

U. S. NAVAL STATION, KEY WEST, FLA.
COMMANDANT'S OFFICE

April 14, 1908.

Subject:

Commandant, Naval Station, Key West, Fla., requests that he may have cognizance and supervision of the dredging of the material for the Army from "Frankford Bank" for filling at Fort Taylor, Fla., as he understands that "Frankford Bank" is a part of the Naval Reservation.

Respectfully returned to the Honorable Secretary of the Navy.

2. In reply to the 3d endorsement hereon, I enclose herewith a copy of a letter from the Land Office, dated March 9, 1855, addressed to the U.S. Surveyor General of Florida, showing that the shoals and Fleming Key are reserved for Military and Naval purposes. Fleming Key and its adjacent shoals, and Man-of-War Harbor are reserved for the Naval Dept.



at low water. Rear-Admiral Forsythe (retired) who was Commandant of this Station during, before and after the Spanish War, informed me that there is a definite claim by the Navy to Frankford Bank.

4. The old records of this office are being searched for the documents that establish this claim, tho there must be something on file in the Navy Department in regard to it. Admiral Forsythe compelled squatters to remove a slaughter pen which they had erected on Frankford Bank.

5. Frankford Bank forms the Western edge of Man-of-War Harbor and channel, and its removal by dredges may deprive that harbor of shelter. Man-of-War-Harbor is also designated as "Hurricane Harbor," because it is a smooth basin that affords perfect shelter during storms.

6. The indiscriminate removal of Frankford Bank by contractors will be likely to seriously impair the value of Man-of-War Harbor and Fleming Key as a torpedo depot. It is believed that the Army engineers will cordially cooperate with the Commandant of the

the interests of the Naval Service, but the contractors will not regard any interest outside of that which is specified in their contract. Experience here at Key West has shown that contractors have deliberately trespassed upon the Naval Reservation, after they had been duly notified. The Commandant was informed that the contractors were dredging by the authority of the Secretary of War, and the contractor proposed to dredge at his convenience, regardless of the protest of the Commandant.

7. Admiral Forsythe told me yesterday that the Department had contemplated erecting a coal shed on Frankford Bank, for the Navy, and I believe that it would be most desirable to so arrange that the dredging of the material for the Army, for fillias at Fort Taylor, would incidentally widen and deepen the channels and remove the obstructions in the same. It would be economical to provide for dredging the late Admiral Belknap's proposed basins for battleship anchorage, rather than the indiscriminate removal of Frankford Bank.

8. In the request for cognizance and supervision of this dredging, the Commandant does not contemplate anything further than cooperation, if the dredging is under the superintendence of Army officers, but if it is done by contractors, whose obligation is to provide material to fill at Fort Taylor, it is necessary for the Commandant to have cognizance and supervision over these portions of the harbor that pertain to the Naval Station.

9. There is no friction with the Army officers in any sense. We have had the most cordial cooperation, and it has always been the policy of the Commandant here to render any assistance to the Army that might be possible. In the first paragraph of my letter, the very fact that Captain Lanza sent me the correspondence regarding the dredging of the material from Frankford Bank, proves the fact that there is no friction; but when contractors do the work, their only obligation is to provide the fill at the least possible cost to the contractor, regardless of its effect

upon the channels or any other considerations which might be involved.

10. The 3d paragraph of the 3d endorsement, suggesting a survey and accurate boundaries, will doubtless solve the entire problem, and authority is respectfully requested to make the suggested survey there in designated.

W. H. Beecher

Commodore, U.S.N.,
Commandant.