CHICAGO HARBOR COMMISSION

APPOINTED BY MAYOR BUSSE TO MAKE A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY AND REPORT ON THE QUESTION OF WHETHER SOME PORTION OF THE CITY’S LAKE FRONT SHOULD BE RESERVED AND UTILIZED FOR HARBOR PURPOSES

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740 THE ROOKERY, CHICAGO

Chicago, March 2, 1908.

Mr. Daniel H. Burnham,
9 Jackson Blvd., City.

Dear Sir:-

In considering the requirements in the way of harbor facilities for a great city, the following specifications for a harbor are suggested:

Specifications for a Chicago harbor.

This harbor shall meet the following requirements:

A. A commodious refuge for lake traffic great and small in time of storm.

B. Ample wharfage for the largest class of lake carriers so arranged as to be easily reached by these vessels under their own steam with depth sufficient at dock lines to admit of loading to the limit of draught for which these large carriers are built.

C. Docks to have ample area for elevators, warehouses, lumber yards, coal yards, passenger steamers, and all of the industries common to the meeting places of rail and water-borne commerce, together with ample track facilities to meet the demands of the business. The mechanical equipment for handling the business of these docks shall be the best adapted, as proven by modern practice, to facilitate the rapid transfer of the different classes of freight from vessel to car or lighter, and vice versa.

The possible locations for such a harbor are:

#1. The lake front between the mouth of the Chicago River and Chicago Avenue;

#2. The lake front between 16th and 52nd Streets;

#3. The lake front between 68th and 83rd Streets;

#4. In conjunction with any one of the previously suggested harbors, the Calumet River.

#5. A combination of these locations.
In your judgment, which one of these localities or what other locality would best meet the needs of the city?

Bearing in mind that the Chicago River will eventually fulfill three separate and distinct functions, namely that of a harbor both for lake vessels unloading at Chicago and lake vessels transferring for canal, river, or rail traffic; secondly, a through channel for vessels continuing down the Illinois River or to the Mississippi River; and thirdly, as a drainage canal, please answer the following questions:-

1. Should the Chicago River be widened or straightened in excess of the plans of the Sanitary District, and if so, how much?

2. Is some alternative route for a wide and straight channel connecting the Drainage Canal with the lake, feasible? If so, where?

3. Should the functions of the Chicago River as a harbor be supplemented by one or more harbors on the lake front?

4. Will you submit to the Harbor Commission a plan, showing your views of an ideal harbor?

5. What class of tonnage do you think it is desirable to handle in the Chicago River, and what class in a harbor on the lake front?

6. What are your views regarding the facilities for transferring water-borne traffic to railroads or teams? What are your suggestions as to how this should be effected at a minimum expense and where?

7. Is the transfer of traffic handled by lake steamers to river lighters, feasible?

8. What kind of commerce would you expect Chicago to gain by improved harbor facilities?

The Commission desires to have the benefit of your special knowledge of this situation in the form of a written statement, and would greatly appreciate the favor of an early reply.

Yours very truly,

Chicago Harbor Commission.

By

[Signature]
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