
J. G. SWIFT

*See Index

¹ Apparent reference to the beginning of the American Revolution with the battle of Lexington in Massachusetts on April 19, 1775.

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 8th Oct. '61 (1861)

Dear friend,

Your allusion on 1st. Sept. to the warm report of (Dennis H.) Mahan* about my visit to West Point in May, was as you may have imagined - very pleasant; - I was glad also to have your approbation of the plan for a "School for Privates" - my age lays it on the shelf; - glad also to read your plan to increase the No. of Graduates W. P. during the War, - but you made no comment on the Volunteers - in my opinion 21 July & all they have done nobly. - The most important comment from Washington is that "You would not be sensible there of the presence of 150,000 men at arms" - Good - very good - I am sorry (John C.) Fremont * endorsed a Presidents action? - tho have no doubt he could not sustain the noble (Nathaniel) Lyon* - Ohio, Indiana & Illinios have to bear that consequent shame of Tardy action! - I note your remark on the severence of your Private relations with T. (Joseph G. Totten)* & of our mutual high estimate of Mrs. (Carolina) T. (otten)* - I have no more words to waste on the Traitor (Samuel) Cooper,* - a little event last week - after many Years of silence on the part of Col. (Stephen H.) Long* came a letter from him - with a message to Mrs. (Louisa) Swift* - You may remember of the plight in which I found him 47 years ago & elevated him, he has permitted six years to elapse & no enquiry in all that time of her who had been his friend - to be sure he has been long over the mountains; - He dedicated his Book to J. (ohn) C. Calhoun* after I had earnestly urged his appt. to the "Western expedition," & after I had sent him to Illinois & proven the fitness of my estimate of him, - true I was no longer his chief & the occasion was the only one he ever had to notice me - but then as I had "transferred my name from the Army Register to a Rum Hogshead" as Noah said - I could give his Book no _____ - methinks he made a Mistake?

When I began this letter I intended to say something about amending the Constitution as to Treason, Habeas Corpus & Tenure of office etc. I learn that the venerable (Josiah) Quincy* contemplates a Revision & Reinforcement, & shall write to him some thoughts on the Error of Congress in Legislating on Slavery when it admitted States with Slavery

Now is no time for any man to hide his Candle under a Bushell - I think those States should be recalled to become Territories, after our movement on the South may have opened their eyes, & after they begin to feel that European extension of cotton culture will change the whole aspect of Slavery; - we should have an amended Constitution to meet their laying down of arms, - for longer or shorter in time lay down they must; - From the day of my casting my Vote for Mr. (Abraham) Lincoln* 6th Nov. last to this, few days have been without lines from me to Somebody South (on ye. Vice) & Ruin to the South of Secession. one vast omission of Morals was made in the Constitution of 1787 in the Preamble - by not emphatically acknowledging the Superintending Providence of God & of our accountability to that Providence - The nation "that omits that is accursed" - I once asked J. (ohn) Q. (uincy) Adams* why

he could not propose its mention forty three Years ago - I was once Dining with him & Mr. (Henry)Clay* & Mr. (Albert) Gallatin* when the conversation was on the (tendency) of our Laws - Mr. Gallatin said that so long as our Laws pointed only to (turning) _____ into (Crown) & omitted all notice (of the) Reciprocal obligations of Duty & Right - we should be going down Hill; - I heard Mr. (Thomas) Jefferson* once say he "feared Democracy was running too fast" he had added to its speed by appealing to the safety of free discussion, - but human Reason has not yet (controuled), & no basis has the human safety in it - that Property Exercises, & No man who owns no Property has a natural Right to vote it away - Tenure of Property is the safest basis of Society - & the great blessing of Liberty cannot be enjoyed without restraint. If you reply to this I will inflict my notions upon the Constitution upon you; - as ever Your

J. G. SWIFT

* See Index

FROM Joseph G. Swift*

Geneva 31 Oct. '61 (1861)

Dear friend,

Your feelings in favour of this family & especially now on the Marriage of Sally (Swift)* & (Peter) Richards* summonses a prompt response to Yours of 26th Oct. Recd. last evening, - I have done wrong in not apprizing you of the coming Marriage as soon as I knew of it last of August, - Maybe an idea that my letters had become Summonses to Reply - which your repugnance to writing made irksome, had some influence, nothing worse at any rate; - This marriage is fit & appropriate in all Respects & we rejoice in your approbation of it & Sally & Mr. R. request me to express their gratification at what you say. - I shall be glad of your thoughts on the War & am very much pleased that our views upon it are coincident. - We expect to move to 100 Remsen Brooklyn by 15th Nov. for the Winter, & if my dizziness depart, as it seems to indicate, it being attendant on eating Solids I hope to see you by & bye & Wm (William H. Swift)* & Mr. (Josiah) Quincy* & daughters - Your friend J.G. SWIFT

*See Index