

Peter Stephen Duponceau an Johann Severin Vater, 06.10.1819

Handschrift: Grundlage der Edition: Berlin, SBBPK, Nachlass Vater: Coll. ling. fol. 2, Bl. 205–206

Nachweis: Mueller-Vollmer 1993, S. 210

[205r]

Philadelphia, 6.th Oct. 1819

I have received my excellent & much venerated friend, your two kind letters of the **17.th of May**, mit alles dazu beygelegt^[a], among which your picture was the to me the most valuable. I thank you with all my heart for this present, which convinces me that you have judged that I should feel its value. I have neatly prefixed it to the Second volume of the **Mithridates**, where your labors begin; a work which I have always before my eyes, & often, very often in my hand. I call it my Manual of Philology. I shall never cease to consider it as the most valuable composition of the kind that the world has ever Seen. I hope you have received the first volume of the Transactions of the Historical & literary Committee of the **A. P. S.** in which I **have in a few words attempted to Sketch the Character of this astonishing Book.**

I have presented in your name to the **American Philosophical Society** the splendid ornament which you learned & ingenious Countrymen have erected in the Majesty of Peace, & in which your Share is peculiarly **honorable** <&> flattering to this Country & honorable to yourself. The Secretary has been ordered to return your thanks in form, & I take the first opportunity to convey to you the expression of the **Society's** gratitude & my own. I have asked & obtained permission of the **Society** to Send you all the copies I should think proper of the Indian Vocabularies that are in the Archives of the Historical Committee, & I avail myself of this permission to Send you seven of them fairly copied; all of them of the languages I have called Floridian & of those Spoken in the <South> Western parts of Louisiana, ~~and~~ <&> the Province of Texas. Those of the Keres, Comanches & which you [205v] Specially call for, we have not got & cannot at present procure. The Vocabularies which **Lewis** & **Clarke** collected are lost & those of **Pike** we have never heard of. The Government, however, has lately Sent a new expedition to the Westward, under the command of **Major Long**^[b], of which, no doubt, you have heard. **The**

a) [Editor] In deutscher Schrift.

b) [Editor] **Stephen Harriman Long** (1784–1864).

Secretary of State h liberally invited the Philosophical Society to point out Subjects of investigation to be added to the instructions given to those who compose the expedition. As I was one of the Committee appointed to prepare those additional instructions, you may well Suppose that I have not forgotten the Indian languages. So that next Year we may expect to have Vocabularies of all the idioms of the Indians on the Missouri & Westward – at present I can only Send you that of the Osages or Washash, a Nation extending fast thro' a great distance from North to South, & in any opinion originally connected with the Iroquois or Hurons, as you will find by comparing Several of their words, particularly in the numerals. If I had a clerk or a copyist who could read & write German, I could send you many curious works & collections on the Indian languages; I shall write however, to my friend Heckewelder at Bethlehem, to see if he cannot get a copy made for you of Zeisberger's Delaware Grammar in the original. It is a long work, but perhaps he may find some young man & <or> woman that will take the pains. If not, I will not promise any |206r| thing, lest I should not be able to keep my word, but I Shall do my best to content you to the extent of my power.

I return you many thanks for your excellent Index linguarum, which I have placed in my Library next to the Mithridates & your Proben Deutscher Volks Mundarten, all bound alike, & making together a complete body of Science. My friend Schäffer writes to me that you have enclosed to him a Copy of the Same work for the Society, but he had not yet received it. Be it as it may, I will not part with mine for any Society in the world; I value it too much. M^r Patterson^[c] has handed your letter to the Society; you need not be ashamed of your manner of writing English.

The first Volume of the Historical |sic| Transactions of the Historical Committee was Sent to you by His Excellency M^r Daschkoff,^[d] late Minister from Russia to this Country, who was kind enough to take charge of it in a packet directed to you. I hope he has Savely forwarded it. I send this packet to the care of D^r Albers^[e] of Bremen, with whom I have just begun a Correspondence. Since the death of the great Ebeling,^[f] I have, alas! no Correspondent in Hamburg. I had begun with him a most valuable & interesting Correspondence, I mean a Correspondence which he

c) |Editor| Wohl Robert Patterson (1743–1824), Sekretär (1784), Vice-Präsident (1799) und Präsident (1819) der American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia (vgl. Penn University Archives).

d) |Editor| Andrei Jakowlewitsch Daschkow (1775–1831), von 1808 bis 1817 erster russischer Botschafter in den USA.

e) |Editor| Johann Abraham Albers (1772–1821), Stadtphysikus in Bremen, gründete 1808 die Zeitschrift „Amerikanische Annalen der Arzneykunde, Naturgeschichte, Chemie und Physik“.

f) |Editor| Christian Daniel Ebeling (1741–1817), Hamburger Aufklärer, Amerikanist etc.

rendered such; he professed, & I have no doubt, felt great friendship for me – he died, just as we begun to be known to each other.

I have always lived a very retired life, & not been fond of extending my Correspondences abroad. But about three Years ago, I was Seized with a violent passion for the German language; I had then a kind of half knowledge of it |206v| So far that I had translated into English [Professor Cæsar](#)'s^[g] German Translation of [Galiani](#)'s *Recht der Neutralität*. But finding an excellent German Master^[h] in [this City](#), who was very poor & wanted assistance, I put myself under his tuition not thinking of any thing else but a Charitable work; but this good Man made me love & feel the beauties of the German idiom, So that for three Years I have taken from every day a lesson of one hour, & studied besides two hours daily by myself. This has raised an enthusiasm in me which has led to any Correspondence with [D^r Ebeling](#), with you & other worthies of your Country. I still continue to take lessons of my good Master. We read together some of your best Poets, & he aids me to feel & understand their beauties, which he is well fitted for; being a Man of feeling & an excellent Classical Scholar. As I began to read with more ease, I studied your *Untersuchungen* & the great *Mithridates*; this raised another passion in me for the Indian languages, which was not difficult, for I have always been fond of Philology; but being a Member of a laborious & active profession (the Law) I have had little time to attend to more elegant studies. But there is no resisting fate. I am like an old Bachelor in Science, I must fall in love with it in my old age, after neglecting it in my more vigorous Youth. I regret the past times, & not having made a better use of them; but they will never return & so I must be contended.

I end this letter because my paper ends. God bless & preserve you for the benefit of Science & Mankind.

Your Sincere & affectionate friend

Peter S. Du Ponceau

g) |Editor| [Karl Adolph Caesar](#) (1744–1811), deutscher Philosoph. Seine deutsche Übersetzung von [Ferdinando Galiani](#)'s *Recht der Neutralität* erschien 1790 in [Leipzig](#).

h) |Editor| Bei diesem "Master" könnte es sich um den bereits oben genannten [Frederick David Schaeffer](#) (1760–1836) handeln, mit dem Duponceau befreundet war (Jennifer Denise Henderson [2004]: *"A Blaze of Reputation and the Echo of a Name": The Legal Career of Peter Stephen Du Ponceau in Post-Revolutionary Philadelphia*, Diss. Florida State University, S. 71 Anm. 52). Der in [Frankfurt am Main](#) geborene [Schaeffer](#), lutheranischer Pfarrer in [Philadelphia](#), hatte acht Kinder und galt als "fine classical scholar" (James Grant Wilson / John Fiske [Hrsg.] [1900]: *Appletons' Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, New York: D. Appleton, s. v. "Schaeffer, Frederick David"). [FZ]