

## FIREPROOF BUILDING FOR THE NATIONAL MUSEUM.

JANUARY 9, 1891.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

Mr. MILLIKEN, from the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, submitted the following

### REPORT:

[To accompany S. 2740.]

The Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, to whom was referred the bill (S. 2740) for the erection of an additional fireproof building for the National Museum, submit the following report:

To demonstrate the pressing necessity for additional accommodations for the vast amount of materials which has been accumulated for exhibition in the National Museum it will, perhaps, be sufficient to present the communication of the secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.

It may also be stated that in view of acquiring a large quantity of the exhibit of the World's Fair of 1892, as was the case in the exhibition of 1876, such material being presented by various foreign countries the pressing necessities are clearly demonstrated.

Your committee therefore recommend the passage of the bill as amended.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, U. S. NATIONAL MUSEUM,  
*Washington, April 29, 1890.*

SIR: I have the honor to lay before you certain considerations setting forth the necessity of an additional building for the National Museum, and respectfully request your attention to them and your recommendation to Congress that the money necessary for this purpose be appropriated.

A set of provisional plans for the proposed new building has already been prepared, and I understand that these are in the possession of your committee. They have been prepared with the utmost care, and represent the results of exhaustive study which has extended over several years, of the plans of the best modern museum buildings in Europe and America, nearly all of which have been personally inspected by officers of the Smithsonian Institution.

The proposed building will contain about 220,000 square feet, and the net area available for exhibition space and for storage and office room would be between five and six acres. The exhibition space would thus be nearly three times as great as in the present buildings, in which only 80,000 square feet are available both for exhibition and storage purposes.

The total cost of the present building was \$315,400, including expenditures for steam-heating apparatus, marble floors, water and gas fixtures, and electrical apparatus.

The proposed building can, I believe, be constructed at a proportionately smaller cost. I am not prepared to state the exact sum which would be necessary for its completion, but from estimates already furnished by responsible contractors, I feel sure that \$500,000, if not sufficient to complete it, would be all that would be required to be expended during the present year, and I would earnestly urge the desirability of appropriating this amount for the purpose in question.

The necessity for a new Museum building is caused by the large increase in the accessions to the collections. In 1882, the first year of active work in the present building, the Museum contained less than 195,000 specimens. This number has now been

increased to nearly 3,000,000 specimens, and the increase during the past eight years has been more than half as large again as during the previous twenty-one years.

The collections of the Smithsonian Institution and of the Government are especially rich in representations of the natural history of this country. A careful estimate made at the end of the last fiscal year showed that there were at that time in the zoological collections 1,850,721 specimens; in the botanical collections 48,637 specimens; in the geological collections 106,766 specimens; in the paleontological collections 172,540 specimens; in the anthropological collections 651,868 specimens, and in the various collections illustrating the arts and industries 43,540 specimens. Since this estimate was made, it is probable that more than 50,000 specimens of all kinds have been received.

The natural history collections include the zoological collections, the botanical collections, and the geological collections, in which are contained not only all the geological and mineralogical specimens, but also the greater portion of the paleontological material, the study of fossil animals and plants forming an essential feature of modern geological work.

The anthropological collections illustrate the history of mankind at all periods and in every land, and also serve to explain the development of all human arts and industries. There are in addition considerable collections illustrating the processes and products of the various arts and industries, as well as the historical collections, which are of especial interest to a very large number of the visitors to the Museum on account of the associations of the objects exhibited with the personal history of representative men or with important events in the history of America.

It is also noteworthy that among the accessions of more recent years many collections of great extent have been received. Among these are the bequest of Dr. Isaac Lea, of Philadelphia, which contains 20,000 specimens of shells, besides minerals and other objects; the Jeffries collection of fossil and recent shells of Europe, including 40,000 specimens; the Stearns collection of mollusks, numbering 100,000 specimens; the Riley collection of insects, containing 50,000 specimens; the Catlin collection of Indian paintings, and the collection of the American Institute of Mining Engineers.

In addition may also be mentioned the extensive collection obtained at the Fisheries Exhibitions at Berlin and London, at the New Orleans Cotton Centennial Exposition, and at the Ohio Valley and Central States Exposition. To these may be added the collections received annually from the U. S. Fish Commission, the Geological Survey, the Bureau of Ethnology, and from many other Government departments and bureaus. These are very extensive and are yearly increasing in bulk and value.

There is in the present Museum Building no exhibition space available for the collections of reptiles, mollusks, insects, marine invertebrates, vertebrate and invertebrate fossils; and the space now afforded for the exhibition of the vast collections of fishes, birds' eggs, plants—fossil and recent—and the geological collections, aggregating not less than 350,000 specimens, is entirely inadequate.

In a letter addressed in 1888 to the chairman of the Senate Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds I endeavored to demonstrate the remarkable increase which had characterized the growth of the collections in the National Museum, and I there stated that in the five years between 1882 and 1887 the number of specimens in the collections had multiplied no less than sixteen times. Since 1887 the pressure for additional room has, of course, grown greater, and during the last year it has become necessary to decline many offers of collections for want not only of exhibition space, but even of storage room where they may be temporarily cared for.

The armory building, which for more than ten years had been used by the Museum for storage purposes, is now entirely occupied by the U. S. Fish Commission, with the exception of four rooms, used by some of the Museum taxidermists, who are now working in very contracted space, and whom it is impossible to accommodate elsewhere.

Every space is now filled to its utmost capacity, and no more collections of any considerable extent can be received until additional room is provided for their reception.

In a few words it may be stated that for exhibition, storage, and laboratory space 316,400 square feet are needed instead of 100,675 square feet, which now constitute the available area for all of these purposes.

In conclusion, I reaffirm without hesitation that unless additional space is provided it will be impossible to take any further important steps toward the improvement of the Government collections.

Your obedient servant,

S. P. LANGLEY,  
Secretary.

Hon. SETH L. MILLIKEN,  
Chairman of the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds,  
House of Representatives.