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SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

4 **PORT RARITAN**

DISTRICT COMMISSION

TO THE

LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE

OF NEW JERSEY

JANUARY 3, 1944

SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT
of
PORT RARITAN DISTRICT COMMISSION

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JANUARY 3, 1944

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Port Raritan District Commission was created by the 1926 New Jersey Legislature (Chapter 337 P. L. 1926). The Commissioners are nine in number and have the jurisdiction and powers set out in this Act.

The Port Raritan District consists of Middlesex County, together with the Raritan River from the head of navigation at New Brunswick to Raritan Bay and all other lands and waters of Raritan Bay and the Arthur Kill contiguous thereto. It is one of the three port commissions in the State of New Jersey, the best known and oldest of which is the port commission formed in conjunction with the State of New York known as the Port of New York Authority. The other port commission is the South Jersey Port Commission which includes Trenton and the important Camden section and all of South Jersey.

TO THE LEGISLATURE OF NEW JERSEY

This is the Seventeenth Annual Report of the Port Raritan District Commission. The War Department has promulgated a rule which places restrictions on the publication of information which will afford aid or comfort to the enemy. This rule includes the development of all rivers and harbors located in the United States. The dimensions of current projects now in the course of construction and those contemplated in the near future, cannot be publicized for the duration. The Commission is cooperating with the Government in this regard, even to the extent of not giving information to anyone unless all credentials are firmly established. Previously, this type of information was given freely to those who were interested in channel depths for industrial location. The waterways in the Raritan Bay District are of such importance to the war effort that this report must necessarily be confined to general facts. It therefore will not be objectionable to give a brief outline of the activities of this Commission in connection with a few of our major projects.

During 1943 we were again able to realize the great benefits being derived by the construction and maintenance of the three-ship anchorage basin and cut-off channel for ocean-going vessels, constructed by the Federal Government within a mile of the municipalities of Perth Amboy, South Amboy and Staten Island. These improvements have supplied to this port waterway facilities which are being recognized and used by shippers in every part of the world as far as war conditions permit. The Federal Government spent about \$1,750,000 for these projects. While the present depth is sufficient, the three-ship anchorage basin has become too small to fulfill the requirements of current shipping. The number of vessels of all types crowded into this area far exceed what was contemplated when the anchorage was constructed. The economic justification for the construction of the anchorage and the cut-off channel has been well established for some time. Upon renewal of shipping after the war is concluded, this Commission will become actively engaged in seeking federal funds for a substantial enlargement of these facilities.

Due to war restrictions, we cannot here set out the value of imports for the Port of Perth Amboy for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1943. Before the war the United States Customs Service was able to provide us with the

value of such imports as well as the total receipts from duties imposed. It would be interesting to report the number of vessels, both foreign and coastwise, which used the Raritan River waterways during 1943, because the figures, if available for publication, would be impressive. When the war is over and such figures are released it will then be evident to what extent the war effort was benefited by farsighted waterway development.

Federal Expenditures

The following figures, provided by the Federal Government, concern the Raritan Bay District and contiguous waterways. It will be noted that while they indicate the magnitude of the work done in the District in the past and also what is proposed for 1944 and 1945, the information is confined to cost and does not mention the nature of the work:

New York and New Jersey Channels—expended and proposed in the fiscal year 1943, \$1,848,000; actual and proposed expenditures for the fiscal year 1944, \$1,049,000; proposed for 1945, as contained in the Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers for 1943 under "Proposed Operations", \$4,050,000.

Raritan River to Arthur Kill cut-off Channel—for the fiscal year 1943, \$22,000, and \$200,000 for fiscal year 1945.

Raritan River—for the fiscal year 1943, \$1100; actual or proposed for 1944, \$4300; for the fiscal year as contained in the draft of the Annual Report of Chief of Engineers, for 1945 under said "Proposed Operations", \$60,000.

The totals of said expenditures, actual or proposed are for 1943, \$1,871,100; 1944, \$1,053,300; 1945, \$4,310,000.

According to the figures supplied by the Office of District Engineer, New York District, the grand total of monies expended on said waterways up to June 30, 1943, was \$37,039,100, which sum includes any work and maintenance under existing and previous projects.

The war in which the whole world is embroiled and which has come to our own shores, has caused readjustment in the matter of international and coastwise shipping. Even so, the Port Raritan District, like the Port of New York, is congested with shipping, and as the war progresses the shipping of cargoes will go on apace. With deep water facilities in this district as they relate themselves to the New York and New Jersey Channels and the great Port of New York, local waterways supply a valuable adjunct to the whole program of waterway transportation requirements.

The fulfillment of these objectives did not come overnight; they represent the fruition of many years of energetic application and well-organized effort. Our program of construction for improved waterways was not inspired by selfish motives. Everything which has been sponsored and accomplished has been done for the betterment not only of the Atlantic seaboard, but for the improvement of all coastal and inland waterways of the United States as well.

Our program is especially designed to meet the requirements of waterway transportation after we have won the war and won the peace. The construction of new vessels in this country is breaking all previous records. After the war, the United States Merchant Marine will need every improved facility for shipping foodstuffs, wearing apparel, household goods, machinery—both heavy and light, building material and commodities of all kinds to all parts of the world. This highly industrialized center will participate largely in the reestablishment of international trade. While the war is going on, we will continue to seek federal funds for deeper and wider channels, in the hope that when the war is at an end our industries will be able to participate proportionately in the days of peace and prosperity which are bound to come.

The Port Raritan District has within its area twenty-five municipalities, among which are New Brunswick, Perth Amboy, Woodbridge, South Amboy, South River, Sayreville and other highly industrialized and thickly populated communities. Those cities which are not located directly on channels having substantial depth, have a close proximity thereto and are expanding their potentialities to an extent which makes the whole of Middlesex County one of the most productive in the nation. We are in the center of improved railroad facilities and modern highways. Being strategically located between the great cities of New York and Philadelphia, the entire Port Raritan District is growing in importance year after year, and our waterways appreciably contribute to the welfare and prosperity of the nation.

New Jersey Ship Canal

This major project is one which has been of great importance to those persons and organizations who follow the development of waterways. The New Jersey Ship Canal, or "the missing link" as it is popularly called, concerns the construction of the New Jersey Bay-Delaware River section of the intra-coastal waterway—a canal extending from Raritan Bay, an arm of New York Bay, through the Raritan River to Sayreville and then across the State of New Jersey in a southwesterly direction to a point on the Delaware River one-half mile above Bordentown, N. J.—under the direction of the Secretary of War and the supervision of the Chief of Engineers, and generally in accordance with the report of the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, dated July 14, 1942, at an estimated cost of \$199,000,000. The construction

of this Ship Canal, only 32 miles long, along the Sayreville-Bordentown route, would provide the one missing link needed to secure a continuous inland deep water route extending from Norfolk, Virginia to Philadelphia, Pa., and thence to New York City, Albany, N. Y., New London, Conn., and to Boston, Mass. A barge canal along the same route across New Jersey has been considered and discarded in favor of a 27-foot waterway providing in general for ships of 25-foot draft.

According to a report made by Chairman Mansfield of the Committee on Rivers and Harbors, House of Representatives, made to accompany H.R. 2208, under date of March 23, 1942, it is claimed that "by expending less than 30% more than the cost of a barge canal, a Ship Canal can be provided, thus adding to the benefits and economies of the barge route the incalculable war time and peace time advantages of an inland protected route for deep sea vessels along the most vital portion of our eastern seaboard." The report further states: "furthermore in time of war, enemy submarines lurking along our coast may be avoided." After mentioning the privation experienced by the New England States during the past winter because of the lack of fuel, the report said: "the construction of a Ship Canal across New Jersey will facilitate the transportation of fuel into the North Atlantic and New England States. . . . this country has an abundance of fuel, even, a surplus, but its transportation system has fallen down leaving an abundance in one part of the country and a serious shortage in another. . . . Moreover rail equipment and trackage should not be worn out transporting freight which can be moved by water."

The report points out that our principal Navy yards upon the Atlantic, except the one at Charleston, are located at Boston, Brooklyn, Philadelphia and Norfolk, and adds: "by the construction of this channel across New Jersey, all these Navy yards will be connected by a safe inland channel for the movement of all Naval vessels except those of the largest type." Further: "this missing link recommended by the Chief of Engineers should be authorized by Congress and constructed as soon as practicable and the committee does so recommend. We need the canal now. We will need it after the war. It is an uncompleted part of a great, useful and needed public improvement already almost completed."

A minority report which accompanied the report above referred to, set forth numerous objections to the construction of this project, some of them being that it is not a war necessity; it is wasteful; it is not wanted by the State of New Jersey; it will destroy approximately 6,000 acres of food producing farm land; it is a direct menace to the fresh water reserve of the State of New Jersey; and it is unnecessary because of better and less costly inland

canals available. These minority views were enlarged upon in the report but those set forth are the nucleus of the objections offered by the minority members of the Committee.

In reference to the fresh water supply particularly, the whole matter was referred back to the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors for further study where it is now having the consideration of that entire Board. As in all waterway matters of great magnitude, it is necessary for the pros and cons to be thoroughly considered and analyzed before Congress appropriates the funds for construction. Each side believes that it has its meritorious arguments for and against such a project. The New Jersey Ship Canal has been before the public for over 30 years. It is now in the hands of Congress and its action is being awaited with deepest interest by countless persons along the Atlantic seaboard.

Raritan River, New Jersey

This Commission is still actively engaged in sponsoring the improvement of the Raritan River to the City of New Brunswick to the end that the river will be deepened from its present project depth of ten feet to fifteen feet at mean low water. At high tide this improvement would provide a depth of twenty feet. On appeal to the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, a hearing was held before the full board in Washington, D. C., last August. Among other things it was pointed out by counsel that with tide, moon and wind unfavorable, barges which attempted to go in and out of the river at New Brunswick frequently get stuck in the mud and, if they are carrying too heavy a load, sustain damage to their bottoms; that if the barges go light, the cost of transportation is increased to shippers; that the City of New Brunswick built a warehouse terminal at a cost of \$150,000, and that this structure cannot be utilized for the purposes intended unless dredging and maintenance meet the fifteen foot mean depth in the river.

Counsel offered testimony to show that concerns like Johnson & Johnson, Utility Construction Corp., and many others require deeper water in the Raritan River for economical transportation of their material. The City of New Brunswick, through Mayor Chester M. Paulus, requested the improvement and stated in a letter: "we are anxious to get deeper water up to New Brunswick which will be of great benefit to our shipping facilities and we hope the channel will be increased to fifteen foot depth by dredging from Sayreville to this City. This will benefit not only New Brunswick but all the portions of Middlesex County between Sayreville and this City."

The Middlesex County Industrial Commission, through its Executive, Peter M. Kroeger, came out strongly in favor of the improvement on the ground that many acres of valuable industrial sites would become available

to new industries who have sought and are seeking locations in this section, but who have found that the present depth of the channel was insufficient to meet their needs for waterway transportation.

This project is now under consideration by the Board of Engineers and a report may be expected at any time.

Woodbridge Creek

This matter is also pending on appeal before the Board of Engineers at Washington, D. C., and concerns the deepening of the creek to ten feet at mean low water and extension of the channel from the Salamander Dock to the foot of Woodbridge Avenue, as well as the construction of a turning basin at the foot of Cherry Street for the turning of tugs and other craft. Among those who supported the project were the Shell Oil Co., Electric Smelting and Aluminum Co., Vulcan Detinning Co., Middlesex Concrete and the Federal Oil Co. Counsel pointed out that there were approximately 4200 feet of available land owned by some of these plants on the east side of the waterway which would be available for industrial improvement, while on the west side of the Creek, approximately 1600 feet would be available for the same purpose. The increased depth would enable barges and other craft to negotiate the waterway more safely than is now possible and would permit the use of vessels of deeper draft. Woodbridge Township and its officials strongly favor this improvement and have supported it on every occasion.

New York and New Jersey Channels

Arthur Kill and Kill Von Kull

Waterways constitute a vital element in the transportation of raw and finished defense commodities. In 1935 funds amounting to \$37,000,000 were authorized by the Federal Government for the improvement of the above channels, together with \$195,000 for annual maintenance. While there is some public record of project dimensions for the above areas, the progress to date must be considered a military secret. The channels in question are teeming with activity but for the duration no specific facts may be given as to the volume of traffic and the interests which are being served. It may be stated, however, that the expenditure of federal funds for these improvements has been thoroughly justified and even now, at the height of the war effort, the program of improvement is being carried forward with expedition. After the war is won by the United Nations and statistics again become available, the public will be gratified to know to what extent these waterways have contributed to the war effort.

South River and Washington Canal

The requests for further improvement of South River, Washington Canal and Smith's Creek previously presented to the War Department are receiving our attention. These waterways, serving industry and commerce, are of great importance to the factories and communities located thereon. While we are aware that all improvements to all of our waterways cannot be made at the same time, by a studied program of progress we are gradually attaining our objectives.

Acknowledgments

To Division Engineer, Colonel Beverly C. Dunn and his staff, we wish to express our gratitude for their cooperation during the past year. Colonel A. B. Jones, District Engineer, United States Engineer Office located at 120 Wall Street, New York City, together with his military and civilian aides, has rendered to this Commission the same high type of cooperation and advice we have always enjoyed from that source. Lieutenant Colonial R. J. Desmond is executive assistant to the District Engineer. Many new faces are to be seen at the District Engineer's Office, but to H. E. Libby, Floyd E. Peterson and C. D. Mayhew, with whom we have a great deal of our business, we are particularly grateful for the time and effort they have expended in our behalf. At all of the public hearings or private conferences held in the District Engineer's Office, on matters concerning the waterways in the Port Raritan District, we have been favored with every courteous attention. When resolutions in Congress are passed upon our request for a review on reports concerning some particular waterway in the District or in connection with a new project which has our sponsorship, the District Engineer loses no time in the issuance of public notices or in making preliminary arrangements for a hearing. Even with the additional burdens imposed upon that office as a result of wartime pressure, our interests continue to receive meticulous attention and prompt disposition.

The Commission also wishes to express its thanks for the constructive help it has received from the Port of New York Authority, State Board of Commerce and Navigation, New Jersey State Highway Commission, State Water Policy Commission and the other agencies in the National and State Governments. We have had a series of conferences with Governor Charles Edison at Trenton concerning the waterways in this District, and we are grateful to him for his interest in our program. We lament the untimely death of United States Senator W. Warren Barbour who cooperated with us in every way possible. United States Senator Albert W. Hawkes, Congressman Charles A. Eaton of the Fifth Congressional District, and Congressman James C. Auchincloss of the Third Congressional District have shown a high degree of interest in the affairs of the Port Raritan District and we wish to acknowledge their efforts in that regard.

Respectfully submitted,

PORT RARITAN DISTRICT COMMISSION,

C. PARKER RUNYON, Chairman.

JACOB M. KLEIN, Counsel.

STATUTES

CHAPTER 337
(P. L. 1926 Pg. 767)
Passed April 1, 1926

An Act to create the Port Raritan District and to provide for the appointment of the Port Raritan District Commission and the vesting in the Commission of appropriate powers and making an appropriation for the expenses of the Commission.

CHAPTER 338
(P. L. 1926 Pg. 772)
Passed April 1, 1926

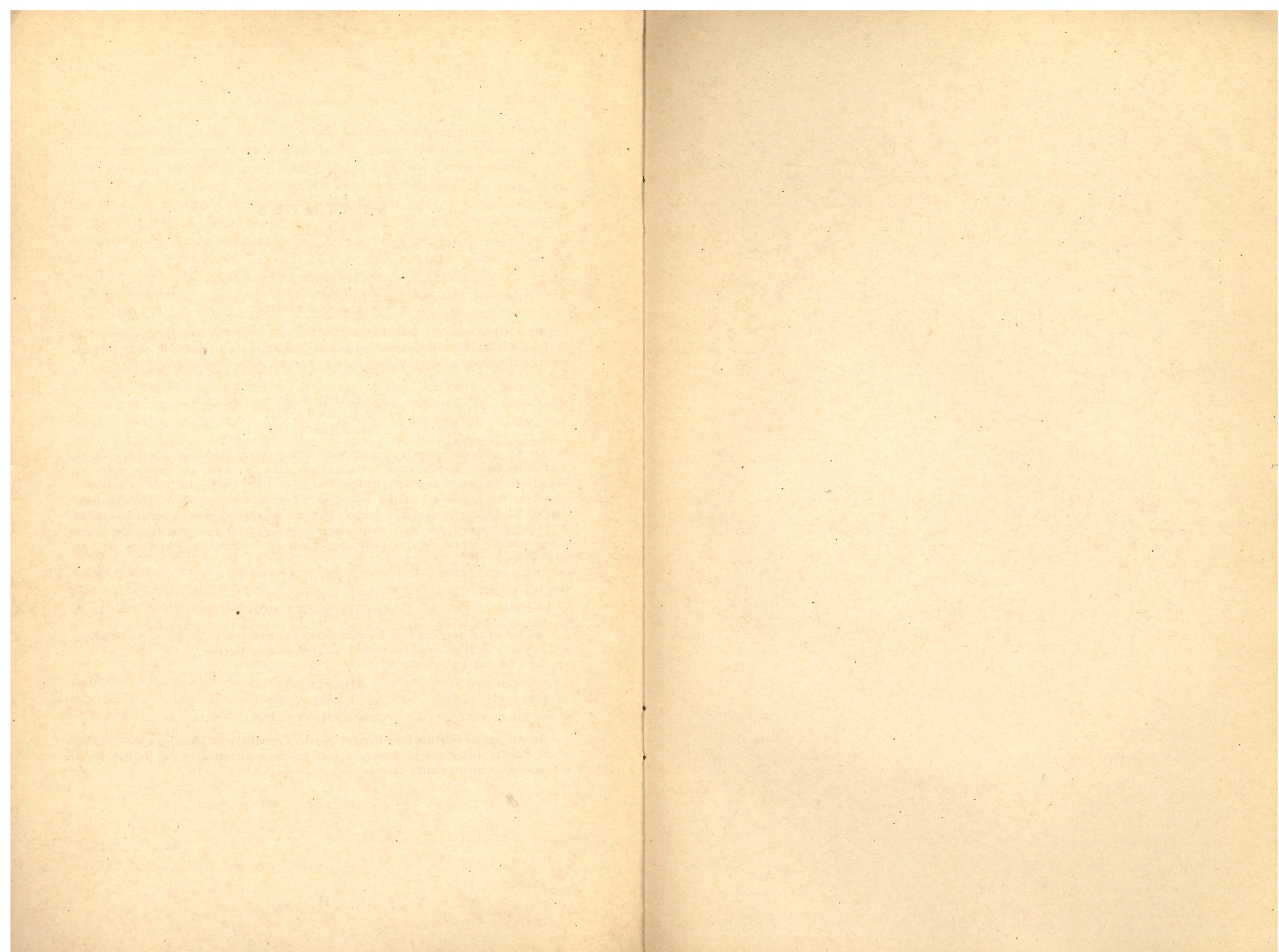
An Act authorizing the governing body of any county, borough, city, township or other municipality in this State to raise, appropriate, set aside and devote money or property to the use of any port, harbor, bridge, or river commission now or hereafter created by the Legislature of this State and giving to any such local governing body property to the use of any port, harbor or river commission now or hereafter created by the Legislature of this State and giving to any such local governing body the power to prescribe the terms and conditions upon which any such money or property shall be held and used.

CHAPTER 31
(P. L. 1927 Pg. 70)
Approved March 7, 1927

An Act authorizing the Port Raritan District Commission to straighten South River, in the county of Middlesex, and making an appropriation therefor.

CHAPTER 22
(P. L. 1928 Pg. 36)
Approved March 6, 1928

An Act authorizing the Port Raritan District Commission to investigate the pollution of the Raritan River and to prepare a plan for the purification of the Raritan River and making an appropriation therefor.



Approved January 19, 1944.

SIDNEY GOLDMANN,

State Librarian.

