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DOCUMENTS

ACCOMPANYING THE

“BILL TO AMEND THE ACT,

ENTITLED AN ACT FOR THE

GRADUAL INCREASE OF THE NAVY

OF THE UNITED STATES.”



JANUARY 5, 1821.

Laid before the House by the Chairman of the Naval Committee, and ordered to be printed.



WASHINGTON:

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1821.

NAVY DEPARTMENT,
December 11th, 1820.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 8th instant, on behalf of the Committee on Naval Affairs, and to furnish, in compliance with your request, the following statement, which contains the information required.

Columbus, of 74 guns;

Peacock, sloop of war, 18 guns;

Spark, (brig) 14 guns;—these vessels are employed for the protection of our commerce in the Mediterranean,—to prevent the Barbary states from committing depredations on the persons or property of citizens of the United States. The *Spark* is principally employed as a despatch vessel to and from the ports of Barbary.

Ontario, sloop of war, 18 guns;—in readiness to proceed to the Mediterranean, to relieve the sloop of war *Peacock*, ordered to the United States.

Constellation, frigate, 36 guns;—cruising in the Pacific Ocean for the protection of our trade and whale fisheries.

Macedonian, frigate, 36 guns;—returning to the United States from the Pacific, after being relieved by the *Constellation*.

Congress, frigate, 36 guns;—cruising in the India Seas, and the several Straits, to afford convoy and protection to our trade to and from China, and to give security against the native pirates.

Corvette *John Adams*, 24 guns;

Corvette *Cyane*, 24 guns;

Hornet, sloop of war, 18 guns;—cruising on the coast of Africa, for the suppression of the slave trade, and capture of piratical vessels—with instructions to cruise, for the same purpose, on their return to the United States, off the coast of Guiana, and among the West India Islands.

Enterprise, (brig) 14 guns;—cruising in the West Indies, Gulf of Mexico, and occasionally round the Bahamas, and along the Southern Coast of the United States.

Lynx, schooner, 6 guns;

Nonsuch, schooner, 8 guns;—cruising as the brig *Enterprise*;—all these vessels being employed to carry into effect the several acts of Congress for the suppression of the slave trade and punishment of the crime of piracy.

Gun Boats Nos. 158 and 168;—cruising for the same objects along the coasts of Georgia, Florida, &c.

Three small vessels, mounting one gun each, are employed off the Mississippi in the protection of the trade and revenue of the United States.

The objects contemplated in the orders to the several ships and vessels of the navy are briefly explained against their names and stations.

As respects the force now employed in the Mediterranean, it is presumed to be not greater than the service and the interests of the United States require for the purposes of protection;—the other ships and vessels are cruising separately, and are considered necessary for the service to which they have been assigned.

I have the honor to be,

With very great respect,

Sir, your most obedient servant,

SMITH THOMPSON.

Honorable PHILIP P. BARBOUR,
Chairman Naval Committee,
House of Representatives.

NAVY DEPARTMENT,
December 18th, 1820.

SIR: Your letter of the 15th inst. has been received, and as most of the information required was to be furnished by the Navy Commissioners, it was referred to them. A full answer to your inquiries would, however, require much time to make the necessary calculations, and as I understood from you in conversation on Saturday evening, that your object was to ascertain whether the time for building the vessels authorized by the act of April 29th, 1816, for the gradual increase of the Navy, might not be extended, without any material injury to the timber and materials on hand, and contracted for under the act, I have had a conversation with the Commissioners on that subject, and their opinion is, that the time for building might be extended for three years, and only half a million, instead of a million of dollars, expended annually.

I take this opportunity to repeat what I mentioned to you in conversation, that the actual balance on hand of the appropriation for the gradual increase of the Navy is a little short of a million of dollars; the reason why a much larger balance appears by the report of the Secretary of the Treasury, is, that requisitions to the amount of the expenditures had not been made on the Secretary, and the Treasurer, as Agent for the Department, had paid, out of moneys in his hands, for other purposes, expenses for the gradual increase of the Navy, and for which that fund was indebted to other appropriations; this has now been rectified by a requisition, and the true balance appears by the books of the Treasury.

I have the honor to be,

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

SMITH THOMPSON:

Honorable P. P. BARBOUR,
*Chairman of the Naval Committee,
House of Representatives.*

NAVY COMMISSIONERS' OFFICE,

9th December, 1820.

SIR : In reply to the queries propounded by the honorable Mr. Barbour, in his letter to you of the 24th ult. which you were pleased to refer to this Board, the Commissioners of the Navy respectfully report:

That the "whole of the materials necessary for the construction and equipment of the vessels authorized by the act of 1816" have not been procured:

That, of the nine ships of the line, and ten frigates, authorized by the act referred to,

1 ship of the line has been built, equipped, and sent to sea.

3 other ships of the line have been built and launched.

2 other ships of the line are now on the stocks, and nearly all the materials necessary for their construction have been procured.

3 frigates are now on the stocks, and the materials necessary for their construction are all procured.

That all the materials of wood, iron, copper, lead, &c. required for the other three ships of the line, and seven frigates, with the exception of the following estimated deficiency, have been procured, and are now deposited at the several building yards, viz.

The deficiency estimated is,

30,000 cubic feet of live oak,

140,250 cubic feet of white oak,

2,032 knees,

153,945 cubic feet of yellow pine,

15,000 cubic feet of white pine,

45,000 locust treenails,

136,761 lbs. of copper,

56,738 lbs. of composition,

89,640 lbs. of lead, *

655,735 lbs. of iron, and other articles, the whole cost of which will, probably, not exceed \$350,000; which sum may be estimated as the probable cost of the materials yet to be procured for the construction of the ships.

The materials for equipment, yet to be procured, will cost not less than \$1,650,000. These materials essentially consist of cannon, carronades, shot, blocks, gun carriages, canvas, cordage, paints, leather, water casks, boats, anchors, kentlege, cabooses, &c.

With respect to preserving "the materials of wood, by covering, or by immersion," it is believed that, by immersion, all the materials of wood, used in the construction of ships of war, might be preserved for a great length of time, while in a state of immersion; but, whe-

ther immersion does not essentially injure the durability of timber, after it is taken out of the water, is a question upon which the most experienced professional men differ in opinion.

On the one side it is urged that the sap juices of timber possess certain acescent fermentative qualities, destructive in their nature and tendency; that their removal is indispensable to the preservation of the timber; that water, being more fluid, in its natural state, than air, and the most penetrative of all bodies, excepting fire, finds its way through smaller pores, enters the timber, and neutralizes, dissolves, or displaces, these sap juices more speedily and effectually than can be done by any other advisable process.

While this hypothesis is, to a certain extent, admitted, that is, so far as to its being necessary that these sap juices should be displaced, it is contended, on the other hand, that their expulsion may be produced by other and more advisable means; less sudden, but more salutary in their operation, and unattended with any of the ills arising from immersion: that a succession of wet and dry divests the fibres of the wood of their natural tenacity, adhesiveness and organization, when exposed in the open air; the wet swelling, and the dry separating, the soft fibres: that one of the tendencies of immersion is, to render the wood porous, and subject it peculiarly to the action of the atmosphere: that, in this porous state, timber, confined, as it must be when brought into use, where there cannot be a free circulation of air, and where a greater or less degree of humidity must prevail, the interstices become filled with putrid, corroding matter, and decay ensues: that timber exposed to intense frosts, after immersion, by which it becomes water soaked, or saturated with water, the pores of the wood become over-distended, and in that state remaining fixed, the elastic adhesiveness of its fibres, and their power of contraction, are destroyed. that a firm, adhesive, consolidated state of fibre, is essential to great durability: that this state never can be produced after the timber shall have been saturated with water, and its pores once distended: that, if the timber be not cut while in a vegetating state, and be kept under shelter, exposed neither to rain, to the heat of the sun, nor to piercing winds, yet having a free circulation of dry air, nature will expel the sap juices, without the aid of any artificial means.

It is further contended that timber of close texture, such as live oak, or the best white oak, when once saturated with water, cannot, by any known process, be dispossessed of its moisture, in any reasonable time: that, when put into a ship, it imparts to the surrounding atmosphere a degree of humidity, which damages the provisions and stores, and generates diseases among the crew: that timber, in a dry state, is not subject to the destructive effects of frost, one of the most insinuating and irresistible of all, operating on the texture of bodies.

Water swells and expands the pores of wood; and the fibres, thus expanded, become, when exposed to frost, still more distended.

The texture of the wood, by frequent exposure to wet and frost, loses its natural adhesiveness, and, by remaining saturated, and in a frozen state, the pores become so fixed in an unnatural state of expansion, as to lose all power of contraction. This, it is observed, is the condition of the oak and pine imported into England from Canada; and to these causes the best writers attribute the "dry rot," so destructive to British vessels. The Canada timber is brought down the St. Lawrence in large rafts, continues months in water, and in that saturated state, is landed and exposed to frost; every attempt to season it, under cover, is unavailing; its pores never close again, and when used as ship timber, dry rot ensues, which, when once commenced, can never be arrested but by taking out all the pieces in any degree affected.

Experiments have been made to arrest the dry rot in ships, by sinking them for months in salt water, but without success. The texture of the wood was found to be essentially injured by being thus water soaked, and it became more subject to this disease than before it was sunk. The ships were also injured in their fastenings, and the atmosphere within them was kept in a constant state of humidity, whence, among other ill effects, proceeded injury to provisions and stores, and sickness to the crews.

When timber begins to decay it communicates and operates by infection on adjacent pieces, and there are no means of arresting a general decay but by removing every piece affected. Hence, the importance of using none but timber sound, imporous, and well seasoned, in the construction of ships.

Among other considerations the following facts are adduced, as sustaining the objections to immersion:

In the early periods of the British Marine, the custom, originating from necessity, was to transport all the navy timber to the dock yards in vessels; it was taken immediately to the yards and there landed in a dry state without having been subjected to immersion; and no other timber than that grown in Great Britain was used.

In the year 1515 the Great Henry was launched, and without having sustained any essential repairs, she was fit for service in 1553, 38 years after she was launched, when she was accidentally burnt; after about 5 years' service she was placed in a "pond" with a covering over her.

In the year 1636 the Sovereign of the Seas, "the first great ship ever built in Great Britain," after having been on the stocks two years was launched; in the year 1696, it was determined to repair her; the frame was found perfectly sound, and, according to Blackburn, "the timber was so firm and hard as almost to resist the edge of tools." By accident she was burnt in the year 1696, after having been a number of years in service; she also was placed in a pond with a covering over her.

The timber with which these vessels were built having been conveyed to the building yards in vessels and not in rafts, and having

consequently been delivered into the yards in a dry state, has been considered one of the essential causes of their great durability.

Between the years 1656 and 1696, British timber became scarce, and foreign timber was, of necessity, resorted to. This foreign timber was at that period, it is understood, almost universally rafted down the waters near which it grew, and to its having been thus rafted and exposed to wet, was attributed the very rapid decay of the 39 ships authorized to be built in 1677. Charnock observes "the scarcity of British timber, which was complained of in the loudest terms so early as the reign of Charles 1st, began to be felt very considerably after the conclusion of the last Dutch war; at the time the vote for building thirty new ships had passed through Parliament in 1677, much labor and exertion became necessary to collect as much as proved sufficient for the purpose. The Navy Board, with every effort it could make, was unequal to the task; and, the deficiency being through necessity supplied by foreign plank, in all probability caused the early decay of the vessels in question."

It is a remarkable fact that there are at this time but two vessels in the British navy as old as the Sovereign of the Seas was at the time she was burnt, viz: the Sussex a 90 and the Prospero an 18 gun vessel.

Blackburn remarks "the Rhine Oak brought down that river from the forests in large rafts, remaining for months soaked in water, and afterwards landed and exposed to intense frost, sustains very material injury, the fibres of the wood being expanded in so powerful a degree, lose their natural texture and remain porous, and the water it imbibes, changing its state and becoming corrosive, dry rot ensues." The French ships built at Antwerp a few years since with the Rhine Oak were found in a state of decay from the dry rot, some of them even while building.

The oaks of north Europe, naturally porous, absorb much water, and from similar causes incur similar consequences. Hence, neither the Dutch nor the Danish ships are durable.

The oaks of the United States, excepting probably the live oak, are sufficiently porous to become saturated in a short time; and, if exposed in this state to the action of frost or of extreme heat, similar effects would inevitably result. The effect of heat and cold is known to be similar in many respects; they both penetrate into substances in the same manner. A cannon, for instance, filled with water securely confined in it will burst upon being exposed either to extreme heat or intense frost; and it will be remembered that wood is far less tenacious than iron, and far more liable to the action of heat and cold.

The oaks with which the ships are built at St. Petersburg are brought down the rivers in crafts, from a very long distance in the interior, being sometimes two years on their passage. This method of bringing their ship timber to the building yards is resorted to, it is understood, from the apprehension that rafting it would affect the durability of their ships. The Russians, for greater preservation,

char the ends of the beams, and such other timber as is practicable, and cover their ships with painted canvass, to preserve them from the snow and rain, and render them more durable.

Lescalier, a distinguished French writer, on the subject of timber, observes:

“Timber cut in good or bad season preserves a greater or less degree of moisture. Some of it remains, especially in the interior of the logs, although the outside of them appear always dry after they have been kept for some time. This moisture, which derives its origin mostly from the sap, contains a great deal of acid congenial to fermentation, and consequently favorable to produce the rot. It is this moisture which must be attacked and driven from the heart of the timber—dryness alone will make it solid and durable. We think it by no means advantageous to lay it in the water, for the purpose of preserving it—water is a dissolvent which in time penetrates, and rots all—Sea water possesses this quality in a less degree than fresh water, but it has it in a great measure. The English do not put the timber in the water for the purpose of preserving it. It is the same with several other maritime nations, who use a great quantity of timber, and possess a considerable knowledge respecting it. The best means known to this day, to preserve timber, appears to be that of keeping it in well constructed and airy sheds, in a vertical position, so that the moisture which remains in the interior of the logs, in running along the fibres of the wood, may be enabled to issue from the lower end.

“We perceive that wood used on land for beams in houses, and other purposes, kept dry and under shelter, will preserve itself for ages.

“We see the English construct the frames of their vessels, and leave them to dry for a long time on the stocks, under the shelter of great awnings, before they finish them completely. Moisture destroys the timber, and dryness preserves it. Timber not only rots when it has been exposed to humidity, but it is likewise exposed to injury from the effect of insects which find their way into it.

“Water seems to be favorable for the decomposition of the sap in the timber immersed; but it substitutes in its place another kind of moisture not less destructive, of which the timber, though afterwards exposed to the air, will not easily get clear—it weakens and destroys the grain of the wood.”

In reply to that part of the query which calls for information as to the practicability of preserving the materials of wood by immersion, the Commissioners of the Navy beg leave to observe, that, although wood, so long as it shall be immersed, may be kept in a sound state for a great length of time, yet, they are not able to discern any advantage resulting from immersion to wood intended to be used in the open air; that injuries certainly arise from saturating timber, and particularly large pieces, intended for use above water; that as regards timber intended for use under water, the bottom of ships for instance, immersion may not be so injurious: but, even in that case, if

the timber could be dry seasoned, and rendered hard and imporous, prior to its being used, it would be greatly preferable to immersion. This, however, could not be conveniently practised, particularly with the large massy timber intended for keels and keelson pieces. Immersion, then, may to a certain extent be resorted to from necessity, but not from choice in any case.

With respect to preserving materials of wood by covering them, the Commissioners would remark, that our live oak is a species of wood particularly subject to rents and warks: that this timber, the strongest, firmest, and most durable of any grown in the United States, is used for the frames of our ships: that, owing to its great weight, (76 pounds the cubic foot) and the expense of hauling and transporting it to the building yards, it is cut to moulds in the forest: that each piece has its appropriate place in the ship, and will not suit for any other place: that the pieces, if stowed in sheds, will spring out of place, and cannot be again restored to their original mould: that it is of the first importance to preserve the form and shape of each and every piece, which cannot be done, under sheds, where the timber has been cut to mould: that if it were intended to place live oak timber for frames under sheds, it should be got out considerably larger than the moulds, in order to make allowance for its springing, which would involve much additional expense in hauling, transporting, and fashioning, when in a hard dry state, to moulds: that if the principle of immersion be discarded, as it should be to the greatest possible extent, there exists, within the knowledge of the Commissioners, no means by which the form and shape of live oak timber, got to moulds, can be preserved, except by putting the frames together, and bolting, planking, and staying them so effectually, as to prevent the possibility of their springing.

With respect to other materials of wood, the result of the experiments made many years since, would seem to indicate the inefficacy of covering as a means of preservation. The white oak and pine, collected under the act of 1799, and placed under sheds, was, in a few years, found in such a state of decay, as to be unfit for use. The Commissioners know but little of the history of the oak and pine collected at that period. Whether the trees had attained their full growth; whether they were not cut in a vegetating state; whether, when stowed, the timber was properly stuck, so as to admit a free circulation of air; whether the sheds were of a sufficient width and height to protect it against the sun, or sufficiently tight to secure it against rains and piercing winds; whether the timber had not been water soaked, prior to its being placed under sheds,—are points, upon which the Commissioners possess no positive information. Since, however, universal experience affirms the efficacy of this method of preserving ship timber, the Commissioners are persuaded that these causes of decay must have existed in a greater or less degree; and, that the result of experiments so partial and unsatisfactory, should, by no means, deter us from adopting it, as far as circumstances may render it expedient to do so.

White oak and pine, cut in the right season, when in a proper state, and brought to the yards dry and carefully placed under sheds affording protection against the sun, rain, and piercing winds, yet admitting a free circulation of pure dry air, could, it is confidently believed, be preserved in a perfectly sound state for a great length of time, probably as long as the furniture of a house.

Lescalier remarks, "there ought to be built in every yard, a sort of great square and flat oven, with several fire places underneath, in order to keep up a sufficient degree of heat, say 45 to 48 degrees, to dry the timber very slow without causing it to crack. This process would expel the air contained in the interior, and extract the acquired moisture, destroy the worms or other insects which might have found their way into the timber, and render it perfectly sound to the very heart. Until it should be thought proper to use it, it should be kept under sheds well aired," &c.

The Commissioners beg leave here to observe, that, if the objections already urged to the practice of immersion, should not be considered as conclusive, still it would be highly improper to resort to it at any of our building yards, where the worm is known to frequent, Norfolk and New York for instance. Again, at some of our building yards, the bottom of the timber docks is so soft that live oak, which is 13½ pounds per cubic foot heavier than water, would sink in the mud in the course of two or three years, if not less time, so far that its recovery would be difficult. We have heard of instances of white oak, which is 20 pounds per cubic foot lighter than live oak, sinking in the mud so far as to be irrecoverably lost.

Those who have heretofore advocated immersion as a means of preserving timber, admit, that to be effectual the timber must be at all times completely covered with water; that to deposit it in water of less depth, at low tide, than its own diameter, would expose it to serious injury from the sun. In constructing a dock, reference must be had to the rise and fall of water; the diameter of navy timber varies from 12 to 28 inches, and the timber must never be placed where there is not, at low water, a depth of water at least equal to these diameters; it should, to cover the timber completely, exceed them two or three inches. Hence, it is obvious, that the expense of constructing suitable docks, even in the most favorable situations, would be no inconsiderable item.

At this time, we use docks for timber to a certain extent, but this arises more from necessity than choice; sheds are unquestionably greatly preferable for every species of timber used for navy purposes, excepting, possibly, live oak cut to moulds; but not having suitable sheds or other means, we are compelled to resort to immersion, as less injurious to the timber than sun, rain, and frost, or an exposure to a succession of wet and dry.

It will, it is presumed, sir, appear obvious, that neither immersion nor covering would answer as a system of preservation, applicable to all our building yards; and that both methods combined would not answer at such of our yards as are frequented by the worm. The

question then presents itself. What plan would it be most expedient to adopt, in reference to the preservation of the materials of wood, as a system applicable alike to each of our building yards?

This subject has justly commanded every attention which could be bestowed upon it. Considering it as we do, vitally interesting to the present and future prosperity of the navy, of which we have the honor to be members, we have investigated it with an anxiety proportioned to its importance. Every means of information, within our reach, has been resorted to, and having satisfied our minds upon the subject, we respectfully submit the result, with a degree of confidence not usually felt by us on such occasions.

To avoid all the disadvantages of immersion, and secure all the advantages, without any of the ills, of covering timber in pieces, the Commissioners of the Navy are of the opinion, that the whole frame should be put together, and planked, bolted and stayed so firmly, that no piece could spring out of its place or shape, and covered so effectually, as to be protected against the sun, moisture, and high piercing winds, yet to admit a free circulation of pure dry air.

In favor of this system, innumerable considerations present themselves; among others, the Commissioners beg leave to submit the following:

1st. This is the only method applicable to all our building yards as a system for the preservation of our ship timber.

2d. As to the efficacy of this means of preserving timber, there is, as far as is known to us, but one opinion, and that decidedly in its favor.

3d. The expense of stowing and unstowing under sheds, or of docking and undocking, in either case considerable, would thus be in a very great measure avoided.

4th. If put under sheds, it is not possible, without incurring great expense, to arrange the pieces of timber in the order in which they would be wanted when required to be put together. They are generally stowed away as they are received from the contractors—Hawse pieces, fashion pieces, knees, floor timbers, counter timbers, &c. &c. are brought together, and necessarily stowed promiscuously: nor could this be otherwise well done, unless we had an extent of shedding far greater than is required by promiscuous stowage. Similar objections, though probably in a less degree, exist to immersion; whereas by framing the pieces together, they are always in place; no expense of removal is incurred; and they are not liable, as they would be either by shedding or immersion, in a greater or less degree, to be lost or misapplied.

5th. The ships in this state could always, when required, be launched and fitted for service in a short time.

6th. It is the most economical, as well as most effectual mode, for the preservation of ship timber, that can, in our opinion, be devised. The covering, or housing, should be first made, and the ship should be built under this covering. A very great and decided advantage thence results as respects workmanship, as well as materials. The

artificers can always make a full day's work at any season, and can perform more work in the same time, than they can do when exposed to the weather.

Many instances might be adduced of the great durability of ships thus built and preserved; one, if not more, occurred at Venice. A ship built there remained on the stocks, under cover, for sixty years, when, on being examined, no mark of decay could be discovered in her timbers; they were somewhat shrunk, which was ascribed, no doubt justly, to their having been put in the ship in an unseasoned state. Escalier observes, "we perceive that wood used on land, kept dry and under shelter, will preserve itself for ages." Thus preserved, the wood acquires a close texture, a hard consolidated fibre, which prevents its imbibing moisture, and enables it to resist all the destructive effects thence arising.

As to "the probable difference between the injury to vessels launched, and those which are framed and kept upon the stocks," the Commissioners have to observe:

That, before vessels are launched, they must be caulked and coppered, and after they are launched, they must be safely moored; the copper and cables would wear, the oakum in a few years would decay, recaulking would become necessary. These are injuries and expenses to which vessels kept on the stocks are not subject.

A vessel afloat, in still water, and well covered, could no doubt be preserved for a great length of time; but if exposed to be agitated by the winds and waves, it would be impossible to cover her as effectually as she could be on the stocks, where she would be immoveable, and operated upon, as she would be in such a situation, by winds from every point of the compass, her sides as far as she could be careened by such winds would be exposed to alternate wet and dry—whence decay would ensue in the parts so exposed, and occasional repairs would become indispensable to the preservation of the ship—repairs which obviously would not be required on vessels kept on the stocks.

"What sum would be sufficient to pay the wages of the workmen at the several navy yards, for one year?"

The Commissioners understanding this question as confined to the wages of the workmen employed on the vessels authorized by the act of 29th April, 1816, have to observe: that at this time our monthly expenditure, at the several building yards, is

At Norfolk,	- - - - -	6913 39
Washington,	- - - - -	6524 18
Philadelphia,	- - - - -	2661 22
New York,	- - - - -	2779 89
Boston,	- - - - -	1712 50
Portsmouth,	- - - - -	237 44
		<hr/>
Making the whole monthly expenditure,	-	20,828 62
		<hr/>
And the annual expenditure,	- - -	\$249,943 44
		<hr/>

At some of the building yards, particularly at Portsmouth, the expenditure will shortly be increased; but at others it will be reduced—a reduction of wages being contemplated, and which it is believed can be made without injury to the public service; and our impression is, that the reduction in the one class of cases will be equal to the increase in the other: so that in the opinion of the Commissioners, the sum of \$250,000, or \$260,000, would be sufficient to pay the wages of the workmen employed on the vessels authorized by the act of 29th April, 1816, at the several navy yards for one year.

“As to the probable cost at which sheds might be erected,” it is thought, that to place all the timber (other than the live oak) now deposited at the several building yards, and that yet to be delivered under existing contracts, under sheds calculated to protect it effectually, would probably involve an expense of 75,000 to 80,000 dollars.

“What is the whole amount of existing engagements in relation to the vessels directed to be built by the act of 1816?”

The Commissioners, on the 31st of January last, had the honor of reporting to you, that the engagements, by contracts, for materials for building (exclusively of purchases made by the navy agents from time to time, at the different building yards) amounted, at that time, to the sum of \$2,771,392 45.

The engagements since that period are estimated at \$490,750 34
Viz.

For Iron	-	-	-	51,960	
Staves	-	-	-	18,343	
Augers	-	-	-	1,500	
Tanks	-	-	-	102,850	
Cannon	-	-	-	188,090	
Timber	-	-	-	73,229	
Kentledge	-	-	-	11,750	
Blocks	-	-	-	9,468	34
Cordage	-	-	-	18,450	
Anchors	-	-	-	14,000	
White lead	-	-	-	1,200	
					<u>490,750 34</u>

These engagements are generally by contract, and do not include those made for labor, which, as before stated, amount to \$20,828 per month. How far these contracts have been executed, or what amount will hereafter become payable upon them, cannot be stated with precision, in consequence of some of the returns, made by the agents, not being perfect, and others not having yet been made. The Commissioners have invariably kept one great object in view: that is, to confine the expenditures to the amount of the appropriation; and they have therefore no hesitancy in observing, that the unexpended balance of the appropriation is abundantly sufficient to meet every engagement made by them.

The engagements for steam batteries have not been increased since

the 31st January last. At that period, as the Commissioners had then the honor of stating to you, they amounted to \$223,555. Of which sum there has probably been paid to the contractors \$117,476 49, leaving the sum of \$106,078 51 yet to be paid, when the contractors shall have executed their respective contracts.

All which is respectfully submitted.

I have the honor to be,

With great respect, sir,

Your most obedient servant,

JOHN RODGERS.

HON. SMITH THOMPSON,

Secretary of the Navy.