

ST. MARTINS RIVER, MD.

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LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING,

WITH A LETTER FROM THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, REPORT ON  
EXAMINATION OF ST. MARTINS RIVER IN WORCESTER COUNTY,  
MD.

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OCTOBER 16, 1913.—Referred to the Committee on Rivers and Harbors and ordered  
to be printed.

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WAR DEPARTMENT,  
*Washington, October 15, 1913.*

THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith a letter from the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, dated October 14, instant, together with copy of a report from Maj. R. R. Raymond, Corps of Engineers, dated November 30, 1910, on a preliminary examination of St. Martins River, in Worcester County, Md., made by him in compliance with the provisions of the river and harbor act approved June 25, 1910.

Very respectfully,

LINDLEY M. GARRISON,  
*Secretary of War.*

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WAR DEPARTMENT,  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS,  
*Washington, October 14, 1913.*

From: The Chief of Engineers, United States Army.

To: The Secretary of War.

Subject: Preliminary examination of St. Martins River, Md.

1. There is submitted herewith, for transmission to Congress, report dated November 30, 1910, by Maj. R. R. Raymond, Corps of Engineers, on preliminary examination called for by the river and harbor act approved June 25, 1910, of St. Martins River in Worcester County Md.



2. St. Martins River is an arm of Isle of Wight Bay, which connects with Sinepuxent Bay. The act of 1910 also called for an examination of Sinepuxent Bay, with a view to a channel 5 feet in depth from the mouth of St. Martins River south, report on which will be found printed in House Document No. 248, Sixty-third Congress, first session.

3. Inviting attention to this examination, the district officer states that while the expense of bringing the necessary plant to this locality for the purpose of dredging the desired channel up to Bishopville or for doing the desired dredging in Sinepuxent Bay is regarded as excessive for either work alone, he believes that it is fully justified for their combined improvement, and therefore recommends a survey of both localities.

4. The division engineer is of opinion that the locality is not worthy of improvement by the General Government.

5. This report has been referred, as required by law, to the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, to whose report dated February 27, 1911, attention is invited. Those at interest were duly notified of the unfavorable character of the board's attitude and invited to submit their views, but no communications were received in response thereto. After reviewing this report, the board is of opinion that the improvement of this locality by the General Government is not advisable.

6. After due consideration of the above-mentioned reports, I concur in general with the views of the division engineer, and the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, and therefore, in carrying out the instructions of Congress, I report that the improvement by the United States of St. Martins River in Worcester County, Md., in the manner apparently desired by the interests concerned as described in the reports herewith, is not deemed advisable at the present time.

DAN C. KINGMAN,  
Chief of Engineers, U. S. Army.

#### REPORT OF THE BOARD OF ENGINEERS FOR RIVERS AND HARBORS

[Third indorsement.]

BOARD OF ENGINEERS FOR RIVERS AND HARBORS,  
Washington, February 27, 1911.

1. Respectfully returned to the Chief of Engineers, United States Army.

2. St. Martins River is an arm of Isle of Wight Bay which connects with Sinepuxent Bay, Md. The stream has two main branches, one of which extends to Bishopville. The improvement desired is the dredging of certain shoals with a view to providing a channel up to this town. The prevailing depth elsewhere in the river and in Isle of Wight Bay to Ocean City, Md., is about 5 feet at low-water level, and the district officer states that this depth is the only economical one to be considered in any present improvement of St. Martins River and its approaches. There is no lunar tide in these waterways, but there is a fluctuation of from 2 to 3 feet in the water levels due to the wind.

3. Bishopville is a town of about 200 inhabitants, having several stores and one mill. Apparently there is little or no water-borne commerce at present. The prospective commerce consists of farm produce, berries, timber, etc. The district officer invites attention to preliminary examination ordered by the act of June 25, 1910, of Sinepuxent Bay, with a view to a channel 5 feet in depth from the mouth of St. Martins River south and states that these two localities should be considered together. While the expense of bringing a dredging plant to this place is regarded as excessive for either of the two works alone, he believes that it is fully justified for their combined improvement, and therefore recommends the authorization of a survey of both localities at an estimated cost of \$1,250. The division engineer is of opinion that the locality is not worthy of improvement by the General Government.

4. At the instance of the board the district officer invited all persons known to be interested in the improvement of St. Martins River to submit statements and arguments to the board regarding the need for the work proposed, but no communications in reference to this subject have been received. In view of the limited area and population that would be benefited by the improved waterway and the small commerce likely to use it the board concurs with the division engineer in the opinion that St. Martins River, Md., is not worthy of improvement by the General Government.

5. In compliance with law the board reports that there are no questions of terminal facilities, water power, or other subjects so related to the project proposed as to render the improvement advisable in the interests of navigation.

For the board:

W. C. LANGFITT,  
Colonel, Corps of Engineers,  
Senior Member of the Board.

#### PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF ST. MARTINS RIVER, MD.

ENGINEER OFFICE, UNITED STATES ARMY,  
Wilmington, Del., November 30, 1910.

SIR: In compliance with department letter of August 4, 1910, I have the honor to submit the following report upon a preliminary examination of St. Martins River, in Worcester County, Md., which is provided for in the river and harbor act of June 25, 1910.

The examination was made under my direction by Mr. George W. T. Miller, assistant engineer, from whose report the following is quoted, viz:

St. Martins River is an arm of Isle of Wight Bay on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The main stream is made up of two large branches called the Bishopville and Showell Prongs and a number of small tributaries. It is with the Bishopville Prong that this examination has to do.

At Bishopville is a milldam which limits navigation. There is no lunar tide in St. Martins River, nor in the contiguous bays, but there is a fluctuation of from 2 to 3 feet in the water level due to the wind.

From Bishopville down about a mile the river has a width of 50 to 60 feet. It then broadens out to about 200 feet, and gradually increases to about a quarter of a mile, where the Showell or Shingle Landing Prong enters. Thence to the mouth it has a width of about one-half mile.



About 1½ miles below Bishopville the river is crossed by a trestle bridge, having a draw opening of 20 feet in it. Most of the obstructing shoals are between this bridge and Bishopville. These shoals are numerous, but very short, and aggregate in length about 1,000 to 1,200 feet, alternating with deep pools. The depth on the shoals at low-water level is from 2 to 3 feet, while the depth desired is 5 or 6 feet at the same stage. Just below the junction of the two prongs is another shoal of about 3 feet depth and about 600 feet long, called the "Mud Flats." About 2½ miles south of the mouth of the river, just above Drum Point, is another 3-foot shoal from 1,000 to 1,200 feet long. The prevailing depth elsewhere in the river and in Isle of Wight Bay to Ocean City, Md., is about 5 feet at the low-water level, and this depth is the only economical one to be considered in any present improvement of St. Martins River and its approaches. The removal of the shoals enumerated would give a 5-foot low-water navigation from Bishopville to Ocean City, a distance of 11 miles, and for a further distance below Ocean City of 6½ miles through Sinepuxent Bay to Sandy Point, where another shoal is encountered on the way to Chincoteague Inlet. The shoals in Sinepuxent Bay are, however, the subject of another provision of the river and harbor act of June 25, 1910, and will be treated in a separate report.

Bishopville, at the head of navigation on St. Martins River, and in whose direct interest the improvement is desired, is a town of about 300 inhabitants, having several general stores. The only industry outside of the stores is a mill for grinding corn, located at the milldam, and operated partly by water power and partly by steam. The town is 2 miles by very heavy, sandy road from the railroad station, Bishop, on the Delaware division of the Pennsylvania Railroad. With the river opened, additional and much better railroad facilities would become available at Ocean City, where the Baltimore, Chesapeake & Atlantic Railway, direct to Baltimore, has a terminal.

Large quantities of farm produce and berries are raised in the surrounding country for the city markets. These could be carried to Ocean City by water for rail shipment much more easily than they could be hauled by wagon over the heavy roads. In addition, there is considerable timber, ready for manufacturing into lumber, which is left standing on account of the difficulty of getting it to the railroad. This timber is, mostly, directly upon the shores of river and bay. Another item of prospective traffic is the carrying of Ocean City's summer visitors up and down the river. Fishing is also carried on to a considerable extent. Ocean City has a winter population of about 400 and a fluctuating summer population of about 4,000.

This is the extent of the benefits that would be derived from improving St. Martins River and Isle of Wight Bay, but by combining this improvement with the removal of the shoals in Sinepuxent Bay the benefits would be materially extended by providing communication with the outside world by way of Chincoteague Inlet, Va., 40 miles below Ocean City, Md.

To the northward from the mouth of St. Martins River extend the shoal waters of Isle of Wight and Assawaman Bays, 6½ miles to the canal connecting Assawaman with Indian River Bay, a link about 4 miles long in the Inland Waterway to connect Chincoteague Bay, Va., with Delaware Bay, Del., projected some 20 to 25 years ago and partially executed but never completed. By this route, if it is ever opened, St. Martins River will be about 36 miles from the Delaware Breakwater Harbor, while now by way of Chincoteague Inlet it is about 125 miles. Any dredging plant to execute the improvement would have to make the ocean voyage of 80 miles from the Delaware Breakwater or an equally long trip from Norfolk to Chincoteague Inlet, and for the small amount of work and the small amount of commerce to be benefited, the cost of the undertaking would be prohibitive. A survey of St. Martins River and the western portion of Isle of Wight Bay would cost \$1,000.

Dependent upon the improvement the local interests expect to revive the commerce of 20 to 30 years ago before the shoals became impassable, when there was a regular line of schooners sailing from St. Martins River to New York and Philadelphia, carrying corn, oats, wheat, pine wood, and lumber.

Even with the improvement of the shoals in Sinepuxent Bay omitted, it is expected that a good trade could be established, as the farmers use a great deal of phosphate fertilizer which could be carried by water as far as the Sinepuxent Bay shoals and then lightered the remainder of the distance at less cost than by the present rail and wagon route.

Without doubt such an improvement would be of great benefit to the entire vicinity, but the cost would be far out of proportion to the money value of the benefits, on account, principally, of its inaccessible location.

3. I concur in the views above expressed. The river and harbor act of June 25, 1910, also provides for an examination of Sinepuxent

Bay with a view to a channel 5 feet in depth from the mouth of St. Martins River south. These two examinations are really for a continuous channel and should be considered together. While the expense of bringing a dredging plant to the locality is regarded as excessive for either of the two works alone, it is, in my opinion, fully justified for the combined improvements.

4. I therefore recommend that they be considered together and that a survey thereof be authorized. The cost of the combined survey is estimated at \$1,250.

5. There are no public terminal or transfer facilities nor any wharves. There are, however, landing places which are available to the general public; but these afford no direct connection with railroads or other transportation lines.

6. Freshets on this stream occasion no difficulty, and there is no current nor hydrostatic head which would make the use of water power feasible.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

R. R. RAYMOND,  
*Major, Corps of Engineers.*

The CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, UNITED STATES ARMY  
(Through the Division Engineer).

[First indorsement.]

U. S. ENGINEER OFFICE, EASTERN DIVISION,  
*New York City, December 2, 1910.*

1. Respectfully forwarded to the Chief of Engineers, United States Army.

2. It will be noticed that no statistics of present commerce are given, and that the district officer reports that, considered alone, this improvement is not worthy of being done by the General Government. The district officer, however, is of the opinion that, considering it in connection with a proposed improvement of Sinepuxent Bay, the combined improvement is fully justified.

3. I am of the opinion that the locality is not worthy of improvement by the General Government.

WM. T. ROSSELL,  
*Colonel, Corps of Engineers,*  
*Division Engineer.*

[For report of the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors see page 2.]



