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Survey of La Crosse Harbor, Wisconsin: letter from the Secretary of War, transmitting, with a letter from the Chief of Engineers, report of a survey of La Crosse Harbor, Wisconsin. 1897

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SURVEY OF LA CROSSE HARBOR, WISCONSIN.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING,

WITH A LETTER FROM THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, REPORT OF
A SURVEY OF LA CROSSE HARBOR, WISCONSIN.

JANUARY 22, 1897.—Referred to the Committee on Rivers and Harbors and ordered
to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, D. C., January 21, 1897.

SIR: I have the honor to inclose, herewith, a letter from the Chief of Engineers dated January 19, 1897, together with a copy of a report from Lieut. Col. W. R. King, Corps of Engineers, dated January 11, 1897, of a survey made by him in compliance with the provisions of the river and harbor act of June 3, 1896, of La Crosse Harbor, Wisconsin.

Very respectfully,

DANIEL S. LAMONT,
Secretary of War.

The SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS,
UNITED STATES ARMY,
Washington, D. C., January 19, 1897.

SIR: I have the honor to submit the accompanying copy of report, dated January 11, 1897, with map, by Lieut. Col. W. R. King, Corps of Engineers, of the results of a survey of La Crosse Harbor, Wisconsin, made to comply with the provisions of the river and harbor act of June 3, 1896.

The plan of improvement contemplated is shown in detail on the map, and meets with the approval of steamboat men generally, the city engineer, and the board of trade of La Crosse.

It is proposed to build a dam or bulkhead of brush and rock in the Mississippi River 1,575 feet long. A smaller dam of similar material,

450 feet long, is provided for, and is intended to catch deposits from La Crosse River. This dam will run shoreward from the upper end of the long dam to the south of La Crosse River.

Provision is also made for dredging the bar on the Mississippi River side of the proposed long dam to a depth of $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet below low water and for depositing the dredged material, estimated at 55,000 cubic yards, on the inside of the bulkhead. This material will provide an additional landing space of 800 linear feet and fill to 1 foot above high water a portion of the space inside the bulkhead. Certain other filling, to be done at the expense of the city of La Crosse, is also provided for.

The work herein outlined to be undertaken by the United States is estimated to cost \$17,000. An appropriation of \$5,000, made by the river and harbor act of June 3, 1896, for improving this harbor, is still available, leaving \$12,000 yet to be appropriated should the within project be carried out.

In order to insure a current along the main dam or bulkhead, thereby preventing the formation there of another bar, Colonel King proposes to carry out at this time a portion of the general project for the improvement of the Mississippi River at this locality, the work to consist of dam construction at Grand Island and Island No. 105. The cost of these dams should be paid from the general appropriation for improving the river between Missouri River and Minneapolis.

Attention is respectfully invited to the following recommendation of Colonel King:

If it is thought advisable to appropriate funds for the improvement of this landing, I would respectfully recommend that the amount be not taken from the appropriation for the general improvement of the river, and that a proviso be added that no expenditure shall be made for this purpose by the United States until the city of La Crosse shall have taken the necessary steps to carry the sewers across the area to be filled in, so as to discharge outside of the bulkhead herein proposed.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. P. CRAIGHILL,
Brig. Gen., Chief of Engineers.

HON. DANIEL S. LAMONT,
Secretary of War.

SURVEY OF LA CROSSE HARBOR, WISCONSIN.

UNITED STATES ENGINEER OFFICE,
Rock Island, Ill., January 11, 1897.

GENERAL: The river and harbor act of June 3, 1896, provides for a survey of "La Crosse Harbor, Wisconsin." This survey was assigned to me by letter of the Chief of Engineers dated September 5, 1896.

The survey was made in November, 1896, by Assistant Engineer W. A. Thompson, who has rendered a report, estimates, and map, the latter of which is forwarded herewith. There are a large number of maps of this locality on file in this office, running from 1866 to 1895, so that but little field work was necessary to gain the needed information. These maps show the changes in bar and channels from year to year.

La Crosse Harbor, like most Upper Mississippi River harbors, is simply the river front or wharf of the city. In the early days of steamboating and down to about 1882, there was a good landing from Jay street to Pine street, about 2,400 feet, and also along the east side of Black River, above La Crosse River, for a half mile. In those days

the channel of the Mississippi River joined that of the Black above the mouth of the La Crosse River, and the water of both the first-named streams ran together in a deep and wide groove along the city front, and with sufficient velocity to carry away or hold in check the débris thrown out from the La Crosse River.

Since about 1882 the channel of the Mississippi River has moved by degrees lower down, so that it now strikes the eastern shore some distance below the mouth of La Crosse River, the change resulting in great improvement to through navigation. But the sluggish current of Black River, now unaided by that of the Mississippi, is no longer able to handle and restrain the sand and mud deposits from La Crosse River, so that to-day the bar has increased to such an extent as to prevent at low stages landings in Black River and also in the harbor of La Crosse from Pine street to a point about midway between Main and State streets. A change in the channel of the La Crosse River, artificially made in 1884, has perhaps largely accelerated deposits. The bridge crossing the river at Mount Vernon street still further restricts the available length of the wharf to about 500 feet, it not being safe to land nearer the bridge than Pearl street. The railroad tracks along the levee also lessen the space for handling freight. The eddy below the bar is troublesome, and sometimes, on account of the nearness of the bridge, makes the departure of boats dangerous. No landing below the bridge is practicable, sawmills and other manufacturing concerns occupying nearly all the shore between the bridge and La Plume Island.

Nearly all the sewage of La Crosse accumulates in the harbor, there being no current to carry it away.

The project presented, which is shown in red on the map, meets with the approval of steamboat men generally, the city engineer, and the local board of trade.

It is proposed to build a dam or bulkhead of brush and rock to an elevation of 8 feet above low water of 1864, commencing at the center of Main street and running upstream to a point about 1,000 feet from shore nearly opposite the foot of Badger street. This dam, which will have a preponderance of brush—the cheaper material—will be 1,575 feet long, the lower 800 feet being on a flat curve and the remainder straight line. A smaller dam, built to an elevation of 4 feet above low water, for the purpose of catching deposits from La Crosse River, will run shoreward from the upper end of the long dam until it meets the 4-foot contour on south side of La Crosse River—about 450 feet.

It is further proposed to dredge (with a suction or hydraulic dredge, if possible) the bar on the river side of the large dam to a depth of $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet below low water and deposit the material, estimated at 55,000 cubic yards, on the inside of the bulkhead, commencing at the lower end and working upstream. This material if properly used will make an additional 800 linear feet of landing and will fill to 1 foot above high water the space inside the bulkhead up as far as the north line of Vine street.

The space within the bulkhead and the line of the low dam produced to shore is 18.6 acres, and it is expected that the city of La Crosse will fill by degrees, as funds become available, the remainder of the area not filled by the United States with the dredged material, and convert the same into a park. This work, comprising about 400,000 cubic yards, may never be carried out; but, however that may be, the execution of this project as recommended will provide, as before stated, about 800 feet of wharf in addition to the 500 feet now available, which will probably be sufficient for some years to come.

To insure a current along the main dam or bulkhead, and thereby prevent the formation of another bar there, I propose to carry out at this time a portion of the general project for improvement of the Mississippi River in this locality, by building the four wing dams from Grand Island and the lateral dam at foot of Island No. 105 (shown on map). The wing dams are to be built to an elevation of 3 feet above low water, and will have low extensions (shown by dotted red lines) from 4 to 6 feet below low water. The lateral dam will also be built to an elevation of 3 feet above low water, and of such a length as to contract the waterway of Black River at low water to a width of 500 feet.

The cost of the wing and lateral dams should be paid from the general appropriation for improving Mississippi River from Missouri River to Minneapolis.

Estimate for improvement of La Crosse Harbor, Wisconsin.

Long dam or bulkhead, Mississippi River:		
Rock, 4,231 cubic yards, at \$1	\$4,231.00	
Brush, 6,874 cubic yards, at 35 cents	2,405.90	
		\$6,636.90
Cross dam, La Crosse River:		
Rock, 548 cubic yards, at \$1	548.00	
Brush, 918 cubic yards, at 35 cents	321.30	
		869.30
Dredging bar outside of bulkhead and transferring material by hydraulic dredge:		
Sand and mud, 55,000 cubic yards, at 15 cents	8,250.00	
Engineering and contingencies	1,243.80	
		17,000.00
Total		17,000.00

I would say that an appropriation of \$5,000 for La Crosse Harbor, was included in the river and harbor act of June 3, 1896, so that only \$12,000 is needed to carry out the project.

If it is thought advisable to appropriate funds for the improvement of this landing, I would respectfully recommend that the amount be not taken from the appropriation for the general improvement of the river, and that a proviso be added that no expenditure shall be made for this purpose by the United States until the city of La Crosse shall have taken the necessary steps to carry the sewers across the area to be filled in, so as to discharge outside of the bulkhead herein proposed.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. R. KING,
Lieut. Col., Corps of Engineers.

Brig. Gen. W. P. CRAIGHILL,
Chief of Engineers, U. S. A.