

**BURRWOOD (LA) AND SOUTHWEST PASS JETTIES  
CONSTRUCTION PHOTOGRAPHS**

(Mss. 5068)

Inventory

Compiled by

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Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections  
Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library  
Louisiana State University Libraries  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University

2011

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**SUMMARY**

<b>Size.</b>	18 items: 5.00" X 7.00" photographic paper prints
<b>Geographic Locations.</b>	Louisiana
<b>Inclusive Dates.</b>	Circa 1905 - 1915
<b>Bulk Dates.</b>	N/A
<b>Languages.</b>	English
<b>Summary.</b>	Eighteen annotated photographic images document construction of jetties in the Southwest Passage of the Mississippi River delta, the aftermath of a storm, and Mardi Gras in New Orleans.
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<b>Citation.</b>	Burrwood (La.) and Southwest Pass Jetties Construction Photographs, Mss. 5068, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, La.
<b>Stack Location.</b>	E:65

## **HISTORICAL NOTE**

The Southwest Pass of the Mississippi River is a naturally occurring, though extensively modified, channel at the mouth of the Mississippi River in Plaquemines Parish. The Pass provides ocean-going ships access to the Port of New Orleans as does the South Pass. The volume of shipping into and out of the Port of New Orleans has made this Pass essential to the economic vitality of the region and the nation.

The Mississippi River carries a huge sediment load as it flows to the Gulf of Mexico. The Southwest Pass suffered from a sediment bar at its mouth and shoaling at the Head of Passes upriver. These sedimentary obstructions reduced the effective depth of the Pass to less than 9 feet making the Pass useless but for shallow draft vessels.

The first improvement of the Southwest Pass occurred under the authority of the river and harbor act of 1836 July 4. Subsequent improvements were made under river and harbor acts of 1837, 1852, 1856, 1867, and 1873<sup>1</sup>. On 1898 February 17, Congress allotted funds for a survey and report regarding the practicality of creating a sustainable channel 35 feet deep and of “adequate width.”<sup>2</sup> The survey was completed in 1898 and the report submitted in early 1899.

Between 1899 and 1902 a number of legislative acts resulted in adoption of a plan in the 1902 June 13 river and harbor act to:

- Create a channel 1,000 feet wide and 35 feet deep at mean low water throughout the entire length of the Southwest Pass by dredging;
- construct sills across Cubits Gap, The Jump, and Baptiste Collets Canal;
- close all minor outlets below the forts;
- construct a dredge;
- construct other necessary plant such as tugboats, barges, tracks, buildings, etc. and;
- purchase land at the shore ends of the jetties.

Laying foundation mats in the east jetty began on 1903 December 31. The west jetty foundation mats were laid in place starting on 1904 August 30. By 1908 June 30, approximately two-thirds of the approved project had been accomplished. The jetties were complete; the laying of sills across Cubits Gap and The Jump, as well as additions to the sill at Pass a Loutre, were completed; the coaling station and wharf at Southwest Pass were completed; foundations for the office and sixteen dwellings were constructed.

An act of 1908 May 28 allowed dredging of 3.5 miles of the river from Head of Passes up to Cubits Gap. An act of 1909 March 03 increased the plant with the addition of a dredge. Additional work at the Burrwood station consisted of filling the station, completion of sewer and fire protection systems, and the addition of a storage building.

The jetties on the east and west – the east jetty, 24,600 feet long with 23,900 feet above water and the west jetty, 18,830 feet long with 18,400 above water – were completed in 1913. Jetty superstructure received necessary repairs in 1915 and 1916.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Annual report of the chief of engineers, U.S. Army, 1916. page 851.

<sup>2</sup> Annual report of the chief of engineers, U.S. Army, 1908. Part 1, page 422.

<sup>3</sup> Annual report of the chief of engineers, U.S. Army, 1916. page 852.

A major hurricane with winds of 125 knots struck the Southwest Pass area 1915 September 29. The Army Corps of Engineers prepared for the storm by filling their dredges with river sand and water to hold the dredges in place. Families living along the southwest pass and at Burrwood were evacuated.

During World War Two, Burrwood Naval Section Base was established to watch for enemy ships and submarines in the Gulf of Mexico and to monitor traffic entering the mouth of the river. Construction of the base began in 1941 and the base was placed into commission on December 15, 1941. The Army Corps of Engineers constructed a water tower approximately 120 ft. in height with a platform atop the tank which supported another smaller tower 75 ft. high. The smaller tower supported a yardarm (crossbeam) similar to that of a ship from which signal lights and signal flags could be hoisted to communicate with approaching ships. Inbound vessels were inspected prior to proceeding upriver to New Orleans and Baton Rouge. In 1942, the U.S. Army set up heavy artillery pieces on either side of the river at Burrwood. The guns had a range of approximately nine miles. The base's heavy duty docks were capable of supporting not only pilot boats and civilian tugs and dredges, but also patrol craft, sub chasers, minesweepers, PT boats, and vessels as large as destroyers. Vessels staging out of Burrwood participated in rescue operations along the central Gulf Coast during the height of the U-boat threat in 1942.

Burrwood no longer exists.

#### **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

This collection consists of eighteen (18) paper photographic prints:

- Fourteen (14) of the prints document jetty construction at the South West Pass of the Mississippi River delta;
- Three (3) of the prints document equipment damage caused by a storm, and;
- One (1) print documents Canal Street at Chartres in New Orleans during Mardi Gras.

**LIST OF SERIES**

- I. South West Pass Jetty Construction
- II. September storm damage
- III. New Orleans Mardi Gras

**SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

**I. South West Pass Jetty Construction**

- 506801 Title Harahan incline - 12 miles above New Orleans where we receive our rock from the quarry at Berry, Ala. By the I.C.R.R., and transfer it to barges. C&L own their own landing and have no subcontractors getting out all material but lumber themselves.  
Notes The remainder of the inscription: Burrwood is 110 miles from New Orleans. Altogether we work about 700 men.
- 506802 Title C & L camp at mouth of S. W. Pass called Burrwood  
Notes None
- 506803 Title Lumber for foundation matts.  
Notes None
- 506804 Title Types of houses for men's quarters. We pay 2.00 per day (10 hrs) Board 4.00 per week.  
Notes The remainder of the inscription: Houses are screened and kept clean by bunk men. We have a doctor at Burrwood all times.
- 506805 Title Building a mat on the Mat Table.  
Notes None
- 506806 Title Laying bound foundation mats for beginning of jetty in canal end.  
Notes The remainder of the inscription: Jetties extend 4 miles on E side and 3 miles on W side of S. W. Pass all to be capped with concrete blocks. (Contract 6 million dollars) We are putting in the concrete finish now.
- 506807 Title Getting in position to lower mats.  
Notes None
- 506808 Title Launching Mats  
Notes None
- 506809 Title Towing mat to jetty. Mat 125' X 100' X 3 ft thick  
Notes Upper left corner of print damaged.

- 506810 Title Layer of stone on foundation mats at land end of jetty.  
Notes None
- 506811 Title After foundation mats are sunk, stone is dumped on them until there are 50 lbs per square foot of stone on the mats.  
Notes The remainder of the inscription: Then another mat is sunk and the process continues until the surface of the jetty is above water. Then the concrete blocks are moulded on the top to finish jetty.
- 506812 Title Empty barge being towed in from jetty.  
Notes Left side corners missing
- 506813 Title Driving pilings for trestle work for railroad to carry material over shore end and shallow marsh at shore end of jetty.  
Notes None
- 506814 Title As jetty appears before concrete blocks are moulded on top.  
Notes Lower left corner damaged.

## **II. September storm damage**

- 506815 Title After the Sept[ember] storm which sunk 8 of our barges, and beached one of our tugs. Recovered all but 3 barges. Storm damage is about \$25,000  
Notes Upper left corner damaged
- 506816 Title A derrick barge which we righted and are now using.  
Notes None
- 506817 Title Barge which dumped her load and caught on wharf as she turned over in Sept[ember] storm  
Notes None

## **III. New Orleans Mardi Gras**

- 506818 Title View from my office window at Mardi Gras time, looking toward Chartres St. They say of the people of New Orleans, "One half of the people are always in parades and the other half watching them."  
Notes None

**INDEX TERMS**

**SERIES LOCATION**

Burrwood (La.)--Photographs.	I
Carnival--Louisiana--New Orleans--Photographs.	III
Hurricane damage--Louisiana--Burrwood--Photographs.	II
Jetties--Mississippi River--Design and construction--Photographs.	I

**CONTAINER LIST**

**Stack**

**Location   Box   Folder   Contents**

E:65	1	1	I. South West Pass Jetty Construction (14 photographic prints) II. September storm damage (3 photographic prints) III. New Orleans Mardi Gras (1 photographic print)
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