

Irving, Washington

**Irving's Manuscript Statement About
"Astoria"**

157 Irving, Washington. Noted American Author. Galley-proof of a column of the Literary World, with heading, "Correction of a Misstatement Respecting 'Astoria,' by Washington Irving," in the form of a printed letter to Henry R. Schoolcraft, Sunnyside, November 10, 1851, with deletions and additions in the hand of Irving. There are about forty lines in all by Irving.

The letter is in answer to a charge made by Schoolcraft, in his "Personal Memoirs," to the effect that Irving had received remuneration (\$5,000) from Astor for his "Astoria." Irving's reply is, in part:

"The work was undertaken by me through a real relish of the subject. In the course of visits in early life to Canada I had seen much of the Magnates of the North West Company and of the hearty trappers and fur traders in their employ, and had been excited by their stories of adventurous expeditions into the 'Indian Country.' I was sure, therefore, that a narrative, treating of them and their doings, could not fail to be full of sterling interest," &c.

Humboldt

1368

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CORRECTION OF A MISSTATEMENT RESPECT-
ING "ASTORIA," BY WASHINGTON IRVING.

To the Editors of the Literary World:

GENTLEMEN—A quotation from Mr. Schoolcraft's work in your last number has drawn from me the following note to that gentleman, which I will thank you to insert in your next.

Yours very truly,
WASHINGTON IRVING.

Nov. 10, 1851.

TO HENRY R. SCHOOLCRAFT, ESQ.

SUNNYSIDE, Nov. 10, 1851.

DEAR SIR—In your "Personal Memoirs," recently published, you give a conversation with the late Albert Gallatin, Esq., in the course of which he made to you the following statement:

"Several years ago John Jacob Astor put into my hands the journal of his traders on the Columbia, desiring me to use it. I put it into the hands of Malte Brun, at Paris, who employed the geographical facts in his work, but paid but little respect to Mr. Astor, whom he regarded merely as a merchant seeking his own profit, and not a discoverer. He had not even sent a man to observe the facts in the natural history. Astor did not like it. He was restive several years, and then gave Washington Irving \$5,000 to take up the MSS. This is the History of 'Astoria.'"

Now, sir, I beg leave to inform you that this is not the History of Astoria. Mr. Gallatin was misinformed as to the part he has assigned me in it. I never asked, nor received of Mr. Astor a farthing on account of this work. He paid my nephew, who was then absent practising law in Illinois, for coming on, examining and collecting manuscript journals, accounts and other documents, and preparing what lawyers would call a brief, for me. Mr. Fitzgreene Halleck who was with Mr. Astor at the time, determined what the compensation of my nephew ought to be. When the brief was finished, I paid my nephew an additional consideration on my own account, and out of my own purse. It was the compensation paid by Mr. Astor to my nephew which Mr. Gallatin may have heard of, and supposed it was paid to myself; but even in that case he has greatly exaggerated the amount.

Mr. Astor signified a wish to have the work brought out in a superior style, supposing that it was to be done at his expense. I replied that it must be produced in the style of my other works, and at my expense and risk; and that whatever profit I was to derive from it must be from its sale and my bargain with the publishers. This is the true History of "Astoria," as far as I was concerned in it.

During my long intimacy with Mr. Astor, commencing when I was a young man, and ending only with his death, I never came under a pecuniary obligation to him of any kind. At a time of public pressure and imprudent investments, when he knew I was straitened and was seeking accommodations from monied institutions, he repeatedly urged me to accept loans from him, but I always declined. He was too proverbially rich a man for me to permit the shadow of a pecuniary favor to rest on our intercourse.

My intimacy with him was perfectly independent and disinterested. It was sought originally on his part, and grew up, on mine, out of the friendship he spontaneously manifested for me, and the confidence he seemed to repose in me. It was drawn closer when, in the prosecution of my literary task, I became acquainted, from his papers and his confidential conversations, with the scope and power of his mind, and the grandeur of his enterprises. His noble project of the ASTOR LIBRARY, conceived about the same time, and which I was solicitous he should carry into execution during his lifetime, was a still stronger link of intimacy between us.

He was altogether one of the most remarkable men I have ever known: of penetrating sagacity, massive intellect, and possessing elements of greatness of which the busy world around him was little aware: like Malte Brun, regarding him "merely as a merchant seeking his own profit."

Very respectfully,
Your friend and servant,
WASHINGTON IRVING.

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Mr. A.

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The only money transaction between us was my purchase of a share in a town he was founding at Green Bay; for this I paid cash, though he wished the amount to stand on mortgage. The land fell in value, and some years afterwards, when I was in Spain, Mr. Astor, of his own free will, took back the share from my agent and repaid the original purchase money. This, I repeat, was the only money transaction that ever took place between us; and by this I lost four or five years interest of my investment. My intimacy with Mr. A. &c.

