



The Garfield Telegraph

Volume 4 • Issue 4 • August 2017

The Smithsonian Institution Established August 10, 1846

The Smithsonian Institution, as described by the institute itself, “is the world’s largest museum, education, and research complex.” Every year, millions of people visit the Smithsonian’s museums, but many visitors do not know that the founding donor of the Institution was an English chemist and mineralogist named James Smithson, who had never even visited America.

James Smithson was the illegitimate son of Hugh Smithson, 1st Duke of Northumberland (also known as Hugh Percy) and Elizabeth Hungerford Keate Macie. Elizabeth Macie went to Paris to hide her pregnancy from English society, and had her son there in secret in 1797. Her son was illegitimate, and could not take his father’s name, so was named James Lewis Macie. By 1801, after James’ parents had both passed away, James Macie took his father’s name and was thereafter known as James Smithson.

He never married and he did not have any children. He passed away in 1829, leaving a will that stated if his nephew, who inherited his estate,



This picture of James Smithson hangs in the snuggery at James A. Garfield NHS.



This picture of the Smithsonian Castle hangs in the snuggery at James A. Garfield NHS.

passed away without heirs, the money was to go to the United States, “to found at Washington, under the name of the Smithsonian Institute, an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men.” Smithson’s nephew passed away in 1835 without any children, leaving Smithson’s estate to the United States.

The Smithsonian Institution was created on August 10, 1846 by the United States Congress. The organization is governed and administered by a Board of Regents consisting of the Vice-President of the United States, the Chief Justice of the United States, three members of the Senate, three members of the House of Representatives, and nine United States citizens. As a member of the House of Representatives, James A. Garfield served on the Board of Regents for the Smithsonian for many years. (Cont’d page 2, See Smithsonian)



Garfield and his dog “Veto” in front of the Mentor farm. (St. Nicholas: An Illustrated Magazine for Young Folks)

National Dog Day

National Dog day is on August 26th and is a day that celebrates man’s best friend. Just like many of us, James A. Garfield enjoyed the company of his dog. Garfield acquired a Newfoundland puppy in Washington D.C. in the spring of 1879. When he sent the puppy to his Mentor farm, he proposed that he be named “Veto”, in honor of former President Hayes’ veto of certain appropriations bills.

Irvin, the Garfield’s second youngest son, was in objection to this name. Garfield assured the younger children, who were at the Mentor farm, that when they were all back together as a family they would come to an agreement on the name with “each man, woman and child to have a vote.” Whether there was a vote by the family or the name ended up just sticking, the dog became known as “Veto.”

(Cont’d page 2, See Dog)

(Smithsonian, cont'd from page 1)

His first term was from 1865-1873, and several years later he was appointed again, serving from 1878-1881. Garfield greatly enjoyed his time serving as a Regent. There are various entries in his diary about attending the Board of Regents meetings and of the interesting talks he had heard from various scientists.

At the closing of his first term as Regent, he made this entry in his diary on Friday, December 19, 1873: "After eight years of service my term of Regent expires next Wednesday. This has been the most pleasant duty of my official life."

When Garfield was elected President of the United States in 1881, he became ex officio Presiding Officer of the Smithsonian Institution. His inaugural ball on March 4, 1881 was even held at the Smithsonian's brand new Arts and Industries Building. At



This "Statue of America" was in the rotunda at James A. Garfield's 1881 inaugural ball held at the Smithsonian's Arts and Industries Building. *(Smithsonian)*

that time, the building was not even yet fully completed and was set to open in October. Garfield's ball was the first public event ever held at the museum, hosting over 7,000 people. Decorations at the event included elaborate bunting and flag displays, garlands of electric lights strung from the ceiling, a temporary wooden floor, and a large

"Statue of America" in the museum's rotunda, which held an electric lamp in her hand "indicative of the skill, genius, progress, and civilization of the 19th century."

Garfield enjoyed taking his family to the Smithsonian and he truly enjoyed his service as a Regent. At James A. Garfield NHS, make sure to look for the pictures of the Smithsonian Castle and James Smithson, which are still proudly displayed in the room which Garfield used as his private office (also known as the snugery).



A view of James A. Garfield's 1881 inaugural ball held at the Smithsonian's Arts and Industries Building. *(Smithsonian)*

(Dog, cont'd from page 1)

Garfield wrote about Veto in his diary on January 2, 1880: "I took the Mahoning train to Solon and went to Sister Mary's. My dog "Veto" was in transports of delight at seeing me. When I would no longer let him leap up on me, he lay at my feet and licked my boots. During my whole visit he followed me everywhere. There is something peculiarly touching in this affection of a brute."

Happy Birthday, NPS!



President Woodrow Wilson signed the "Organic Act" creating the National Park Service on August 25, 1916.

Before this, there was no single agency designated to manage all of the various federal parklands as some were administered by the Department of the Interior, the War Department, and the Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture.

Today there are over 400 units in the National Park System, all committed to the same goal as stated by the Organic Act, to "...promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments and reservations... which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

For more information about James A. Garfield NHS:
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