

REPORT

OF

THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY,

COMMUNICATING

(In compliance with a resolution of the Senate)

*Estimates of the cost of constructing a new custom-house in the city of New Orleans, of completing the marine hospital in that city, and of improving the harbor of Port Pontchartrain.*

FEBRUARY 4, 1845.

Referred to the Committee on Commerce, and ordered to be printed.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, *February 4, 1845.*

SIR: In obedience to the resolution of the Senate of the United States, adopted the 31st of December last, instructing the Secretary of the Treasury "to report to the Senate the condition of the old custom-house in the city of New Orleans, and the sum required for the construction of a new custom-house in the said city; the sums required to complete the marine hospital in the city of New Orleans, and to improve the harbor at Port Pontchartrain, in the State of Louisiana," I have the honor to transmit herewith a copy of a report, made to this department by the collector of New Orleans, with accompanying estimates of the sums of money necessary to accomplish the objects mentioned in the resolution, furnished by an architect of that city of high reputation in his profession. His estimates are as follows: For the construction of a custom house building of sufficient size for required purposes, \$220,000; and for one of similar magnitude, to be rendered perfectly incombustible, \$400,000. For the completion of the marine hospital at New Orleans, a further sum of \$50,000 will be needed. To improve the harbor at Port Pontchartrain, about \$20,000 will be required.

In connexion with the subject of a new custom-house at New Orleans, and the title to the ground on which the present one now stands, to which the attention of the Senate was respectfully invited in my communication to that body under date of the 19th ultimo, I beg leave to submit herewith copy of a proposition just received from the first municipality of New Orleans, tendering to the United States, for their use, forever, a square of ground situate in front of the present custom-house, on condition that a new custom-house be constructed thereupon, and the relinquishment, on the part of the United States, of all claims to the square of ground on which the present custom-house stands, with the understanding that the United

States may retain the use of the old custom-house for the space of three years to come.

From information received by the department, the square of ground tendered to the United States is believed to be sufficiently capacious for present custom-house purposes, and its location equally convenient with that on which the custom-house at present stands. In view of these facts, together with the dispute in regard to the title of the United States to the site now occupied, I would respectfully suggest the expediency of acceding to the propositions of the first municipality before referred to.

All which is respectfully submitted.

GEORGE M. BIBB,  
*Secretary of the Treasury.*

HON. WILLIE P. MANGUM,  
*President pro tem. United States Senate.*

CUSTOM-HOUSE, NEW ORLEANS,

January 15, 1845.

SIR: I have now the honor to forward a letter from James Gallier, Esq., relative to the cost of building a new custom-house, completing the marine hospital, and deepening the harbor of Port Pontchartrain, together with his opinion of the condition of the present custom-house.

Mr. Gallier is the architect and builder of the St. Charles hotel in this city, considered one of the finest edifices in the Union, and he bears a high reputation in his profession; consequently, his estimates are entitled to credit.

The site of the present custom house is in litigation between the city and the General Government; but I am of opinion that this could be readily adjusted, provided a building, ornamental to the city, was ordered by Congress; at all events, I am convinced the location will not cost the Government any thing.

I have the honor to be, with high respect, your obedient servant,

THOMAS BARRETT,  
*Collector.*

HON. GEORGE M. BIBB,  
*Secretary of the Treasury.*

NEW ORLEANS, January 13, 1845.

SIR: In compliance with your request, and in conformity with the requisition addressed to you from the Treasury Department, bearing date the 2d January, 1845, I have carefully examined into the several matters therein specified, and respectfully submit the following report, and estimates thereon:

The old custom-house of New Orleans is in a dilapidated and insecure condition; it is very inconvenient, and altogether unsuitable to the present and future wants of commerce, and of the public service.

A new building, of sufficient size for all the required purposes, erected upon the square of ground on which the present edifice stands; the founda-

tions made of concrete; the basement and stairs of granite; the cornices of marble; the walls above the basement, and the interior walls, of brick work; the upper floors and the roofs framed of timber; the roofs covered with slates; and the gutters of copper—all finished complete—will cost about two hundred and twenty thousand dollars. Say \$220,000.

A building, of similar magnitude with the above, built so as to be perfectly incombustible; the outside walls, porticoes, cornices, stairs, and floors, made of granite and marble; the framing of the floors and roofs of cast iron; the doors and windows all of metal—will cost about four hundred thousand dollars. Say \$400,000.

It will of course be seen, that any thing approaching a correct estimate cannot be made, until some particular *plan* and arrangement of the building shall be fixed upon; and this arrangement will depend on whether the whole square of ground on which the present building is situated shall continue to be, as it is at present, appropriated exclusively to the custom-house, or whether, in addition thereto, it may be deemed a matter of sufficient public advantage to erect thereon a series of warehouses fronting on three sides of the square, leaving the side next the river, together with the centre of the square, for the custom-house and its yards. The former arrangement would be by far the most noble looking and grand in effect; the latter would be of the greatest public utility. The ground is sufficiently large for both purposes; and if the warehousing system should ever be adopted, such stores would, in that event, become indispensable. If the department should deem it necessary to have *plans* made, to show what may be accomplished in either way, and will confide to me the furnishing of the same, I shall deem it a high honor, and will devote to the task my best energies, and whatever ability the experience of twenty-five years' professional practice may enable me to give to it.

To complete the building of the marine hospital, and furnish the same with every thing necessary for the reception of its intended inmates, will cost about fifty thousand dollars—say \$50,000; and can be made ready for use by the first of September next.

To improve the harbor of Port Pontchartrain, will require about twenty-thousand dollars. Say \$20,000.

I am, very respectfully, sir, your obedient servant,

JAMES GALLIER, *Architect*.

THOMAS BARRETT, Esq., *Collector*.

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*Mayorality of New Orleans.—Council of Municipality No. 1.—Secret meeting of Wednesday, January 22, 1845.*

*Resolved*, That the square of ground situate in front of the present custom-house, and described in the plan already transmitted to the Treasury Department, be tendered by this municipality to the United States, for their use, forever.

*Resolved*, That proper deeds of conveyance shall be passed therefor, and that the consideration of said conveyance, to be accepted by this municipality, will be the erection, by the United States, of a new custom-house, on the ground now tendered to them, and the relinquishment on their part of all their claims to the square comprised within Levee, Canal, Custom-House, and Front Levee streets.

*Resolved*, That for a period of time next succeeding said conveyance, and to be determined and fixed by the Treasury Department, not exceeding three years, the United States may retain the possession and use of the present custom-house.

Approved 23d January, 1845.

J. GENOIS, *Recorder*.

E. MONTEGUT, *Mayor*.

A true copy :

E. MONTEGUT, *Mayor*.

Majority of New Orleans—Council of Municipality No. 1—Secret  
Meeting of Wednesday January 22, 1845

*Resolved*, That the square of ground situated in front of the present custom-house, and described in the plan already transmitted to the Treasury Department, be rendered by this municipality to the United States; for their use forever.

*Resolved*, That proper deeds of conveyance shall be passed thereto; and that the consideration of said conveyance to be accepted by this municipality, will be the erection, by the United States, of a new custom-house, on the ground now rendered to them, and the relinquishment on their part of all their claims to the square comprised within Levee Canal, Custom-House, and Front Levee streets.