

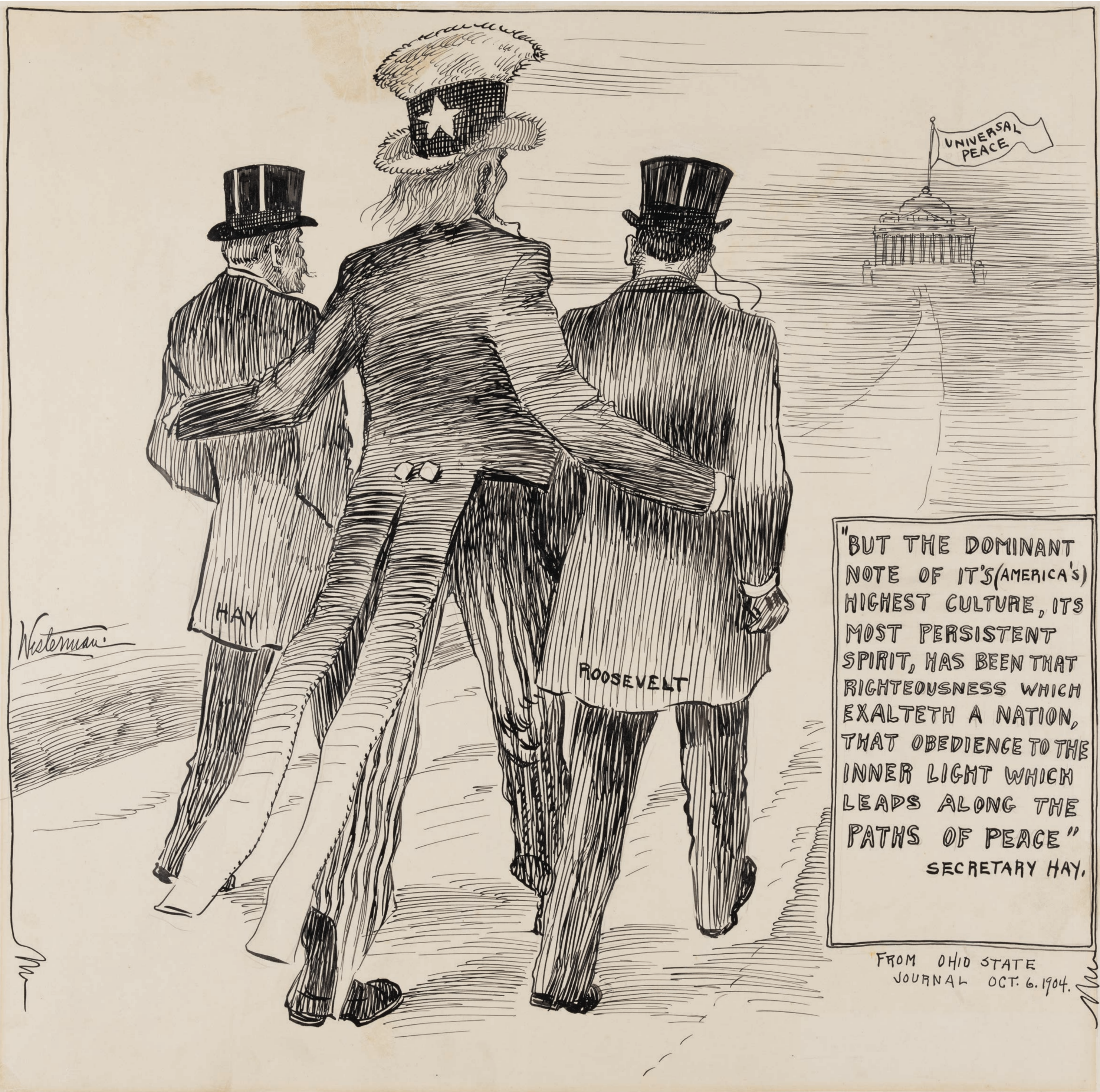
PART III

Reshaping Memory

BUILDING A NARRATIVE OF MORAL AUTHORITY

FROM MORAL ASSURANCE TO CONTESTED MEMORY

The opening cartoon, “Uncle Sam,” presents a clear declaration of moral leadership: the national figure strides ahead while the president and the secretary of state follow. Authority here is collective and directional: the path is set, and the legitimacy of the journey is assumed.



A second image shifts the register from allegory to diplomacy. In “A Loafin’ Around the Thrones” John Hay appears seated in Paris, absorbed in Molière and Montaigne, while requests from monarchs pile at his feet. Three crowned figures sit behind him. Leopold II of Belgium, Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany and King Edward VII of Britain, their bodies leaning forward, wait for a response. These rulers represent Europe’s imperial order: Belgium’s extraction empire in the Congo, Germany’s late but aggressive overseas expansion and Britain’s global dominion sustained by naval power and colonial administration. Hay reads while they posture.

The contrast is pointed. Europe’s monarchs chase territory, railways and markets; Hay turns instead to Europe’s own literary and philosophical traditions. The cartoon assigns composure to the newcomer and imperial frenzy to the old powers, presenting American influence as cultivated restraint rather than territorial conquest. The United States enters imperial politics without crowns or colonies, claiming authority through diplomacy and by invoking Europe’s own literary and philosophical canon.

With the national leadership and diplomatic self-assurance framed in these two images, the narrative starts to harden into moral comparison in the third image.

effort to retrace sequence, authorship and intent, and to sift through the competing memories by which this legacy was later claimed, organized and told.

Brown’s collection preserves a series of private letters that reveal hesitation, disagreement and anxiety over how the story should be told, even as public policy rhetoric projected confidence and moral clarity. As editors, former presidents, politicians and missionaries returned to the question of how the remission of the Boxer Indemnity should be remembered, they revisited less the mechanics of policy than its authorship and afterlife. In these pages, memory is sorted, clarified and quietly contested.

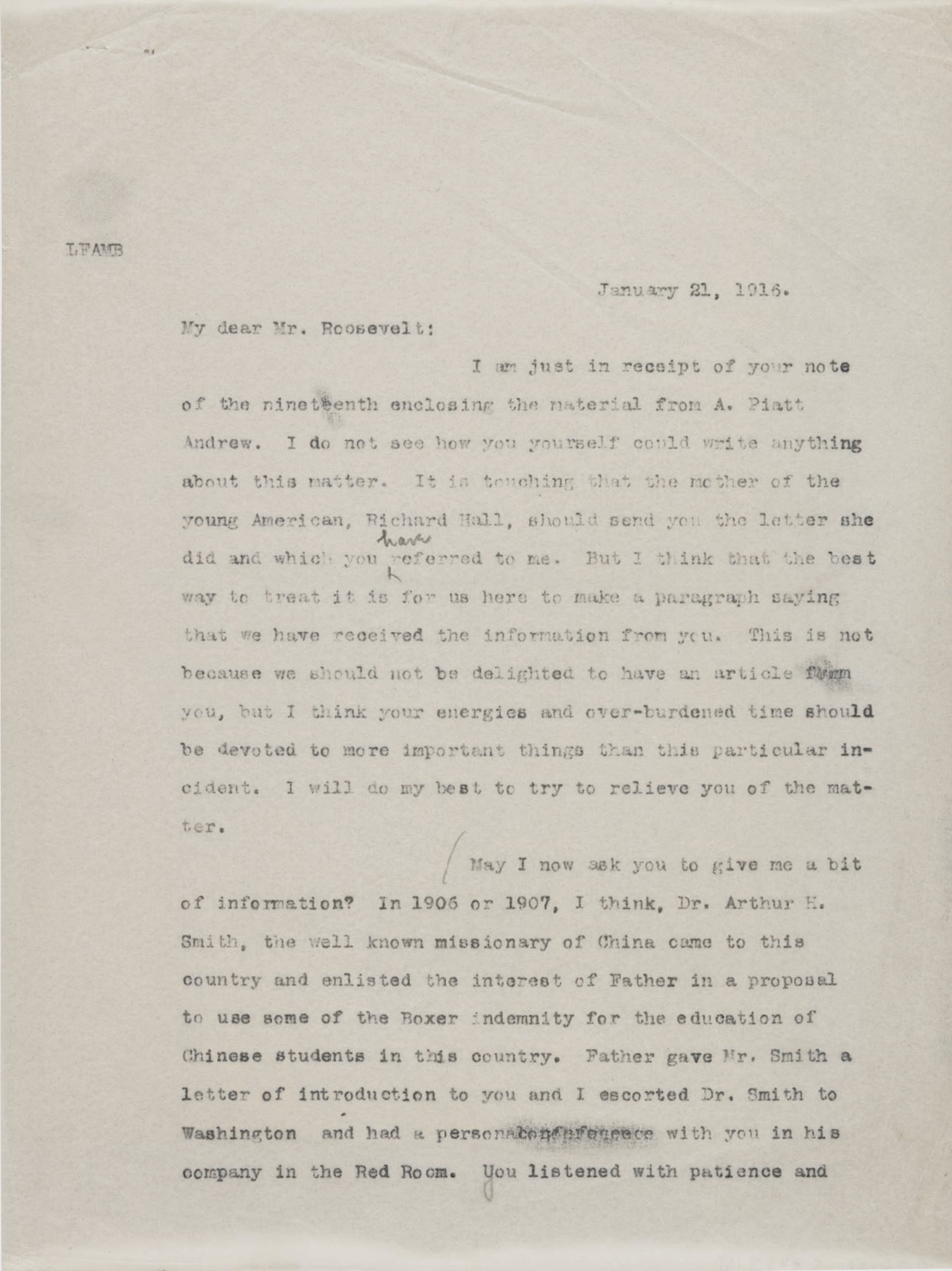
What emerges from this correspondence is that the remission of the Boxer Indemnity appears not as a single act but as a legacy continually shaped by how it was recalled, framed and told.



In “Another Great American to be Proud Of,” Hay is elevated through an evocative historical analogy. He holds a document that proclaims his plea for the “Integrity of China,” while a kneeling Chinese man kisses his hand. Behind them hangs a portrait of his early mentor Abraham Lincoln holding the Emancipation Proclamation, regarded with reverential gratitude by a kneeling African American man holding the president’s hand. The parallel with “The Great Liberator” is visually explicit and deliberately ambitious. American diplomacy in China is folded into a lineage of national redemption, transforming policy into moral inheritance.

Whether read as earnest affirmation or uneasy overreach, this image marks a turning point. What begins as guidance and posture becomes legacy. China is no longer merely a site of action: it becomes the measure against which American virtue is proclaimed.

The correspondence that follows reveals the behind-the-scenes maneuvering to carefully maintain this meaning.

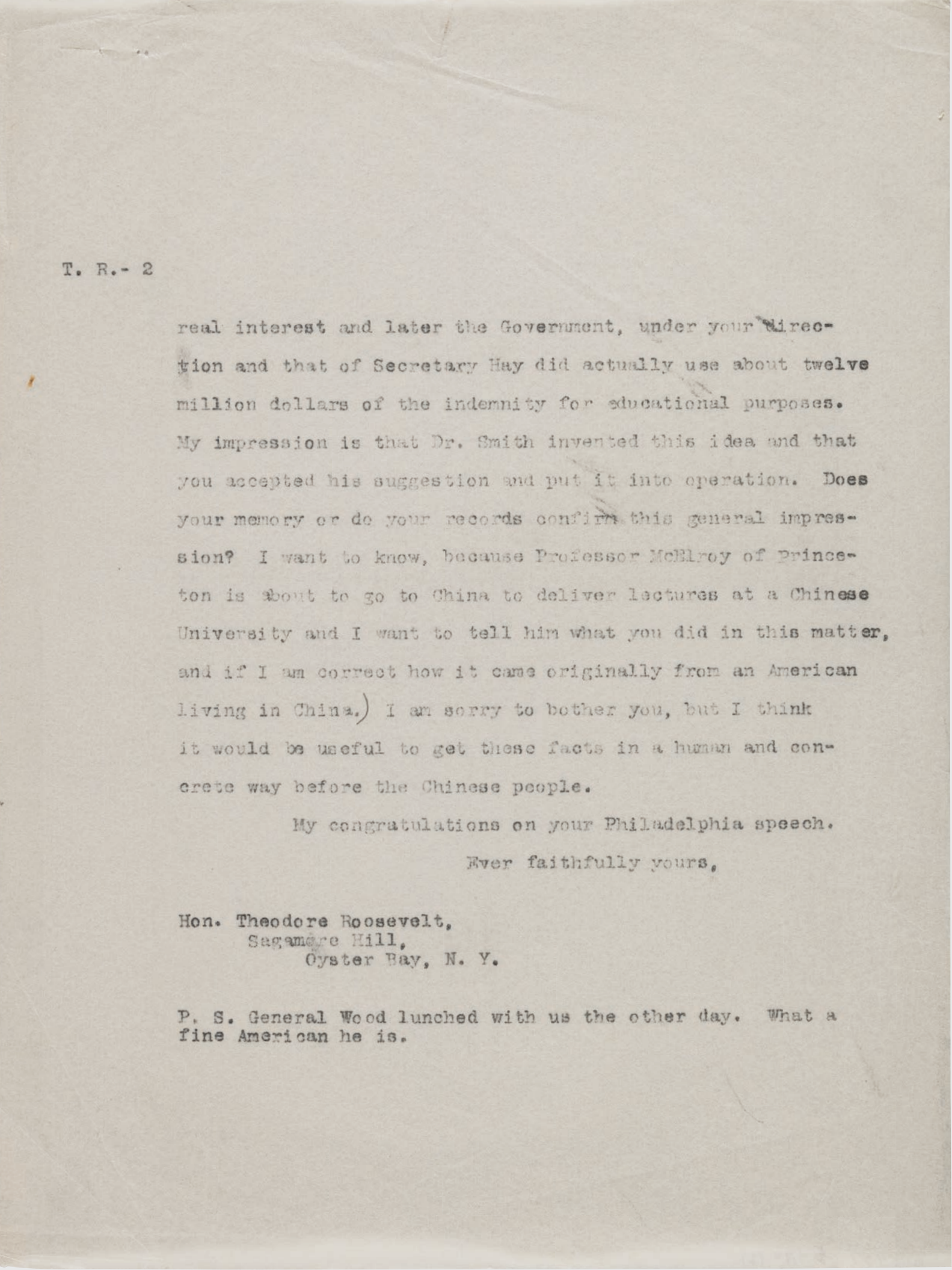


January 21, 1916.

My dear Mr. Roosevelt:

I am just in receipt of your note of the nineteenth enclosing the material from A. Piatt Andrew. I do not see how you yourself could write anything about this matter. It is touching that the mother of the young American, Richard Hall, should send you the letter she did and which you referred to me. But I think that the best way to treat it is for me here to make a paragraph saying that we have received the information from you. This is not because we shouldn't be delighted to have an article from you, but I think your energies and over-burdened time should be devoted to more important things than this particular incident. I will do my best to try to relieve you of the matter.

(May I now ask you to give me a bit of information? In 1906 or 1907, I think, Dr. Arthur H. Smith, the well-known missionary of China came to this country and enlisted the interest of Father in a proposal to use some of the Boxer indemnity for the education of Chinese students in this country. Father gave Mr. Smith a letter of introduction to you and I escorted Dr. Smith to Washington and had a personal conference with you in his company in the Red Room. You listened with patience and real interest

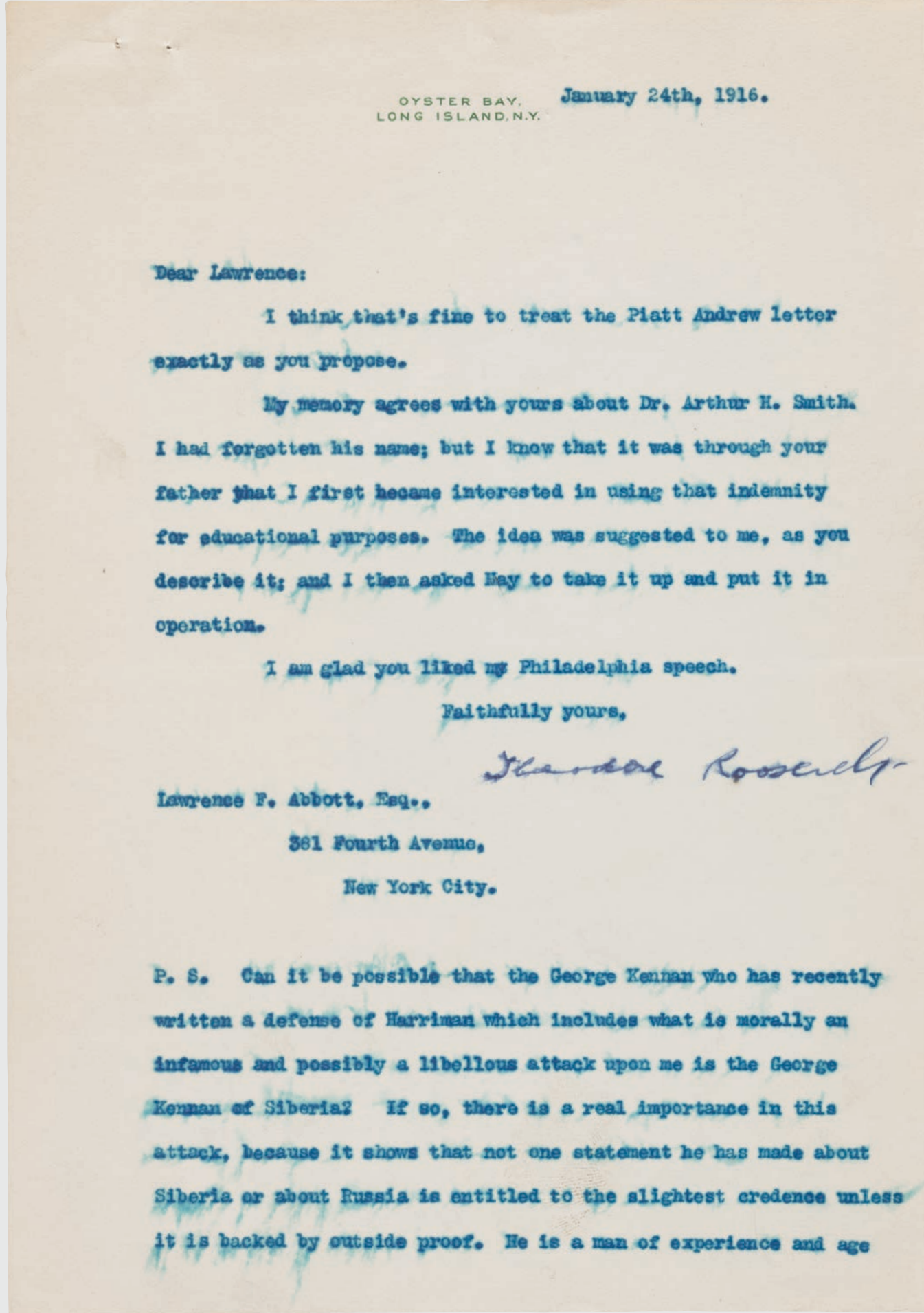


and later the Government, under your direction and that of Secretary Hay did actually use about twelve million dollars of the indemnity for educational purposes. My impression is that Dr. Smith invented this idea and that you accepted his suggestion and put it into operation. Does your memory or do your records confirm this general impression? I want to know, because Professor McElroy of Princeton is about to go to China as a delegate of Princeton University and I must tell him what you did in this matter, and if I am correct how it came originally from an American living in China.) I am sorry to bother you, but I think it would be useful to get these facts in a human and concise way before the Chinese people.

My congratulations on your Philadelphia speech.
Ever faithfully yours,
(Signature)

Hon. Theodore Roosevelt,
Sagamore Hill,
Oyster Bay, N.Y.

P. S. General Wood lunched with us the other day. What a fine American he is.



Oyster Bay,
Long Island, N.Y.,
January 24th, 1916.

Dear Lawrence:

I think that's fine to treat the Piatt Andrew letter exactly as you propose.

My memory agrees with yours about Dr. Arthur H. Smith. I had forgotten his name; but I know that it was through your father that I first became interested in using this indemnity for educational purposes. The idea was suggested to me, as you describe it; and I then asked Hay to take it up and put it in operation.

I am glad you liked my Philadelphia speech.

Faithfully yours,
Theodore Roosevelt

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