

SPECIAL MESSAGE

AND

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTS

RELATIVE TO

CONNECTING THE MISSISSIPPI WITH THE LAKES.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE, February 28.

Gentlemen of the Assembly :

I herewith submit to your honorable body a communication from the Governor of Wisconsin, and an accompanying memorial from the Legislature of the same State.

SAMUEL MERRILL.

STATE OF WISCONSIN, EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, }
MADISON, February 10, 1868. }

To His Excellency, Hon. Samuel Merrill, Governor of Iowa :

SIR: I am advised that General Warren holds to the opinion that it is entirely practicable to connect the Mississippi River and Lake Michigan by a navigable channel through the Wisconsin and Fox Rivers.

It is claimed by those who have given attention to the subject that a low-water channel of quite or nearly four feet can be had at a cost comparatively inexpensive. Should the depth required reach six, nine or more feet, it is thought the cost would more nearly approximate to the cost of proposed channels of like depth elsewhere. While the channel must be made ultimately of the greater depth, and sufficient for military purposes, yet a temporary channel of four feet would give great relief to commerce.

Such is the size of the locks on the completed portion of the work, and the quantity of water in the Wisconsin and Fox Rivers, that boats, flat-bottomed and much larger than any on the Erie Canal, can make the passage; and it is hoped, by the parties referred to, that a low-water channel of four feet will have capacity for commerce little less than the Erie Canal.

In this view, I suggest that brief memorials be prepared and passed, urging upon Congress, at its present session, an appropriation, more or less great.

Should the Legislatures of Minnesota and Iowa unite with Wisconsin in urging this, it is hoped that Congress, at its present session, may make a beginning which shall guarantee the ultimate completion of the work.

I inclose copies of a memorial passed by the Wisconsin Legislature of 1867, and of one to be submitted to the present Legislature. Possibly they may be of use in the preparation of a memorial for your State (if one shall be required).

Respectfully, your obedient servant,

LUCIUS FAIRCHILD.

A Memorial to Congress in relation to the project of connecting, by navigable channels through the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers, the waters of the Mississippi River with the waters of Lake Michigan.

To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States, in Congress assembled :

The memorial of the Legislature of Wisconsin respectfully represents :

That the project of connecting the Mississippi River and Lake Michigan, by navigable channels through the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers, has heretofore received the attention of Congress. Its growing importance to the country, the Northwest and the State, becomes each year more apparent, and each year, for six successive years, has induced the Legislature of Wisconsin to memorialize Congress.

The subject of connecting the Mississippi and the Lakes, has been considered by the people met in local, county, State and National Conventions by boards of trade and by the Legislatures

and Governors of States, and without exception by resolution, memorial and message, all have united in recognizing its importance, and in urging upon Congress attention and action in relation thereto. The character of the undertaking is alike apparent to Congress, the Legislatures and the people. It is rendered necessary, as a military measure, to protect against inroad and attack, a frontier extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific, as a commercial measure, to enlarge the already inadequate outlets for an increasing commerce, thereby lifting from freights and ultimately from the people extortionate tariffs, and as a measure otherwise national, to establish out of avenues of intercourse and trade, bonds of national unity.

Whatever can be said of the national importance of connecting these waters by any channel, is equally true in reference to this channel. Nature unaided, has by way of the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers, almost effected the desired connection. Aided by a few dams and locks, and altogether not to exceed five miles of canal, a channel, having in all but extraordinary stages of low water a navigable depth of four feet for one third of the way and nearly three feet the remainder, reaching a distance of over one hundred and fifty miles from Green Bay upon Lake Michigan to Portage City upon the Wisconsin, has been open to regular commerce. Boats of light draft, in the ordinary stages of water, can now pass from Lake Michigan to Portage City and down the Wisconsin into the Mississippi River. Boats of three and four feet draft, have in stages of high water, repeatedly made the passage. Late in June, 1867, the Brooklyn, a steamboat of three hundred tons burthen, loaded at Green Bay and without detention, delivered her cargo at the port of St. Paul.

Estimates of the cost of deepening and completing this channel have been made under the direction of Congress by Maj.-Genl. G. K. Warren. His report (other than preliminary), has not been made, or if made, has not been seen by your memorialist. But judging from the present condition of the work, the conformation of the country, the nature of the materials at hand and the supply of water, your memorialist is constrained to believe that the cost will be comparatively inexpensive and may not exceed for a channel

of four feet in low water, one-fourth; or of six feet two-thirds; or of nine feet three-fourths of the cost of a like channel in any other State. The quantity of water and the size of the locks are greater than in the Erie Canal, permitting the passage of flat bottomed and larger boats, so that a depth of four feet in the rivers is estimated, for the purposes of commerce, equal to at least six feet in the canal; an estimate strengthened by the fact that the motive on the canal is horse power and on the rivers steam.

With the channel extended to the Mississippi and reduced to a uniform low water depth of four feet, commerce will find relief in an outlet, with capacity little less than the Erie Canal. Estimating the average price per bushel for moving grain by rail from the Mississippi to Lake Michigan at twenty-nine cents and by water not to exceed fourteen cents; and estimating the quantity of grain exported yearly from Minnesota at ten millions of bushels, from Iowa twenty, Wisconsin fifteen and Northern Illinois fifteen, in all sixty millions of bushels, and upon the movement eastward of this, a single crop, the saving will be nine millions of dollars. Add to this the saving upon the western freights and it appears, that in a single year, a sum will be saved exceeding fourfold the probable cost of the work. It may be said that coming in competition with railroads, the grain will not go all by water and therefore the estimate is incorrect. Whether moved by rail or water, the grain must go at approximately water rates.

The navigable waters which it is proposed to improve and develop and the carrying places between the same are common highways, declared such by the ordinance of 1787 and are of the class of navigable waters over which the General Government has invariably retained control and to improve which it has long been its policy to make appropriations.

For these reasons your memorialist respectfully invites the attention of Congress to this subject, and while a necessity for economy in the administration of national affairs is apparent; yet, in the opinion of your memorialist, the pressing importance of an early completion of this work will justify Congress at its present session in undertaking the same:

Be it therefore resolved by the Senate, the Assembly concurring, That the Governor be and he is hereby authorized and requested to affix his official signature hereto, and forward a copy of this memorial to the President of the United States, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and to each of our Senators and Representatives in the Congress of the United States.

A MEMORIAL

To Congress in relation to the project of connecting by navigable channels through the Wisconsin, Fox and Rock rivers, the waters of the Mississippi river with the waters of Lake Michigan.

To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled:

The Memorial of the Legislature of Wisconsin respectfully represents:

That the project of connecting the Mississippi river and Lake Michigan by navigable channels through the Wisconsin, Fox and Rock rivers, appears to the Legislature, (your memorialist) to be one of vast importance to Wisconsin, to the Northwest and to the entire country. An oppressive sense of this importance is the only apology the Legislature can offer for memorializing Congress in relation thereto at each of its annual sessions for five successive years.

Permit your memorialist to respectfully suggest a few of the reasons, which to the Legislature appear conclusive, why the immediate execution of this project by Congress, not only is of vast importance, but is a necessity:

Upon its execution may depend the safety of our northern frontier. No frontier is more assailable or more in need of protection from possible foes. Great Britain occupies the northern portion of the continent, with a territory coterminous with our own, stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific. She has constructed a series of short canals around the rapids of the St. Lawrence, with locks forty-five feet wide and two hundred feet long, and eight feet deep, and has connected lakes Erie and Ontario by the

Welland Canal, with locks twenty-six feet wide, one hundred and fifty long, and eleven feet deep, and capable of ready enlargement. She has also constructed the Rideau Canal, professedly as a military work, by an interior route, between Montreal and Kingston, with locks thirty-three feet wide and one hundred and forty-two feet long; and although the channel is only five and a half feet deep, yet it is capable of passing a dangerous vessel, when buoyed up by lighters. She has a formidable fortress and depot of military and naval stores at Kingston, on Lake Ontario, another at Malden, at the mouth of the Detroit river, and a third at Penetanguishene, on Georgian Bay; besides forts more or less impregnable at Toronto, Niagara, Port Stanley, Windsor and Port Sarnia. Most of these points are intersected by railways, by which a large force can be rapidly concentrated.

To oppose these formidable preparations, we have a few dismantled forts, which a half hour's cannonading with improved ordnance would batter down, and which from their weakness would invite rather than deter attack; no lines of water communication by which a war vessel, larger than a canal boat can be thrown into the lakes; no naval or military depots; nothing but a single steamer of one hundred tons burden, mounting a single eighteen-pounder for aggressive or defensive purposes; nor can the number, under the treaty stipulations of 1817, be increased beyond one more on the upper lakes, one on Lake Ontario and one on Lake Champlain. It may be a startling fact, but it is nevertheless true, that a single battery planted on the Virginia side of the Ohio river, below Pittsburgh, and a single gunboat anchored near the south shore of Lake Erie, have the power to sever the great arteries of communication between the east and the west. The dreadful import of this fact becomes apparent, when it is remembered that the annual wheat crop of the State of New York is hardly enough to feed her population for one third of a year, while the annual wheat crop of the New England States is only enough to feed their population three weeks.

The committee on canals of the Senate of New York and the committee on naval affairs of the Senate of the United States, having this project before them, have unanimously reported in its

favor—the former by its report, made on or about the 10th of April, 1862, and the latter by its report, made on or about the 3d of March, 1863.

As a commercial measure, the execution of this project is no less a necessity. The products of the Northwest for exportation, have increased beyond example. The capacity of the present channels of commerce is insufficient to move them, while the cost of transportation is so great, that in some localities corn is used for fuel, and in most, is converted into pork and beef before it can be forwarded. The product of grain, for example, has increased; that of Wisconsin, from 36,000,000 bushels in 1860 to nearly 50,000,000 bushels in 1865; that of Illinois, from 155,000,000 bushels in 1860 to 230,000,000 bushels in 1865; that of Iowa, Minnesota and other Western States in proportion, quite or nearly as great, and yet only a mere fraction of the soil (estimated at one-eighth) is under cultivation. The increase for years to come can not be less than in the years last past; and with it the cost of transportation will be increased and the incapacity of the present channels of commerce become more apparent and more ruinous.

By the execution of this project, vast sums now paid to middle men will be saved to the consumer and producer; freights will be classified, giving to railways the exclusive control over certain classes of freight, and in quantity more than they can move. Railway capital can not be imperiled, but if so, better the corporations than that the people should suffer.

By its execution, the entire country is benefited, not less the East than the West; not more by the returns of commerce, than by developing avenues of intercourse into bonds of unity. The project which tends to unite, by friendly bonds, the remote parts of a country, can be no less national in character than that which guards against outward foes.

Your memorialist respectfully suggests, that this work should be undertaken by the General Government. It can not be successfully accomplished by the States separately, and can not be undertaken by them even, as in most there are constitutional prohibitions against the incurring of State debt. As a national and military measure, its accomplishment is devolved, not upon the States, but

upon the General Government. The navigable waters which it is proposed to improve and develop, and the carrying places between the same, are common highways, declared to be such by the ordinance of 1787, and are of the class of navigable waters over which the General Government has invariably retained control, and to improve which it has long been its policy to make appropriations.

Your memorialist respectfully suggests, that this work should be undertaken at this time, because the public debt is great. Its accomplishment will increase the wealth of the country, out of which the debt is to be paid, and will enlarge the incomes of the consumer and producer, by whom it is to be paid. At any cost, its early accomplishment is dictated by true economy. It will not cost a sum equal to the saving over land carriage on the movement seaward of a single grain crop.

For those reasons, your memorialist invites your attention to this subject, and trusts it will receive early and due consideration.

Be it therefore resolved by the Senate, the Assembly concurring, That the Governor be and he is hereby authorized and requested to affix his official signature thereto, and forward a copy of this memorial to the President of the United States, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and to each of our Senators and Representatives in the Congress of the United States.

SPECIAL MESSAGE.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE, MAR. 23.

Gentlemen of the Senate:—

In reply to your Resolution March 18th, inquiring "whether the Cedar Rapids and Missouri River Railroad has accepted of the grant made to said company by Chapter 37 of the Acts of the Eighth General Assembly, as required by said Act," I have the honor to state that a formal, written acceptance, signed by the President and Secretary of said corporation, with the corporate seal affixed, was deposited with the Secretary of State, in compliance with the terms of the Act conferring the grant.

The second inquiry of your Resolution, "what portion of said road has been constructed within the limits of said land-grant," appeals to facts which are not in the possession of this office.—The map which was filed in the office of the Secretary of State, bears the date of December 26th, 1862; being a map of the original line, and no map of the modified line, indicating the present route of the road, has been deposited by the Company. Accordingly, I am unable to give any authoritative answer to this branch of your inquiry.

The amount of lands originally included within the grant made to the State for the use of the Cedar Rapids and Missouri River Railroad, was 775,717.67 acres. These were the lands which were embraced within the limit of fifteen miles on either side of the line of that road. By an Act of Congress, approved June 2d, 1864, an additional grant was made, conditional upon the impossibility of finding the amount of land first granted within the proposed limits. The Commissioner of the General Land Office estimates