

all of it—that he obtained permission from Judge Bushrod Washington, who inherited the papers of his distinguished uncle, to take whatever letters he might choose from Gen. Washington's voluminous correspondence, provided only that he would leave copies in their stead. The result was, that he came into possession of some fifteen hundred letters, many of which were included in the three sets of the signers which he completed. "Of course," writes his son, Wm. B. Sprague, Jr., "many other autographs were obtained from friends by way of exchange; but a very large number of his collections were addressed to Washington, and bear his endorsement." Dr. Emmet had thought, from what Dr. Sprague had told him, that the latter had with his exchange with Mr. Tefft, made up from his Washington collection a full set of the signers, and all the generals of the Revolution.

Mr. Gratz states, that of Dr. Sprague's best set of signers, which eventually came into his possession, twenty-one were addressed to Washington; and, from this set, five had previously been exchanged with Dr. Emmet, including the Lynch letter, and letters of Heyward and Middleton. Mr. Gratz adds, that a few of the letters in his set of the signers, obtained by Dr. Sprague from the Washington manuscripts, are represented in duplicate in the second Sprague set of the signers, now belonging to the Pennsylvania Historical Society. It would appear, therefore, that aside from some duplicates, Dr. Sprague did not acquire from the Washington manuscripts to exceed twenty-nine letters of the signers—except duplicates, a little more than one-half of the whole number. He probably had to exchange duplicates for many he did not possess, not only with Mr. Tefft, as Dr. Emmet states; but with several others, as indicated by Wm. B. Sprague, Jr.

There is a pretty general opinion with our oldest and most intelligent autograph collectors, that Dr. Sprague originated the idea of making a collection of the autographs of the signers of the declaration of independence; and that he was undoubtedly the first to complete his set. The date of its completion is not known—it was, however, prior to