Ridgway Collection

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BAKERY AND DELICATESSEN
922 EIGHTH STREET PHONE 448
BOONE, IOWA

Jan 27 - 1917

Prof Robt Ridgway
Washington D C

Dear Mr. Ridgway

During the year of the Pan-American Exposition I had the pleasure of an hours visit with you at your office in Washington D.C.
You were working on your manuscript the "Birds of North and Middle America" at the time. The pleasures of that visit have since been renewed from time to time by the receipt from you, the published volumes of your valuable work. Your friendship and kindness during that brief hour give me the courage to write to you at this late day for advice and council in a matter that is of great importance to me.
Briefly the situation is this:— I desire to make a change that will better the condition of myself and family — with that end in view I am anxious to obtain a position in the government service in some department of the Smithsonian Institution or National Museum; and thought you would advise me in what way and through what channels I will have to work in order

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to obtain a position. All my life I have been interested in Ornithology - but conditions have been such that I have been obliged to follow a mercantile career - Even when our mutual friend the late Charles Aldrich (from whom I had a letter of introduction when I called on you) a few years before his death, generously tendered me the position as Museum assistant in the State Historical Department at Des Moines, of which he was Curator, I was obliged to decline the offer for financial reasons, because there was a mortgage on the home of my parents and I felt my duty was to save it for them if I could - regardless of my own ambitions.

Last month I disposed of my little store and as there does not seem to be any chance to conduct a successful business on account of lack of financial means - therefor I feel that if I could obtain work of some kind in some branch of the government service that I could improve my condition in life and at the same time have work that would be congenial.

I have a wife and three children. My oldest daughter is 20 past. The younger daughter is 16 and my son will be 14 in May.

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Once located in Washington I believe I could secure work for my daughters under the civil service laws. First the older one, then in few years Marie would be old enough - during this time my son would have the advantage of good schools.
Mr Ridgeway I write these thoughts to you frankly and trust you will advise me as to the best way to proceed in order to first obtain work for myself - preferably in some capacity that will get me in touch with the birds of our country and research work if possible. But beggars should not be choosers - I will say frankly that I have no expert knowledge of ornithology - only what I have picked up from meeting the birds in fields and woods - but I do feel that I could be of some service in some capacity in the great variety of work that is carried on by the Smithsonian Institution - at least earn a wage that would bring in enough to keep body and soul together and in the end I hope a benefit to myself and family. Trusting to hear from you I wish to remain, Your friend

Carl Fritz Henning.