

# International Journal of Naval History

Volume 1 Number 1

April 2002

## **A Naval Depot and Dockyard on the Western Waters: The Rise and Fall of the Memphis Naval Yard, 1844–1854**

*Stanley J. Adamiak, University of Central Oklahoma*

The Memphis Navy Yard remains an often overlooked part of antebellum U.S. naval history, yet for over a decade it played an important role in sectional politics.<sup>1</sup> It arose in the 1840s amidst regional political, economic, and security concerns and declined when those objectives changed. Though local and state politics certainly played a role in its development, this paper will focus on the influence of regional politics on national naval policy.

Several factors made the establishment of a western naval facility politically desirable in the early 1840s. Southerners feared another Anglo–American war where British attacks would not be limited to the coasts, but might include raids up southern rivers to incite slave rebellions.<sup>2</sup> They called for better coastal fortifications, new armories, an increased naval presence, and a “western naval depot and dockyard.” The west added demands of its own such as forcing the U.S. Navy to use American grown hemp for cordage and a program of internal improvements.<sup>3</sup>

In 1841, Navy Secretary Abel Upshur set an ambitious agenda for naval reform, expansion, and modernization. Serving John Tyler, an unpopular president, he faced a Congress that viewed naval policy largely along sectional, rather than political lines, with most southerners and westerners seeing the navy as an extravagance that benefited a handful of eastern states.<sup>4</sup> Upshur tried to build a consensus for naval expansion, arguing that it benefited every part of the country, specifically the South and West. As Congress discussed the Gulf of Mexico’s vulnerability, the Senate called upon Upshur’s views on the “necessity and practicability” of establishing a navy base on the Gulf of Mexico, predicated on an ongoing naval survey.<sup>5</sup> The Navy had a yard at Pensacola, but after over a decade it lacked construction and repair facilities or even a wharf. Soon the Senate also inquired into “the expediency ... [of] establishing a shipyard on the Ohio or Mississippi River.”<sup>6</sup>

Outside of Congress, the biggest booster for a western naval yard was Navy Lieutenant Matthew Maury. His “Harry Bluff” editorials in the *Southern Literary Messenger* touched on the issue, but a second anonymous series, “Letters to Mr. Clay,” endorsed a navy yard in Memphis, Tennessee. Maury, a Virginian raised in Tennessee, sounded arguments that would remain the mantra for project supporters.

# International Journal of Naval History

Volume 1 Number 1

April 2002

Maury felt Memphis was the “most suitable” of all the river towns. Being eight hundred miles up the Mississippi, it was immune from sudden attacks. It was far enough north to be free of fever and far enough south to remain ice free. As a shipyard it could draw on the resources of the entire Mississippi and Ohio Valleys, from Pennsylvania coal and iron to Missouri and Kentucky hemp, to foodstuffs and timber from every adjacent state. If the government funded a “National Canal” connecting the Ohio River and Great Lakes, it could serve that frontier as well.<sup>7</sup> Maury also hammered the sectional differences in naval spending and patronage, monopolized by “a few Atlantic states,” calling it a form of “vassalage” rendered to the Northeast.

The idea of a Memphis Navy Yard initially was seen as an oddity by many locals, but the leadership soon embraced it.<sup>8</sup> The small river town of four thousand envisioned itself as becoming the major commercial center of the Southwest. A navy yard would aid its efforts to attract rail connections and industry.<sup>9</sup>

In spring 1842, Upshur presented Congress with the long awaited naval survey of the Gulf Coast. The report went beyond a coastal survey and advocated a navy yard on the lower Mississippi. In wartime, with coastal facilities knocked out or blockaded, it could construct iron steamers and convert riverboats into war steamers.<sup>10</sup>

The Navy Board of Commissioners urged Congress to build shallow draft steamers that could be based at Pensacola, but said nothing about a yard on the Mississippi.<sup>11</sup> Upshur added that he felt it an “absolute necessity” to reinforce the Gulf, for its security affected the commerce of the entire Mississippi Valley, especially cotton, the nation’s largest export. He too wanted to bolster Pensacola, build steamers and construct a large scale facility on the Mississippi, citing the economic benefits to the interior and security. If the yard included a ropewalk, it would spare the expense of shipping raw hemp to Boston, the navy’s only ropewalk, and eliminate a major grievance of western farmers.<sup>12</sup>

Upshur’s endorsement yielded results. The Kentucky Legislature petitioned for a government ropewalk in Louisville. A House committee endorsed the proposal, citing the vulnerability of imported hemp and the navy’s reluctance to utilize American grown hemp.<sup>13</sup> In August, the Tennessee General Assembly petitioned for Memphis’ consideration as a naval yard. The House approved the measure, but the Senate adjourned without taking action.<sup>14</sup>

Upshur renewed his call for a yard on the Mississippi in late 1842 without endorsing a particular site, noting the entire Mississippi Valley was cut off “from its due share in the supplies of the Navy.”<sup>15</sup> Encouraged by the Secretary’s report, Kentucky Senator John Crittenden introduced a resolution for a Kentucky hemp agency and a survey for a navy yard on either the Ohio or Mississippi Rivers.<sup>16</sup> In January, the Naval Affairs Committee recommended surveying Memphis alone and in early March the Senate approved the bill.<sup>17</sup>

# International Journal of Naval History

Volume 1 Number 1

April 2002

In the House, the Naval Affairs Committee submitted a lengthy report with additional material from Memphis, including an engineer's report of a proposed canal that could provide cheap water power. They also alluded to War Department reports that advocated making Memphis a rail hub for the entire Southwest. The House once again approved the measure.<sup>18</sup>

Simultaneously, Congress dealt with the hemp issue. In 1843 Congress created two hemp agencies in Louisville, Kentucky and St. Louis, Missouri.<sup>19</sup> These stations provided information and encouragement as well as preliminary inspections to spare the expense of shipping tons of fiber to Boston only to have it rejected. Congress also required the navy to purchase American hemp provided it was the same quality and price as imported fibers.<sup>20</sup>

In April 1843, a board of three navy officers examined Memphis. New Navy Secretary David Henshaw merely attached their report to his Annual Report with only a passing reference. The officers reported the 82 acre site consisted of alluvial bluffs overlooking the river. Their only concern was the water levels that ranged from a reported high of thirty feet to a low of seven. The officers felt Memphis was an "excellent" site for constructing warships but was barely sufficient as a repair center due to the fluctuating water levels.<sup>21</sup>

The report yielded a Senate resolution calling for the establishment of a Memphis Navy Yard.<sup>22</sup> While agreeing with the concept of a yard, opponents felt that other sites should be surveyed, especially in their own districts.<sup>23</sup> Natchez and Vicksburg, Mississippi urged consideration, as did Cairo, Illinois.<sup>24</sup> Memphis bolstered its case with additional arguments and a treatise written by Maury, no longer anonymous, emphasizing its benefits to the whole south and attacking the millions squandered on Northern yards.<sup>25</sup> President Tyler weighed in his support for a navy yard but avoided endorsing a specific site.<sup>26</sup> Amendments for a comprehensive survey of the Mississippi Valley failed in both houses by roughly a two to one margin.<sup>27</sup> The Memphis Navy Yard became a reality in mid 1844 when strong majorities in Congress voted \$100,000 to purchase a site for the construction, repair, and supply of naval vessels.<sup>28</sup> Both parties allegedly supported the Memphis Navy Yard for 1844 was an election year and the party that could deliver the spoils might carry Tennessee.<sup>29</sup> Though not mentioned in the laws, both President Tyler and Navy Secretary John Mason urged Congress to build a ropewalk as well.<sup>30</sup>

Though authorized, it took some time for actual construction to begin. Title problems forced a navy board to "compromise adverse interests and reconcile conflicting claims," some of which potentially required action by the state legislature which would not meet until October 1845! The board drew up plans that included not only construction facilities but a ropewalk as well. The most expensive task would be securing the riverfronts on both the Mississippi and the Wolf River that bisected the property. It

# International Journal of Naval History

Volume 1 Number 1

April 2002

required sinking and pilings along the river fronts and constructing several levees. The site would have to be leveled and retaining walls constructed along the bluffs.<sup>31</sup> Mason approved the plan. Yards and Docks Bureau Chief Lewis Warrington felt the project worth the “Great Labor” and “considerable expense” involved. He asked Congress for nearly \$500,000 of a projected \$2,000,000 for the coming year. He received only \$200,000.<sup>32</sup>

In early 1845, the planned yard faced a new President, James K. Polk, and new Navy Secretary, George Bancroft. One would think that Polk, a Tennessee politician, would shepherd the project, but he took little interest. Bancroft approached the navy looking for expenses to cut.<sup>33</sup> In November, Warrington proudly reported in the “First official mention” of the Memphis Navy Yard that initial contracts had been finalized. Warrington was soon at odds with his superior over the plans. Bancroft wanted them scaled back to make the ropewalk the highest priority. Warrington resisted, arguing the plan fit the law and Mason had approved it.<sup>34</sup> Bancroft ordered the Chief to revise the plan and noted in his Annual Report that he had “disapproved some of the details of the plan” that were too “extravagant.” He felt that monies should be appropriated “first to the immediate construction of a ropewalk, and next to simple arrangements for the building and equipping of steamers.”<sup>35</sup>

The request to make the ropewalk a priority generated some controversy. The Tennessee General Assembly felt the limitation violated the 1844 law that outlined the yard as a place of construction. It was an issue of “national harmony” taking away from a region deprived by naval spending. Both the House and Senate restricted operations at the yard solely to the ropewalk.<sup>36</sup>

The restriction put the navy in an awkward situation. While the ropewalk itself, a two story building over 1300 feet long, would only cost \$100,000 including its machinery, the same work to stabilize the yard would still have to be done regardless of what was built and the savings would be minimal. Contracts had to be renegotiated, delivered supplies reallocated, and labor “diverted” from earlier tasks.<sup>37</sup> By late November 1846, four major contractors abandoned the project. Navy Secretary John Mason, who succeeded Bancroft, urged Congress to restore its “original purpose” and “make this yard a place of construction.”<sup>38</sup> Mason would serve another two years, but this was the last time he or any future Secretary would publicly endorse a fully capable yard.

The yard made no contribution to the Mexican–American War. Officially, the steamer Allegheny, which had been constructed in Pittsburgh, was outfitted in the yard, but considering the lack of facilities, these services were minimal.<sup>39</sup> Surprisingly local boosters did use the war to push for yard expansion. The war would lay the seeds for the yard’s demise. As the nation expanded to the Pacific, its security needs changed.

# International Journal of Naval History

Volume 1 Number 1

April 2002

The yard's survival depended upon the ropewalk and the production of American cordage, but by late 1850, the ropewalk was still not completed. Bureau Chief Joseph Smith (who replaced Warrington) complained of the "annoyance experienced from the repeated failure of contractors to comply with their engagements."<sup>40</sup> Nature also took its toll when floods damaged construction. Dropping water levels caused more damage when soil shifted, wreaking havoc among the embankments, pilings, and foundations, compounding "serious architectural errors." Smith bluntly reported to Congress that "the foundation of the yard is of doubtful solidity and stability," and backed a plan to resurvey the site.<sup>41</sup>

In 1851, Army engineers examined Memphis to determine its "fitness" as a navy yard from "strictly a professional point of view without regard to political coloring." The report argued that Memphis lacked the "essential requisites" to be an effective navy yard. They felt it had to be near the ocean and strongly fortified. Memphis was too far away, though they noted sarcastically that it did not need fortifications for the Mississippi's low water and obstructions made it impervious to enemy attack. They did, however, endorse a ropewalk, but expressed concern that the machinery's vibration might damage the foundation. Navy Secretary William Graham merely labeled the report "an interesting discussion of the question involved."<sup>42</sup> Although the officers claimed to be free of political coloring, another War Department report released that year questioned the navy's ability to protect the coasts.<sup>43</sup>

Bureau Chief Smith backed the report, reminding the Secretary that "the creation of a Navy Yard at Memphis, originated with the Congress and not with the Navy." Though a ropewalk in theory seemed "useful," he saw no advantage to Memphis "due to its remoteness to the Atlantic."<sup>44</sup> Smith clearly had little faith or interest in promoting American hemp. His report to Congress was more guarded, stating that the nation had too many navy yards and it might be better to cut spending on some yards "than . . . to cripple and render less efficient the more important" facilities. He added that Pensacola met the navy's current needs in the Gulf of Mexico.<sup>45</sup> This was aimed not only at Memphis, but a growing movement to re-establish a depot in New Orleans.

The Senate Naval Affairs Committee, armed with a memorial from the Tennessee Legislature, reasserted the harm of limiting Memphis' development and attacked the report's findings. It maintained that the Mississippi River could handle medium sized warships most of the year. Had not the *Allegheny*, a steamer of 1100 tons displacement, made the journey? Civilian steamers of two to three times the size routinely traveled the river. The committee recommended completion of the yard on the original design.<sup>46</sup>

Perhaps the yard had a future if the ropewalk could have proven its utility.<sup>47</sup> In 1851, hemp agencies planned to ship nearly two hundred tons of American hemp to Memphis, but inspectors rejected the majority. By 1853, the navy suspended its hemp agencies for none was being supplied.<sup>48</sup> The Memphis Ropewalk often sat idle.

# International Journal of Naval History

Volume 1 Number 1

April 2002

Congressional patience for waste in the navy yards reached a low point in late 1853. The House approved a resolution regarding the “expediency of abolishing or disposing of such navy yards ... as can be dispensed with” and cutting costs of the remainder.<sup>49</sup> The House slashed Memphis appropriations to a mere \$13, 000, a quarter of the navy’s request. The Senate Naval Affairs Committee offered an amendment to double the appropriation leading to a lengthy debate over the yard’s merits. Critics called the navy yard a “perfect delusion” and “great mistake,” built too far in the interior to be useful. Political intrigue, some insinuated, duped Congress to make an unwise decision. Supporters felt that the yard had not been given the opportunity to prove itself and the country should complete it on the original plan. The amendment failed.<sup>50</sup> Tennessee Senator Joiner Jones declared that Congress had broken its arrangement with the Mississippi Valley by converting a navy yard to a mere ropewalk. He called for its abolishment rather than tolerating Congressional neglect.<sup>51</sup> Jones offered amendments striking out the appropriation and returning the land to the city of Memphis. If Jones hoped to shame Congress and rally supporters to prevent its demise, he failed. Both amendments easily passed.<sup>52</sup>

Faced with Senate amendments, Tennessee representatives followed a similar strategy. Yard opponents proposed transferring the Memphis appropriation to the new yard under construction at Mare Island, for San Francisco was important to the navy, while Memphis was not. They felt the navy had too many yards and squandered nearly \$1,000,000 on a yard the navy neither wanted nor needed. Amazingly an amendment was then proposed to spend \$100,000 on developing a depot in New Orleans. The Senate amendments striking out the appropriations and ceding the site back to the city were nonconcurrent into the bill.<sup>53</sup> The Memphis Yard was abolished.

Memphis leaders appealed for a delay until the next Congressional session when it hoped Congress would reconsider its “hasty” action. They expected Congress to complete the yard on its original plan “in justice to the South and West.” Navy Secretary John Dobbin forwarded the petition to President Franklin Pierce. He felt that the city had no right to dictate government policy, adding that the current eight yards were “amply sufficient” and no other yards were needed. Pierce concurred with Dobbins’ view.<sup>54</sup>

A House Committee responded that the yard was “suddenly and unceremoniously abandoned” without any instruction from the executive branch. It quoted past reports and new writings by Maury supporting the yard’s strategic purpose. The committee systematically countered each argument from the lack of water to unstable soil. The issue was not too many navy yards, just too many in the “pampered” east.<sup>55</sup>

Supporters in both houses tried to get the yard’s retrocession. In the House, Tennessee Congressman Frederick Stanton’s bill to that purpose died in committee. He tried a back door approach by specifying that only domestic hemp be spun into rope at the Memphis

# International Journal of Naval History

Volume 1 Number 1

April 2002

ropewalk, but it too was defeated.<sup>56</sup> The Senate version of the naval appropriations bill included a conditional retrocession of the yard, but the House version did not, leading to contention both in the conference committee and in the House. When Stanton made one last attempt to add an amendment, he was met with laughter.<sup>57</sup> To break the deadlock, the Senate voted to recede its amendment.<sup>58</sup>

It is a matter of debate over whether the Memphis Yard could have served the function that its originators envisioned for it was never given a chance. Even had Congress reinstated the yard in 1855, it is doubtful that it would have spent the estimated \$1.3 million necessary to complete the yard.<sup>59</sup> Given the failure of efforts to purchase American hemp, a ropewalk alone made little sense. One cannot blame an anti-navy Congress either, for the same Congress that killed the yard also approved construction of six *Merrimack* class steam frigates. The yard owed its rise and decline to the regional politics. In the 1840s, the South and West had been neglected and a navy yard on the Mississippi River seemed a panacea to the regions perceived vulnerability and an outlet for its products. Although endorsed by the Navy's civilian leadership, the Bureaus never fully embraced the project. The Mexican-American War doomed the yard. It changed the nation and the national outlook. The Mississippi Valley was no longer the "west." It also changed the political system. In 1854 while debating the future of the yard Congress was in the midst and aftermath of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Though the Memphis Navy Yard never occupied the center stage on the political agenda, it serves as a window into how regional politics affected naval policy.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Memphis Navy Yard's story appears mostly in regional histories. It is not found in general naval history works such as Kenneth J. Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power* (New York: Free Press, 1991), Robert W. Love, Jr. *History of the U.S. Navy, 1775-1941* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1992), and Harold and Margaret Sprout, *The Rise of American Naval Power, 1776-1918* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1990 reprint of 1966 edition). C. O. Paullin mistakenly placed the navy yard at Vicksburg, Mississippi (Charles Oscar Paullin, "Naval Administration, 1842-1861," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* 33(1907), 1452), a mistake repeated by at least one historian, Geoffrey S. Smith, "An Uncertain Passage: The Bureaus Run the Navy, 1842-1861," in Kenneth J. Hagan (ed.) *In Peace and War: Interpretations in American Naval History, 1775-1984* (Westport, Ct: Greenwood Press, 1984), 97.

<sup>2</sup> *House Report (HR) 3*, 27<sup>th</sup> Congress, First session, 1-22; Abel Upshur to President Tyler, in National Archives Record Group 71 M1099, *Annual Reports of Secretary of the Navy, 1822-1866* (1841): 380-1. (ARSN (year)).

# International Journal of Naval History

Volume 1 Number 1

April 2002

---

<sup>3</sup> See St. George L. Sioussat, “Memphis as a Gateway to the West: A Study in the Beginnings of Railway Transportation in the Old Southwest,” (n.p., 1917) reprinted from the *Tennessee Historical Magazine* March and June 1917.

<sup>4</sup> On Upshur’s tenure see Claude H. Hall, *Abel Parker Upshur: Conservative Virginian, 1790–1844* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin), 107–93; Paolo E. Coletta, “Abel Parker Upshur,” in Paolo E. Coletta (ed.), *American Secretaries of the Navy, Volume I, 1775–1913* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1980), 177–94.

<sup>5</sup> Resolution . . . , 21 July 1840, *Senate Document (SD)* 74, 27<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session. Emphasis in original.

<sup>6</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 21 July 1841, 27<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 247.

<sup>7</sup> *Southern Literary Messenger*, Vol. 7: 724–8.

<sup>8</sup> James D. Davis, *History of Memphis: The history of the city of Memphis, being a compilation of the most important documents ...* (Memphis: Hite, Crumpton, and Kelly, printers, 1873), 206–7. Reminiscences of a Memphis newspaperman.

<sup>9</sup> Gerald Capers, *Biography of a River Town: Memphis: Its Heroic Age* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1939), 85–6. Also see Carolyn Pitman, “Memphis in the mid-1840’s: Memphis before the Mexican War,” *West Tennessee Historical Society Papers* 23 (1969): 30–44.

<sup>10</sup> *House Document (HD)* 220, 27<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session.

<sup>11</sup> Lewis Warrington to Upshur, 22 January 1842, *SD* 98, 27<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session,: 4–6.

<sup>12</sup> Upshur to Senate, 31 January 1842, *Ibid.*; Upshur to President, *ARSN* (1842): 539–50.

<sup>13</sup> *HD* 180, 27<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session; *House Report (HR)* 551, 27<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session.

<sup>14</sup> *HR* 991, 27<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> session.

<sup>15</sup> Upshur to the President *ARSN* (1842): 550; Upshur to W.P. Magnum, 17 December 1842, *SR* 6, 27<sup>th</sup> Congress, 3<sup>rd</sup> Session, 2–8.

<sup>16</sup> 22 December 1842, *Congressional Globe*, 27<sup>th</sup> Congress, 3<sup>rd</sup> Session, 75.

# International Journal of Naval History

Volume 1 Number 1

April 2002

---

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 January 1843, 166; 2 March 1843, 383.

<sup>18</sup> *HR 114*, 27<sup>th</sup> Congress, 3<sup>rd</sup> session; Walter Chandler, "The Memphis Navy Yard, and Adventure in Internal Improvement," *West Tennessee Historical Society Papers*, I (1947), 68.

<sup>19</sup> *United States Statutes at Large*, (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1861) 5:648. *Statutes*.

<sup>20</sup> To provide more encouragement, it extended the contract periods from one year, to three in 1846 and five in 1848. *Ibid.*, 9:5, 513.

<sup>21</sup> Henshaw to the President, 25 November 1843, *ARSN* (1843): 489–90; *Ibid.*, 564–9.

<sup>22</sup> *Senate Journal*, 19 December 43, 28<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 39.

<sup>23</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 28<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1st Session, 47, 320, 404, 478, 538, 634, 692. Appendix, 499–500.

<sup>24</sup> *HD 199*, 28<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session; *SD 206*, 28<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session; *SD 196*, 28<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session 28.

<sup>25</sup> *HD 33*, 28<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 20–48.

<sup>26</sup> Tyler to House, 23 February 1844, in Richardson, James D. (ed.), *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (Washington: Bureau of National Literature and Arts, 1909), 4: 278–9. *Messages*.

<sup>27</sup> *Senate Journal*, 11 April 1844, 28<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 228; *House Journal*, 15 June 1844, 28<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 1140–1. The vote in the Senate was 13–27 and the House 49–113.

<sup>28</sup> "An Act to establish a navy yard and depot at or adjacent to the city of Memphis . . .," *Statutes*, 5:665. The vote in the House was 118–49, *House Journal*, 15 June 1844, 28<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 1140–1; The Senate passed the measure 31–11, *Senate Journal*, 12 April.

<sup>29</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 33<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 2154.

<sup>30</sup> Mason to President, 25 November 1844, *ARSN* (1844); John Tyler to Congress, 3 December 1844, *Messages*, 349.

# International Journal of Naval History

Volume 1 Number 1

April 2002

- 
- <sup>31</sup> L. Rousseau to Mason, 16 September 1844, *ARSN* (1844): 634–7.
- <sup>32</sup> Warrington to Mason, 19 November 1844, *Ibid.*, 537; 3 March 1845, *Statutes*, 5:792.
- <sup>33</sup> On Bancroft see K. Jack Bauer, “George Bancroft” in Coletta, *American Secretaries of the Navy*, 217–26; Lilian Handlin, *George Bancroft: The Intellectual as Democrat* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), 204–5.
- <sup>34</sup> Warrington to Bancroft, 24 November 1845, National Archives Record Group 45 M518, *Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy from the Chiefs of the Navy Bureaus, 1842–1885*. *LRB*.
- <sup>35</sup> Bancroft to Warrington, 6 December 1845, in National Archives Record Group 45 M480, *Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Navy to the Chiefs of the Navy Bureaus, 1842–1886*. *LSB*; Bancroft to Congress, 1 December 1845, *ARSN* (1846): 399.
- <sup>36</sup> SD !\*#, 29<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session; *House Journal*, 29<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 15 June 1846, 961–2; *Senate Journal*, 29<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 1 August, 1846, 469; *Congressional Globe*, 29<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 5 August 1846, 1197; 10 August 1846, *Statutes*, 9:100. A House amendment making the ropewalk a priority while continuing the construction mission failed 62–122, but the amendment firmly limiting operation solely to a ropewalk passed by a slimmer sixteen vote margin (95–79). The Senate approved a similar amendment by a mere four votes.
- <sup>37</sup> Smith to Mason, 14 November 1846, *ARSN* (1846): 399.
- <sup>38</sup> Mason to the President, 5 December 1846, *Ibid.*, 384.
- <sup>39</sup> Stephen M. Findlay, “The *Allegheny*: A Revisionist Note on a Memphis Myth,” *West Tennessee Historical Society Papers* 32 (1978): 70–83; For the city’s wartime activities see Turner J. Fakes, Jr., “Memphis during the Mexican War,” *West Tennessee Historical Society Papers* 119–44.
- <sup>40</sup> Smith to Mason, 25 October 1847, *ARSN* (1847): 161.
- <sup>41</sup> Smith to Graham, 17 August 1850, *LRB*; Smith to Graham , *ARSN* (1850): 318.
- <sup>42</sup> Report, 11 June 1851, *ARSN* (1851): 41–50; Graham to Congress, 29 November 1851, *Ibid.*, 7.
- <sup>43</sup> *House Executive Document (HED)* 5, 32<sup>nd</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session; “Report of Lieutenant Maury,” August 1851, *Ibid.*, 182–3. The War Department report on fortifications

# International Journal of Naval History

Volume 1 Number 1

April 2002

---

included inquiries among several naval officers, including Maury who used his lengthy reply to once again assert the Mississippi Valley's importance and demonstrate how a fully developed Memphis Yard was a key element in its defense.

<sup>44</sup> Smith to Graham, 24 June 1851, *LRB*.

<sup>45</sup> Smith to Graham, 16 October 1851, *ARSN* (1851): 162.

<sup>46</sup> SR 215, 32<sup>nd</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session.

<sup>47</sup> *HED* 36, 31<sup>st</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session 1–6, 12–13.; *ARSN* (1849): 434–5; *ARSN* (1853): 546–7.

<sup>48</sup> Samuel Hart to Dobbin, 1 November 1853, *ARSN* (1853): 546; James F. Hopkins, *A History of the Hemp Industry in Kentucky* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1998 reprint of 1951 edition), 189.

<sup>49</sup> *House Journal*, 22 December 1853, 33<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 131.

<sup>50</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 33<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 2153. The vote was 15–24.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 2153–4.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 2179. There is no record of the vote. The *Globe* indicates they were “agreed” to.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 2125–7.

<sup>54</sup> *House Journal*, 4 January 1854, 33<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 56; *HED* 28, 33<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session.

<sup>55</sup> *House Journal*, 4 January 1855, 33<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 143; *HR 61*, 33<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session. The Committee consisted of Frederick Stanton (TN), Nathan Taylor (TN), William Smith (VA), Thomas Eliot (MA), and J. Glancey Jones (PA). Maury drew comparisons to the ongoing Crimean War. He compared the Besieged Russian naval base at Sevastopol to Pensacola and noted the Russians had wisely placed their building yards up river, just as the U.S. had done with Memphis.

<sup>56</sup> *House Journal*, 1 February 1855, 33<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 287; *Congressional Globe*, 33<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 935–6.

<sup>57</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 33<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, *Ibid.*, 1179.

# International Journal of Naval History

Volume 1 Number 1

April 2002

---

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 1148. The vote to recede three amendments was 22–13. The city hoped the navy would change its mind and waited until 1857 to formally accept the “gift.” The yard fell into disrepair. During the Civil War after the Union capture of the City, the Federal government debated reestablishing a yard, but found the site had deteriorated too much.

<sup>59</sup> Smith to Dobbins, 26 January 1855, *LRB*.