



**Smithsonian Institution**

*Smithsonian Institution Archives*

## **Proceedings of the Board of Regents Meetings, 1920-1931**

Extracted on Mar-28-2024 08:00:44

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mother written on his return from Washington to Salem:-

"I am now beginning to realize the cares and anxieties of being an inventor. Flesh and blood could not stand much longer such a strain as I have had upon me. You seem to think that my anxieties are over, when in truth they are really only beginning.

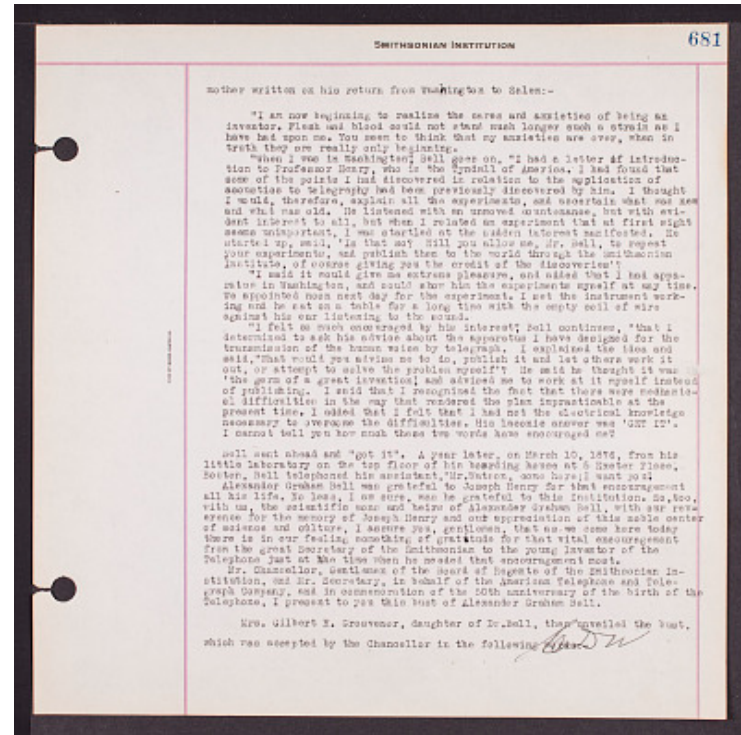
"When I was in Washington," Bell goes on, "I had a letter of introduction to Professor Henry, who is the Tyndall of America. I had found that some of the points I had discovered in relation to the application of acoustics to telegraphy had been previously discovered by him. I thought I would, therefore, explain all the experiments, and ascertain what was new and what was old. He listened with an unmoved countenance, but with evident interest to all, but when I related an experiment that at first sight seems unimportant, I was startled at the sudden interest manifested. He started up, said, 'Is that any Will you allow me, Dr. Bell, to repeat your experiments, and publish them to the world through the Smithsonian Institute, of course giving you the credit of the discoveries?' I said it would give me extreme pleasure, and added that I had apparatus in Washington, and could show him the experiments myself at any time. We appointed noon next day for the experiment. I set the instrument working and he sat on a table for a long time with the empty coil of wire against his ear listening to the sound.

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"I felt so much encouraged by his interest," Bell continues, "that I determined to ask his advice about the apparatus I have designed for the transmission of the human voice by telegraph. I explained the idea and said, 'What would you advise me to do, publish it and let others work it out, or attempt to solve the problem myself?' He said he thought it was 'the germ of a great invention,' and advised me to work at it myself instead of publishing. I said that I recognized the fact that there were mechanical difficulties in the way that rendered the plan impracticable at the present time. I added that I felt that I had not the electrical knowledge necessary to overcome the difficulties. His laconic answer was 'GET IT'. I cannot tell you how much these two words have encourage me."

Bell went ahead and "got it". A year later, on March 10, 1876, from his little laboratory on the top floor of his boarding house at 5 Exeter Place, Boston, Bell telephoned his assistant, 'Mr. Watson, come here; I want you.'

Alexander Graham Bell was grateful to Joseph Henry for that encouragement all his life. No less, I am sure, was he grateful to this Institution. So, too, with us, the scientific sons and heirs of Alexander Graham Bell, with our reverence for the memory of Joseph Henry and



our appreciation of this noble center of science and culture, I assure you, gentlemen, that as we come here today there is in our feeling something of gratitude for that vital encouragement from the great Secretary of the Smithsonian to the young Inventor of the Telephone just at the time when he needed that encouragement most.

Mr. Chancellor, Gentlemen of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, and Mr. Secretary, in behalf of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, and in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the birth of the Telephone, I present to you this bust of Alexander Graham Bell.

Mrs. Gilbert H. Grosvenor, daughter of Dr. Bell, then unveiled the bust, which was accepted by the Chancellor in the following words.  
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