

TO AUTHORIZE THE TRANSFER OF THE CUSTOMHOUSE AT
SALEM, MASS., FROM THE JURISDICTION OF THE TREASURY
DEPARTMENT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

MAY 12, 1936.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. WALSH, from the Committee on Finance, submitted the following

R E P O R T

[To accompany H. R. 10934]

The Committee on Finance, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 10934) to authorize the transfer of the customhouse at Salem, Mass., from the jurisdiction of the Treasury Department to the Department of the Interior, having had the same under consideration, report it to the Senate without amendment and recommend that the bill be passed.

The purpose of the proposed legislation is explained in the attached report of the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, House of Representatives, accompanying H. R. 10934. As indicated in the House report (No. 2495) the bill has the approval of the Treasury Department.

[H. Rept. No. 2495, 74th Cong., 2d sess.]

The Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 10934) to authorize the transfer of the customhouse at Salem, Mass., from the jurisdiction of the Treasury Department to the Department of the Interior, having duly considered the same, hereby make report of it with the recommendation that the bill do pass.

The bill has the approval of the Treasury Department, as evidenced in the following letter:

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
Washington, April 9, 1936.

Hon. FRITZ G. LANHAM,
Chairman, Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds,
House of Representatives.

MY DEAR MR. LANHAM: Further reference is made to your letter of February 7, 1936, with which you enclosed a copy of H. R. 10934, a bill to authorize the transfer of the Customhouse at Salem, Mass., from the jurisdiction of the Treasury Department to the Department of the Interior, and requesting the views of this Department on the measure.

The bill has as its purpose the preservation of the Salem Custom House as an historic memorial of the early shipping days of Salem, when it was a leading maritime port. The records of the Treasury Department show that the building was completed and occupied the latter part of 1819, and stands today substantially as originally built. Between the years 1846 and 1849, Nathaniel Hawthorne was surveyor of customs at this port and occupied the room on the main floor of the building at the corner of Derby and Orange Streets. In the preface to the "Scarlet Letter", the author makes reference to this building and to the eagle over the main entrance. The building, therefore, possesses an authentic historic value.

Salem is still an active port of entry, and the old building has been kept in constant use as a custom office. While the customs receipts have been considerably diminished in recent years, enforcement and other work has not diminished, so that it has been deemed advisable to keep the old building in active use. However, the matter of accommodating the two customs officials at Salem has been taken up with the Fourth Assistant Postmaster General, who states that a survey has been made by a representative of his office, and that suitable and acceptable space can be provided in the new post-office building at Salem for the Customs Service, if necessary.

Accordingly, if suitable space is provided in the post-office building for the accommodation of the Customs Service, the Treasury Department has no objection to the enactment of the bill H. R. 10934 to transfer the customhouse at Salem, Mass., to the control and jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior for preservation and maintenance as a historic site.

Very truly yours,

WAYNE C. TAYLOR,
Acting Secretary of the Treasury.

The total acreage involved in this measure is not in excess of 4 acres and that part of it in the customs plant itself is less than 1 acre. This site is on the water front and the land includes the famous Derby wharf from which sailing vessels formerly went to China and all ports of the world. There is no authority existing in the executive departments for the transfer of a building of this nature at the present time without legislation. The proposal is to rehabilitate this historic scene and to save the Derby wharf and the customshouse, in which Nathaniel Hawthorne did some of his later writing. The desire is to preserve the relics of the old Colonial period of Salem. This building now contains furniture of the Nathaniel Hawthorne period and it is contemplated that many articles of historic interest can be added to make it a museum of national interest.

