

BLAINE HARBOR, WASHINGTON.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING,

WITH A LETTER FROM THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, REPORT OF EXAMINATION OF BLAINE HARBOR, WASHINGTON.

DECEMBER 5, 1907.—Referred to the Committee on Rivers and Harbors and ordered to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, December 4, 1907.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith a letter from the Chief of Engineers, U. S. Army, dated June 8, 1907, together with copy of a report from Maj. H. M. Chittenden, Corps of Engineers, dated April 11, 1907, of a preliminary examination of Blaine Harbor, Washington, made by him in compliance with the provisions of the river and harbor act of March 2, 1907.

Very respectfully,

ROBERT SHAW OLIVER,
Acting Secretary of War.

The SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS,
Washington, June 8, 1907.

SIR: I have the honor to submit herewith report of April 11, 1907, by Maj. H. M. Chittenden, Corps of Engineers, on preliminary examination of Blaine Harbor, Washington, ordered by the river and harbor act approved March 2, 1907.

Blaine Harbor has a deep and commodious entrance, admirably protected from prevailing winds; but access to the harbor front is cut off by tide flats, making it necessary to build long wharves. The improvement desired is the dredging of a channel through these tide flats, so that vessels can approach nearer the town.

With the information at hand the district officer is unable to arrive at a conclusion as to whether it is advisable that the desired improvement should be undertaken by the General Government, and he recommends a survey, as provided for by law, in order to secure the necessary additional information.

For the reasons given in its report of May 27, 1907, herewith, the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors expresses the opinion that it is not advisable for the United States to undertake the work proposed at Blaine Harbor and does not concur in the recommendation of Major Chittenden that a survey be made.

I concur in the adverse views of the Board, and will add further that the desired improvement is in the nature of providing terminal facilities for the water-borne commerce at Blaine rather than of completing part of the through channel. As such it should, in my opinion, be provided by the local interests rather than by the General Government. It is recommended, therefore, that no survey be made in this case and that this report be transmitted to the Public Printer and printed as authorized by section 3 of the act of March

Very respectfully,
A. MACKENZIE,
Brig. Gen., Chief of Engineers,
U. S. Army.

The SECRETARY OF WAR.

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF BLAINE HARBOR, WASHINGTON.

**UNITED STATES ENGINEER OFFICE,
Seattle, Wash., April 11, 1907.**

GENERAL: Complying with instructions contained in your circular letter of March 14, 1907, I have the honor to submit the following report of a preliminary examination of Blaine Harbor, Washington:

A public hearing was held in Blaine on the 4th instant and a personal examination made of the harbor.

The city of Blaine is estimated to possess a population of about 4,000 people. It is situated in the northwest corner of the State of Washington and borders directly upon the British line. Its chief industries are fish and timber products. The fishing industry for the year 1905 amounted to over 12,000 tons of exported fish products, worth nearly \$2,000,000. The timber product for 1906 consisted of something over 120,000,000 feet of logs and about 43,000,000 feet of lumber, the estimated value of which is about \$7,500,000. There is also a considerable traffic in general merchandise. There were nearly one thousand vessels entering the harbor during the year 1906, with a tonnage varying from 5,000 to 3,000 tons. About 70 per cent of the business is done in vessels under 100 tons net tonnage. The port is an important one in the fishing business and will continue to be an important one in the timber business for many years to come.

In recent years the Navy has held target practice in the vicinity of Blaine Harbor and has had considerable occasion to enter the harbor and land at the wharves for various purposes. Whether this arrangement will be permanent is not known, but the situation is considered a favorable one for target practice.

The harbor of Blaine is inclosed by a long sand spit, which completely protects it from the prevailing winds. The great difficulty experienced arises from the fact that the tidelands extend far out into the harbor, making it necessary to build wharves about a mile long in order to reach deep water. The shoal portion of the bay breaks off very quickly into deep water when the limit of the tide flats is reached. It is the desire of the people of Blaine to have one of the State waterways dredged inshore, so that vessels can approach nearer to town, and this constitutes the purpose of the survey and examination asked for in the recent river and harbor act.

I am of the opinion that a waterway such as is desired would be of great advantage to the commercial interests of this port; but I can not state, without further information as to cost, and as to local aid in making a dredged channel available for commerce, whether or not the desired improvement would be advisable. I recommend that I be authorized to make a survey of the harbor and submit my conclusions later. An additional reason for the survey is the fact that this office has no official map of Blaine Harbor and one is necessary in connection with the general supervision of the Sound for

Brig. Gen. A. MACKENZIE,
Chief of Engineers, U. S. A.
Very respectfully, your obedient servant,
H. M. CHITTENDEN,
Major, Corps of Engineers.

BOARD OF ENGINEERS FOR RIVERS AND HARBORS,
Washington, D. C., May 27, 1907.
[Sixth endorsement.]

Respectfully returned to the Chamber of Commerce of
Army.

In accordance with the recommendation of the Board, * * * *
the district officer has procured from the Chamber of Commerce of
Blaine a paper setting forth the reasons of those interested for advo-
cating the improvement of this harbor, and the Board has given care-
ful consideration to the statements and arguments contained therein.
The desires of those interested are indicated in the following

As for the matter of maintaining a dock across the tide flats, it would probably be a necessity, however inconvenient, even if we had the additional wharfage which would be afforded by dredging the waterway. It should be stated that the maintenance of these docks is a very great expense on account of the destruction of the piling by teredos; and if the wharfage along the waterway should prove sufficient for the needs of this port it would be more than a mere convenience. But whether the wharf across the tide flats is maintained or not it affords and could afford no adequate facilities. The city controls a street side 80 feet wide whereon the present wharf is maintained, and the land on either side is controlled by private concerns. But one vessel can moor at this dock at a time; and the dredging of the waterway at the present time as affording a wharfage is an absolute necessity to the traffic of this place, not a mere convenience.

There are, however, other reasons why the waterway is a necessity. The first of these is that our present deep-water frontage is all utilized by industries and although we are now maintaining a dock across the tide flats we have no facilities for loading or unloading vessels nor for mooring craft except the

inadequate and temporary one afforded by our wharf. (We do not consider the private wharves owned by local manufacturing plants, as these are reserved for their own use.) * * *

Nearly all the traffic here is done on vessels of less than 100 tons, and while our harbor is landlocked, yet these smaller vessels require a better shelter than even our snug little harbor affords. A waterway would give us this necessary shelter.

The above describes very clearly the conditions now existing at Blaine Harbor. The improvement desired does not pertain to the harbor proper, but contemplates the dredging of an artificial waterway across tide flats bare at low water, and situated wholly within the limits of the city of Blaine, for the purpose of affording additional water front where facilities for loading and unloading vessels can be provided and maintained at minimum cost. It is stated that the accessible deep-water frontage, consisting of 2,000 feet, is all taken up by industries, which would seem to indicate that existing wharf sites are suitable in character, though insufficient in extent.

The principal difficulty at this harbor appears to arise from the fact that the city has not retained for public uses a sufficient area of the water front to accommodate wharves for its general shipping. Additional water front and additional docks are needed, and the proposed artificial waterway would afford these. Its construction, however, would appear to be equivalent to furnishing an immense slip or dock, which is a work properly developing upon the interests directly concerned, the facilities being those pertaining to the loading and unloading of vessels and not to the necessities of navigation. The Board does not believe that Congress contemplates entering upon the construction of a purely artificial slip or basin for the purposes defined in this instance, and in its opinion such work is not a proper object for the expenditure of public funds, though it recognizes that the improvement proposed would be valuable to local interests and might advantageously be executed by them.

The question of providing additional mooring facilities and shelter for small boats where nature has done so much does not appear to be of sufficient importance to warrant consideration as reasons for undertaking an improvement of the character now proposed.

For these reasons the Board is of the opinion that it is not advisable for the United States to undertake the work proposed at Blaine Harbor, and it is unable to concur with the district officer in his recommendation that a survey of the locality be authorized.

For the Board:

D. W. LOCKWOOD,
Colonel, Corps of Engineers,
Senior Member of the Board.

O