Treasury Department
Fifth Aud's Office
December 15th 1848.

Sir,

Having doubts as to the propriety of erecting some of the Light Houses & Beacons which appropriations were made in the bill passed 14th August last, I availed myself of the 2d sec of the bill to call upon the Secretary of the Navy to detail officers of that Department to examine the several sites and report their opinions as to the expediency of erecting the buildings viz

In Massachusetts and New York

At the mouth of Parmet River, Truro, Cape Cod
Wings Neck, Buzzards Bay, Mass.
North Brother, near Hurl gate, New York

For the examination of these Commander George F. Pearson was designated by the Secretary of the Navy.

In Maryland & Virginia

At Blackistones Island, Potomac River
Sand Shoal Island, On the Coast of the Eastern Shore of Virginia

For the examination of these Commanders Franklin Buchanan was appointed.

In North Carolina

At the upper Jetty
Campbells Island
Orton's Point
Horse Shoe
At Price's Creek
At Oak Island, Cape Fear River

} Cape Fear River

For the examination of all these Commanders William D. Gardner was appointed.

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In Louisiana.

A Floating Light on Ship Shoal near Dernen Island.

A Floating Light in Atchafalaya Bay. For these Com. Gorge N. Hollins was appointed.

In Michigan & Wisconsin.

A Beacon Light near Mammajuda Island and A Beacon Light at Grass Isld in Detroit River.

A Light House at Port du Mort and A Light House at Port Washington both in Wisconsin.

For the examination of these sites Commander Stephen Champlin was appointed.

These several officers have reported in favor of erecting all the lights which were submitted to them respectively.

Proposals have been invited for building the Floating Lights for Ship Shoal and Atchafalaya Bay in Louisiana and the one authorized for Cockspur Knoll in Savannah River, has been built and is now on her way to that station. Of the several Light Houses authorized by the above mentioned act proposals for building the two in Detroit River, and two on Oak Island, at the entrance of Cape Fear River at both which places the land belonged to the U States, have been invited by public advertisement. In relation to all the others authorized by the act with the exception of the South Brothers Island the Superintendents have been instructed to purchase the proper sites, if they could be obtained on reasonable terms and forwarded the deeds for the opinion of the Attorney General as to their

validity. Until this is done and the favorable opinion of the Attorney General is received together with acts ceding jurisdiction by the several states in which the Lights are authorized no step can be taken for erecting the Buildings.

I would respectfully recommend that the joint Resolution of 11th September 1841, requiring the opinion of the Attorney General, as to the validity of titles to Land acquired by the United States, be repealed, as it is calculated to embarrass and delay the public works, and answers no useful purpose whatever. The resolution directs that no money shall be paid for lands until the opinion, (favorable) of the Attorney General shall be obtained, and the parties from whom we purchase will not execute the Deeds until the money is ready to be paid to them, so that in point of fact we are obliged to violate the law before we can send the Deeds to the Attorney General, who has after all to rely upon the opinion of the Attorney who we employ to examine and decide upon the title, in the State where the land lies.

In respect to the Light authorized on the North Brother, near Hurl Gate, New York, the opinion of Commander Pearson, who was detailed to examine it, was favorable to its erection; but on application to the owner of the Island, Mr. Edward Ackerman Collector at New York learnt that he was indisposed to sell less than the whole Island of 15 acres for which he asked 9000 Dollars but would take 5000 Dollars for 2 acres.

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This price was considered so unreasonable, taken in connection with a Report of B. F. Isherwood Esq an Engineer of the Navy Department whom I had sent to examine the Light Houses in the New York District, against the erection of a Light at this place, in opposition to the opinion of Commander Pearson as to induce me to instruct the Collector to take no further step in the case, without the further direction of Congress on the subject. A copy of the Report of Mr. Isherwood as well as that of Commander Pearson are herewith submitted marked B & C.

By the act of the 8th April 1848 entitled "An act to change the location of certain Light Houses and Buoys" the Light House authorized to be built on Fellers Point on the North River, New York, was transferred to Tarry Town Point on the same River.

The appropriation in this case was 4000 Dollars. The Collector and Superintendent at New York, was directed soon after the passage of the act changing the location, to purchase the site if it could be had at a reasonable rate. On consulting the Pilots and Captains of Steam Boats, the Collector learnt that it was the general opinion of those persons, that the Light instead of being put upon Tarrytown Point, should be placed upon Beekmans Point about 2 miles distant from where the law placed it, and for the site of 2 acres the owner asked the enormous price of 3000 Dollars. Nothing further, of course has been done. A copy of the Collectors letter marked A is herewith enclosed for the consideration of the

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Committee.

Having instituted an enquiry as to the proper site to which the Light House and Keepers House on Amelia Island ought to be removed, as provided for by the Light House law of the 14th August last, the Superintendent at Jacksonville, Florida, transmitted to me conflicting opinions of Pilots a Captain of a Revenue Cutter and himself, as to the propriety of removing the Light. Copies of these opinions are herewith enclosed marked A & B. It being thus doubtful whether the Light ought to be disturbed, I have concluded to take no further step in relation to it.

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I take occasion to enclose a letter from Mr. Lawrence and one from A. H. Norris Esqr an Engineer at New York who was appointed to oversee the building of the Light House upon Execution Rocks marked C & D showing the progress made with that work down to the 4th Instant. This work ought to have been completed agreeably to the Contract on the 1st August last, but the Contractor having neither skill nor means to carry on the work, has induced gentlemen at New York to join him in the undertaking who possess both. It is expected that the work will be finished by the 1st January or very soon thereafter if the weather should prove favorable.

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I have &c &c.
Stephen Pleasonton
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Hon
Washington Hunt
Chairman of the Committee
of Commerce of the House of Repts