

SINEPUXENT BAY, MD.

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L E T T E R

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING,

WITH A LETTER FROM THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, REPORT ON PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF SINEPUXENT BAY, MD., FROM THE MOUTH OF ST. MARTINS RIVER SOUTH, WITH A VIEW TO A CHANNEL 5 FEET IN DEPTH.

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OCTOBER 11, 1913.—Referred to the Committee on Rivers and Harbors and ordered to be printed.

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WAR DEPARTMENT,  
*Washington, October 10, 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 9th instant, together with copy of report from Maj. R. R. Raymond, Corps of Engineers, dated November 30, 1910, on preliminary examination of Sinepuxent Bay, 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 9, 1913.*

From: The Chief of Engineers, United States Army.

To: The Secretary of War.

Subject: Preliminary examination of Sinepuxent Bay, Md.

1. There is submitted herewith, for transmission to Congress, report dated November 10, 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 Sinepuxent Bay, Md., with a view to a channel 5 feet in depth from the mouth of St. Martins River south.

2. The only navigable connection between Sinepuxent Bay and the ocean is via Chincoteague Inlet; and while there is apparently but little commerce now using this waterway, it is the hope of those interested that an improvement to a depth of 5 feet would result in a return to the commercial activities of 20 or 30 years ago.

3. The act of 1910 also provided for an examination of St. Martins River, in Worcester County, Md., which is a tributary of Sinepuxent Bay. (See report in H. Doc. No. 254, 63d Cong., 1st sess.) 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 doing the desired work in Sinepuxent Bay or St. Martins River 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 notified of the board's unfavorable 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 Sinepuxent Bay, Md., with a view to a channel 5 feet in depth from the mouth of St. Martins River south, as apparently desired by the interests concerned and described in the reports herewith, is not deemed advisable at the present time.

WM. T. ROSSELL,  
*Chief of Engineers, United States 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. Sinepuxent Bay is one of the several shallow inland bays extending along the Atlantic coast from Cape Henlopen to Cape Charles. The only navigable communication between Sinepuxent Bay and the ocean is via Chincoteague Inlet, and from this inlet as far north as St. Martins River the general depth is 5 feet at low water. There is no appreciable lunar tide in this section, but there is a fluctuation of the water level of 2 to 3 feet due to the wind.

3. The district officer reports that there are two particularly bad shoals in Sinepuxent Bay with 3 feet depth over them, the improvement of which would afford an unobstructed 5-foot low-water navigation from Chincoteague Inlet to above Ocean City, a distance of about 40 miles. No statistics of present business were obtainable, and there is apparently but little commerce now using this waterway. It is stated that 20 to 30 years ago there was a thriving business on these bays, and it is the hope of those interested that the improvement of the waterway would result in a return of commercial activity. The project would be an isolated one and would involve considerable expense in assembling and returning the necessary plant. The district officer believes that, considered alone, the cost would be very great in proportion to the business, either present or prospective, to be benefited, but if undertaken in conjunction with the improvement of St. Martins River, with which the bay connects, the expense would be fully justified for the combined improvements, and he therefore recommends that a survey of these waterways be authorized at an estimated cost of \$1,250. The division engineer is of opinion that the locality is not worthy of improvement by the United States.

4. At the instance of the board, the district officer invited all persons known to be interested in the improvement of Sinepuxent Bay 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 probable large cost of the proposed work and the limited benefits to be expected therefrom, the board concurs with the division engineer in the opinion that Sinepuxent Bay, Md., is not at present 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,  
*Lieut. Col., Corps of Engineers,  
Senior Member Present.*

#### PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF SINEPUXENT BAY, 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 report upon a preliminary examination of Sinepuxent Bay, Md., with a view to a channel 5 feet in depth from the mouth of St. Martins River south, 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 I quote as follows:

Sinepuxent Bay is one of the chain of inland bays extending along the Atlantic coast of Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware from Cape Charles, Va., almost to Cape Henlopen, Del. These are all very shallow bodies of water with no definite lines of division between them until the head of Assawaman Bay is



reached, where a narrow neck of land running to the ocean shore separates Assawaman Bay from Indian River Bay. This barrier was cut through about 20 years ago by a canal, a link in the proposed "Inland waterway from Chincoteague Bay, Va., to the Delaware Breakwater Harbor, at or near Lewes, Del." This canal has become too shoal for any but very small boats.

The chain of bays to the southward is separated from the ocean by a narrow strip of land, through which are many inlets between Cape Charles and Chincoteague, which is now the most northerly inlet on this section, except Indian River Inlet, the outlet for Indian River and Rehoboth Bays. Formerly Green Run Inlet opened about halfway between Chincoteague and Ocean City, but it closed many years ago, leaving Chincoteague the only outlet to the ocean, for Chincoteague, Sinepuxent, Isle of Wight, and Assawaman Bays, and these bays have been steadily shoaling. As far north as the St. Martins River the general depth is about 5 feet at low-water stage. The lunar tides through Chincoteague Inlet are soon lost in the wide expanse of the bays and in the network of thoroughfares, but there is a fluctuation of the water level of 2 to 3 feet, due to the wind.

There are two particularly bad shoals in Sinepuxent Bay with 3 feet depth on them, one off Sandy Point and the second off South Point, 6½ and 10 miles, respectively, south of Ocean City. If these two places were improved there would be an unobstructed 5-foot low-water navigation from Chincoteague Inlet to above Ocean City, a distance of about 40 miles. This would open up intercommunication for all the surrounding country, give water transportation to the farmers in marketing their farm produce and berries, in place of the heavy sandy roads, and give them a cheaper way of getting their supplies. At one time, 20 to 30 years ago, there was a thriving business on these upper bays, but it gradually dwindled as the waters shoaled until it no longer exists in spite of the increasing population.

No statistics were obtainable as to present business, but glowing descriptions were given of the business of the past, with the firm belief that it would return many times over if communication were again opened.

These bays form a part of the route of the inland waterway before mentioned, and they would have been deepened if that project had been carried to completion, thus opening up all this country to communication with the outer world as a part only of the territory benefited.

Such isolated projects in inaccessible places as the one in hand are relatively very expensive and must give promise of large increase in business to warrant their execution. Such hardly seems the probability in the present case, as the cost, due largely to the distance a dredging plant would have to be transported, would be very great in proportion to the business, either present or prospective, benefited.

It is estimated that a survey covering the shoals in question would cost \$500.

I concur in the views above expressed. The river and harbor act of June 25, 1910, also provides for an examination of **St. Martins River**, in Worcester County, Md. 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.

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.

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

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.]

UNITED STATES 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 St. Martins River, that 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 p. 2.]

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