

20th Congress,  
1st Session.

[Doc. No. 262.]

Ho. of Reps.  
Executive.

---

**AFRICANS AT KEY WEST.**

**MESSAGE**

FROM THE

**PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,**

RELATIVE TO THE DISPOSITION OF

**THE AFRICANS LANDED AT KEY WEST**

FROM A -

**STRANDED SPANISH VESSEL.**

---

**APRIL 30, 1828.**

Read, and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary.

---

WASHINGTON :

PRINTED BY GALES & SEATON.

1828.



*To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States :*

WASHINGTON, 30th April, 1826.

In the month of December last, one hundred and twenty-one African negroes were landed at Key West from a Spanish slave-trading vessel, stranded within the jurisdiction of the United States, while pursued by an armed schooner in his Britannic Majesty's service. The Collector of the Customs at Key West took possession of these persons, who were afterwards delivered over to the Marshal of the Territory of East Florida, by whom they were conveyed to St. Augustine, where they still remain.

Believing that the circumstances under which they have been cast upon the compassion of the country, are not embraced by the provisions of the act of Congress of 3d March, 1819, or of the other acts prohibiting the Slave Trade, I submit, to the consideration of Congress, the expediency of a supplementary act, directing and authorizing such measures as may be necessary for removing them from the territory of the United States, and for fulfilling towards them the obligations of humanity.

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.



*Papers relating to the introduction of slaves into the port of St. Augustine.*

CUSTOM HOUSE, ST. AUGUSTINE,

15th March, 1828.

SIR: I have the honor to inform you that the schooner General Geddes, of Charleston, burden  $77\frac{2}{3}$  tons, owned and commanded by John Morrison, having on board one hundred and seventeen negroes, arrived at this port on the 11th instant; and, on the 12th, the Captain presented at this office the following documents, viz:

The register of said vessel, granted at Key West, on the 17th July, 1827, and a manifest of the cargo of said vessel, consisting of *one hundred and fourteen Africans*, (as thus described,) not signed by the master, nor dated, but with an oath endorsed thereon, signed by the master, and sworn to before the Collector, dated the 7th March, 1828, *that the duties upon the goods, wares, and merchandize, of foreign manufacture*, as therein specified, had been paid, or secured to be paid, according to law; and a permit was also endorsed on the manifest, for the vessel to proceed to this port; a copy of which manifest I have the honor to forward you, herein enclosed, marked A.

On the afternoon of the same day, Captain Morrison produced to me an affidavit, a copy of which I have also the honor to enclose, marked B, stating that the slaves brought to this port in his vessel had been taken from the wreck of a Spanish slave brig, found on the Florida reef. Waters Smith, Esq. Marshal for this District, also made an affidavit before me, that the negroes were brought to this place for safe keeping. I annex a copy of his affidavit, marked C.

No evidence is adduced before me, other than the oath of the Captain, that these slaves were taken from a wreck; nor is there any thing further shewn me, that goes to prove that these negroes were not intended to have been introduced into this Territory, as I humbly conceive that such would be the presumption, on finding them in a vessel hovering on and ashore on our coast.

A representation having been made to me that these negroes were in an unhealthy state, arising from their confinement on board the vessel, I granted a permit that they might be removed; but I have not, as yet, admitted the vessel to an entry.

On the arrival of this vessel, I addressed a letter (not officially) to the District Attorney of the United States, informing him that these negroes had been brought into the Territory, and requested him to adopt the legal measures pointed out in the act of Congress of 3d March, 1819, entitled "An act in addition to the acts prohibiting

the slave trade," under which I claim the bounty therein authorized to an informer. I have the honor to enclose a copy of that letter, marked D.

I have deemed it my duty to make this statement to your Department, in the absence of Mr. Rodman, the Collector, whose duties I perform, in order that such instructions may be forwarded me as the state of the case may require.

I have been informed that the Collector of Key West seized these negroes on their arrival at that place, but under what particular law he acted, I am not, at present, informed.

I have the honor to be,

With great respect,

Your obedient servant,

**THOS. F. CORNELL,**

*Deputy Collector of the Customs for the District of St. Augustine.*

The Hon. **RICHARD RUSH,**

*Secretary of the Treasury.*

( A. )

*MANIFEST of the whole Cargo on board the Schooner General Geddes, John Morrison master, burthen seventy-seven tons, bound from Key West for St. Augustine.*

Marks & Number.	Number of Entries.	Packages & Contents.	Shippers.	Residence.	Consignees.	Residence.
		One hundred and fourteen Africans.	Waters Smith.	St. Augustine.	Waters Smith.	St. Augustine.

[Doc. No. 262.1

I, John Morrison, do swear the within is a true manifest of the whole cargo of said schooner *General Geddes*; and that such goods, wares, and merchandise of a foreign manufacture, as therein specified, were legally imported; and the duties thereupon have been duly paid, or secured to be paid, according to law.

**JOHN MORRISON.**

Sworn to before me, this 7th March, 1828.

**W. PINKNEY, Collector.**

**CUSTOM HOUSE, Key West, March 7, 1828.**

I certify that the above oath was taken and subscribed before me, and duplicates delivered, according to law.

**W. PINKNEY, Collector.**

**DISTRICT OF KEY WEST,**

*Port of Key West, 7th March, 1828.*

John Morrison having sworn, as the law directs, to the within manifest, consisting of one hundred and fourteen Africans, and delivered a duplicate thereof, permission is hereby granted to the said schooner, to proceed to St. Augustine, Territory of Florida.

Given under my hand and seal, at the Custom House, Key West, the day and year above written.

**W. PINKNEY, Collector.**

---

( B. )

John Morrison, being duly sworn, doth depose and say, that the Africans now on board his schooner, *General Geddes*, were, on the 20th December last, taken from the Spanish slave brig *Guerrero*, wrecked on the Florida reef, and on the 23d day of the same month, were delivered into the custody of F. A. Brown, Esq. Deputy Marshal at Key West.

**JOHN MORRISON.**

Sworn to before me, this 11th March, 1828.

**THOS. F. CORNELL, Deputy Collector.**

---

( C. )

Waters Smith, Marshal for the Eastern District of Florida, being duly sworn, doth depose and say, that the Africans now on board the schooner *General Geddes*, John Morrison master, were put on board at Key West, by this deponent, for the purpose of being con-



veyed from Key West to this place for safe keeping, and are the same that were placed in custody of deponent's deputy, F. A. Brown, Esq. on the 23d of December last.

WATERS SMITH.

Sworn to before me, this 11th March, 1828.

THOMAS F. CORNELL, *Deputy Collector.*

---

( D. )

ST. AUGUSTINE, *March 11, 1828.*

SIR: I take the liberty to inform you that a number of negroes, or persons of color, amounting to about one hundred and twenty, have been imported into the Territory of Florida, contrary to the provisions of the acts of Congress in such case made and provided; and I beg you to adopt such legal measures as are required of you, officially, in the same. The negroes, or persons of color, are now on board the schooner General Geddes, John Morrison master, and in his possession, lying at anchor in this harbor.

I have only to add that the information which I now give you, is not officially, as Deputy Collector of the Customs, nor have I seized the negroes.

I have the honor to be,

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

THOS. F. CORNELL.

THOMAS DOUGLASS, Esquire,

*United States District Attorney for East Florida.*

---

MARSHAL'S OFFICE, EASTERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA,

*St. Augustine, April 2, 1828.*

SIR: I had the honor of addressing you, on the — of February last, on the subject of 121 African negroes, then in my custody at Key West. I have since removed them to this place for greater safety. While they were at Key West, attempts were made to take them from the possession of my deputy, by force, and by bribery; and, the night before I removed them from the island, an attempt was made to carry off a part of them. Captain Doane, of the revenue cutter Marion, assisted me, with one of his officers and part of his crew, to protect the Africans; and, on a requisition from Colonel Pinkney and myself, convoyed the vessel in which I transported the negroes, from Key West, to this place. I deemed it absolutely neces-

sary to remove the negroes from Key West: they were not safe there; but the removal was attended with considerable expense: they were placed in my custody perfectly naked, many of them sick and extremely weak and feeble: it was necessary to clothe them, and humanity required that medical aid should be furnished the sick. I have used the greatest economy in the disbursements; and for their removal, clothing, medical attendance, and rations, have paid upwards of three thousand dollars. I am not in a situation to lay out of so large a sum without serious inconvenience; and, as it is almost impossible to raise money in Florida, I hope you will take this case into consideration, and advance to me four thousand dollars. Should this case come within the acts of Congress which place the Africans at the disposal of the President, I presume there will be no objection to the advance; and, should it not be a case of that description, and the sum solicited can be advanced, it shall be accounted for in my future accounts with the Treasury.

I have given bonds to the United States for 20,000 dollars, and for 10,000 dollars, with ample security, conditioned for the faithful discharge of the duties of my office, and truly to account for all money that may be received by me. The Government will therefore hazard nothing by making the advance, and it will be a very great accommodation to me.

Should any instructions from your Department, or that of the Navy, be deemed necessary, I shall be pleased to receive them.

With great respect, I remain

Your obedient servant,

WATERS SMITH, *Marshal.*

Honorable RICHARD RUSH,

*Secretary of the Treasury.*