

PERMANENT PORT PROSPERITY SEEN

Church Says Naval Work Indicates Recovery of Commercial Shipping

SITUATION NOT LIKE 1918

City in More Advantageous Position to Retain Gain Caused by Emergency

By HENRY F. CHURCH
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As early as 1698, Edward Randolph, collector of the King's customs, reported Charleston as "the safest port for all vessels where no wind will damage them, and all things will be had necessary to refit them." Since then the port of Charleston has figured in many official reports as possessing the finest natural harbor south of Hampton Roads, seaward location, a shorter average ocean haul to the key points of the world than any other Atlantic or Gulf port; proximity to the Panama canal and the Caribbean area; modern and ample port facilities; central and strategic location relative to both commerce and defense.

Over Charleston's wharves, during its two-and-a-half centuries as a world port, have moved in great volume specialties such as rice, indigo, beef, lumber, cotton, phosphate rock and fertilizers, each in its heyday, and thus, from specialty to specialty, Charleston has moved onward, acquiring experience in the handling of many lines and facilities which amply equip it for its present day role as a general cargo port; yet, despite its natural and acquired advantages, it has suffered many setbacks from wars, embargoes, economic upswings, and disfavoring rail rates; while often, in the past, political prejudice and indifference at Washington, militated against its proper development as a defense center.

Now, since the federal government has come to realize anew that the importance of Charleston, in the plan of national defense, and its vital worth to our merchant marine, can no longer be ignored, it is apparent that Charleston has the opportunity to regain its prestige as a leading port of the South Atlantic, and there is no logical reason for believing that, after a boom period, this port will again suffer an acute commercial and military decline as was the case following the first World war.

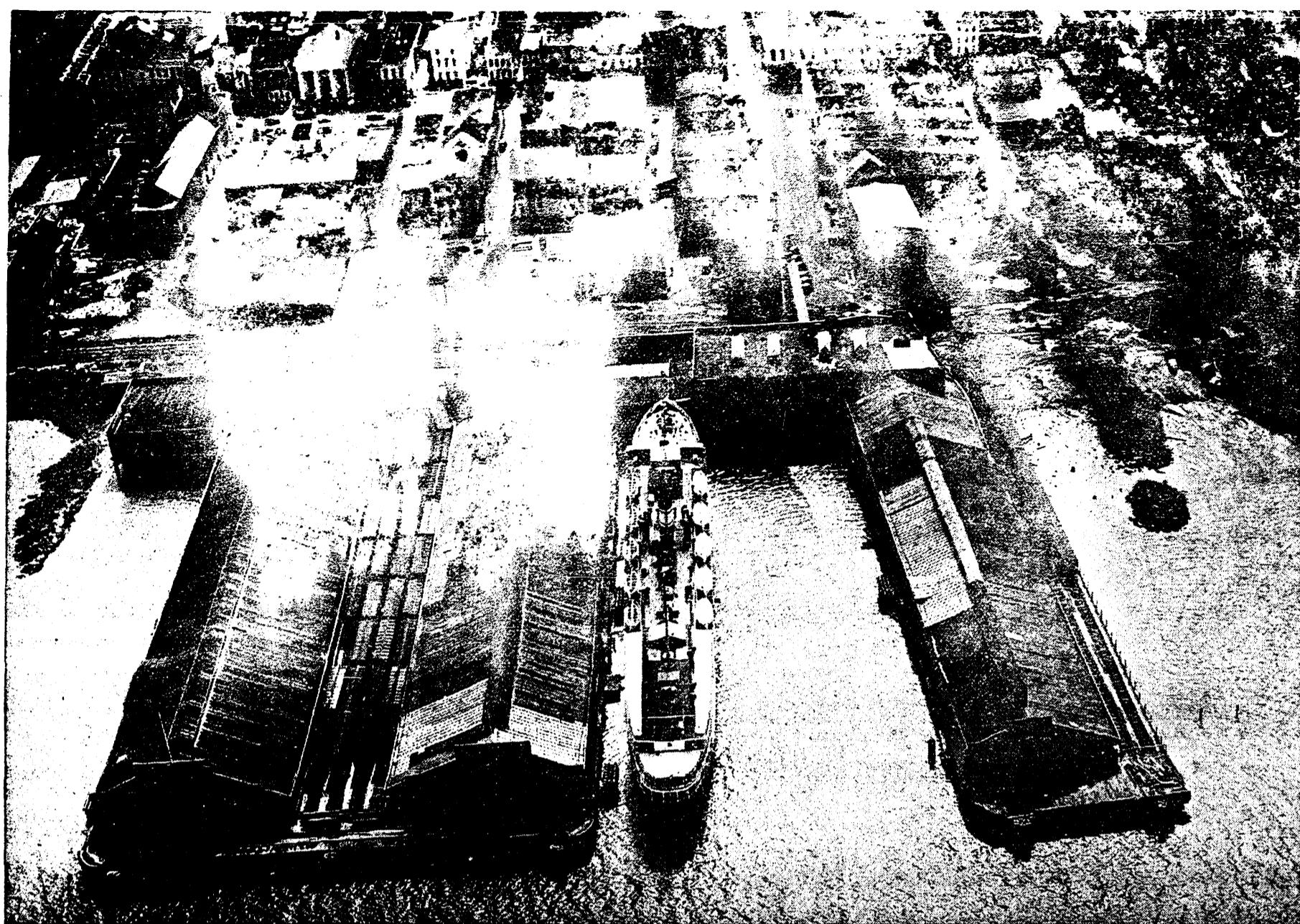
Rail Discrimination Recalled
A comparative study of the major factors affecting this port, during the two emergency periods in question, shows that the present day Charleston is in a more advantageous position to cope alertly with its port problems, and to subsequently solve them, than was the case in 1918, when the sudden interest of the federal government in Charleston's possibilities brought temporary relief from more than thirty lean years of sporadic port activities.

From 1885 to 1917, Charleston had suffered from the gradual introduction of rail rate discriminations, and because of the proximity of more favored competitor ports and the nature of its largely agricultural hinterland, which did not attract regular scheduled steamship services in its foreign trade, it had become dependent upon coastal movements for the bulk of its water-borne commerce, so that in 1918, when the government erected here the army supply base, and rail rates were brought into more favorable alignment, it was yet badly handicapped, with but small support from its limited trade territory, including the industrial areas of its own state. With the end of the World war, government activities dwindled, and such commercial gains as the port achieved, during the post war period of prosperity, were in great part lost during the long depression which followed.

During that period, however, Charleston had become the official state port of South Carolina, and as such gradually succeeded in winning the support of all sections of the state, some of which, for the first time, became conscious of the fact that Charleston's port facilities were an asset to South Carolina as a whole and began to work for its development. That this support is sincere is best evidenced in the recent hearing before the United States maritime commission, at Washington, when in vigorous protest to the curtailment of Charleston's coastwise steamship services, the entire South Carolina congressional delegation, together with representatives from the South Carolina public service commission and other traffic groups from the industrial areas of the state, appeared in force demanding not only remedial action against these curtailments, but seeking an equitable share of the lease-lend shipments, and other government controlled commerce.

Expenditures Bore Cited
With reference to the slump in the navy yard and other military activities at Charleston following the first World war and which some predict will again occur when the present emergency shall have ended, it should be noted that the government spent here only a relatively small sum during that previous emergency, compared with the vast expenditures made in military developments at this port during the past several years, especially the fiscal year ending June 30, 1941, in which was spent at Charleston alone \$124,565,365, or 78.4 per cent of the \$158,847,000 allocated to South Carolina during that period for defense projects and contracts.

Even at its peak of employment in 1918 and the immediate post war period, when an average of 4,770 civilians were on its payrolls, the Charleston navy yard, in addition to its principal task of refitting and repairing vessels of various types, built only one destroyer, two gunboats, two tugs, and eight submarine chasers, as compared with its activities in the last three years, in which, beginning with the Stetts, eighteen destroyers have been laid down and



Pictured from the Air are the Clyde-Mallory Lines' Terminals on the Cooper River Waterfront, with a Ship Shown in One of the Slips. (Aerial Photo by Taft.)

contracted for, and upward of 10,000 civilians are now employed.

That the federal government is not again placing Charleston in temporary use, is attested in its recent selection of this port as an auxiliary to the Brooklyn supply base, for the movement of troops and supplies, in an anticipated volume which calls for the use of two waterfront sites; that it has found the facilities of Charleston so favorable for the purpose, it is erecting a second large overseas discharge and replacement depot, northeast of the city, to augment its existing depot at Sullivan's Island; and that it has constructed here an army general hospital, and made great expansion to the North Charleston ordnance depot. Other facilities approved, which point to a large scale use of Charleston harbor, include an anchorage area for cruisers, destroyers, and submarines; deepening of existing channels; and the provision of a fleet landing.

It is an obvious fact that, where permanent military activities have been set up at a port, commercial shipping has increased in direct ratio, and new industries have been attracted. Charleston should be no exception to this general rule, which has brought prosperity to other Atlantic and Pacific ports. Recognized by the federal government as a major strategic defense center and serving as chief seaport to a state facing the greatest industrial development in its history, it

is safe to predict that, by following its restored opportunity to a determined end, the port of Charleston can attain in prosperity which, as far back as 1826, led Robert Mills, the economist, to admit to but one worry, that being that in due course New York, Boston and Philadelphia might encroach on Charleston's prestige as a seaport.

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Duty followed on the Recruit Ship, Norfolk, as pay officer and commissary officer with additional duty in charge of accounts of the USS Richmond, yard craft and auxiliaries. After duty in the naval training station at Norfolk, from October 1915 to May, 1918, he was ordered to the Naval Operating base for duty as disbursing officer, Hampton Roads, Va., and in January, 1919, joined the USS Arkansas as supply officer.

Orders on September 6, 1905, took him to the naval training station, Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island as assistant general store keeper. From December 8, 1905, to June 26, 1906, he was in Colon, Panama, on special duty with the party under Lieutenant Commander G. W. Logan. He attended the Navy Pay Officers' school in Washington, during the summer of 1906, reporting on November 9 for temporary duty as assistant purchasing pay officer at Seattle, Wash.

On December 26, he assumed duty as paymaster of Torpedo Flotilla Division, and on January 19, 1907, began duty in the USS Chauncy. Duty followed in the USS Raleigh and USS Chattanooga. From May 3, 1907, he was commissioned passed assistant paymaster.

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