

**MOBILE HARBOR, ALA.:
HEARINGS ON THE SUBJECT
OF THE IMPROVEMENT OF
MOBILE HARBOR, ALA**

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Mobile Harbor, Ala.: Hearings on the Subject of the Improvement of Mobile Harbor, Ala by
Committee on Rivers and Harbors United States

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COMMITTEE ON RIVERS AND HARBORS UNITED STATES

**MOBILE HARBOR, ALA.:
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IMPROVEMENT OF MOBILE HARBOR, ALA.

COMMITTEE ON RIVERS AND HARBORS,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, D. C., Friday, February 1, 1918.

The committee this day met, Hon. John H. Small (chairman) presiding.

The CHAIRMAN. Gentlemen, the committee will kindly come to order. This is the morning that we have assigned to a delegation from Mobile, Ala., and we are ready now, Mr. Gray, and I will ask you to kindly take charge and indicate the gentlemen who desire to be heard.

Mr. GRAY. Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the committee, as stated by our chairman, we have before us to-day certain gentlemen from Mobile, representing the commercial bodies of that port, who are to talk to us about the necessity of an increased appropriation for this great harbor upon the Gulf. They have come here under considerable disadvantages; you know something about the weather conditions. In fact, they have come through ice and snow to get here and were about 12 hours belated. They are extremely anxious about this matter, and desire to speak candidly of the real conditions as they are, and of the wonderful developments that have taken place at Mobile since the last engineer's report. These gentlemen are here especially to inform you, and to show you the reasons why Mobile, at this time, should have a greater appropriation than that contemplated and recommended by the Board of Engineers.

I have pleasure in presenting to you the gentlemen who will act as chairman of the Mobile delegation at this meeting to-day. Mr. Stewart Brooks, of Mobile, vice chairman of the joint rivers and harbor committee, who will address you and will present the other members of the delegation who desire to be heard.

The CHAIRMAN. We will be glad to hear from you, Mr. Brooks.

STATEMENT OF MR. STEWART BROOKS, VICE CHAIRMAN JOINT RIVERS AND HARBOR COMMITTEE, MOBILE, ALA.

Mr. BROOKS. Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, we keenly appreciate the opportunity that presents itself to us to-day. We do not wish to take any more of the time of your committee than we have to, and therefore we will not indulge in generalities. The reason I am before you personally is to save time by giving an outline of how we will present our case. We expect, unless you ask questions that will require something else, to ask you to listen to only three technical speakers. We have a delegation of six gentlemen here. One of our

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HEARINGS

ON THE SUBJECT
OF THE

IMPROVEMENT OF MOBILE HARBOR, ALA.

HELD BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON RIVERS AND HARBORS

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SIXTY-FIFTH CONGRESS

CONSISTING OF

JOHN H. SMALL, North Carolina, *Chairman*.

CHARLES F. BOOHER, Missouri.
THOMAS GALLAGHER, Illinois.
THOMAS J. SCULLY, New Jersey.
SAMUEL M. TAYLOR, Arkansas.
H. GARLAND DUPRÉ, Louisiana.
MARTIN DIES, Texas.
OSCAR L. GRAY, Alabama.
GEORGE K. DENTON, Indiana.
HUBERT F. FISHER, Tennessee.
CLARENCE F. LEA, California.

CHARLES A. KENNEDY, Iowa.
ROBERT M. SWITZER, Ohio.
JAMES A. FREAR, Wisconsin.
DOW H. DRUKKER, New Jersey.
PETER E. COSTELLO, Pennsylvania.
S. WALLACE DEMPSEY, New York.
HENRY I. EMERSON, Ohio.
HENRY Z. OSBORNE, California.
RICHARD P. FREEMAN, Connecticut.

FEBRUARY 1, 1918



WASHINGTON
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

1918

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members is, by invitation, with the Fuel Administration to-day and can not be with us, and we are sorry because he is one of the most experienced men we have. We have talkers who will give you nothing but a plain, uncolored, and unbiased presentation from our viewpoint.

I think it will be within the bounds of propriety for me to thank you for giving us the privilege of entertaining two delegations from this committee, one consisting of your honored chairman and Mr. Switzer, Mr. Emerson, and your assistant secretary, as I recall, and the other consisting of Messrs. Frear and Hulbert. We are sorry to miss Mr. Hulbert, but we are glad to meet his successor, Mr. Lea.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Lea succeeds Mr. Kettner; Mr. Hulbert's successor has not been appointed.

Mr. BROOKS. Gentlemen, we shall ask you to hear our case in three sections: First, Mr. Horace Turner, who is an experienced shipping man and will present the case generally. He will handle nearly all of the matters we desire to handle before you to-day. We will then ask you to hear Dr. A. G. Ward, president of the Alabama State Harbor Commission. Then we will hear from Mr. Parsons on the industrial development of Mobile.

I may say that we feel we would be done an injustice if our case were considered on anything written or printed. Developments have been so stupendous and so fast that an accurate idea of the conditions could not be obtained from anything printed or written. Only a few months ago the Government was taking away from Mobile its normal traffic for export, but now the Government has reversed what it formerly did, and more traffic is being thrust upon us than we ever had before. We believe you will find, when you hear from these gentlemen, that our request for increased appropriations for this port is justified.

I now take pleasure in presenting to you Mr. Horace Turner, chairman of our committee.

The CHAIRMAN. Before the hearing concludes, I think it would be proper if you would have one of the gentlemen describe the water terminals as they exist to-day, and your plans for any future development of such terminals.

Mr. BROOKS. I will ask Mr. Turner to present that matter in the opening portion of his talk. I could tell you in a general way, but I think Mr. Turner could present it more concisely, and I will ask Mr. Turner to give that subject his first attention.

STATEMENT OF MR. HORACE TURNER, CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT RIVERS AND HARBOR COMMITTEE OF MOBILE.

Mr. TURNER. Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, our petition here to-day for an increased appropriation is really predicated upon the assumption that we can not ever get 30 feet of water at the rate we are going now. We are already far behind; we should have had 30 feet long ago, but on account of first one thing then another we have been allowed to lag behind our competitors. It was in 1913 that we had a favorable report on Mobile as we thought. We came up before this committee and asked for money, and we were asked to get a further test as to the cost of maintenance. That delayed us until 1916. We then obtained a favorable report. At that time it

was recommended that we should have this 30-foot channel and that it should be completed within a period of four years. We lost much time waiting to get the report, and after the report was approved we lost another two years; so instead of getting a 30-foot channel by 1920, as we expected, we are still not even on the road to getting one, for the appropriations we are getting now will not dig the channel.

I think the appropriation of \$100,000 for new work is based upon the idea that we can use one or more of the existing dredges in our district. There are three down there, one at Mobile, one at Pascagoula, and one at Gulfport, and the idea seems to be that those dredges can be used on our work. As a matter of fact, we have been taking up the question with our district engineer of getting our channel dug to where it originally was, viz, 27 feet. The dredges have been called into service for this emergency work, to go around and dig some of the basins in front of shipbuilding plants, etc. They have been called in because there were no private contractors to do that work, so the Government has been doing it, and it has been very necessary, but it took the dredges from the maintenance work, and almost every channel in the Gulf has shoaled up on that account. It is for this reason that at Mobile we can not do anything but keep up the maintenance work. The engineer at Mobile has written me a letter showing that he could not use the Gulfport and Pascagoula dredges to help out. I should like to read that letter:

WAR DEPARTMENT,
UNITED STATES ENGINEER OFFICE,
Mobile, Ala., January 21, 1918.

MR. HORACE TURNER,
Mobile, Ala.

DEAR SIR: In reply to your inquiry of the 18th instant regarding time when you could count on having the 27-foot depth restored in the Mobile channel and regarding time when any progress could be expected on the new 30-foot channel, will state that on account of the fact that all the dredges of this district have been used for several months in connection with emergency dredging for various shipbuilding plants, all of the three main ship channels of this district are badly shoaled up, and it will not be practicable to divert either of the other dredges to Mobile. Additional delay has been caused by the extensive repairs caused by this private dredging, as the material encountered in dredging for the shipyards caused much more wear and strain on the dredging machinery than that found in the regular channel dredging.

On account of the large amount of shoaling which has already taken place and the delay referred to, it is believed that all of the funds now on hand will be required to restore the 27-foot depth in the channel. As to date when material progress can be made on the 30-foot project this will, of course, depend on the new appropriation, but, as you are probably aware, it will be impossible to make any material progress on the new project with the dredging plant now on hand. The three dredges which we have are from four to nine years old, and the amount of time required to keep them in first-class shape from now on will probably be greater than it has been in the past. As there is a large amount of dredging work in sight at both Gulfport and Pascagoula, it is not believed that dredges can be diverted from either of those channels for any long periods without serious protests from those localities.

Yours, very truly,

G. K. LITTLE,
Special Disbursing Agent.

So you see we can not get anywhere with the dredging plan. We have either got to have another dredge down there—and that would require quite a heavy appropriation—or we have got to have enough money to finish this channel by outside contracts.

The first recommendation of the Chief Engineer was for \$850,000. That provided for another dredge, and I think the next recommendation of the local engineer provided for a similar amount, something around \$800,000, so that they could really make some headway on this 30-foot project. There is no use talking about giving it to us 10 years or 20 years from now. It is going to be my effort to show you that, based upon our actual tonnage and actual freight conditions, we should have had it long ago, and we should now be given enough money to get it just as quickly as it is possible to do so.

In the first place, I will file with the committee a statement which shows the position of Mobile. This statement is for the year ending June 30, 1913, which is the last normal year for which we have statistics, and which is the last year in which statistics were compiled by the Government in such a manner that you can compare the ports. The statistics are now made up by districts and you can not compare the individual ports any longer.

Statement showing exports and imports for year 1913.

	Exports.	Imports.	Total.
New York.....	1,098	\$1,048,320,629	\$1,966,286,617
Galveston.....	558	7,820,628	280,278,496
New Orleans.....	277	82,396,100	232,379,377
Boston.....	57	145,596,451	216,132,108
Philadelphia.....	44	33,309,678	169,525,022
Baltimore.....	129	22,865,238	149,380,877
San Francisco.....	86	62,501,681	128,323,036
Puget Sound.....	90	51,473,683	114,021,792
Savannah.....	61	4,461,832	62,967,286
Mobile.....	38	3,675,180	31,499,178

The second statement gives the net registered tonnage of vessels entered and cleared in foreign trade for the year ending June 30, 1913:

	Vessels.	Tonnage.		Vessels.	Tonnage.
New York.....	8,089	28,894,780	Galveston.....	1,376	3,325,460
Puget Sound.....	8,750	5,945,826	San Francisco.....	863	2,275,532
New Orleans.....	2,064	5,312,018	Norfolk.....	628	1,492,403
Philadelphia.....	2,173	5,158,600	Sabine.....	678	1,422,587
Boston.....	2,623	4,968,419	Mobile.....	1,386	1,328,689
Baltimore.....	1,488	3,466,832			

The third statement shows the class of steamers loaded at New Orleans during 1913, showing draft loaded outward:

Steamer.	Draft.	Steamer.	Draft.
Jean D'Arc.....	28	Saxonia.....	27.7
Prometheus.....	27.9	Californian.....	27.3
Custodian.....	28	Excelsior.....	27.8
Victorian.....	30.6	Phoenix.....	30
India.....	30.6	Nessian.....	27.6
Monarch.....	29	Maartensook.....	29
Cestrian.....	29	Rathlin Head.....	28.8
Commanchee.....	27.9	Armenian.....	30.6
Bulyssis.....	27.8	Meltonian.....	27.8
Wayfare.....	28.3	Gerredijk.....	29.2
Nubian.....	29.9	Colonian.....	28.3
Andijk.....	28.11	Atlantian.....	28.8
Oxonian.....	28.4	Kansan.....	29.5
Hesperus.....	28	Richmond.....	30.3

The next is a statement showing the tonnage handled at Mobile and at Savannah, Charleston, Brunswick, Pensacola, and New Orleans, the principal competitors of Mobile; also, at Port Bolivar, Texas City, Key West, and Galveston, all of them having 30 feet of water. This tonnage statement is shown for 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915, and 1916, and these statistics clearly show that Mobile already has more tonnage than Brunswick and Charleston combined, more than twice the tonnage of Pensacola, and more than that of Port Bolivar, Texas City, Key West, and Brunswick combined, and yet Mobile has to struggle along with a 27-foot channel and handle its tonnage at a disadvantage, although each and every one of these other ports have been given 30 feet of water some time ago. It seems to us that if it is economical for the Federal Government to give these ports 30 feet Mobile should certainly have 30 feet, because her tonnage is equal to that of several of them combined.

Tonnage handled at Mobile and competing ports for 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915, and 1916, and the depth of channels at such ports.

Year.	Mobile.	New Orleans.	Savannah.	Pensacola.	Port Bolivar.
1912.....	2,210,486	5,059,830	3,120,678	1,271,979	428,465
1913.....	2,212,805	6,442,332	3,154,089	1,475,050	256,105
1914.....	2,320,442	6,273,012	2,478,535	1,164,502	267,640
1915.....	1,579,804	6,536,132	2,890,130	871,166	182,450
1916.....	1,673,020	7,306,432	2,748,898	810,544	173,596

Year.	Texas City.	Key West.	Brunswick.	Charleston.	Galveston.
1912.....	464,237	554,107	735,697	986,206	3,224,367
1913.....	446,228	458,780	1,029,026	1,043,056	4,455,068
1914.....	301,106	655,407	487,224	487,184	5,019,794
1915.....	300,789	1,069,077	500,011	920,802	5,326,889
1916.....	266,133	1,028,374	470,016	1,108,901	2,513,081

Depth of water:

New Orleans, 31 feet (upon 35-foot project).
 Savannah, 26 feet, plus 6-foot tide.
 Pensacola, 30 feet.
 Port Bolivar, 30 feet.
 Texas City, 30 feet.
 Key West, 30 feet.
 Brunswick, 30 feet, plus 6.6-foot tide.
 Galveston, 30 feet.
 Mobile, 27 feet.
 Charleston, 30 feet, plus 5.2-foot tide.

Mr. BOOHER. How many feet of water have you now?

Mr. TURNER. Twenty-seven feet, and we can not increase the depth at all at the present rate of the appropriations.

Mr. BOOHER. Let me call your attention to the Engineer's Report, page 834, volume 1, "Conditions at the end of fiscal year." The channel across Mobile Bar is now being used? Is that out in the open Gulf?

Mr. TURNER. Yes.

Mr. BOOHER. Is not that the project you are talking about?

Mr. TURNER. It is part of it.