United States Branch Mint
400 Esplanade Avenue
New Orleans
Orleans Parish
Louisiana

HABS No. LA-1119

HABS
LA
36-NEWOR
6'-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

UNITED STATES BRANCH MINT HABS No. LA-1119

HABS LA 36-NEWOR 67-

Address: 400 Esplanade Avenue, New Orleans, Orleans Parish, Louisiana.

The United States Branch Mint at New Orleans occupies Square 16 on the lower edge of the Vieux Carré (400 Esplanade Avenue) in the City of New Orleans, Orleans Parish, Louisiana. The main entrance to this structure is on the uptown side of Esplanade. This site was formerly the original Jackson Square and prior to that, it was the site of the Spanish Fort St. Charles, built in 1792.

At one time it was the largest mint in the United States. Today it stands as perhaps the largest monumental building in the Greek Revival style in New Orleans.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A branch mint at New Orleans was established by act of Congress in 1833. Construction began according to plans and specifications of William Strickland in September, 1835. Although it opened with the coinage of dimes in 1838, all of the machinery was not installed until 1844. The cost estimate in the building contract is stated at $182,000. This contract (see Appendix A) as well as the original Strickland drawings (see HABS photocopies) may be found in the Notarial Archives, City of New Orleans, annexed to an act passed before J. Cuvillier, Notary Public, Book #6, Act #19, 22 August 1835. We are told further that expenditure by 1843 was $254,740. (Agnes Addison Gilchrist, William Strickland, Architect and Engineer, page 91).

The site on which the Mint stands was deeded to the United States Government by the Mayor of the City of New Orleans on May 11, 1835 with the stipulation that it would revert back to the city should the site be used for any other purpose; however, this condition was removed in July 18, 1878 and the building has served several functions since the mint operations were discontinued. It was used as a mint from 1838-62 and 1879-1910 (A. A. Gilchrist, page 91). During the first period, it was in the possession of the State of Louisiana for a brief period (January 26 to May 31, 1861) when coinage was continued for a time from United states dies. After the mint was closed in 1910, the assayer's office remained for a while. It was then unoccupied until the Veterans Bureau used it again in the period 1927-30.

In 1932, it was converted to a Federal prison for short-term confinement of offenders of the National Prohibition laws. When the prisoners were transferred in 1943, it was turned over to the Coast Guard for use as a reception center during Work War II. Since that time, it has been used by the Coast Guard for storage purposes.

During the course of the HABS Survey in the summer of 1963, the

United States Government declared the building surplus and offered it for sale.

A record of alterations to the building during its early history (until 1859) has been obtained from records of the Office of the Supervising Architect in the National Archives (see Appendix B). This together with the typed transcript of the original building contract, has been included in a term paper by Robert J. Young, student in course number U-131, Tulane University, New Orleans, May 16, 1963. This "paper" is deposited in the Architectural Library at Tulane University which allowed reproduction of the material for inclusion in this report.

Other alterations are not so well documented. The files of the Commanding Officer of the Coast Guard Supply Unit based at the Army Transportation Terminal, New Orleans, Louisiana, contain limited information and drawings which shed some light on the changes which have occurred. There is a small scale set of three blueprints made for the Justice Department and dated January 5, 1931. The most important differences shown in these drawings from Strickland's original drawings are in the stairways. The central main stairway and the minor stairs in the two end wings have been relocated. Some partitions have also been removed in the front portion of the end wings. There is no indication whether these changes existed prior to the date of the drawings. However, the history of the uses of the building would seem to support the fact that such major changes were not necessary until the building was converted to a Federal prison with its need for large dormitories and cell blocks. Yet the existence of the slender cast iron columns with Doric and Ionic capitals which are now in the large rooms seems to date probably from the time of Major Beauregard's letter of October 18, 1854 (see Appendix B and interior photographs made in July 1963).

During the occupancy by the prison, the large brick smokestack was removed, a laundry building was built in its general location, and two high brick walls were built to enclose the rear courts (March 1941). One of these walls was subsequently removed by the Coast Guard in 1946. Also, in a November 1939 drawing the iron fence on North Peters Street was moved back 22.63' to allow for widening the street.

After the Coast Guard took the building over, several of the rear doorways were enlarged, the low concrete block service structure was added at the rear of the central wing (March 1945) and new gas-fired boilers were installed in March 1952. In 1949, an estimate was made for rehabilitating the building in the amount of $59,800.00. All of this project was not carried out.

APPENDIX A
BUILDING CONTRACT
BETWEEN JOHN MITCHELL & BENJAMIN F. FOX
AND - THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
REPRESENTED BY - MARTIN GORDON - SENIOR -
ACT - NO - 19
BY - J. CUVILLIER - NOTARY -
UNITED STATES MINT.

United States of America - State of Louisiana - City and Parish of New Orleans.

Be it known that on the twenty second day of August in the Year of our Lord one thousand Eight hundred and thirty five and of the Independence of the United States of America the Sixtieth;

Before me, Joseph Cuvillier, Notary public duly commissioned and sworn in and for the parish and city of New Orleans therein residing and in the presence of the witnesses hereinafter named and undersigned;

Personally came and appeared; John Mitchell of this city, master mason and builder, and

Benjamin F. Fox, also of this city, master carpenter and Joiner; of the one part; and - The United States of America, herein represented by Martin Gordon, Senior, Esquire, of this city their duly authorized agent and commissioner of the second part - ;

Said John Mitchell, Benjamin F. Fox and Martin Gordon, Senior, herein acting in their several qualities declared that they have, this day covenanted, bargained, promised and agreed to and with each other in manner and form following to wit

The said John Mitchell and Benjamin F. Fox, bind and oblige themselves, jointly and severally unto the said United States, that they shall and will forthwith commence, build and erect on a certain square of ground situated in this city comprised within the public road of New Orleans Levee street, esplanade, old Levee and Barracks streets, heretofore and now known as "Jackson Square," all and singular the Buildings hereinafter described according to the several plans numbered from "One" to "Four," inclusively;duly countersigned by the said parties and hereunto annexed for recourse and covenanted and agreed to make part of this act;

And that they, the said John Mitchell and Benjamin F. Fox shall and will at their proper cost and charge, furnish all materials of what soever description which shall or may be necessary for the erection of said Buildings and that the same shall be the Best quality - All the lumber and timber which shall be used in the completion of the same shall be well seasoned. And that all and singular the said Buildings and work shall be done in a good substantial and workmanlike manner and be completed and ready for delivery on or before the fifteenth of May next 1836 under penalty to him the said agent and Commissioner in the sum of two hundred dollars per day the same

daily from and after the said date of the Fifteenth of May Eighteen hundred and thirty six until the said buildings shall be fully completed and delivered.

The main or principal building shall consist of a center of Ninety feet in front on Esplanade Street, with wings on each side of Ninety six feet each fronting on said street; making the whole of said front two hundred and Eighty two feet by a depth of Eighty one feet.

The Elevation of said Buildings shall be of the heighth [sic] of three stories, resting on a sub-basement of two feet in height; the basement to be Eleven feet high in the clear - The principal story to be of the height of sixteen feet in the clear; the whole of said Buildings to be covered with a Slate-Roof.

Foundations.

The foundations are to be laid on planks at the depth of four feet below the surface of the pavement; these planks are to be placed in a trench six feet in width, one layer in a longitudinal, and the other in a transverse direction - closely fitted to-gether and perfectly level through out. The foundation walls are to be Brick work three feet four inches in Brradth [sic], laid in the middle of the planked bottom, which is to have at least sixteen inches of an offset, both inside as well as outside of the wall.

Sub-Basement:

The sub-basement, or water table course, is to be of granite at least one foot on the bed, and laid in lengths from three feet to eight feet. This course of stone is to be washed back from the face at least three inches, which is the offset to the face of the wall of the Basement story. This basement is to extend along the whole front and ends, where it is to be returned at the end of the wings and under the piazzas in the rear of the Building.

Basement.

The brick work of the Basement story is to be carried up three feet in thickness to the springing line of the groined arches, which is to be at least six feet above the level of the water table, on floor line of this story. The groin arches are to be composed of paving or hard bricks nine inches in thickness, the rise four feet, and the spandrils to be filled up level with the top or crown of the arches. The entire area of this story is to be filled up with good clear gravel or sand, and flagged over with flags at least three inches in thickness, which flags are to form the first floor of the building throughout, the flag stones to be composed of granite or hard sand stone. The basement is to be surmounted by a belting course of granite, one foot in height, and washed back at least three inches at the top. It is to be one foot in breadth on the Bottom bed, and is to extend all round the building, with a projection of two inches from the face of the wall

of this story - The windows are to be revealed frames three feet Eight inches by Six feet in height, made of the best heart pine. The sash to be also of the best heart pine, three lights wide by four in height; glass, the best crown or Boston, in lights of twelve inches by sixteen inches. The sills and heads of the windows to be of granite, four feet in length for the sill and five feet for the head, the sills to be at least ten inches in width, and five inches in thickness - the whole finished with outside shutters - The windows of the Basement story all round the building to be guarded with Iron of at least one inch square placed in a vertical direction and four inches apart.

In each of the apartments designated on said plan of the Basement story, as number "fifty one" - "Fifty two" - "fifty three" - "fifty four," there shall be good and sufficient fire places and chimneys.

Principal Story -

The principal story walls to be twenty seven inches in thickness and carried up ten feet to the springing line of the groined arches - These arches to be nine inches in thickness and to rise four feet; the spandrils to be filled level with the crown of the arch, to receive a flag stone floor. The whole area of this story is to be flagged over with the exception of the rooms nos. one, two, three, four, five and nine as marked in the plan of the principal story. The rooms marked six, seven, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, thirty four, thirty five, thirty six, forty, forty one, forty two, are not to be arched, but they are to be floored over and laid with boards one and a quarter inches in thickness, and the joists are to be four inches by twelve inches in depth, laid thirteen inches apart, they are to be of the best pine or cypress.

In this story there shall also be in the rooms designated on said plan by the numbers "one," "two," "three," and "four" good and sufficient fire places and chimneys, to correspond with those of the basement story. - The windows of this story are to be made in revealed frames, three feet eight inches by eight feet in height, made of the best pine.

The sash three lights in width by four in height, in lights of twelve inches by twenty two inches of the Best kind, as described in the Basement story. The sills and heads of the windows to be of granite as described above, the whole finished with inside shutters.

Attic Story -

The attic story walls are to be Eighteen inches in thickness, and carried up to the square of the Building or fourteen feet in height to the ceiling. This story is not to be arched, but roofed with good

red cypress or white pine girders and rafters. The rafters to be at least four inches by twelve inches at the heel, and nine inches at the head. The girders and joists four inches by fourteen inches to project across the piazzas and to rest upon a string piece to be laid on the cast iron columns of the piazzas - The roof is to be sheathed with good pine Boards one inch in thickness, wall nailed into the rafters, which are not to be placed at a greater distance apart than two feet. There is to be a wooden cornice all round, to project sixteen inches from the face of the wall, the top of which is to be covered with cypress turned over the gutter pole and continued at least Eighteen inches under the slate of the roof.

In this story fire places and chimneys shall be made to correspond with those of the Basement and main stories.

The windows of this story are to be revealed frames three feet Eight inches in width by five feet six inches in height made of the Best heart pine, sash three lights in width by four in height in lights of twelve by fourteen inches, of the Best Boston glass; the heads and sills to be of granite as heretofore described in the lower stories.

The floor of this story to be laid with flag stones, with the exception of numbers "Twenty nine," "thirty" - "thirty one" -"thirty two" - "thirty three" - "Thirty four," - "Thirty five" - "forty" - "forty one" and "forty two" - which are to be laid with the best inch and a quarter heart-pine flooring boards, - tongued and grooved together.

The floors of all the halls and piazzas of each of the stories are to be laid of the best heart-pine flooring boards.

Doorways and Doors -

The doorways from the passages and halls and those communicating with the various rooms are to be four feet in width by seven feet six inches in height; they are to be plain, jamb cased, with a two inch head put on to receive the plastering and to form an architrave surrounding the doorway. The doors are to be three inches in thickness, panneled [sic] with stiles of six inches and rails of ten inches in breadth; they are to be furnished with the best American mortised locks and butt hinges.

The doors of all the vaults and fire proof closets are to be double and let into a stone sills and heads well clamped into the walls - Their dimensions to be two feet eight inches in width by six feet six inches in height, plain - panneled [sic] in wrought Iron three fourths of an inch in thickness -

Columns of the Piazzas -

The columns of the piazzas for each story are to be of cast iron ten inches in diameter, with a cap and base, their height of course must correspond with the elevation of each floor from story to story.

Coins or Pilasters -

Each angle of the Building is to contain a pilaster of granite two feet nine inches on each face, extending from the belting course to the underside of the architrave of the Building, which is twenty-four feet above its course. The pilasters are to have plain moulded capitals of Eighteen inches in depth and the Body of the pilaster is to project three inches from the face of the Building when rough cast. - These pilasters are to be laid in courses of twelve or twenty inches in height and at least one foot on the Bed, breaking joint alternately in the center of each face -.

Front Portico and Steps -

There are to be four columns of three feet in diameter in front of the center building; these are to be flanked by antae or pilaster of two feet-nine inches square showing a single faced pilaster towards the columns - These columns are to be made of brick and rough cast; having stone bases and Capitals of the Ionic order. The whole depth of the Portico from the line of the street containing behind the cheek blocks upon which the columns and antea rest, a flight of granite steps leading from the pavement to the floor of the principal story. These steps to be six feet each in length in the clear, having a bearing upon the wall of the basement and upon the check block of at least nine inches rise, and a foot on the tread, leading to a platform which is to be upon a level with the floor of the principal story, and as wide as the main entry, which is twelve feet. The architrave to be of granite, two feet two inches in height, by two feet nine inches in width, extending across the whole front of the portico, breaking joint over the center of each Column; the frieze to be constructed with brick work and the cornice of wood - The portico to be covered on a level with the cornice, with a flat roof of copper or zinc.

Roof, Gutters & Conductors.

The roof is to be covered with the best milled welsh slate, laid in courses of at least fourteen inches - The eave and valley gutters to be of copper two feet ten inches in width; the eave pipes of copper, the conductors of five inch cast iron pipes, of which there are to be Eight in number four in front and four in the rear of the Building at the inner angles of the piazzas, to be covered with copper.

Interior Stairs.

There are to be three flights or interior stairways of stone, and two of wood - one in the hall or center of the Building and one on the extreme ends of the wings, these are to be of stone - The center flight of steps to be five feet in width, each step to be seven and a half inches rise by one foot in the tread, each flight, from the basement to the attic story is to be furnished with iron balusters at least one inch square, and a handrail of mahogany, three inches in diameter -

The wooden flights are to be constructed from the basement story to the rolling-room, and from the rolling room to the drawing and cutting rooms in the attic story, and from thence into the garret or roof of the center building - over the central flight of stairs leading to the attic story there is to be a sky light of ten feet square, formed on the ridge of the roof to give light and ventilation to the halls of the principal and attic stories, this sky light to be formed of thick glass plate on each side of the ridge of the roof of the centre building -

Plastering -

The whole of the interior of the building is to be plastered with three coats of plain plaster with plain cornices at the ceilings of the principal and attic stories. A centre piece or rosette is to be formed in the centre of the hall opposite the central stairway, for the purpose of hanging a lamp or chandelier in each of the stories, the ceiling of the piazzas of each story is to be plastered with three coats of plain plastering.

Rough Casting -

The whole of the exterior of the building is to be rough cast with good clear sand, washed and mixed with the best lime, well trowelled and jointed in courses corresponding with the courses of the pilasters and window heads the colour of the rough casting to correspond with that of the granite used in the building of the porticos and pilasters -

Painting and Glazing -

All the wood work of every description as well as the iron work is to be painted with three coats of paint of the best white lead, and all the sash are to be glazed with the best of glass. The front windows to be glazed with the best English crown glass, and those of the rear in the wings and under the piazzas, of Best Boston glass. All the sash to be wall bedded in putty and painted with three coats of white lead -

Iron Railing -

The whole lot upon which the building is to be erected is to be enclosed with a dwarf wall and iron railing. The dwarf wall is to be composed of granite two feet in height by fourteen inches in thickness, which is to support an iron rail let into the stone of five feet in height. This rail is to be of wrought iron, round and one inch in diameter by five feet in height, with a plain spear head above the top rail, which is to be three inches in breadth by three fourths of an inch in thickness - There are to be two gateways formed of wrought Iron, eight feet in width on the ends of the building, opposite to the passage through the basement story; these gates are to have stone sills of the breadth or thickness of the dwarf wall and are to be laid flush with the top of the pavement of the street -

This railing is to be painted with three coats of paint -

And in Consideration of the premises and in the true and faithful performance of all and singular the obligations herein taken by the said John Mitchell and Benjamin F. Fox; he, the said Martin Gordon Senior Esquire, herein acting in his said quality; does by these presents, covenant, promise and agree to and with the said John Mitchell and Benjamin F. Fox, that for the construction of said Buildings, he hereby binds & obliges the said United States of America to pay unto them the sum of "One hundred and Eighty two thousand Dollars," in ready money in manner and form following, viz;

(1) Seventeen thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars on Commencing the foundations of said buildings -

(2) Seventeen thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars on setting the frames of the Basement story. -

(3) Seventeen thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars, on setting the frames of the Second Story -

(4) Seventeen thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars, on setting the frames of the third, or attic story -

(5) Seventeen thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars, when the third story walls shall be of the requisite height -

(6) Seventeen thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars when the roof shall be completed -

(7) Thirty five thousand five hundred dollars, when the buildings shall be finished and key delivered, and received by the commissioner aforesaid - ./.

And the balance of said price being "Forty Thousand Dollars" the said parties have mutually agreed as follows; -

That in as much as the erection of the one wing of said building designated on said plans to wit; on that of the basement story as numbers "forty five" - "forty six" - "forty seven" - "forty eight" - "forty nine" - and "fifty" - on the plan of the plan of the principal story as numbers - "nine" - "ten" - "Eleven" - "twelve" - "twenty two" - and "twenty three" - and on the plan of the third or attic story as numbers "twenty four" - "twenty five" - "twenty six" - "twenty seven" - "twenty eight" - and "twenty nine" - Together with the dwarf wall & iron railing as designated on said plans, shall be delayed until a future period; the said sum of "Forty Thousand Dollars" shall be retained by the said agent or Commissioner until such time as the said wing shall be required to be built - and for the Building thereof, the said John Mitchell and Benjamin F. Fox, respectively, jointly and severally bind themselves and their heirs to commence and undertake for said sum of "Forty Thousand Dollars" whenever thereunto required by the said agent or commissioner or whomsoever else may be

authorized to require the same.

That the payment of said sum shall be made accordingly as the erection of said wing shall be in progress; that is to say;

(1) Five thousand dollars, on commencing the foundations -

(2) Five thousand dollars, on setting the frames of the Basement story -

(3) Five thousand dollars, on setting the frames of the second story -

(4) Five thousand dollars, on setting the frames of the third story -

(5) Five thousand dollars, when the third story walls are up to the height -

(6) Five thousand dollars, when the roof of said wing is finished; and

(7) Ten thousand dollars, when the said wing is finished and the keys of the same delivered and received by the said Commissioner -

It is further agreed and understood that the time herein before mentioned for the erection & delivery of the main Building and one wing thereof: viz: the fifteenth May next is intended only for the completion of the said main Building and wing.

It is further understood that all and every part of said Buildings now and hereafter to be built shall be finished in every part and point in conformity to the aforesaid plans without any change or alteration whatsoever, and that no compensation shall be allowed for extra-work, materials, scaffolding & hoisting machinery or Job work or other matters whatsoever, with the exception only of the necessary Iron railings for the several galleries, which shall be at the expense of the United States aforesaid. -

The said Building to be completly finished according to the foregoing stipulations and delivered Key in hand on or before the fifteenth day of May Eighteen hundred and thirty-six - But it is understood should the weather be such as to impede the working on said building, during its progress and that said commissioner should be satisfied that the weather was the cause of said Building not being finished and delivered at the time aforesaid, then the said time is hereby extended for the space of Sixty days after said fifteenth day of May, with a like penalty of two hundred dollars for every day thereafter for the non completion & delivery of said buildings

And thereupon appeared and intervied [sic] to this act Mr. LOUIS AUGUSTE LEMOYNE, of this city, who declared that having taken due cognizance of the foregoing act, he hereby binds and obliges

himself & his heirs in solido with the said John Mitchell & Benjamin F. Fox and their respective heirs for the faithful performance of all and singular the obligations by them herein taken.

This done and passed at the city of New Orleans aforesaid, on the day, month and year herein first above written, in the presence of ABEL DREYFOUS and WILLIAM LAKE, both residing in this city, witnesses thereunto required, who have signed their names to-gether with all parties and me the notary - "for the Building of a Branch of the United States Mint -" in this city" - "to-gether with the dwarf wall and iron railings" - their references approved - the words "Esplanade Street." - "In the clear" - "For" "Agreed and." - interlined approved - the words "the time" "altered = approved. - the words "the said public Road or New Levee Street" - "the" - each angle - be required to" erased null and void./.

(William Lake)
( )
(WILLIAM LAKE)

(Abel Dreyfous)
( )
(ABEL DREYFOUS)

(Martin Gordon Sr.)
( )
(MARTIN GORDON - SR.)

(John Mitchell)
( )
(JOHN MITCHELL)

(Benj. F. Fox)
( )
(BENJ. F. FOX)

(L. A. Lemoyne)
( )
(L. A. LEMOYNE)

(Wm. Cuvillier)
( )
(WM. CUVILLIER) NOTARY.

Specifications and plans by architect W. STRICKLAND annexed to original act for reference.

NOTE: All punctuation and capitalization are as they appear in original act.

APPENDIX B

REFERENCE SERVICE REPORT

INQUIRY: (1963) Information concerning the remodeling of the Branch Mint at New Orleans, Louisiana.

Report: Records of the Office of the Supervising Architect in the National Archives contain the following information pertinent to this inquiry:

In a letter of April 17, 1854, addressed to the Director of the United States Mint at Philadelphia, Mr. Charles Bienvenu, Superintendent of the Branch Mint at New Orleans, called attention to the deplorable condition of the building and urged that necessary repairs be made as soon as possible. Major G. T. Bauregard, who was in charge of the new Customs House in New Orleans, was then instructed to examine the Branch Mint Building and to forward a detailed estimate of the remodeling and repairs which should be undertaken.

In a letter of May 9, 1854, Major Bauregard informed the Secretary of the Treasury that at least $25,000 would be required for essential repairs on the building. At the same time he recommended that an additional $12,000 should be appropriated for the purpose of taking down and rebuilding a portion of the front walls in the North East wing which has "bulged out at least four inches." The principal other items of repairs suggested were reslating the roof and strengthening its frame, renewing the wooden cornice, making an interior or garden fence, anchoring the walk, flagging the rear yard, and coppering the roof of the portico. In accordance with his estimate an initial appropriation of $37,000 was approved by the Treasury Department.

In a letter of October 18, 1854, addressed to the Secretary of the Treasury, Major Bauregard stated that the only portion of the building which was "groined and consequently partially fireproof" was that fronting on Esplanade Street. He pointed out the necessity of making the main central portion of the building fire-proof by the introduction of iron beams and segmental arches and stated "that can no doubt be done without having to rebuild the inclined exterior walls . . . for being relieved of the outward thrust of these arches they would probably be sufficiently strong and firm to resist the vertical weights of the floors and roof." The Treasury Department approved Major Bauregard's recommendation that an additional amount of $55,000 be appropriated for this purpose, making a total appropriation of $92,000 for the work.

On April 12, 1855, Major Bauregard transmitted to the Department his project of operations and at the same time recommended that the garret floor throughout the building should be made fireproof, and that a galvanized iron roof and cornice should be put upon the building. His estimate for the latter purpose was $99,000, making his total estimates on the repairs $191,000.

Captain G. W. Smith was appointed superintendent of these repairs and assumed his duties on January 7, 1856, with Departmental instructions to commence operations, based on the fireproof project of Major Bauregard. After an examination of the building had revealed much poor material and workmanship in the structure, Captain Smith recommended on January 30, 1856 that a plan providing for only essential repairs be adopted, which would cost about $25,000 and preserve the mint until an appropriation could be obtained for an entirely new mint.

On February 9, 1856, the Department approved Captain Smith's recommendations and work on a plan for light repairs was commenced. However, the Department instructed Captain Smith on March 11, 1856, to again resume the fireproof project.

A total of $27,687.60 was expended on the repairs to the end of June 30, 1856, under the superintendence of Captain Smith, leaving a balance of $64,312.29 available for the completion of the work. J. K. Duncan, who succeeded Captain Smith as Superintendent of Repairs, forwarded to the Department a project of operations for the completion of the repairs, including the fireproof repairs of the central portion of the building and the rear main galleries. The projected work was delayed for many months due to the difficulty experienced in obtaining the iron beams and girders ordered from the manufacturers.

An additional appropriation of $17,311.73 was requested on January 12, 1857 and it was recommended at the same time that Major Bauregard's project of making the garret floor, roof and cornice fireproof should be carried into effect. The fireproofing of the rear wings with their galleries and the main entrance halls of the center portion of the structure was also recommended. The estimated cost for completion of the entire project was $127,972.73. These recommendations were approved by the Department and an appropriation of $120,661 was provided for the project.

Superintendent Duncan stated in his annual report, dated June 30, 1857, that "for want of material, the work on the garret floor, laying segmental arches and beams, was mainly discontinued up to the close of the year, ending June 30, 1857. The flooring on the second story galleries and main halls of centre building - rear wings and their galleries were not completed, because the flooring would have been much injured by the future operations on the garret floor." The Superintendent assured the Department that immediately upon the arrival of the iron for the garret floor and roof, the work would be pushed forward towards completion with all possible speed. The Treasury Department was notified on February 4, 1858, however, that "the repairs in progress on this building promise to occupy a full twelve months in completion."

The records do not indicate the exact date on which the repairs were completed but it appears that the project was terminated in 1859.

No information has been found concerning any other major repairs to the Branch Mint building at New Orleans during the early period of its history.

/s/ Jane F. Smith
Jane F. Smith
Natural Resources Records Division

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PART III. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: An outstanding example of a Greek Revival structure on a monumental scale.

2. Condition of fabric: Fair to poor; this building has

been unoccupied for a long time with only minimum maintenance.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Plan, shape and dimensions: Basically the plan is "E-shaped" with the central pavilion being the largest, approximately 90' x 100'. The end pavilions are approximately 81' x 37'. The over-all length of the main facade on Esplanade Avenue is approximately 282'. There are three stories plus a low attic.

2. Foundations: 3'-4" brick foundation resting on mat of planks, one layer longitudinal and one layer transverse. (Note: This foundation system is similar to that of the United States Custom House at 423 Canal Street, built some 20 years later. See HABS records, LA-1109.)

3. Wall construction: The river-mud brick walls are 36" thick in the basement; 18" thick at the third story.

4. Chimneys: An original high brick smokestack was demolished during occupancy of a federal prison. At the rear is a high modern metal smokestack.

5. Porches, stoops:

   a. Entrance portico: Six columns (four Ionic columns with 3'-0" diameters and two Doric square columns) of stuccoed brick with stone bases and capitals; granite architrave, brick frieze and wooden cornice; two flights of granite steps enclosed within granite cheek-blocks lead up each side.

   b. Three-story galleries (piazzas) surround two sides of each court at the rear. These galleries have cast iron columns that are 10" in diameter.

   c. A cast iron balcony faces North Peters Street.

6. Openings:

   a. Doorways: In the central block on Esplanade Avenue there is a pair of wooden doors opening to the basement under the portico. These doors are three-paneled (the upper two panels are glazed). The main entrance doors are a pair with three recessed panels in each. Above, in the pediment, is a pair of four-paneled wooden doors framed by a simple wooden tabernacle with glazed side lights and wooden pediment. A similar doorway is on the

Decatur Street side of the end pavilion. This doorway has a horizontal architrave rather than pediment. All other openings in the rear and on the rear courts are modern wooden warehouse-type doors that hang on metal tracks.

b. Windows: Windows are metal security-type windows with security bars on the exterior.

7. Roof: Intersecting gable roofs covered with corrugated sheet metal. Numerous metal ventilators and skylights are on the roof. No eaves; wooden cornice.

C. Description of the Interior

1. Floor plans: The principal floor of the central pavilion has two rooms on each side of the entry which leads to a large stair lobby. The original stairs were relocated at an undetermined date from entry axis to the sides in order to accommodate an elevator. Behind the central stair lobby is a large room which is flanked by two smaller rooms, and cast iron stairs. This larger room was recently used as a dining hall (cast iron columns have been installed to support the segmented arched ceiling and beams). On each side of the central pavilion is a large room (used as dormitories) converted from several smaller rooms. Cast iron columns and beams replace the original bearing walls. At the corners of the building, small rooms have been converted to baths. The end pavilion projecting to the rear from these baths contain cell blocks and stairs. Basically, the basement and the third floor plans are disposed similarly.

2. Stairways: The main stairway and the stairs in the end pavilions are undated, relocated replacements of the originals. The rear stairways of the central block are cast iron replacements of wooden stairs that were called for in the building contract; they are, however, in original location.

3. Flooring: The basement floor is of flagstone; the floors of the other stories are wooden.

4. Walls and ceiling: Both are plaster on brick. The brick walls are 13" thick. These were originally rough cast and scored; recently they were sandblasted smooth, stuccoed and painted.

5. Doors: No original doors remain.

6. Trim: Molded wooden trim.

7. Lighting: Modern electrical fixtures.

8. Heating: Modern central heating

D. Site

1. General setting: The United States Branch Mint is at the river end of Esplanade Avenue and faces northeast. Across North Peters Street, toward the Mississippi River, are docks and shipping facilities. Behind the structure is the receiving area for the French market. On the other two sides are various wholesalers and auto service stations.

2. Enclosures: The complete square is enclosed with a dwarf granite wall surmounted by a wrought iron fence. The fence railings are 1" in diameter and terminate in plain spear heads. A high brick wall also encloses one of the rear courtyards.

3. Outbuildings: There is a small concrete block structure to the rear of the central block.

4. Landscaping: Some trees and shrubs with lawn.

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