



3824 Photo. Tailed

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION,
BUREAU OF ETHNOLOGY.

1880

Washington DC Oct 27

My Dear Sir

I have received from Dr. Blanchard
Orstedt chief physician at present on the
Commission supérieure de santé de l'armée
générale, Algiers, a photograph of a tailed man,
an enlarged copy of which I have pleasure
in sending you herewith.

I am yours cordially

A. J. Powell

Mr John S. Bellinger

Surgeon U. S. A.

Army Medical Museum

John Wesley Powell; John S. Billings, Bernhard Ornstein

Autograph Letter Signed and accompanying Albumen Photograph of a Tailed Man (1879-80)

Washington, D.C.: (1879-80)

\$1500

Autograph Letter Signed by John Wesley Powell, Director of the Bureau of Ethnology in Washington, D.C., together with an accompanying photograph, which he sent in 1880 to John S. Billings, a surgeon and a statistician on medicine in the U.S. Army. The one page letter is written on "Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of Ethnology" letterhead, dated: "Ap. 27" [1880], and is addressed at the bottom to "Dr. John S. Billings, Surgeon U.S.A., Army Medical Museum." Some water staining to the edges and related blurring to the manuscript text, still legible, and three-inch tear repaired with tape on the verso, good only. The Albumen Print measures (9½" x 12") laid down on a cardboard mount (11" x 16"). Contemporary manuscript caption in ink on the bottom margin of the mount: "3824 Photo. Tailed man," and on the back in French, which identifies the photograph as a being from the Society of Anthropology in Berlin. Dated "Oct. 18" (with "1879" inserted in pencil). Light soiling and toning to the mount, with a tear to the top margin of the mount, very good.

The photograph of a tailed man, which Powell takes "pleasure in sending" to Billings, is an enlargement of the photo taken in 1879 by Surgeon-General Bernhard Ornstein, chief physician of the Greek army. The original photo, sent to the Berlin Anthropological Society, sparked a decade-long debate about whether such protuberances were "atavistic tails" or "pathological protuberances."

Powell was a celebrated naturalist and explorer who, despite losing an arm in the Civil War, led the first known passage through the Grand Canyon in 1869. When Congress created the Bureau of Ethnology in 1879, Powell was named its first director, a post he held until his death. John Shaw Billings is best known as the modernizer of the Surgeon General's Library, the nation's first comprehensive library for medicine. He also started *Index Medicus*, a monthly guide to contemporary medicine that ran until his retirement at the Medical Museum and Library. A nice association. [BTC#422485]