



WHAT
HAPPENED

The cornerstone for the U.S. Customs House was laid on Feb. 22, 1849.

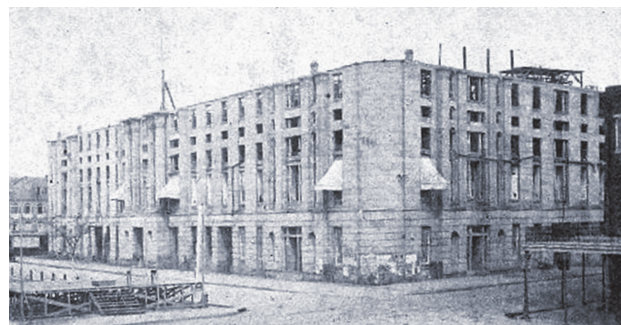


The grand Marble Hall in the center of the Customs House is considered one of the finest Greek Revival interiors in the United States.

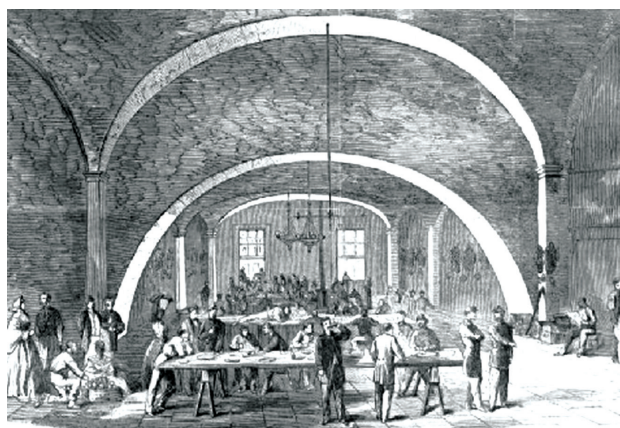


The Audubon Butterfly Garden and Insectarium opened on the first floor of the Customs House in 2008.

A series of eight architects worked on the building while it was being constructed, from 1848 until 1881.



Known now perhaps more for its monarch butterflies than its marble hall, the **U.S. Custom House** is one of the most important and historic federal buildings in the southern United States.



Building construction was stopped during the Civil War and the unfinished building was used to manufacture gun carriages for the Confederacy, as a Union headquarters and as a federal prison.

The Customs House is listed as a National Historic Landmark. A major renovation was completed in 1993 that restored rooms and other interior elements to their pre-1916 condition.



Construction of the granite monolith, at the corner of Canal and North Peters streets, began in 1848 and took 33 years to complete. The 326,000-square-foot building was originally designed by Alexander Wood and was meant to be a "plain and substantial building." The imposing structure makes an impression inside and out, with its Greek and Egyptian revival architecture and an impressive room called the Marble Hall, which features Corinthian columns and depictions of myths and gods.

The building was commissioned after the U.S. Custom House, designed by famous architect Benjamin Latrobe and completed in 1809, began crumbling because of its poor foundation. A newer, larger building was also needed as New Orleans emerged as one of the nation's largest ports.

Construction of the building was suspended during the Civil War, but was used during the war, including as a Union headquarters. The building was renovated in 1915, and again in 1975 and 1993. The later renovation restored the space to its original appearance.

The first floor of the building is leased to the Audubon Butterfly Garden and Insectarium, but other sec-