

LIGHT-HOUSES.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY,

TRANSMITTING

*A report respecting Light-houses.*

MARCH 3, 1851.

Ordered to be printed.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,  
*February 19, 1851.*

SIR: For the purpose of determining what the public exigencies in regard to the improvements provided for in the act "making appropriations for light-houses, light-boats, buoys, &c., and providing for the erection and establishment of the same, and for other purposes," approved the 28th of September, 1850, demand, the Secretary of the Treasury, in the contingency specified in the act, was directed to appoint officers of the revenue service to institute preliminary surveys.

By the 5th section of the act, it is provided that the reports of these officers, when adverse to the works designated, shall be laid before Congress at its next session.

Accordingly I have the honor to transmit a copy of a letter from S. Pleasonton, esq., the general superintendent of the light-house establishment, with copies of the reports of the officers designated, specifying the sites on which it is not deemed necessary to erect the works provided for.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

THO. CORWIN,  
*Secretary of the Treasury.*

Hon. HOWELL COBB,  
*Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,  
*Fifth Auditor's Office, February 12, 1851.*

SIR: Under the 3d section of the act entitled "An act making appropriations for light-houses, light-boats, buoys, &c., and providing for the

erection and establishment of the same, and for other purposes," passed on the 28th September, 1850, the Secretary of the Treasury detailed Captain Green Walden, of the revenue service, for the purpose of examining and reporting upon the expediency, or otherwise, of building the light-houses, and providing for other objects, for which appropriations were made by that law, from the seacoast of the State of Maine to that of Delaware; and he likewise detailed Captain Richard Evans, of the same service, to examine and report, in like manner, upon the propriety of erecting light-houses, and providing other objects, for which appropriations were made, on the seacoast from the State of Maryland to that of Texas; and he also detailed Captain Gilbert Knapp, of the revenue service, to examine, in like manner, the sites of proposed lights on the northern lakes; and, as the 5th section of the same law requires that all adverse reports of such officers to giving effect to the law shall be laid before Congress at the next ensuing session, I have now the honor to transmit the reports of those officers in regard to such objects as they considered necessary.

The proper instructions have been given by this office to the several superintendents of lights to give effect to the law, in all cases, in which the examining officers have reported favorably.

I have the honor to be, sir, respectfully, your obedient servant,

S. PLEASANTON.

HON. THOMAS CORWIN,

*Secretary of the Treasury.*

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*Extracts of a report made January 15, 1851, by Captain Green Walden, of the revenue service, to the Secretary of the Treasury, in relation to sites for light houses, &c., on the northern coast, viz: from Delaware to Maine, inclusive, under the 3d, 4th, and 5th sections of the act of 28th September, 1850.*

Commencing in the State of Maine, November 8, I visited Black Saddle-back Rock, near the entrance of Eastern Isle of Holt bay, where it is proposed, by the act of Congress above referred to, to build a light-house. This rock contains about three acres at high water. Its rise above the level of the sea at high water is about 14 feet, and it is not exposed to the open sea. The erection of a light house at this point would not, in itself, be particularly connected with other lights, but, I am certain, would be a decoy, and serve to mislead strangers when approaching this part of the coast for shelter. This is a dangerous and intricate passage at all times, and no proper sailing directions could be given, as its whole entrance is intercepted by sunken rocks and reefs; and no experienced pilot or ship-master would hazard the risk of his life and property in attempting to make this passage in the night.

There are but few vessels that attempt to navigate here even in the day time, and these only by those who live in the immediate vicinity, as there are other and better passages leading to their port of destination, and a good harbor pointed out by light-houses and other means, while the proposed light house would not, if erected, serve as a coast or harbor light. Spoon island, lying about four miles SW. by S. from this point, would be a more suitable place for a light, should the department feel disposed to erect one

in this vicinity. In 1838 a portion of this island was purchased by the government for a site on which to build a light-house, by virtue of an appropriation made by Congress for that purpose; but, owing to the remonstrances of masters of vessels and others, the whole project was abandoned.

*Egg rock, near Nahant, visited November 20th—proposed light.*—From this place are seen six different light-houses, the furthest only thirteen miles, and the nearest about six miles distant, viz: Boston light, bearing SSW. 7 miles; Long Island Head light, SW.  $\frac{3}{4}$  W. 7 miles; Baker's Island light, NE. by E.  $\frac{1}{2}$  E. 9 miles; Eastern Point Cape Ann light, E. by N.  $\frac{1}{4}$  N. 10 miles; Marblehead light, 6 miles; Minott's Rock light, 13 miles. Hence, the addition of another light-house within so small a circle seems to me to be entirely unnecessary for the interests of navigation, especially as the proposed light-house would not lead to a safe anchorage, or answer any good purpose for a course light.

In making the above suggestions and explanations, I leave the matter to the further consideration of the department.

*Bass river, visited December 6th—proposed light-house.*—This is a small inlet on the north shore of the Vineyard sound, having not more than from three to four feet water at low tides. Near its entrance is a small breakwater, two hundred feet in length, and about thirty-six feet wide. This breakwater was built some years since by appropriations made by Congress; but, the river being unnavigable, except for small vessels, and these only at high water, the breakwater was left in an unfinished state. Appropriations were made by Congress for a light-house on this breakwater. Owing to the extreme shoalness of water in this river, and unsafe anchorage about this breakwater in strong south gales, I do not conceive that the interests of commerce require that a light-house should be erected here. Within seven miles west of this point there are already two light-houses leading to Hyannis harbor. This harbor is free of access, and can be approached in safety, even by strangers, at all times.

About ten miles northeast from the proposed light at Bass river there is also a good harbor, much frequented by vessels when wind-bound; and I am well persuaded that no experienced shipmaster would think of anchoring his vessel at Bass river, with a view of making a safe harbor, should the proposed light-house be erected.

There are also great facilities for guiding vessels to Old Stage Harbor, by means of Monomy light and other signals. During the last Congress appropriations were made for mooring a buoy on Monomy rip; but, on examination of this shoal, I find that a buoy has already been placed there at the government's expense.

*Sow-and-Pigs reef, near Cuttyhunk.*—After a careful examination and inspection of this reef, I am led to believe that a suitable foundation for a light-house cannot be found here. There is constant motion of the sea at this place, and not more than one day of a month during a year that a boat can land on the reef with any degree of safety. The reef extends in a southwest direction from Cuttyhunk light-house, and the inner edge of ledge is about one-fourth of a mile from the shore. The rocks appear out of water about forty-five rods in length, and thirty feet in width, at low tide, and only show above water six or seven inches, excepting some large loose stones, which may be seen on some portions of the reef, of the size of a hog'shead; the rest is composed principally of loose stones, but

to what depth I was unable to ascertain; but I am confident that it must be some feet under water before a proper foundation for a light-house could be found; and, should a work of this kind ever be accomplished, it must be attended with a very great expense.

*Fire-Island inlet, visited January 3, 1851.*—I recommend that a spar-buoy be moored here on the outer bar of the channel—the spar to be ten inches in diameter, and thirty feet long; to me moored ten feet at low tide. Also one in the channel, between the outer bar and Democrat shoal, so called, of the same dimensions, and in the same depth of water, as last named. These two buoys will require moorings and fastenings of the first class, as they are much exposed to the open sea. Also one on Democrat shoal, ten inches in diameter, and twenty-five feet in length, in two fathoms at low tide, and ten feet from the northwest end of the shoal. Also one of the same size on the west end of the Farm shoal, so called, in ten feet at low tide. The buoy on the outer bar will bear from the light-house WSW. about one mile, and the buoy in the channel between the outer bar and Democrat shoal W., half a mile distant, and the buoy on Democrat shoal W. by N. one mile, and the buoy on Farm shoal WNW. three quarters of a mile.

*Monaskonk—called in the act Conaskonk—visited January 9, 1851.*—This is a shoal point extending from the west side of Raritan bay in a north-northeast direction about one mile, having over it from two to four feet, at a distance of half a mile from the main shore at low tides.

On the north side of the bay, opposite this point, three miles and a half distant, is already a light-house, near which is a main ship channel, and which answers every good purpose for the navigation of this river, so far as regards light-houses. The west side of this bay is shoal, and not much frequented by vessels of any class. About half a mile west of Monaskonk point is a small town called Key Port, which is the only place of any note on the west side of the bay. Therefore, after carefully examining this place, I am led to believe that the public exigency does not require a light-house to be erected at this point; and with a view of rendering the reasons which have led me to these conclusions, in part apparent to the department, I respectfully submit a plan of the several locations touching this matter.

Instead of the erection of a light-house I would recommend that a beacon be erected on this shoal, in four feet water at low tide. The same should be built of granite, 23 feet high, 18 feet at its base, gradually tapering to 6 feet at the top. A spar and drum should be erected upon it, of the same dimensions as the one I have recommended for Logy's ledge.

The interests of navigation will be benefited by placing a 10-inch spar-buoy, 35 feet long, on the west end of Diamond reef, in 15 feet water at low tide. This reef lies about one-eighth mile north of Governor's island, New York harbor.



*Extracts of a report made January 27, 1851, by Captain Richard Evans, of the revenue service, to the Secretary of the Treasury, in relation to sites for light-houses, &c., on the southern coast, viz: from Maryland to Texas inclusive, under the 3d, 4th, and 5th sections of the act of 28th September, 1850.*

## MISSISSIPPI.

*A beacon on the pier at Mississippi City.*—This pier is the property of Doctor Tegardus, who keeps a hotel at that place, and it is for the accommodation of said hotel to land and take off passengers for steamboats. The pier is a temporary one, being built of plank upon pine logs set up in the sand, and not sufficient to support a beacon. To build a beacon there, a foundation would have to be raised in seven feet water, which, it is presumed, would cost more than the amount appropriated for the beacon. The only use for a light at this place is to mark the steamboat landing. The navigation at this place is open and clear of shoals, and the lights at Boloni, Cat Island pass, Mary Ann, and Ship island, (when built) being all in sight, I cannot see that the interests of commerce would be advanced by this expenditure, especially as there is no trade there.

*Light-house at Pascagoula river.*—The mouth of this river bears north from Round Island light house about four miles distant. The river is very shallow, and can only be navigated at high water by vessels of light draught. The prevailing opinion of the persons living there is, that a light house would be of no use unless the river were deepened. Captain Grant, a gentleman of enterprise who resides at the mouth of the river, is making some improvements by dredging at his own expense, but agrees with others whom I conferred with, that a light would be useless unless the navigation were improved. I am, therefore, of the opinion that there is no immediate necessity for a light-house at this place.

*Extract of a report made November 26, 1850, by Captain Gilbert Knapp, of the revenue service, to the Secretary of the Treasury, in relation to sites for light-houses, &c., on the northwestern lakes, under the 3d, 4th, and 5th sections of the act of 28th September, 1850.*

I have examined the site designated in the bill for a light at Port Ular. I cannot recommend a light at this point for the following reasons: There are not more than eight or ten dwelling-houses at the place, and very little business done of receiving goods or shipping produce, without any river or prospect for a harbor, and it is within six miles of Port Washington light-house. Many of the captains whom I have consulted are of opinion that it would only embarrass navigation, and be of no benefit, except locally. Yet should the government determine to build a light-house at this point, I would recommend a red light, and the tower 25 or 30 feet high, and on the first grade of high land from the water.





