

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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DOCUMENTS

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THE LEGISLATURE

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE.

1866.



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1866.

FORTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE.

SENATE.

No. 22.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

To which was referred the subject of a Fresh Water Basin in the Harbor of Portland.

The Committee to which was referred the subject of a Fresh Water Basin in the harbor of Portland, for the use of the Navy of the United States, have had the matter under consideration, and devoted to it the time and attention which its eminent merits as a National work, and its importance to the interests of this State demand.

But your Committee do not deem it necessary to discuss, at great length, the propriety of the Government's constructing a Fresh Water Basin. Its necessity is recommended by the President, and universally admitted. The question to be determined is, where shall a Fresh Water Basin for the preservation of the Navy be located?

The following advantages are important, if not indispensable, for such location :

1st. It must be accessible, *at all seasons of the year*, for vessels of the largest class.

2d. It must be reasonably secure against foreign capture, or injury from long range artillery on vessels outside the harbor.

3d. It must be capacious enough to hold all the vessels that the Government may consider requisite for the prompt defence of its coastwise harbors against foreign invasion.

4th. It must have an abundant and never failing supply of pure fresh water at all seasons of the year.

5th. Economy in the national expenditures requires the location to be where the necessary cost of construction and subsequent support would be the *least*, consistent with the object to be accomplished.

6th. It must have depth of water enough, both inside the basin and at its entrance, to float vessels of the largest class.

7th. It must be near enough to the ocean, and to our large commercial cities, to make the iron clads available for harbor defence in case of sudden attack by a foreign enemy.

8th. The location should be where ship carpenters, building materials and sailors can readily be obtained.

Your committee believe that more of the essential requisites for such a basin can be found at the mouth of the Presumpscot river, in the harbor of Portland, in connection with the improvements now being made there by the Presumpscot Water Power Company, than at any other location on the Atlantic coast.

The distance from the ocean of the proposed location, is not over six miles, and one mile north-east of the city of Portland. The ship channel from the ocean is straight, and the water of sufficient depth for the largest vessels.

The entrance to the harbor of Portland, is narrow, and easily defended. The forts now constructed, and in progress, will render the harbor as secure against foreign invasion as any harbor on our coast. The distance of the proposed site from the ocean is too great for the work to be injured by projectiles thrown from ships outside the harbor. The proposed location covers an area of more than one hundred acres, a portion of which is now owned by the government in connection with the Marine Hospital. The needful property not now owned by the government can be purchased at a reasonable price.

The supply of fresh water would be obtained from the canal of the Presumpscot Land and Water Power Company, said canal being one hundred and thirty feet wide and ten feet deep, and elevated thirteen feet above high tide. The Presumpscot river having its rise in large fresh water lakes, covering hundreds of square miles, is less affected by the drouth than most of the rivers of New England, and can be relied upon with absolute certainty to furnish the necessary supply of fresh water, at all seasons of the year, to fill a basin of any required capacity.

The large national debt, incurred for the preservation of the government, requires a rigid economy in the public expenditures, and if a fresh water basin can be constructed at Portland, for many thousands of dollars less than at some other place, other advantages being equal, a due regard to economy would give such location the preference. The construction of a sea wall and embankment on but two sides of the proposed basin, with a lock from tide water, can be built for very much less money at Portland than at any other location on or near the coast, and certainly there is no other place on the whole American seaboard where a basin can be filled with fresh water so cheaply, and with equal certainty of supply. The land and water rights, and all the required materials for construction, can be obtained at Portland cheaper than at any other city on the Atlantic.

Access to the proposed locality does not require to be made by dredging out the channel. The water is eleven feet deep at low tide, and twenty-two feet deep at high tide, as appears by the United States Coast Survey. The water in the basin would be twenty-two to twenty-six feet deep; thus affording every desired facility for docking vessels of the largest size.

The distance of Portland from Boston and New York is not so great as to prevent the iron clads docked at Portland, from being made promptly available, on emergency, at either of those commercial cities.

The ships built, and the number of sailors furnished the navy within the past four years by the State of Maine, is conclusive proof that no other locality can more readily furnish the men and materials to repair and man government vessels, when needed, than this State.

In addition to the above mentioned advantages, a dry dock for the examination and repair of vessels, can be built on the property of the government adjoining, and in connection with the proposed basin, for a small per centage of the usual cost of such structures. The side walls and gates would be almost the only expense, as the foundation would be solid rock, and the dock would be filled with water from the basin, and emptied through discharge pipes, at low tide, without one dollar of expense for pumps, steam machinery, or other mechanical power, now every where else necessarily employed to free the dock from water. This novel and economical feature cannot but arrest the special attention of the government

in comparison of advantages of the proposed site with those of any other location that can be brought into competition with it.

Your Committee beg leave to offer the accompanying resolution.

C. J. ABBOTT,
S. A. HOLBROOK,
C. E. WELD,
GEO. F. SHEPLEY,
JOHN L. STEVENS,
THEO. C. WOODMAN,
ISAIAH STETSON,
P. HOUGHTON,
J. W. FAIRBANKS,
H. H. BURBANK.

STATE OF MAINE.

RESOLVE in favor of a fresh water basin, for iron clads,
at Portland.

WHEREAS, the preservation of the iron clad steam-
2 ships of war of the United States, requires that they
3 should be placed in fresh water basins, and the Pre-
4 sumpscot river at Portland furnishes most available
5 water, combined with other unusual facilities and ad-
6 vantages, for such purpose ; therefore,

Resolved, That our senators and representatives in
2 congress, be requested to use their best efforts to cause
3 a scientific examination of said locality to be made,
4 under the authority of the United States, and to secure
5 the establishment of such a basin at that place.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN SENATE, February 13, 1866.

Read and accepted, and on motion of Mr. ABBOTT, laid on the table and 350 copies of the same ordered to be printed for the use of the Legislature.

THOMAS P. CLEAVES, *Secretary.*