

1863 Letter from the Department of State to the Government Printing Office

Lee Ann Potter

On Saturday, January 3, 1863, Assistant Secretary of State Frederick W. Seward sent a letter to John D. Defrees, superintendent of Public Printing, asking that 500 copies of a “circular and proclamation” be printed. The letter also gave specific instructions as to what type of paper was to be used, the layout, and when the department wanted the copies to be ready (the record copy of the letter is featured on p. 273).

The circular he referred to was from his father, Secretary of State William H. Seward, who ordered that it be sent to all of the diplomatic and consular agents of the United States serving abroad. It began by announcing that President Abraham Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation:

You will receive herewith a copy of a proclamation which was issued by the President on the first day of January instant, in which he designates the States and parts of States which yet remain in insurrection against the United States, and gives effect to the proclamation which he issued on the 22nd day of September last, and in which it was announced that the slaves within such States and districts would, as a measure of military necessity, on the said first day of January, be declared forever free.

It continued by explaining what the proclamation meant:

Through this great act, slavery will practically be brought to an end in

eight of the States of this Union and in the greater portions of two other States. The number of slaves thus restored to freedom is about three and one-half millions.

And it concluded with his, and the president’s, deep feelings about the proclamation’s significance:

The President entertains no doubt that this transaction will commend itself to the enlightened judgment and moral approbation of not only all Christian states, but of mankind.

Officials at the newly established Government Printing Office recorded in a register of print jobs completed for the Department of State, that 500 copies of the circular and the “Proclamation of President” were in fact printed. The register also indicated that the associated costs included \$2.85 for composition, \$4.00 for press work, and \$3.85 for the 14-pound-per-ream white foolscap paper that was used (See pp. 274–275 for the register pages.).

As soon as the copies were ready, officials at the Department of State sent them

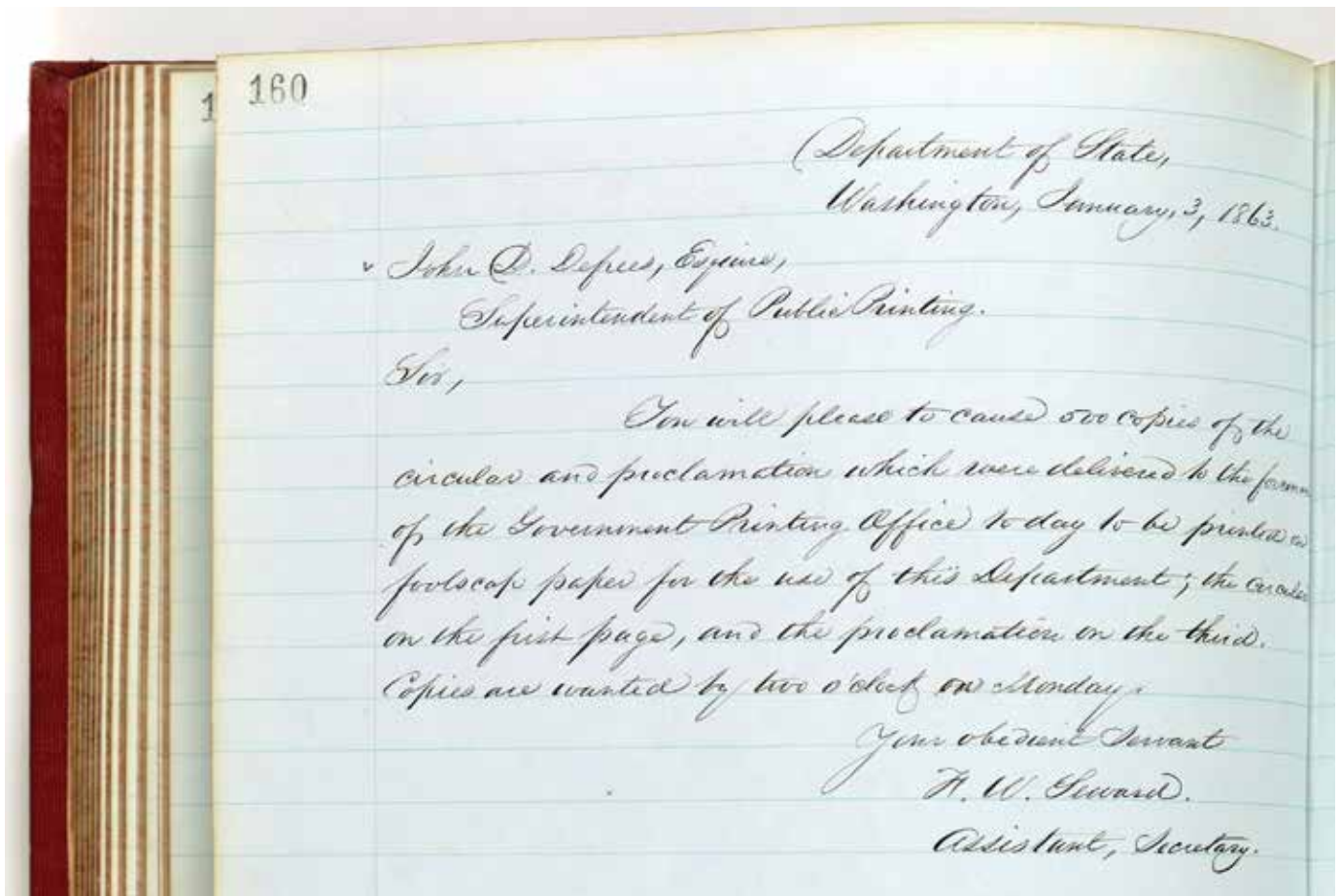
to the American consulates and embassies around the world. Depending on the ease or difficulty of mail delivery to various locations, officials received them at different times in the coming weeks. Many began receiving them toward the end of January and promptly responded.

Bradford F. Ford, the American minister resident in Copenhagen, Denmark, was one of the first to reply. On January 20, he wrote to Seward of the impact the proclamation would have on whether European powers would support the Confederacy. He stated, “Depend upon it, that proclamation is the severest blow the confederates have received this side of the Atlantic.”

Two days later, Norman B. Judd, envoy at the American Consulate in Berlin, Prussia, reported that he had received the “President’s proclamation of January 1, 1863, making freedom national,” and that news about it was spreading rapidly. He explained,

The proclamation of freedom has reached the liberal heart of Germany, and I hear in various directions of preparations for congratulatory addresses. I hail that proclamation with the deepest thankfulness, and with the feeling that the enormous expenditure of blood and treasure in this unholy rebellion has borne its fruit in the

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Announcing the New National Archives at New York!

Dorothy Dougherty

This fall, "Teaching with Documents" readers who have grown fond of federal records over the years will be able to enjoy a new, must-visit venue in New York City! The National Archives at New York City is relocating from a small government office in the Greenwich Village area to a historic landmark building in downtown Manhattan, known as the Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House. The new Research Center will double in size while still providing access to New York holdings, which date from 1685 to the 1990s and span across federal agencies operating in New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Also, in the brand new Learning Center, education specialists will offer free professional development sessions and student field trips in the mornings, while afternoon programming will serve the general public with a wide variety of learning opportunities. Free copies of featured documents, document discovery sessions, Archival Adventures, access to online resources, and more, will be available. With records such as the Titanic Limitation of Liability case file, which includes a drawing of the ship's plans; Thomas Edison's copyright for the Kinetoscope (precursor to the early moving image camera); Albert Einstein's Declaration of Intention to become a U.S. citizen; Annie Moore's passenger arrival record (as the first person processed at Ellis Island Immigration Center in 1892); U.S. Custom House records (including drawings and photos of the historic spaces in our new landmark building); Civil War records (including the names of New York and New Jersey soldiers who registered for the draft and prize cases of ships intercepted during the war); and more, the new facility will provide the public with the opportunity to engage, discover, and be inspired by the many stories found within the National Archives. See www.archives.gov/NYC/ for more information.

DOROTHY DOUGHERTY is Public Programs director of the National Archives at New York.

SECRETARY'S OFFICE

Office of the

When received.	Description of Printing.	No. of pages or cuts.	Cost of composition.	No. of copies.	No. and size of pages of press-work.
1862.			\$	c	
1 October 1,	Diplomatic and Consular Officers,	118000	59 00	300	12600 1/2 pp. 8vo.
2	Form No. 9,	7500	3 75	2000	2000 2000 1/2 pp. 8vo.
3	14,	20300	10 10	12,000	35 pp. 8vo.
4	15,	17600	8 50	2,000	2,000 2,000 1/2 pp. 8vo.
5	17,	15600	7 75	2,000	2,000 2,000 1/2 pp. 8vo.
6	31,	6500	3 25	2,000	2,000 2,000 1/2 pp. 8vo.
7	43,	7200	3 60	8,000	16,000 16,000 1/2 pp. 8vo.
8	44,	32600	16 30	18,000	18,000 18,000 1/2 pp. 8vo.
9	" 44,	3600	1 60	6,000	6,000 6,000 1/2 pp. 8vo.
10	16, Diplomatic Correspondence,	0.0000	19 00	1,900	19,000 19,000 1/2 pp. 8vo.
11	20, Blank Letter of Appointment,	2200	1 10	500	1000 1000 1/2 pp. 8vo.
12	21, " to Consuls,	2800	1 40	2,000	4,000 4,000 1/2 pp. 8vo.
13	29 Circular No. 27, 7c.,	6700	3 35	200	800 . . .
14 January 18,	" No. 28,	9700	4 85	600	2,000 . . .
15	28, List of Dip. and Cons. Officers,	118000	59 00	300	12600 8 1/2 pp. 8vo.
16 Account 3,	Commission for Justices of the Peace,	6200	3 10	500	500 500 1/2 pp. 8vo.
17	17 Cover for List of Dip. & Cons. Officers,	3000	1 30	600	1200 . . .
18	20 Pay Roll	12600	6 30	150	300 1/2 pp. 8vo.
1863.			19475		
14 Jan'y 12	Labels, - Consul of Havana,	1500	75	300	400 2
20	" " Panama,	1500	75	200	400 2
21	21, Report on Japanese Currency,	40500	20 70	200	4800 2
21 1/2	3 Proclamations of President	5700	2 95	300	2000 2
22 February 13,	Circular No. 32,	6200	3 10	500	2000 2
23	Homestead Law, and circular	20100	10 15	500	4000 2
24	18, Circulars Nos. 17 & 22,	15300	7 65	500	8000 1
25	24 Certificate of Appointment,	3500	1 75	500	1000 2
26	26, Requisitions,	7000	3 50	200	1850 2
			5080		
27 March 9,	Circular and Resolution of Senate,	5600	2 80	200	800 2
28	10, Correspondence in case of "Islamats",	560000	280 20	200	71600 1/2 pp. 8vo.
29	16, Instructions for Printers,	18100	9 20	200	1600 2
30	19, Treaty with Kiussas Indians	10100	5 05	300	2400 2
Carried forward,			29720		

Secretary of State.

Cost of press-work.		Total cost of printing.		Quantity and kind of paper.		Cost per ream.	Cost of paper.		No. of copies on sheet.	Remarks
Rs.	P.	Rs.	P.	Rs.	P.	Rs.	P.	Rs.	P.	
12 60	71 60	15	Printing Paper	56	6 44	4 83				octavo.
4 00	7 75	1 2	White Folio post	20	3 00	3 30	4			both sides.
50 00	60 10	12 18	Semiparochment	20x4 25	4 60	57 30	2			
16 00	24 80	4 6	White. Neolium	26	4 68	20 13	4			100 lines
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8 00	9 40	4 7	Cap paper	14	2 58	11 11				
1 60	4 95	- 9	"	"	"	1 15				
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1 20	3 70		Colored medium		7 00	2 28	4			5 th
60	6 90		Super Royal		15 68	2 75	2			
<u>724 27</u>		<u>919 02</u>				<u>6841 46</u>				
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50	1 55	2 1/2	"	"	"	2 8				
9 60	31 00	2 7	Blue Cap.	12	2 19	5 15	5 1/2			
4 00	6 85	1 2	White leaf	14	3 50	3 85	1			
4 00	7 10	1 2	White Cap.	12	3 90	3 30	1			
8 00	18 05	2 8	"	"	"	6 45	2 5/2			
8 00	15 65		Printing paper	Bates	56	6 44	2			
2 00	3 75	1 12	"	Deemy	26	3 90	4 29	1		
2 70	6 20		Paper from Bombay							
<u>34 90</u>		<u>90 70</u>				<u>23 60</u>				
1 60	4 40	9	White cap.	14	2 10	9 5	1			
11 32 20	42 3 40	38 15	Blue		12	2 17	84 87 90			
3 20	12 40	18	White		16	2 92	2 63	2 2/2		
4 80	9 85	1 6	"		14	2 10	2 73	2 1/2		2 sheets Ea.
<u>152 85</u>		<u>450 05</u>				<u>91 18</u>				

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

1. Share copies of the featured documents with students. Lead a class discussion with the following questions: What kinds of documents are these? When were they created, by whom, and for what purpose? Explain to students that the proclamation mentioned in the documents was the Emancipation Proclamation. Review the proclamation's details with students and ask why they think the Department of State wanted 500 copies to be made quickly, just days after it was issued. [The Emancipation Proclamation is available online from the National Archives at www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/emancipation_proclamation/index.html.]
2. Ask students to speculate about how news of the Emancipation Proclamation was received in other countries. Keep a list on the board of the adjectives students use. Next, read aloud the excerpts from the Foreign Service officers included in this article and ask students to generate another list of adjectives to describe the collective response to the Emancipation Proclamation. Encourage students to compare the lists and discuss the similarities and differences. As an extension, introduce students to the Foreign Affairs of the United States (FRUS) volumes. They are available online at <http://uwdc.library.wisc.edu/collections/FRUS>. Explain that while these published volumes do not include all of the correspondence of State Department officials, they include many examples. Encourage students to explore the volumes and discover for themselves how significant events in history were reported.
3. Tell students that the Government Printing Office (GPO) was created by Congress in June 1860 and began operations on March 4, 1861. Invite them to explore the GPO website and discover what this government agency does. Ask them why they think the agency was created at that particular time. Invite them to read the introduction to the publication "Keeping America Informed" at www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GPO-KEEPINGAMERICAINFORMED/pdf/GPO-KEEPINGAMERICAINFORMED.pdf, or read to them the following excerpt and lead a class discussion about its meaning:

Setting down the written word for all to see... preserves it, authenticates it, and makes it official, the real thing. This act in turn makes it possible to replicate and disseminate the written word unchanged, providing a common foundation for literacy, education, commerce, the arts, and—perhaps most important of all—the conduct of government in a free society.
4. Explain to students that news of the Emancipation Proclamation was also spread through the press, by the issuance of General Orders within the military, and by word of mouth. Invite students to contrast those methods with how news is spread today. Encourage them to select a current world news story and find information about it from five different sources. Ask them to compare and evaluate the sources, writing a paragraph about which source they trust the most and why.
5. Inform students that the Emancipation Proclamation was one of 50 proclamations issued by President Lincoln. Divide students into five groups and assign each group 10 of the proclamations. Ask them to conduct research and find out what their assigned proclamations were about. Invite volunteers from each group to share their findings, and ask the class to categorize the proclamations and discuss to what extent they contribute to student understanding of the Civil War. [The proclamations can be found in Volume 13 of the Statues at Large, beginning on page 730, on the Library of Congress's Century of Lawmaking site at <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=013/llsl013.db&recNum=759>].
6. Invite students to find out more about Frederick W. Seward, John D. Defrees, William H. Seward, or any of the foreign affairs officers mentioned in this article. Encourage students to share their findings with the class.

The author would like to thank archivist Sarah Farinholt for her help in locating the documents featured in this article.

Note about the Featured Documents

The record copy of the letter dated January 3, 1863, from F.W. Seward, assistant secretary of state, to John D. Defrees, superintendent of Public Printing, comes from Domestic Letters of the Department of State, 1784–1906, Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, and is in the holdings of the National Archives.

The register indicating print jobs comes from Registers of Printing for Executive and Other Departments, Volume: State 1862-1871, Records of the Government Printing Office, Record Group 149, and is also in the holdings of the National Archives. Both are available online from the National Archives at www.docsteach.org.

TEACHING WITH DOCUMENTS

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acknowledgement of man's right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness' in his own way...

On January 24, George G. Fogg, the American minister resident in Berne, Switzerland, reported, "Your circular of January 3, transmitting the President's proclamation...is received. Permit me, without discussing the military efficiency of the measure, to express the opinion that this act...does and will 'commend itself to the enlightened judgment and moral approbation' of every friend of our republic." He further reported,

In Switzerland, I know of no public press or public man whose sympathies are not now with the federal government. It is everywhere understood to be a struggle between freedom and despotism...It is only in illiberal and reactionary court circles, odorous with the flavor of past, or dreams of future despotisms, that the rebellion has its sympathizers and friends.

Bayard Taylor, the American chargé d'affaires in St. Petersburg, Russia, reported on January 27 that one of the principal daily papers in the Russian language, *Ve'domosti* (Gazette), printed a leading editorial article in support of the Emancipation Proclamation. He proceeded to include the translated text of the editorial and explained that he felt "it may interest you ... as a specimen of an influential portion of the press here, which is never read and never quoted outside the empire."

In his letter to Seward written on March 9, James Watson Webb, the envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary from the American Legation in Petropolis, Brazil, described the president's proclamation as "all-important" and one that he "most cordially and unreservedly" approved. He explained that upon receipt of it, he immediately enclosed a copy of it

to the secretary of foreign affairs.

Whether speculating about the Emancipation Proclamation's impact, describing the reactions they witnessed abroad, or sharing their personal feeling about proclamation, the widespread response reported by State Department officials to Lincoln's proclamation declaring slaves "forever free" resonated around the globe. 🌐

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