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ESTIMATE OF APPROPRIATION, BUILDING FOR GEOLOGICAL SURVEY.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY,

TRANSMITTING

AN ESTIMATE OF APPROPRIATION FOR A BUILDING FOR THE GEOLOGICAL SURVEY.

JANUARY 27, 1909.—Referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
Washington, January 27, 1909.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith, for the consideration of Congress, a communication from the Secretary of the Interior, of this date, submitting an estimate of $2,500,000 for the construction of a fireproof building, including vaults, heating and ventilating apparatus, elevators, etc., in Washington, D. C., for the United States Geological Survey and other bureaus of the Department of the Interior, and asking for an appropriation of $250,000 to begin the construction thereof.

Respectfully,

GEO. B. CORTELYOU,
Secretary.

THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, January 27, 1909.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith an estimate providing for the construction of a fireproof building for the United States Geological Survey and other bureaus of the Department of the Interior, which is respectfully forwarded through your department for the appropriate action of Congress.

The rented buildings at present occupied by the Geological Survey are inadequate, unsuitable, and unsafe for the purpose, and the public building occupied by the General Land Office and the Office of Indian Affairs provides insufficient space for the accommodation of those bureaus. In each of these three bureaus overcrowding, with the

resulting unhealthful conditions and the necessary use of artificial light, so hampers the transaction of public business as to cause a real loss in the efficiency of the public service. The danger of loss of valuable public records in the rented buildings constitutes, however, the strongest argument in favor of adequate provision for these bureaus of the Interior Department.

The inadequacy of the rented buildings occupied by the Geological Survey has become critical. At present about 600 of the 900 persons on the survey rolls are employed in Washington, mostly in the two buildings 1330 F street and the annex on an adjoining alley. Temporary provision has been made for other employees in the Pension Office, the National Museum, and the Smithsonian Institution buildings, a scattering of the office force not productive of good administration or the best results.

The amount of available floor space in the F street buildings is quite insufficient for the needs of the present force. A large part of the survey work is not clerical and demands much more space than that sufficient merely for the desks and chairs of employees. Geologists, topographers, chemists, physicists, photographers, draftsmen, engravers, lithographers, and other specialists must have room for their instruments, apparatus, working collections of specimens, maps, drawings, etc., and the degree of crowding to which the force is now subjected diminishes the quantity and depreciates the quality of their work.

From time to time the owner has enlarged the main F street building, each addition, however, darkening rooms in the older portions and increasing only slightly the floor space available for the more important work of the survey. Even on the brightest days 131 members of the survey work only with the aid of artificial light, and on cloudy days this number is increased to 420. The lack of a natural light not only seriously affects both the quality and the quantity of the drafting, engraving, microscopic, and other technical work, which form so important a part of the survey's activities, but the injurious effect upon the eyesight is a matter of experience with a large percentage of those engaged in certain classes of work.

The constant danger of fire in these buildings presents the most urgent ground for consideration of this estimate. An inventory of the public records and other property exposed to this danger at the present time aggregates over four and a half million dollars, with the following items:

Manuscript maps, reports, illustrations, notes, and records in process of preparation for publication	$1,514,000
Permanent records, including stream-gaging records, mine maps, and other data not replaceable	1,250,000
Library and catalogue	520,000
Maps in process of engraving	380,000
Engraved plates	634,000
Instruments and apparatus	157,000
Engraving and printing equipment and supplies	75,000
Publications—reports and maps	196,000
Miscellaneous office equipment	114,000
	4,840,000

The above estimate is conservative and can not express the actual loss that the public would suffer, inasmuch as the second item includes many records, extending through a quarter century, which can not be replaced.

The main building occupied by the Geological Survey contains over 100,000 square feet of varnished and inflammable wood partitions, so that a fire once started makes rapid progress. Twice within the last five years, on December, 27, 1903, and again on December 16, 1908, serious fires have occurred in this building at night. The 1903 fire originated in the sixth floor, and was confined to that floor, destroying $10,200 of government property. The 1908 fire originated on the fifth floor, and caused a loss in government property of $15,810 on the fifth and sixth floors. In both instances the presence of survey officials, in addition to that of the night watchmen, contributed to the prompt extinguishment of the fires with these comparatively small losses. The building is safeguarded as far as practicable, steel safes are placed wherever the strength of the building will permit, and many record cases are fireproofed; but if a fire originates on a lower floor, or in an adjacent building, those most familiar with the Geological Survey building and its contents expect to see the complete destruction of these government records.

Scientists and engineers who have occasion to use the survey library or to examine the public records have freely expressed their appreciation of the danger to this property. A recent published statement is that of the city engineer of San Francisco:

> In examining many of the buildings in Washington occupied by the vairous departments, buildings in which are stored data and documents of almost incalculable value, I find that they are mainly structures which would not rank higher than San Francisco's third-class buildings. It is astonishing that the Government faces such risks. Note the Geological Survey fire. The floors in that building are of wood, so are the doors and file cases and furniture, and in that building are data many times the value of the structure. Note the Interior Department, with its valuable records. You will find wooden shelving, wooden furniture, and wooden window frames. Now, a building of that kind is not safe. I would suggest for economy that the goverment buildings be put in better shape to resist possible fire.

My attention has also been called to the general expression of concern with which the leading engineering journals of the country mentioned the recent fire. The Engineering and Mining Journal of December 26, in an editorial, states:

> The Geological Survey, on December 16, had a fire in its headquarters in Washington, whereby many maps, photographs, and other records of value were destroyed. About three years ago the Journal forecasted that this would happen sooner or later, the building rented for the Geological Survey being a dangerous firetrap. We urged then that Congress should provide the Geological Survey with suitable headquarters. Just as our embassies abroad are neglected, so has been the Geological Survey, one of the national institutions of which the country should be proud.

The Engineering News of December 24 calls attention to the narrow escape of the "entire building with priceless records from complete destruction," and the Mining and Scientific Press offers "congratulations to the Geological Survey on escape from a great disaster."

To remedy this critical situation and to provide adequate quarters for not only the Geological Survey but also the General Land Office, the Office of Indian Affairs, and the Reclamation Service—the bureaus of the Interior Department which have to do with the public lands—I have the honor to recommend the erection of a fireproof building with sufficient floor space for the four bureaus above named.

Careful estimates have been made of the present needs of these bureaus as follows:

	Square feet floor space.
Geological Survey	235,000
General Land Office	135,000
Office of Indian Affairs	50,000
Reclamation Service	15,000
	435,000

The essential requirements of the proposed office building are three: First, a maximum of windows and light, especially for the large number of draftsmen, engravers, microscopists, and other specialists who are engaged in work that requires the best natural light; second, a substantial basement for the working collections, printing presses, and publications; third, floor space free from vibrations for the chemical and physical laboratories.

Whatever the architectural design, therefore, the building must provide an abundance of well-lighted space and must be thoroughly fireproofed in all its finish and equipment. The buildings that have been provided for the Department of Agriculture, the National Museum, and the Bureau of Standards may be cited as evidence of an appreciation on the part of Congress of the requirements of scientific bureaus. The buildings lately erected for the Bureau of Standards are splendid examples of public buildings well adapted to secure maximum efficiency of employees and safety of public records.

The concentration in one adequate building of the bureaus of the Interior Department whose work is most closely affiliated would serve the convenience of both the legislative and the executive branches of the Government. For this reason it is essential that the building should be centrally located. These bureaus are now cooperating to a greater extent than ever before in the administration of the public lands. The map-printing division of the Geological Survey has become practically the map-making branch of the whole department, doing work for the General Land Office, the Office of Indian Affairs, and the Reclamation Service, in addition to the survey work.

The removal of the four bureaus to a new building would result not only in saving the annual rentals now paid by the Geological Survey and the Reclamation Service, $34,900 and $8,000, respectively, but also in providing quarters for the Bureau of Education and the Civil Service Commission in the building now occupied by the General Land Office and the Office of Indian Affairs, and saving an additional $8,500 in rent now paid; that is, it would save an aggregate of $51,400 now paid in annual rental for inadequate and unsafe quarters.

Estimates of the cost of a public building to meet the requirements above mentioned indicate a maximum of $2,500,000, for which amount the submitted estimate provides. This cost is only a fraction of the value of the public property that would be safeguarded by the erection of the proposed building.

Very respectfully, JAMES RUDOLPH GARFIELD,
Secretary.

The SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY.

Item.

INTERIOR DEPARTMENT.

To provide for suitable office accommodations for the United States Geological Survey and other bureaus of the Interior Department—

Toward the construction of a fireproof building including vaults, heating and ventilating apparatus, elevators, and approaches complete, in the city of Washington, D. C., for the United States Geological Survey and other bureaus of the Department of the Interior, to be erected on such public reservation as shall be determined by the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of War, and the Superintendent of the Capitol, acting as a commission for that purpose..... $250,000

The said building shall be constructed under the direction of the Superintendent of the Capitol and the Director of the United States Geological Survey, at a cost not to exceed $2,500,000, for any part or all of which sum contracts are authorized to be entered into, including the employment of all necessary skilled and other services. The appropriation herein and hereafter made for such building shall be disbursed by the Secretary of the Interior.

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