

POCOMOKE RIVER, MARYLAND.

LETTER
FROM
THE SECRETARY OF WAR,
TRANSMITTING

A report from the Chief of Engineers of a survey of Pocomoke River, Maryland.

FEBRUARY 5, 1885.—Referred to the Committee on Rivers and Harbors and ordered to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington City, February 4, 1885.

The Secretary of War has the honor to transmit to the House of Representatives a report dated the 2d instant, from the Chief of Engineers, and a copy of a report from Mr. W. F. Smith, United States agent, of the results of a survey of Pocomoke River, Maryland, made under his directions, to comply with the river and harbor act of July 5, 1884, together with a copy of the report of a preliminary examination of the same as therein provided for, and also an estimate of \$8,000 as the cost of removing the only impediment to good navigation from the mouth of said river to the town of Snow Hill.

ROBERT T. LINCOLN,
Secretary of War.

The SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS,
UNITED STATES ARMY,
Washington, D. C., February 2, 1885.

SIR: I have the honor to submit herewith a copy of a report to this office from Mr. W. F. Smith, United States agent, of the results of a survey of Pocomoke River, Maryland, made under his directions, to comply with the requirements of the river and harbor act of July 5, 1884, together with a copy of the report of a preliminary examination of the same as therein provided for.

The work of improvement made on this river by the Government prior to 1880 has stood well, and has been of decided benefit to navigation.

That now suggested, the cost of which is estimated at \$8,000, would remove the only remaining impediment to good navigation from the mouth to the town of Snow Hill, and appears to be called for by the growing trade of the river.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN NEWTON,
*Chief of Engineers,
Brig. and Bvt. Maj. Gen.*

Hon. ROBERT T. LINCOLN,
Secretary of War.

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF POCOMOKE RIVER AND SOUND,
MARYLAND.

UNITED STATES ENGINEER OFFICE,
Wilmington, Del., October 17, 1884.

GENERAL: I have the honor to forward herewith a report of a preliminary examination of Pocomoke River and Sound, made by Thomas I. George.

I am of the opinion that the river is worthy of improvement from the commerce now being carried on by means of steamboats and sail vessels.

The estimate for the survey is \$500.

Respectfully,

WM. F. SMITH,
United States Agent.

The CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, U. S. A.

REPORT OF MR. THOMAS I. GEORGE.

BALTIMORE, *October 15, 1884.*

GENERAL: In accordance with your instructions (received through Colonel William Proctor Smith, assistant engineer) of the 3d instant, I have made preliminary examinations of Pocomoke Sound and River, and beg to submit the following report:

There being no necessity for entering upon any detailed description of Pocomoke Sound and River, that work having been previously most ably performed by Mr. George W. Parsons, of Salisbury, Md. (as may be seen by reference to the Report of the Chief of Engineers for 1879, vol. 1, folio 507, &c.), I shall confine myself to that portion of the river which, in my opinion, is worthy of improvement, giving my reasons for such opinion.

The improvement of the navigation of the Pocomoke River, made during the year 1879, by the United States, has been of the most decided advantage to the town of Snow Hill, Md., and the large area of territory tributary thereto.

Detailed descriptions of this improvement can be found in the Reports of the Chief of Engineers for the years 1879 and 1880.

The principal means of transportation to and from Snow Hill is by steamboat, there being a semi-weekly line from Baltimore to that place, making landings at other points on the river, Snow Hill being the present head of navigation.

In addition to this steamboat line, there are six sail vessels owned in and trading to and from Snow Hill, their chief cargoes being lumber, with return cargoes of coal, ice, and the more bulky freights not usually transported by steamboats. The average capacity of these vessels is about 80 tons.

There are also a number of vessels owned and run from Pocomoke City, Md., and other points on the river, which, with some outside craft, all trade to Snow Hill.

The trade of Snow Hill has greatly increased since the completion of the improvement made by the United States, during the year 1879.

During the past year more than 12,000 tons of miscellaneous freight have been carried by the steamboats and sail vessels combined, and about 8,000,000 feet of lumber by sail vessels alone.

The steamboat at present on this line is too small for the needs of the commerce of Snow Hill and other points on the river, and the company owning it are desirous of putting a larger boat on the route to supply this demand, but are unable to do so, on account of the very short and sharp bends in the river, immediately below Snow Hill. It is not, however, the steamboat alone that would be benefited by an additional improvement to the navigation of the river, as very often vessels are compelled to await a favorable wind to allow them to pass out beyond these bends; sometimes the time lost in this way is two or three days. The bends referred to are just below Snow Hill, and to obviate these difficulties it would be necessary to cut through a point of marsh and swamp.

The cut through the swamp opposite "Dighton," which was made by the United States during the year 1879, needs a resurvey to determine its present depth, and also to obtain the necessary data for making an estimate for an additional width of, say, 25 or 30 feet, which the present needs of commerce require; its original width was 80 feet. Therefore, for the reasons stated above, I think that a portion of the Pocomoke River is worthy of improvement, and would respectfully recommend that a survey be made of the river from the iron bridge at Snow Hill to a point opposite "Dighton" or a short distance below the south end of the cut-off made by the United States in 1879. The amount required to make this survey would be about \$500. This amount is intended to include the cost of making map and estimate.

I do not consider the present or prospective needs of commerce require any outlay for a survey of the "Muds" at the mouth of the Pocomoke River.

Respectfully submitted.

THOMAS I. GEORGE.

General W. F. SMITH,
United States Agent.

SURVEY OF POCOMOKE RIVER, MARYLAND, FROM SNOW HILL TO
DIGHTON.

UNITED STATES ENGINEER OFFICE,
Wilmington, Del., January 21, 1885.

GENERAL: I have the honor to forward herewith a copy of a report and survey, made by Mr. C. M. Bird, of the Pocomoke River, Maryland, from Snow Hill to Dighton, being the only part of the Pocomoke River and Sound where any improvement is deemed necessary at the present time.

The improvement of the river by making a "cut-off" below Snow Hill, as suggested by Mr. Bird, is recommended as important by reason of the commerce now existing. The title to the land necessary to make the "cut-off" should be made over to the United States free of all expense.

The appropriation asked for is \$8,000, all of which could profitably be expended during the present year.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

WM. F. SMITH,
United States Agent.

The CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, U. S. A.

REPORT OF MR. C. M. BIRD, ASSISTANT ENGINEER.

UNITED STATES ENGINEER OFFICE,
Wilmington, Del., January 21, 1885.

GENERAL: I have the honor to submit the following report of the survey, under your direction, of the Pocomoke River, Maryland, from the Iron Bridge at Snow Hill to a point opposite Dighton, about 1 mile below, together with the map* showing the present condition of this portion of the river, and also of the new channel opposite Dighton, which was finished in August, 1879.

* Omitted.

As will be seen by the map, this new channel has maintained its original depth, and has somewhat increased in width; the original width was 80 feet; it is now about 100 feet wide at low-water mark.

Between the steamboat wharf at Snow Hill and the Dighton Cut there is at the present time four exceedingly abrupt and dangerous bends in the river. These render the navigation by the steamboats using the river intricate and dangerous at all times, and in times of strong winds it is almost impossible to pass them, while sailing vessels are compelled to await favorable winds and tides to pass them at any time.

The improvement proposed and shown on the map contemplates making a new channel or "cut-off" through the low neck of land or swamp forming the bends of the river, giving a channel of 80 feet clear width, with a depth of 7 feet at mean low water.

This "cut-off" will be 1,100 feet in length, and will save 3,000 feet of very dangerous navigation, making a saving of 1,900 feet, and will entirely avoid the four dangerous bends. The estimated cost of the improvement is as follows:

24,000 cubic yards dredging, at 30 cents	\$7,200
Engineering and superintendence	800
Total	8,000

The material to be removed is partly stumps and logs, the balance is soft mud. The stumps and logs generally appear to be very rotten, the underbrush is small and easily dredged out. The material can be deposited on either side of the cut or placed in the abandoned bends of the river as may appear to be most available.

It seems to be the general opinion of all parties interested in the navigation of the river that this improvement will make good navigation all the way from the mouth of the river to the head of navigation.

The commerce of Snow Hill is increasing. As shown by the report of Mr. Thomas I. George on the preliminary examination of this work, under date of October 15, 1884: One semi-weekly line of steamboats to Baltimore. Six sailing vessels, with an average capacity of 80 tons each, owned in and trading to Snow Hill, besides a number of other vessels owned and run from Pocomoke City, Md., and other points on the river, which, with some outside craft, all trade to Snow Hill.

During the past year more than 12,000 tons of miscellaneous freight have been carried by the steamboats and sail vessels combined, and about 8,000,000 feet of lumber by the sail vessels alone.

It is extremely important to those using the river that the navigation at these bends should be improved to accommodate this rapidly improving commerce.

As the cost of improving the bends by dredging the present channel would be about the same as by making the "cut-off," and as the benefits would only be partial and temporary, I have not made any estimate for that work.

I remain, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

C. M. BIRD,
Assistant Engineer.

General WILLIAM F. SMITH,
United States Agent.