

Abraham Lincoln papers

From Benjamin B. French to Abraham Lincoln, July 2, 1863

Washington, July 2d 1863.

My Dear Sir,

I think you believe in my truth, my sincerity & my honesty, & believing thus I do not think you would suffer me to be dishonored or degraded without cause. The Honorable Caleb B. Smith, when Secy. of the Interior, without any consultation with me, or notice to me, appointed me Disbursing Agent of the Capitol Extension and New Dome, & I gave bonds for 40000 dollars & entered on the duties & have most faithfully performed them till yesterday, when, to my utter surprise, and without notice or reason, Mr. Secy. Usher saw fit to "relieve" me, as he expressed it, from those duties.

The Com. of P. B. has always been the Disbursing Agent of the Patent Office Building, & his appointment and blank bond for \$40000, has always accompanied his Commission as Commr ever since that Building was commenced. Mr. Usher has also "relieved" me from that duty.

Why this has been done I am at a loss to know, unless it be that, as I was doing the duty for a mere trifle, & even that expired yesterday, & I should probably have continued to do it for nothing, and the Secy. desired to give some one else a fat salary. That is the only reason I can think of for — there has never been a single complaint, & all the persons employed are expressing their strong regrets at the removal.

After having done all my duty for you & to you, and to my Country, avowing always, my determination to stand by and defend you & your policy "to the last of my blood & my breath," — & I now solemnly reaffirm that intention, — it is hard to receive such evidence of lack of confidence in me as the action of the Secy. shows.

I do not write this expecting or asking any action by you, but only to let you know the treatment I have received, & to express a hope that I still retain your confidence and kind feeling.¹

1 French later helped draft a bill that would have made his office independent of the Secretary of the Interior's authority. See Lincoln to French, March 25, 1864; and French to Lincoln, March 27, 1864.

You may rely upon my doing all my duty toward you, be where I may.

I am, with high respect

your faithful friend

& Obt. Servt.

B. B. French