William Luther Sibert was born October 12, 1860, in Gadsden, Alabama. In 1878 Sibert entered the University of Alabama, and in 1880 he received an appointment by Congressman William H. Forney to West Point Military Academy.

In 1884 Sibert graduated from West Point with the rank of second lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers. He graduated from a second school of military engineering in 1887, and in 1888 was ordered to Kentucky to improve conditions of the Green and Barren Rivers, where he rebuilt the entire system of locks.

Throughout his career Sibert worked on many notable projects, including the connection of the Great Lakes at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan; the Ohio River Project; the Panama Canal; the construction of locks at Miraflores and Pedro Miguel; and many other projects both nationally and internationally.

His work on the Gatun Locks of the Panama Canal brought him world renown. At the completion of the Canal he wrote, “The Panama Canal is of great strategic value to the United States from a military standpoint, but like all points or lines with such a value, it is liable to be the scene of conflict in case of war.”

In the spring of 1917 he was promoted to the rank of major general and led the First Division into combat in France. Several years later, General Sibert was assigned the task of organizing the U.S. Chemical Warfare Service. He was placed in charge of the operation and given the title of director.

After traveling around the world with the Corps of Engineers to work on lock systems, General Sibert retired from the Army in 1920 and in 1923 he was appointed chairman of the Alabama State Docks Commission by Gov. William W. Brandon with a condition of “no political interferences.” The Commission had jurisdiction over waters and shores of Alabama and seaward to the limits of state control.

As chairman, General Sibert constructed an open terminal at Mobile under a $10 million appropriation. Stemming from the development of the terminals were “spin-off” developments such as highway and bridge construction, railways, and the industrialization of Alabama’s only port city.

In 1928, under the direction of President Calvin Coolidge, General Sibert was named chairman of the Boulder Dam, which is currently known as the Hoover Dam.

General Sibert was inducted into the U.S. Army Chemical Corps Hall of Fame on June 30, 1989.

General Sibert’s life was one of unselfish devotion to his country and its people.

He and his wife, Mary, had six children: five sons and one daughter.

General Sibert died on October 16, 1935, in Bowling Green, Kentucky. He was 75.