

From the May 7, 1884 issue of the Trappe Enterprise on dredging what would later be named La Trappe River.

“Mr. Joseph Seth went on to Washington a few days ago to see about the appropriation for dredging Dividing Creek. Several favorable reports were given, but we failed to receive the appropriation. The following is the report of Captain Thomas Turtle, which among others were given to Mr. Seth, and published in the *Ledger* last Thursday.

United States Engineer Office  
Baltimore, Md.  
November 6, 1882.

Colonel: According to instructions from the office of the Chief of Engineers a “*preliminary examination*” of Dividing Creek, Maryland, has been made under my direction by Mr. J.L. Seager, assistant engineer, and the following extract is made from his report:

Dividing Creek enters the Choptank River from the north, between Clora’s [sic] Point and Howell’s Point, and about 11 1/2 miles from the mouth of the river. Vessels drawing 6 feet can go up the creek at mean low water to within about three-quarters of a mile of the landing, “a county wharf” at the head of navigation for small vessels, and about 1 1/2 miles from the town of Trappe, in Talbot County. At the “landing” there is a small wharf in good condition, with a small warehouse on it for the storage of freight. The creek is tolerably straight, with good open water for most of its length, but there are some points and bars that narrow the present navigable channel in places [sic] so that a survey of the whole creek would be necessary.

The length of the creek is about 3 1/2 miles. The land along the banks is cultivated, in many places close to the shore, and is very productive, the county of Talbot being one of the finest farming districts in Maryland. Trappe in Talbot county, is the nearest settlement to Dividing Creek; it is a flourishing town of 400 inhabitants; containing twenty-seven business houses, four schools, four churches, and one large grist and lumber mill. The nearest present steamboat landing is about 6 miles distant. There are also in the neighborhood of Trappe two large grist mills, three carriage factories, and six saw-mills. There are two schooners, with an aggregate of 126 tons burthen owned in and trading from the creek; also three schooners, whose tonnage I could not ascertain, trading from, but not owned in, the creek.

The principle products of the country about Dividing Creek are wheat, corn, oats, fruit, and potatoes. The yearly shipments are, as nearly as I can determine, about 25,000 boxes fruit, 10,000 bushels potatoes, 200,000 bushels grain, 500 cords wood, and a considerable quantity of ship timber.

Imports are about 500 tons coal, 25,000 bushels lime and shells, 400 tons fertilizers, and a large quantity of general merchandise. It is estimated that from \$5,000 to \$8,000 yearly would be saved in freight and hauling could vessels come to the “landing” instead of having to lighter\* their cargoes; also, that the fruit trade would be greatly increased, the present distance to steamboats on the Choptank being too great to haul perishable articles with profit.

I estimate the cost of the field work for a thorough survey of this creek at \$580.

The date supplied by Mr. Seager’s report may, I think, be assumed as nearly correct.

Dividing Creek penetrates a rich farming region, and if a channel were dredged up to the wharf at the head of the creek lighterage\* on the creek and long hauls to steamboat landings would be saved to quite an extent of the country. I judge from consultation with Mr. Seager that a channel with 6 or 7 feet depth at mean low water and a width of 100 feet would require the removal of 40,000 to 50,000 cubic yards, but a survey would be necessary to determine even approximately. It is my opinion that Dividing Creek is "worthy of improvement," and that benefit would repay the expenses. The improvement is however, a matter of local interest, with the usual indirect public benefit, but, in my opinion, not at all a public necessity."

I estimate that it will cost to make the survey or examination contemplated by the act, including the project and estimate for improvement, and the information required to be furnished, the sum of \$800, made up as follows:

Field work	\$580
Office work and contingencies	<u>220</u>
	800

Very respectfully, &c.  
THOMAS TURTLE  
Captain of Engineers.  
Lt. Col. William P. Craighill,  
Corps of Engineers, U.S.A."

In 1886, the name of Dividing Creek changed to La Trappe River. Apparently it was thought that a river with a fancy name would be more likely to be granted an appropriation for dredging than a mere creek with a common name. Actually, it is now named La Trappe Creek on maps and charts, which is apparently incorrect.

The actual bill reads "LAWS OF MARYLAND. CHAPTER 79. AN ACT to change the name of the tributary of the Choptank river, known as "Dividing creek" in Talbot county, to "La Trappe river." SECTION 1. Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Maryland, That the name of the tributary or branch of the Choptank river known as "Dividing creek," extending into Talbot county, and upon which the landing for the town of La. Trappe in said county is located, be and the same is hereby changed to "La Trappe river," and shall hereafter be called and known by that name. Approved March 25, 1886." Thankfully, the town's name was not also changed to La Trappe.