



The commercial losses sustained by the cities of Baltimore, Washington, and Alexandria, owing to the ice obstructions in the Patuxent and Potomac rivers, were never more signally illustrated than during the month ending January 15, 1881. For the greater part of this period, access to Baltimore has only been made possible through the active efforts of two powerful and costly ice-boats, owned by the city of Baltimore, and built for this service. These boats, by their daily movement, have kept open a narrow and constantly-freeing channel, and have assisted the overloaded tugs in taking their tows up and down the river.

But, to take the case of the oyster trade of Baltimore, no provision of tugs and ice-boats can fully meet its demands. The receipts of oysters in Baltimore during the season of 1879-'80, as we have seen, were 7,277,972 bushels—about one and a half times the entire product of the Virginia fisheries. The latter employed, in oyster dredging, 4,481 canoes and 1,217 larger vessels. No statistics showing the number of vessels engaged in supplying Baltimore with oysters can be obtained, but it is manifest that their tonnage largely exceeds that of the Virginia fisheries. An open and unobstructed harbor is necessary to the full prosecution of this business, and the laying-up of many vessels and the delays of navigation have inflicted great losses upon the trade.

What these losses are may be conjectured from the parallel case of the Washington and Alexandria oyster trade. The records of the Washington Board of Health show a falling off of fifty per cent. in oyster receipts at that port during December, 1880, compared with the corresponding month of 1879. The greater part of the Washington supply has been obtained by rail from Baltimore and Quantico, the upper Potomac having been virtually closed to navigation during the latter half of the month of December, 1880. From the best accessible sources of information, it can hardly be doubted that the oyster receipts of the two cities, during the month ending January 15, 1881, have fallen short of the receipts of the corresponding month of last year by 530,000 bushels, valued at \$225,000.

Were the Southern Maryland Railroad in operation, there would be no deficiencies in the monthly yield of the fisheries, due, at least, to delayed transportation. The present difficulty of transportation and its attendant losses would be removed, and oysters could be carried by rail, from Point Lookout to the heart of the continent, in the time now occupied in transporting them by vessel from Point Lookout to Baltimore.

The grain trade of Baltimore, moreover, if intended to compete with that of New York, will require, in the future, an unobstructed outlet to the ocean, and among other plans proposed to obtain this, none is more feasible than a railway communication between Baltimore and St. Mary's harbor, and the building of grain elevators at the latter point. Here, at all seasons, vessels may safely enter from the ocean, discharge and forward their cargoes by rail to Baltimore, and be loaded again with Baltimore exports. It should be borne in mind that, practically, St. Mary's harbor lies as near to the grain-fields of the great West as does Baltimore.

More serious even than the losses of the oyster trade are those of the coal shippers of Alexandria, Georgetown, and Baltimore, resulting from the ice obstructions in the Patuxent and Potomac. The latter river has been closed to navigation almost the entire month ending January 15, 1881. Vessels are ice-bound, and the usual steady shipment of Maryland coal to the Northern coast ports is wholly suspended.

What the loss has been to the Baltimore coal trade, during the present period of obstructed navigation, cannot now be ascertained. It has doubtless been very great, while all movement of coal northward by the interior canal line is suspended. But all losses in this trade would be avoided by the construction of the Southern Maryland Railroad, and by the erection of coal shoots and depots at St. Mary's harbor. Supplies of coal brought to this point by rail, with unvarying regularity, from the Maryland mines, over the Metropolitan Branch of the Baltimore and Ohio Road and the Maryland Southern Road, could thence be shipped at all seasons, and without delays, to the places of consumption.

**NOTE.**  
**DEPTH OF WATER**  
In St. Mary's Harbor, 24 to 30 feet.  
In Drum Point Harbor, 30 to 100 feet.

**MAP SHOWING THE**  
**SOUTHERN MARYLAND**  
**RAILROAD**  
and its connections  
**NORTH, SOUTH, EAST**  
**AND WEST.**

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SCALE OF STATUTE MILES, 12 TO ONE INCH.

The Southern Maryland Road is virtually an extension of the Pennsylvania and the Baltimore and Ohio Roads to deep water in the lower Chesapeake, and through them and their ramifications it becomes connected with the whole railroad system of the country, and with the coal fields of Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania.

At Point Lookout the road touches Cornfield Harbor, and at St. Mary's the estuary of St. Mary's river, which is one of the safest and most capacious harbors on the Atlantic coast. A branch line, 2 1/2 to 3 miles long, is designed to be built from the crossing of Chancellor's Run to Drum Point Harbor, at the mouth of Patuxent river. The road will, therefore, make three connections with the lower Potomac and Chesapeake Bay.

**The Advantages of St. Mary's Harbor to Vessels Engaged in the Carrying Trade.**—From Cape Henry to Washington is 190.8 miles; to Baltimore, 175 miles. St. Mary's harbor is, therefore, 101.5 miles nearer to the Atlantic than Washington, and 83 1/2 miles nearer than Baltimore. An incoming vessel might, therefore, enter St. Mary's harbor, discharge her cargo, and have it sent by rail to these cities sooner than she could beat up the Potomac river, or the upper Chesapeake Bay, to either of them. An outgoing vessel might take a cargo of Maryland coal at St. Mary's, and pass Cape Henry into the open ocean, before a Washington or Baltimore vessel could make Point Lookout.