

CHESTER TIMES – April 26, 1916 – NEW SHIPBUILDING PLANT ON
DELAWARE RIVER FRONT

Formal announcement was made yesterday of a mammoth new industry for this city, the Sun Shipbuilding Company,, which has taken title to the 50 acres of land owned by Senator Sproul and the McClure estate situated on the Delaware River between Ridley River on the east and Morton Avenue on the west. The Sun Shipbuilding Company is a new organization recently perfected for the purpose of building the shipyard.

There have been various rumors concerning this project on the street for some time and it was known that interests identified with the Sun Company of Marcus Hook, and with Senator Sproul in the Wetherill Works, were contemplating the establishment of a large shipbuilding plant in this city.

The active heads of the new shipyard, which will be one of the largest and most completely equipped in the country, will be the Messrs. J. Howard Pew and Joseph N. Pew, Jr., of the Sun Company, who are among the largest independent oil producers and refiners in the United States, and Senator William C. Sproul, who recently purchased the business and plant of Robert Wetherill & Co., Inc., one of the oldest established industries of this city. The Sun Company will be in control of the new corporation.

The Wetherill Works will be merged with the new shipbuilding company but will continue on its present line of business and with its present organization, Messrs. Sproul, Klaer and Garthwaite remaining in charge of that branch of the business. The business of building marine engines and boilers will be added to the present line of the Wetherill plant, and extensions and improvements are likely to be made to that industry.

CONTRACT FOR BUILDING MATERIAL – The shipyard, which will occupy the desirable piece of ground between the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad and the river, and Ridley Creek on the east, and Morton Avenue on the west, will be immediately equipped for the building of large vessels for the ocean trade. Contracts have been awarded to the Belmont Iron Works for the structures of the property and about 6000 tons of steel will be used in building the various shops. Work upon these will be undertaken at once. The principal building, which will contain the iron working departments, will be 640x430a feet in dimensions, and the upper floor will contain the mold loft and some of the other departments of the works. Other buildings for storehouse, copper and sheet iron work, forges, etc., have also been contracted for.

At present six concrete shipways, each capable of taking vessel of 750 feet in length, will be constructed. These shipways will be served by large overhead cranes carried upon steel structures. There will also be a fitting out dock and extensive wharf improvements, so that the whole plant will be complete in every detail.

SITE ONE OF THE BEST – The site is regarded as one of the best, if not the best, on the Delaware River, being a firm piece of ground with a dry porous soil and extending out to within a few hundred feet of the deep channel of the Delaware River. This land was acquired about nine years ago from the Simpson estate by Mr. Sproul and the late William J. McClure, and under the directions of Josiah Smith, Esq., who was interested in the proposition the land was bulk headed and afterwards filled in with clean sand dumped from the river during dredging operations. It covers about 1500 feet on the river and extends back almost an equal distance to the tracks of the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad.

Among the others interested with the Messrs. Pew and Mr. Sproul in the enterprise are General T. Coleman DuPont of New York and Wilmington, Mr. S. M. Vauclain of the Baldwin Locomotive Works, Mr. E. V. Babcock, the Pittsburgh lumberman and Mr. J. Leonard Lepogle,

formerly of the Cambria steel Company, and who figured largely in the recent transactions with that property.

Mr. J. Howard Pew and his brother Mr. Joseph N. Pew, Jr., are very well known in this community, they having been in charge of the business of the Sun Company at Marcus Hook, where they succeeded their father, the late Joseph N. Pew, who was the founder of the business. The Sun Company in addition to its producing and refining of oil, is also largely engaged in the transportation business and owns a large fleet of tank ships. It has been an important factor in the growth of Marcus Hook, in the past few years and is one of the most substantial industries in the county. Messrs. Pew have won a high place in the business world and in the industrial community by their success and their fair doings with their employees.

The new shipyard will occupy the place which was at first selected as a site for the New York Ship yard, now located in Camden, N. J. Difficulty in securing the title at the time and condition of the land, which had not then been filled in, prompted Mr. Henry G. Morse, founder of the New York Shipbuilding Company to locate in Camden.