

**HARBOR AT CAPE PORPOISE.**

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**LETTER**

FROM

**THE SECRETARY OF WAR,**

TRANSMITTING

*A report of the survey of the harbor at Cape Porpoise, in Maine.*

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**DECEMBER 15, 1845.**

Read, and referred to the Committee on Commerce.

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**WAR DEPARTMENT, December 9, 1845.**

**SIR:** In compliance with the resolution of the House of Representatives of the 7th of June, 1844, requiring the Secretary of War "to procure and report to the House, at the next session of Congress, a survey of the harbor at Cape Porpoise, in the State of Maine," I have to state that Mr. Secretary Wilkins reported, during the then next session, that the want of appropriation applicable to such objects had delayed the survey required.

I now respectfully transmit herewith a report of the chief of the Corps of Topographical Engineers, accompanied with all the information believed to be required by the resolution.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

**W. L. MARCY,**  
*Secretary of War.*

**Hon. J. W. DAVIS,**  
*Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

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**BUREAU OF TOPOGRAPHICAL ENGINEERS,**  
*Washington, December 8, 1845.*

**SIR:** I have the honor of transmitting herewith a copy of the report of Captain W. H. Swift, corps of topographical engineers, upon the condition of the harbor at Cape Porpoise, Maine, with a plan and estimate for its improvement, directed by a resolution of the House of Representatives of the 7th June, 1844.

Respectfully, sir, your obedient servant,

**J. J. ABERT,**  
*Col. Corps Top. Eng.*

**Hon. W. L. MARCY,**  
*Secretary of War.*

WASHINGTON, October 2, 1845.

SIR: I have the honor to state that in obedience to your instructions of the 6th ult., to proceed to Cape Porpoise harbor, Maine, and there to examine the site of the pier proposed to be built at that place for the protection of vessels engaged in the coasting trade, I have performed the duty assigned to me, and have now to report the result of my examination.

No appropriation for a survey of this harbor having been made by Congress to carry out the resolution of the House of Representatives of the 7th June, 1844, directing the Secretary of War "to procure and report to this House, at the next session of Congress, a survey of the harbor of Cape Porpoise, in the State of Maine," I was instructed by you to call upon the Hon. Mr. Herrick, late the member of the House of Representatives for that district, for such information in reference to the proposed improvement as he might have it in his power to impart.

By the accompanying extract from a communication of Mr. Herrick, and by the aid of the sketch furnished by Mr. Herrick, the object to be secured will be readily understood. The personal examination which I made of the site of the proposed pier, and of the neighboring stone quarries, will enable me to present a plan and an estimate of the probable cost of constructing the work, which it was the object of the resolution to bring to the notice of Congress.

The harbor of Cape Porpoise lies on the eastern part of the township of Kennebunkport, and about three miles east of Kennebunk river, about midway between Portsmouth and Portland, the only harbor in fact between these two points, and consequently much resorted to by vessels engaged in the coasting trade between Boston and all the ports east of Kennebunk, embracing nearly the whole coast of Maine, the provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, &c. &c.

This harbor is formed by a cluster of small islands, and the principal entrance lies between Goat island on the east, on which there is a lighthouse, and Holly island on the west; the width of the channel between them is about 90 yards, and about 6 fathoms in depth at low water. After passing the islands, the channel increases to about 100 yards in width, and at the distance of one eighth of a mile the depth diminishes to 3 fathoms—which width and depth continue without any sensible variation for the distance of about one quarter of a mile; thence it diminishes to 50 or 60 yards in width, and to 16 feet in depth; thence it is gradually reduced both in width and depth to the head of the bay or harbor at Town's wharf, a total distance from the islands at the entrance of about four-fifths of a mile.

From the preceding description, it will be seen that the capacity of the harbor is not great. It has ample depth of water for the class of vessels which is most in use in navigating this part of the coast—vessels of from 60 to 200 tons, and drawing say 7 to 12 feet; but it does not possess sufficient width. It is so much resorted to as a harbor of refuge in storms, that it is not unusual for 60 or 80 vessels, and sometimes 100, to seek shelter in it at the same time; and it is at such times that the difficulties which are apt to be remedied are experienced. The channel way being narrow, the vessels are obliged to anchor so near each other, that the swell of the sea produces constant dangers from collision with each other—a result which is perfectly evident.

To obviate this difficulty, it is proposed by the inhabitants and others,

