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Jane Van Nimmen

book review of

*The First Smithsonian Collection: The European Engravings of George Perkins Marsh and the Role of Prints in the U.S. National Museum* by Helena E. Wright

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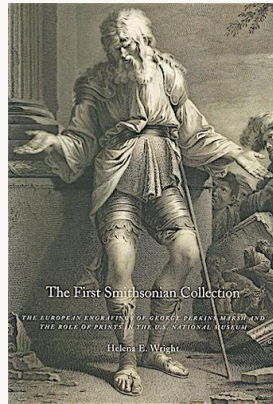
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Helena E. Wright,  
*The First Smithsonian Collection: The European Engravings of George Perkins Marsh and the Role of Prints in the U.S. National Museum.*

Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, 2015.

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Upon James Smithson's death in 1829, the nephew of the wealthy English chemist and mineralogist inherited his fortune. According to the surprising terms of the will, if his heir died childless, the bequest was to go to the United States, a country Smithson had never visited. The will specified only that the money should be used to found "at Washington, under the name of the Smithsonian Institution, an establishment for the increase & diffusion of knowledge among men." The late English scientist's nephew died without issue in 1835, the United States accepted the bequest, and more than \$500,000 in gold sovereigns and many of Smithson's books and personal effects arrived in New York by ship at the end of August 1838.<sup>[1]</sup> The country, still shaken by its first serious economic depression the previous year, was divided on many issues, chiefly the widening split between the abolitionists and the Southern slaveholders. Controversy delayed the decision on what to do with the Smithson windfall.

Following years of debate, an energetic speaker in April 1846 urged the House of Representatives to devote the funds to a national library. The eloquence of Vermont Congressman George Perkins Marsh (1801–1882), one of the protagonists of the book under review, seemed to propel the rancorous legislators toward a decision (4).<sup>[2]</sup> On August 10, 1846, an Act of Congress established the Smithsonian Institution with a board of regents to govern it. The bill authorized construction of a building to house natural history objects "including a geological and mineralogical cabinet; also a chemical laboratory, a library, a gallery of art, and the necessary lecture rooms" (4–5).<sup>[3]</sup> The wording echoed Marsh's plea for "a library, a museum, and a gallery of art."

In her forcefully documented study Helena E. Wright, Curator of Graphic Arts at the National Museum of American History—one of the present-day Smithsonian’s nineteen museums and galleries—frames the story of Marsh and his acquisitions in a deft narrative combining meticulous institutional history and a broader investigation of print collecting in the United States. Congressman Marsh, early in his fourth term in the House, proposed in May 1849 to sell the Smithsonian his collection of 300 books on the fine arts and some 1,300 European engravings, etchings, and woodcuts. The financially strapped congressman wrote in the sales agreement that his collection had cost him “upwards of \$4,000, besides much study and labor” (13). He offered the Smithsonian, which he served as member of the board of regents, a bargain price of \$3,000. A few days after the sales proposal, the recently inaugurated Whig President Zachary Taylor officially appointed the Whig congressman Marsh as United States Minister to Turkey. The first Secretary of the Smithsonian, Joseph Henry, met the ex-congressman in Albany on September 11, 1849, ten days before Marsh sailed to Europe for the first time to take up his diplomatic post. Henry handed Marsh an advance of \$1,500 out of his own pocket.<sup>[4]</sup> With that somewhat furtive down payment, the young Smithsonian Institution acquired its first collection.

In an initial chapter Wright discusses Marsh’s role in the formation of the Smithsonian. She points out that in the 1850 annual report Secretary Henry presented the acquisition of the engravings as a major step toward fulfilling the congressional mandate to establish “a Gallery of Art”; he then referred the reader to an enthusiastic description of the prints by Charles Coffin Jewett, appointed in 1848 as assistant secretary and librarian (12–13).<sup>[5]</sup> Wright also introduces the roots of a developing conflict between Jewett and Henry, a Princeton scientist renowned for his work in electromagnets. Hired from Brown University in 1848, the visionary librarian Jewett intended to develop a union catalogue at the Smithsonian, an idea so progressive that it would only be realized at the Library of Congress some fifty years later. Henry, however, wanted more of the interest income to be spent on scientific research, not on the library. He ended the dispute by suddenly dismissing Jewett in July 1854. Although Jewett continued his career and became superintendent of the new Boston Public Library in 1858, his departure left the Marsh Collection without a vital advocate and prone to neglect.

In Chapter 2 (“A Brief Biography of George Perkins Marsh”), Wright supplies background on how the polyglot lawyer in Burlington, Vermont, became a self-made connoisseur of European engravings before ever traveling abroad. Wright can be brief on Marsh’s life because two excellent sources support her summary: the collector’s widow, Caroline Crane Marsh, published a memoir in 1888, and David Lowenthal issued in 2000 an excellent biography, *George Perkins Marsh: Prophet of Conservation*.<sup>[6]</sup> Thanks to Marsh’s own book *Man and Nature; or Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action*, published in 1864 and still in print today, Marsh is remembered as a pioneer in his concern for the environment.<sup>[7]</sup>

When the Democrat Franklin Pierce won the 1852 presidential election, Marsh knew he would have to leave Turkey; after some months of European travel, he returned to Vermont “virtually bankrupt” (29). He lectured on the English language at Columbia College, and at the Smithsonian he promoted the introduction of a camel corps in the United States Army, also the subject of a book, *The Camel* (1856). Referring to Marsh’s character and intentions in her study, Wright clarifies her description of the collector as a New England “Conscience” Whig: an anti-slavery liberal who wanted to improve “the world through knowledge, reflection, and

deliberate action” (32). During the 30th Congress (1847–49), Marsh had served in the House with Abraham Lincoln, the only Whig among the seven congressmen from Illinois. The Whig Party dissolved in the mid-1850s, and Marsh joined Lincoln in the new Republican Party. During the frantic spring of 1861 after the presidential inauguration, as the crisis at Fort Sumter intensified and the Civil War began, Lincoln appointed Marsh envoy to the new Kingdom of Italy. Marsh presented his credentials in Turin in June 1861, moved with the capital to Florence in 1865, then to Rome in 1871. He was still in the post when he died in Vallombrosa on July 23, 1882.[\[8\]](#)

Wright’s third chapter establishes Marsh as one of antebellum America’s pioneer print collectors. She acknowledges her debt to Marjorie B. Cohn, the well known Harvard Art Museums print curator emerita. Cohn visited the Smithsonian in 1983 to study Marsh as a contemporary of Francis Calley Gray (1790–1856). Gray bequeathed his collection of engravings to his nephew William, who immediately donated them to Harvard College, his uncle’s (and his own) alma mater. The passage on the Marsh Collection in the remarkable Gray biography by Cohn, the first art historian to discuss it, bore the dramatic subheading: “A National Collection Lost.”[\[9\]](#) Wright, a young Smithsonian curator at the time, set herself the arduous task of trying to reassemble—virtually, at least—Marsh’s print collection. The congressman had sold the Smithsonian fewer than half as many impressions as Gray bequeathed to Harvard. The college, however, could keep track of Gray’s prints because William Gray supplemented his uncle’s gift with an additional endowment for a curator. In 1859 Harvard appointed the German-born expert Louis Thies to the post, and ten years later Thies published an outstanding collection catalogue. The Smithsonian was not so fortunate.

By the time Thies’s catalogue of the Gray Collection appeared, Secretary Henry at the Smithsonian had sent most of the Marsh prints and portfolios—plus some 40,000 library books—to the Library of Congress. As Wright describes in her fourth chapter (“The Marsh Collection at the Smithsonian, 1849–1874”), Henry used a serious fire in the ten-year-old red sandstone building known as the “Castle” as an excuse for moving these holdings. The Marsh prints and books, luckily, were unharmed when the upper story of the Main Hall and the north and south towers burned in [January 1865](#) (94). Apparently the Smithsonian retained no inventory of what was sent on deposit to the Library, nor did the Library of Congress list what they received; the imprecise description by Jewett in the annual report of 1850, based on Marsh’s sales proposal, served in lieu of an official record of the collection. This lack of an accurate, detailed account in either institution—not the fire—lies behind what Cohn called the loss of a national collection. She observed in her book on Gray that Marsh’s effort to illustrate the history of engraving through his prints was “doomed,” not only by his limited resources, but by the sale to the Smithsonian.[\[10\]](#) Writing a history of the Marsh Collection almost thirty years after Cohn’s book appeared, Wright identifies more Marsh impressions than were known in the 1980s and adds fascinating nuances in her account. She cannot, however, entirely refute Cohn’s judgment.[\[11\]](#)

The author makes an insightful comparison of Marsh with other early North American print collectors: the New Haven architect Ithiel Town, the Baltimore banker Robert Gilmore, Jr., and the above-mentioned Boston lawyer Gray (39–50). Unlike Marsh, all three men traveled abroad before—and while—they acquired their prints. Because Town’s and Gilmore’s impressions were dispersed after their deaths, only Gray’s prints can be matched with Marsh’s

purchases. The two men collected many of the same artists. Early on in Burlington, Marsh bought a dozen etchings by Christian Wilhelm Ernst Dietrich, a prolific eighteenth-century [printmaker and painter](#) active in Dresden (60). Wright illustrates one of several Dietrich etchings owned by Marsh still in the Library of Congress (61). This impression of [a blind beggar](#), now thought to be a restrike, is annotated on the verso in French with scrupulous reference citations in [Marsh's hand](#). The Boston collector Gray also acquired [three Dietrich etchings](#), choosing more complex subjects, such as [Mountebank](#).

Marsh, ordering books and catalogues on engraving from his mostly American book dealers, delved into the field and acquired impressions by known masters from various schools. In September 1840, the Burlington lawyer purchased for his reference library the twenty-one volumes of *Le Peintre Graveur* by Adam von Bartsch (Vienna, 1803–21), as well as Giuseppe Longhi's *La Calcografia* (Milan, 1830). Marsh relied heavily on Longhi's judgments and included both his original Italian edition and the German translation by Carl Barth (*Die Kupferstecherei*, 1837) in his sales agreement with the Smithsonian (62–63).<sup>[12]</sup> Francis Calley Gray also admired Longhi as a printmaker and owned dozens of his reproductive engravings after Raphael, Rembrandt, and other artists, as well as after nineteenth-century painters, such as [François Gérard](#). As was often the case in his large collection, Gray even acquired two different states of Longhi's engraving after Gérard's portrait of Eugène de Beauharnais.

After selling his prints and moving to Constantinople, Marsh had perhaps lost contact with the Leipzig bookseller, print dealer, and auction house of Rudolf Weigel; he had owned and studied carefully all the volumes of Weigel's *Kunstkatalog* in his collecting days (63–65). When Weigel announced the auction in 1852 of what remained of the Ernst Peter Otto collection in Leipzig, bidders arrived from all corners of Europe. Gray authorized Thies to bid on one of the eighteen "Otto prints" in the sale and acquired a fifteenth-century engraving, the [crown jewel](#) of his collection.<sup>[13]</sup> For Marsh, the album he labeled "Early German Masters" was a similar gem; from that album, now in the National Museum of American History, Wright chose for her back cover *The Forge of the Heart* (1529), engraved by the [Monogrammist IB](#), with its four emblematic women. Hope looks to heaven, and Tolerance reclines beneath the forge, as Envy and Tribulation mercilessly shape a human heart (68–9).

To offer a clearer picture of the American art market, Wright's fifth chapter ("The Reception of Prints in the United States after the Civil War") introduces other passionate print collectors: the Philadelphia banker James L. Claghorn, the New Yorker Henry Foster Sewall, and Senator [Charles Sumner](#) from Boston. Claghorn lent his works widely for exhibitions, another aspect of collecting beautifully covered in Wright's study (101–13).<sup>[14]</sup> His collection, sold to T. Harrison Garrett, is now in the Baltimore Museum of Art (the Garrett Collection). Sewall, who owned the staggering number of 23,000 prints, lent generously as well (108). In 1879, for example, he exhibited in Cincinnati his magnificent fifteenth-century engraving signed by Antonio Pollaiuolo around 1465, the [Battle of the Nudes](#). A year after Sewall's death in 1896, Boston's Museum of Fine Arts purchased his collection with funds from a bequest from Harvey D. Parker. The collection thus bears Parker's name, and Sewall is indicated in the museum database provenance notes (137). Senator Sumner, the most prominent of the early print enthusiasts, was known in Massachusetts as a fervent abolitionist and reformer when he was elected in 1851. After a Southern congressman attacked Sumner on the Senate floor in May 1856, nearly beating him to death, the disabled senator studied engravings during his long



recovery. Following Frank Gray's death late that year, Sumner haunted the Gray Collection in Cambridge and later thanked its curator Thies for assistance when he published in the 1870s a major essay on his hobby: [The Best Portraits in Engravings](#).

Sumner referred to Marsh three times in his essay. First, he mentioned using Marsh's copy of Longhi's book in the Library of Congress, after asking for it in vain in Paris at the Cabinet des Estampes (the Library returned [La Calcografia](#) to the Smithsonian, probably in 1888, where it is now available online). Sumner also discussed the then-famous *Face of Christ*, also called the *Sudarium*, engraved in 1649 by Claude Mellan in a single, spiraling line from the tip of the nose (110). He quoted Charles Perrault's description of the image in *Les Hommes illustres* and reported using Marsh's "excellent copy" of Perrault in the Library of Congress (the book is still in the Library's Rare Books and Special Collections Division, but the current catalogue record bears no trace of Marsh).<sup>[15]</sup> An impression of the *Sudarium* in Sumner's bequest to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, is a copy signed in 1735 by Dudesert.<sup>[16]</sup> Sumner, in any case, was hardly overwhelmed by the renowned Mellan work, calling it "at best, a curiosity among portraits." In his third reference to Marsh, Sumner declined to choose between two famous masterpieces of portrait engraving: Edelinck's [Philippe de Champaigne](#) (after a self-portrait) or Robert Nanteuil's [Pomponne de Bellièvre](#) (after Charles LeBrun). Before his death in 1871, Louis Thies had opted for Nanteuil, yet former congressman Marsh, true to the much-admired Italian engraver Longhi, favored Edelinck. Sumner left impressions of both prints to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, as did Gray to Harvard. Marsh owned an impression of [Philippe de Champaigne](#), which remains in the Library of Congress and is illustrated in *The First Smithsonian Collection* (111).

Wright's chapters on the enthusiastic reception of European prints by Marsh and other collectors are the core of her study. Using their own words when she can, the author draws the reader close to the pleasure these works gave their owners. Wright's well chosen, if sometimes painfully murky illustrations, however, offer little visual enjoyment. Furthermore, the only detail provided is on the book jacket: Robert Strange's [Belisarius](#) (1757). Cohn's biography of Gray in 1986, by contrast, made use of a number of details, many appearing next to the full-size illustration. When Wright praises in her text an impression's dazzling satin and lace, or the subtlety of parallel lines, the reader is compelled to look for detail in digital images of the same prints in other collections. Months after publication of the book, fifty-one such images—including a few of Wright's [illustrations](#)—were posted on the Smithsonian's Marsh Collection site with excellent zoom and mouse-wheel enlargement capability. Presumably more records will be posted in due course to complement the printed book (166–67).

Throughout her story, Wright diligently tracks the physical location of the Marsh prints. After the sale in 1849, she follows the collection from Marsh's Washington residence and his Burlington home through its arrival at the Smithsonian to be shelved in architect James Renwick's still unfinished Castle (74–75). She describes how a few prints were framed and permanently displayed there before the 1865 fire and explains the unfortunate dispersal of the bulk of the collection around 1866. Secretary Henry, putting his house in order after the disaster and favoring science over art, dispatched most of the Marsh prints and books to the Library of Congress as part of the larger "Smithsonian Deposit" (94–97).

For the remainder of the Marsh Collection left behind in the Smithsonian, another exodus followed within a decade. Assistant Secretary Spencer Fullerton Baird asked his assistant Edward Palmer to prepare a list of all the works of art in the Smithsonian to be deposited in Washington's new Corcoran Gallery of Art, now called the Renwick Gallery in honor of its architect (95 and Appendix 3).<sup>[17]</sup> Secretary Henry, who authorized the deposit and convinced his board of regents to approve the move, was made [a trustee of the Corcoran](#) on April 24, 1873. Some sixty Marsh prints were transported to the new gallery shortly after it opened on January 19, 1874. The Corcoran impressions included Wright's frontispiece to her book, [The Education of Achilles](#) (1798) by Charles-Clément Bervic, after a painting by [Jean-Baptiste Regnault](#) from 1782, as well as the reworked version from 1775 of a famous etching by Rembrandt: [Christ Healing the Sick](#), also known as *The Hundred Guilder Print* (87). With the death of Secretary Henry in 1878 and the appointment of Marsh's friend Baird in his place, the first attempts to reassemble the print collection began.

Wright's sixth chapter describes Baird's interest in exhibitions and display and the opening in 1881 of the second Smithsonian building, now called [the Arts and Industries Building](#), destined to house the U. S. National Museum. Inspired by the new arts and industries museums in London and Vienna, another assistant to Baird, George Brown Goode, intended to create a major evolutionary display of the graphic media. He hired Sylvester Rosa Koehler as part-time curator in 1886, and the energetic writer and expert on the graphic arts divided his time between the Mall in Washington and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, where he was appointed curator of prints at about the same time. In 1888 the Smithsonian retrieved from the Library of Congress Marsh's early German album, the two folio volumes of the *Houghton Gallery* (including outstanding mezzotints by [Richard Earlom](#) after Jan van Huysum), and three Dürer woodcuts. Wright reports that, in fact, the Dürers had probably not belonged to Marsh, but to [John Varden](#), and in 1959 two of the Dürer woodcuts were deaccessioned by the Smithsonian as an exchange (133, 165).<sup>[18]</sup> The documentation prepared in 1873 for the Corcoran shipment prevented such confusion of ownership and enabled the Smithsonian to retrieve nearly all the prints in 1896. Recently, those same Corcoran prints stood camera ready and prime for digital catalogue entries: most of the first fifty-one records posted on the Smithsonian's Marsh Collection site in the autumn of 2015 refer to impressions returned by the Corcoran. Among the few missing prints from the Corcoran list was the large [Aurora](#), engraved by Raphael Morghen after Guido Reni and still unlocated (145).

The sixth chapter ends with the Marsh Collection once again orphaned. Goode died suddenly in 1896, and Koehler resigned for health reasons two years before his own death in 1900. In her seventh chapter on the twentieth century, Wright describes the collection as fading from institutional memory "like the sleeping beauty of legend" (151). At the same time the role of art within the Smithsonian grew. In 1906, a ruling by the District of Columbia Supreme Court established a National Gallery of Art within the Smithsonian; that title, however, went to the "Mellon Gallery" when the new art museum by John Russell Pope opened on the Mall in 1941. The Smithsonian National Gallery became the Smithsonian Gallery of Art, which increasingly focused on American art (152–53).

The somewhat listless tug of war for the Marsh Collection between the institution on the Mall and the Library of Congress dissipated in 1897 when the splendid new Library building opened on Capitol Hill. A selection of Marsh impressions went on view in the print gallery on

the second floor (140). The third Smithsonian Secretary Samuel Pierpont Langley had made a last effort in 1896 to engage the regents in reclaiming the works at the Library, as well as those at the Corcoran (137). The Library, practiced at passive resistance to repeated requests for restitution, instead accelerated the development of their own print department. Herbert Putnam, appointed Librarian in 1899, notified Langley that the Library had no record of which prints had been “transferred” in the 1860s (138). The seventh Smithsonian Secretary Leonard Carmichael finally conceded, indicating to Librarian of Congress L. Quincy Mumford in 1958 that the Smithsonian deposit would not be withdrawn; the policy, reviewed over the years, remains in place. Curator Wright and the Smithsonian Libraries continue to work with Library of Congress staff to identify the entire Marsh Collection and to add descriptions of their holdings to current [online databases](#) in both institutions.

The book concludes with an eighth chapter entitled “Visual Culture and National Identity.” Wright attributes much of the success of museum programs in the Smithsonian to Baird’s insistence that collections and research were complementary activities. She also credits Baird’s protégé Goode, who hoped in the U.S. National Museum “to transform the role of museums ‘from a cemetery of bric-a-brac into a nursery of living thoughts’” (177).<sup>[19]</sup> In her book’s preface, Wright remarks that what Marsh had created as a scholar’s trove to share with his friends had become “a public collection with an established record of reception by national audiences for more than a century and a half.” She thus relates the building of his private collection and its sale to the Smithsonian to “the public process of institution building—the museum movement—in nineteenth-century America (XVII).”

After Marsh and his family landed in Le Havre in October 1849, he had hastened to the Cabinet des Estampes at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris for his initial look at a national print collection; he had intended to make his prints available to the public in the same way. His continued museum going enriched his exploration of Europe, where he saw the originals of some of the reproductive prints he had left behind. There is no evidence in *The First Smithsonian Collection* that Marsh ever looked back on his years in Washington. He maintained a warm correspondence with Baird for the rest of his life, gathering specimens and books for his friend. Yet Wright cites no reaction by Marsh to the Smithsonian fire in 1865 or the dismal fate of his collection, although Baird kept him informed of progress in rebuilding the Castle towers.

Marsh had other woes. A few weeks after the fire, Marsh got word that his only surviving son had died at age thirty-two in the United States.<sup>[20]</sup> Lincoln was assassinated in April. The following month Marsh began his move with his invalid wife from Turin to Florence, the second capital of united Italy. Still recovering from severe depression, Marsh said of the Tuscan city in a letter to Baird on August 2, 1865: “Florence is a mighty fine museum and a mighty poor residence.”<sup>[21]</sup> In January 1866, he wrote to [Baird](#): “My sorrows of the past year have made me suddenly an old man.” His chief consolation was no longer his library or works of art on paper: he loved walking in the Alps. Attacks of sciatica curtailed his daylong mountain hikes, but he told Baird in [a letter](#) dated September 27, 1867: “Of my many old tastes the love of rocks and ice is almost the only one that has survived.”

From Italy, Marsh often sent kind regards to Joseph Henry, although the first Smithsonian Secretary had exiled his engravings. After Henry died, Congress commissioned [a bronze statue](#)



from William Wetmore Story.<sup>[22]</sup> The expatriate American sculptor had never met Henry, and Marsh visited his studio in Rome to confirm that the completed clay figure was a faithful likeness. In a letter written the year before Marsh died, he praised Story's work to Baird, pronouncing the statue "[dignified and graceful](#)" (32).

In her book Wright has crafted another dignified and graceful memorial, not only to Marsh, but also to other nineteenth-century print lovers whose investment formed the core of museum and library collections in the United States. She introduces forgotten men and women who played a role in securing a place for graphic arts in the capital, in the museums of the East Coast, and in exhibitions elsewhere. One theme demonstrated by the trajectory of the Marsh Collection is that curatorial care and cataloguing, along with provenance records for prints, are essential. Claghorn and Garrett, for example, followed the tradition of stamping their impressions with a collection mark. Staff laboring over the years at the Smithsonian and the Prints & Photographs Division at the Library of Congress must have felt occasional chagrin that Marsh did not adopt the practice. Even if many of his acquisitions have gone astray and others are not yet described, Wright's patient research and documentation—invoice by invoice—of the nation's first public print collection reveals much about the flourishing of visual literacy in North America.

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## Notes

[1] The gold was melted down and transferred to the U.S. Treasury, where it began to accrue interest amounting to six per cent per year. For documents relating to the bequest, see the [online exhibition](#) "From Smithsonian to Smithsonian: The Birth of an Institution," mounted by the Smithsonian Archives.

[2] Marsh's speech in the House on April 23, 1846, is reproduced in William Jones Rhees, ed., *The Smithsonian Institution: Documents Relative to its Origin and History: 1835–1899*, vol. 1, 1835–1887 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1901), 371–87.

[3] The Smithsonian Archives exhibition includes the text of the [founding act](#) of 1846.

[4] When he finally paid Marsh the remainder in June 1850, Henry told Marsh that the first payment had been "from my own funds" (10, 75). See [Smithsonian history](#) chronology site and enter in general keyword search box: "Marsh print & book collection purchased".

[5] Wright mentions that both Henry and Jewett discreetly maintained Marsh's anonymity in the report. Both were also aware of the risk that boasting about an entirely European collection could arouse rising nativist sentiments or annoy Jacksonian Democrats who might consider the prints an elitist cultural intervention from overseas (12–13).

[6] Caroline Crane Marsh, *Life and Letters of George Perkins Marsh* (New York: G. Scribner's Sons, 1888); David Lowenthal, *George Perkins Marsh: Prophet of Conservation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000). [A new edition](#) of Lowenthal's book appeared in 2015. Lowenthal had already published an earlier study: *George Perkins Marsh: Versatile Vermonter* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958). Marsh's books, purchased after his death by a wealthy admirer, Frederick H. Billings, and donated to the [University of Vermont](#), are an impressive source suggesting the breadth of his interests. Billings also purchased Marsh's childhood home in Woodstock in 1869

and developed reforestation projects on and near the property; the Vermont farm is now a [national park](#).

[7] Clark University's George Perkins Marsh Institute, Worcester, Massachusetts, includes an "[About Marsh](#)" section on their website. It alludes to his extraordinary versatility, without mentioning his passionate interest in the art of engraving or his collection.

[8] For a fascinating account of Marsh's reactions to the new Kingdom of Italy, see Lucia Ducci, *George P. Marsh Correspondence: Images of Italy, 1861–1881*, The Fairleigh Dickinson University Press Series in Italian Studies (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2011), originally published as *L'Unità debole: lettere dell'ambasciatore americano George P. Marsh sull'Italia unita* (Milan: l'Ornitorinco, 2009). For a photograph of his grave in Rome, enter "Marsh Giorgio Perkins" in search box of [database](#) for the Protestant Cemetery, Rome.

[9] Marjorie B. Cohn, *Francis Calley Gray and Art Collecting for America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Art Museums, distributed by Harvard University Press, 1986), 240–44. In her preface, Cohn thanks Helena Wright for her assistance in tracing Marsh prints at the Smithsonian.

[10] Cohn, 242.

[11] Wherever it is relevant to the story of the Marsh Collection, Wright includes a parallel account of its presence in the Library of Congress. She explains briefly why no one—even Congressman Marsh and others who served on the Joint Committee on the Library, as well as on the Smithsonian board of regents—considered expanding the mission of the Library, designed to serve legislators and their families, into a national library (134–35). She refers the reader to the excellent book by Carl Ostrowski, *Books, Maps, and Politics: A Cultural History of the Library of Congress, 1783–1861* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004) for the history of this period. Especially pertinent is Ostrowski's fifth chapter on the Southern Whig (later a Democrat) James Alfred Pearce, a senator from Maryland after 1843, who dominated Library affairs until his death in 1862. Pearce was also chairman of the board of regents at the Smithsonian.

[12] Wright reproduces the text of the sales agreement in Appendix I (191–98). From [the catalogue](#) of Marsh's books in his possession when he died, we know that he replaced his original copy of the *Calcografia* with another one now in the University of Vermont Marsh Collection (63).

[13] See Cohn, 207–09, and Thies's description of the sale in his [collection catalogue](#). The Otto prints are now usually designated "Anonymous," and the [British Museum](#), which purchased fifteen in Leipzig in 1852, and another in 1866 from the collector's friend Zani, adds the attribution to Baccio Baldini and dates them as ca. 1465–80.

[14] The Smithsonian's remarkable [Pre-1877 Art Exhibition Index](#) supports Wright's trenchant summary of early exhibitions in North America. There one can learn, for example, that in 1874 Claghorn lent his engraving by Robert Strange of Salvator Rosa's *Belisarius* to a show of more than a thousand prints from his collection in Philadelphia (when the link opens, click on "Record Link" for a more complete format). Wright discusses a publication about the Claghorn exhibition at the [Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts](#), which reprints critical comments by editor William J. Clark, Jr., a friend of Thomas Eakins, originally published in the *Philadelphia Evening Telegraph*. She notes the writer's conservative view of reproductive line engraving as interpretation, and her segment in Chapter 5 on Claghorn's exhibitions provides a snapshot of the lively interest and expertise in the graphic arts during the decade following the Civil War (105–06).

[15] Charles Sumner, *The Best Portraits in Engravings* (New York: Frederick Keppel, 1875), 13; Charles Perrault, *Les Hommes illustres . . .* (Paris: A. Dezalier, 1796–1700), vol. 2, 97. Perrault illustrated Mellan's life with [an engraved copy](#) of his self-portrait by Gérard Edelinck.

[16] The Sumner impression is not photographed in the MFA database, but an image of the [Dudesert copy](#) at the Metropolitan Museum of Art is available on their collection site. Three impressions of the [Sudarium](#) were listed in Thies, *Gray Collection* (1869), 228.

[17] [The list](#) appeared in the Smithsonian *Annual Report* for 1874, 65. The famous ethnobotanist Edward Palmer collected specimens for Baird during this period. He was reputed to be outstanding at documenting his finds, but the Palmer who prepared the list in 1873 of works for the Corcoran deposit is not further identified in the Wright book (95 and 229, n103). Although most of the prints were described in the list with title and artist, Rembrandt's *Christ Healing the Sick* (etching, drypoint, and engraving) was never signed or dated. The author of the list, perhaps unfamiliar with Rembrandt's master print, entered it as "Artist Unknown," as was the engraving by Auguste Desnoyers after Raphael's *Alba Madonna* (National Gallery of Art, Washington). The [first transfer](#) to the Corcoran took place on February 13, 1874.

[18] The Library of Congress also deaccessioned a Dürer engraving from the Marsh Collection through its duplicates and exchange section in around 1967, [Hercules at the Crossroads](#), also called *Jealousy* (166).

[19] Wright cites George Brown Goode, “The Museums of the Future” (1889), reprinted in Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, ed. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 322.

[20] See Ducci, *L’Unità debole*, 20–21, and Marsh’s letter of May 4, 1865, to Hiram Powers, 76–78.

[21] Ducci, *L’Unità debole*, 95.

[22] The Story bronze of Secretary Joseph Henry originally faced the Castle, but Secretary S. Dillon Ripley had it turned in 1965 to face the Mall.