THE PENNSYLVANIA IMPROVEMENT SOCIETY AND ITS PROMOTION OF CANALS AND RAILROADS, 1824-1826

BY ROBERT E. CARLSON*

IN STUDYING the canals and railroads of early nineteenth-century America, one is struck by the different types of promoters who were active in initiating these projects. For New York, her Erie Canal was carried through because James Geddes and Jesse Hawley, Benjamin Wright, and De Witt Clinton combined engineering acumen with political and economic expediency to crystallize popular support.1 In contrast, Maryland's later move toward a railroad was begun by Philip E. Thomas and George Brown, typical of the Baltimore business community who saw a profit advantage in more rapid and efficient transportation systems.2

By the middle 1820's, Pennsylvania was confronted with two potent challenges. The success of the Erie Canal, demonstrated


even before the works were completed, made it clear that much trade coming from the West would bypass this Commonwealth. At the same time Maryland was certain to exploit her commercial opportunities by enlarging her established road and water contacts with Western Pennsylvania and the Susquehanna Valley. More than any other city, Philadelphia would surely suffer from the gains made by New York and Baltimore.\(^3\)

With motives as variegated as local pride and jealousy on the one hand and the raw facts of economic survival in the face of sharp competition on the other, Philadelphia had to find answers to these challenges. Although there were many responsible for shaping the eventual decision, more than any other it was the Pennsylvania Society for the Promotion of Internal Improvements in the Commonwealth that dramatized the need, presented relevant information about the available alternatives, and eventually advocated the choice of the canal.

Under the guiding hand of Mathew Carey, the pamphleteer and publisher,\(^4\) eleven leading citizens signed an “Address,” directed “To those on whom Heaven has bestowed the goods of fortune, and, what is more valuable, hearts to make a proper use of them for the public benefit.” This document, dated October 11, 1824, marks the unofficial beginning of Philadelphia’s drive to do something constructive to better her competitive position. Significantly, only two of the eleven represented the city’s business interests, for among the others were three lawyers, one medical doctor, an auctioneer, and three “gentlemen.” This was no pressure group in the narrow sense of the term but rather a broad-gauge effort coming from the awareness of men who knew the dangers of doing nothing.

Their address opened with an expression of an ideal and a state-


\(^4\) Unfortunately, the biographies of Carey do not treat his canal interests to any extent but emphasize his publications, especially his pamphlets on political subjects; see, for instance, Earl L. Bradsher, *Mathew Carey, Editor, Author, Publisher* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1912) and Kenneth Wyer Rowe, *Mathew Carey: A Study in American Economic Development* (Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, Series LI: Baltimore, 1933).
ment of an immediate goal: "It is proposed to form a society in this city for the promotion of national improvements, of which the object will be to collect into one focus, and to disseminate throughout the United States, the most valuable and correct information that can be procured, on the subject of the construction of canals, roads, bridges, railways, steam-engines, and other objects tending to advance the national wealth, power, and resources, as well as individual prosperity. But while concerns of national interest will occupy a due share of the attention of . . . the society, internal improvement within our own state, will be its primary object."

To achieve these ends, the group planned to publish and distribute six or eight pamphlets each year. Then, recognizing that most of the progress in roads, canals, railroads, and steam engines had been made abroad, these organizers proposed to send "some duly qualified person to Great Britain" to examine the works under construction and in operation there and file a report of his findings.5

Because they were fearful that a plan for many subscribers each paying only a nominal sum of money would result in inadequate funds to support their proposal, the promoters chose to limit the membership to twenty-five and to set the first year's subscription at $100. A week later they submitted their idea to leading citizens of both Philadelphia and Pennsylvania. Aware that the annual dues would undoubtedly cause the greatest anguish, they assured their prospective members that "compared with the great objects of the proposed society, the contribution is insignificant."6

To some Philadelphians who were solicited the idea was a most worthy one. Within a month eleven new members were added to the original promoters, and the subscription list began to assume imposing proportions; among others, there were Nicholas Biddle, Joseph P. Norris (president of the Bank of Pennsylvania), Nathaniel Chapman and John Y. Clark, both medical doctors, respected lawyers such as John Sergeant and Richard Peters,


junior, merchants such as Gerard Ralston, and William Strickland, promising young architect-engineer who was corresponding secretary of the recently-organized Franklin Institute. Of course there were some prospects who did not join. From those who replied the reaction to the idea was almost universally favorable, but response to the subscription was something else; Joseph Reed candidly admitted that “I cannot afford to pay 100 Dolls.” and Thomas Burnside of Harrisburg complained that his means were “too limited to become a member.” But the organizing committee held their ground, rightly judging that the costs of sending an agent to Great Britain would require at least $2,500 and probably double that sum. Over-all, the response was gratifying, and Mathew Carey recorded in his Diary the consensus of the promoters, “[I] am very sanguine in my expectations of success for this measure.”

At the first formal meeting of subscribers, held on November 30, a constitution was adopted. Drafted by Carey and sent to both enrolled and prospective members, this document included several important changes from earlier thinking. Instead of limiting the membership to twenty-five, now the Society “shall consist of as many members as shall sign this constitution” (eventually forty-eight did). Next, the prime objective was delimited, simply “to promote internal improvements in the commonwealth.” Although the subscription for the first year was retained at $100, the yearly dues thereafter were announced at $10. The usual officers and duties were included, but in addition an “Acting Committee” consisting of five members were made responsible for conducting the Society’s affairs, and especially to have charge of the correspondence. This last was an important assignment, for it was assumed that the Society would correspond with other promoters of roads, canals, and railroads as well as with civil engineers and those in charge of public works. Further, from time to time, the Acting Committee were to report their findings to the Society, and especially to submit cost estimates of specific projects that they thought worthy of support. Finally, after having

---

7 See, for instance, letters from N. Sellers to Nicholas Biddle and others, October 24, 1824; T. Butler to Mathew Carey, October 25, 1824; Joseph Reed to Mathew Carey, November 1, 1824; and Thomas Burnside to Mathew Carey, December 12, 1824, Manuscript Correspondence on Internal Improvements, Ridgway Branch, Library Company of Philadelphia.

8 November 30, 1824, Mathew Carey Diary, 1822-1826, unpublished manuscript, University of Pennsylvania Library.
adopted this constitution, officers were elected; John Sergeant was chosen president for a one-year term, Mathew Carey was elected to one of the three vice-presidencies, Gerard Ralston was chosen for the demanding position of Corresponding Secretary, while Carey, Joseph Hemphill, Richard Peters, junior, Stephen Duncan, and Thomas Biddle were designated the Acting Committee, although Biddle was subsequently replaced by Strickland. With the framing of this constitution and the election of officers, the "internal" phase of the Society's work was completed.

Between December, 1824 and the following summer, the Pennsylvania Society developed its primary purpose along three courses of action. First, it published papers to acquaint the people with several kinds of internal improvements; by March, 1825, it had printed and circulated about a thousand copies each of one pamphlet on roads, five on canals, one on railways, and one on canals and railways. Although the Society claimed to be unbiased in its preference, both the number and the contents of the canal pamphlets cannot be overlooked. These reflect the personality of Mathew Carey, the guiding power in the Society, author of most of these pamphlets, and holder of shares in the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal. In one, he wrote of the increased attention being paid by the public to "facilitating the intercourse between the different states and different parts of the same state, by means of canals, [and] the immense advantages of which are duly appreciated." In another he compared the cost of transportation by canal and road and judged it to be sixteen to one in favor of canals; then, drawing his inspiration from current Erie Canal experiences, he called on Pennsylvanians, through their legislature, to initiate action that would "lead to the glorious result of uniting the citizens of the western portion . . . with their eastern brethren" by a grand canal. Changing his tactics somewhat in his third


10 Copies of one or more of these pamphlets can be found in the American Philosophical Society, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and the Ridgway Branch, Library Company of Philadelphia, among other places. See especially, FULTON, "Canal Policy, No. 1—Third Edition," Philadelphia, December 8, 1824. FULTON was one of several names used by Mathew Carey in his efforts to publicize the need for internal improvements.

effort, Carey accentuated the jealousy theme, and vividly described some of "the beneficial consequences which have resulted to the state of New York, from the magnificent and liberal canal policy adopted by the legislature of that state." He observed that the domestic exports of Pennsylvania had diminished by about 40 per cent from 1817 to 1823, even though the population had increased by about 30 per cent. In light of this alarming circumstance he called for a canal, thereby opening a water communication between the Susquehanna and Allegheny Rivers, and assured the citizens that such would be as beneficial to this Commonwealth as the Erie Canal was to New York. And, since the project would necessarily be a costly one, he claimed that it could not be done by private subscription and must therefore "be executed by the state."

For their part, the Acting Committee, undoubtedly following Carey's lead, also supported the canal cause. In an address of January 13, they called on this state's citizens to shout "with one voice." "We will have a Pennsylvania Canal to connect the two extremes of the state."

Suddenly, as if they had been called to task for presenting only the canal story, Carey and the Acting Committee belatedly mentioned the railroad in their publications. Possibly it was Stephen Duncan or Nicholas Biddle who opened Carey's eyes, for these men had earlier corresponded on the subject. Duncan, writing in late December, 1824 from the state capitol where he was serving as a Senator, asked Biddle for information about the Liverpool & Manchester Railway's plans, probably because this great company had issued its first prospectus just two months earlier. Biddle had some information which he forwarded, but more important, he also submitted an opinion. He felt that a railway would cost no more than one-third as much to build as a canal, that its tolls would be proportionately lower, and that it could be used throughout the year, and therefore gave it his unequivocal support.

"The subscribers, the Acting Committee of 'The Pennsylvania Society for the promotion of Internal Improvements in the Commonwealth,' respectfully submit the following address . . . to the consideration of their fellow citizens," Philadelphia, January 13, 1825, Sellers Family Papers, II, American Philosophical Society.
"Letter, Stephen Duncan to Nicholas Biddle, Harrisburg, December 25, 1825, Nicholas Biddle Papers, XI, Library of Congress."
As Biddle admitted, his suggestions may have seemed startling because they were so new, but, as he also put it, “I believe them to be sound & practicable. I repeat that whoever will establish a railway & steam waggon between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, will do more honor to himself & more service to the State than by any other measure which I can imagine.”

Carey reflected his knowledge of this correspondence in his pamphlet of February 14, significantly titled “Canals and Railroads,” wherein he admitted that considerable “differences of opinion” had developed between the canal and railroad proponents. But to Carey, the worst consequence of these differences was the delay they would create in any move toward improving Pennsylvania’s competitive position. Because of this he modified his stand and called for a uniting of all Pennsylvanians for the purpose of opening a communication and letting “the mode and the route be subjects of future consideration, after proper explorations.” He went further than he had ever gone before in allowing that railroads were superior to canals in the speeds attained, in more effective operations in winter, and in ease of repair. In almost the same breath, however, he questioned their use on the grounds of high construction costs, their purported inability to ascend steep inclines, and the consequences of frost on the track and roadbed. Unfortunately, as sources for information on railroads, Carey had chosen several English authors, notably Thomas Gray, who often obscured rather than enlightened, and Carey forthrightly concluded, “it must be obvious that we are quite in the dark on this subject.”

This effort was followed by the one pamphlet devoted exclusively to railroads, but instead of writing it himself, Carey joined the other members of the Acting Committee in assuming responsibility for it. To the detriment of the railroad point of view, this pamphlet merely paraphrased an essay prepared by the Highland Society of Edinburgh, the contents of which were not always relevant to the specific problems found in Pennsylvania. However, the essay did give a satisfactory historical perspective of railways

---

15 Letter, Nicholas Biddle to S. M. Duncan, Philadelphia, January 4, 1825, Nicholas Biddle Papers, XI, Library of Congress.
in Great Britain and described many technical problems that had been solved there in preceding years. More important, it emphasized (and this is where Carey and the canal advocates in the Pennsylvania Society missed the point) that knowledge about railroad construction and operations was rapidly being accumulated and that every indication pointed to railroads being more generally useful than canals in most situations. By now the canal proponents in the Society realized that they had to allow some time before pushing their case, at least until more information could be obtained from Europe.

In March 1825, both the Society and Carey gave additional evidence of their broader attitude. The Society, in another address to the citizens, wanted it understood "that we disclaim . . . any partiality or prejudice for or against any particular route, or for or against canals or railways." It promised no haste in pushing any one route or mode, but it remained confident that "the Pennsylvania Canal (or Railway, as the case may be), to connect the settlements on the Allegheny with those on the Susquehanna, the Schuylkill, and the Delaware" would enhance Pennsylvania's competitive position against New York. For his part, Carey somewhat de-emphasized canals in two pamphlets published in March 1825 (in fact, he owned that railroads might even be preferable to canals, but only in mountainous areas) and turned his efforts to one of the Society's primary activities—awakening interest in internal improvements in general.

This awakening of interest took other forms during late 1824 and early 1825 and as such helped to change the Society into a Pennsylvania, rather than solely Philadelphia, organization. First, Carey's pamphlets were sent to newspapers throughout the state, with the usual request that they be printed. A representative sampling shows that this was done by the United States Gazette in Philadelphia, the Pennsylvania Intelligencer in Harrisburg, and the Crawford Messenger in Meadville. Inevitably the appearance of these pamphlets in the press led to numerous letters to the editor in each paper, and the correspondence, while often more

heated than enlightening, did stimulate discussion and controversy, which, it will be recalled, was an original purpose of the Society. Next, the Society, through its Acting Committee, was a clearing house for information on roads, canals, and railroads, and answered numerous queries from all parts of the state. Finally, the Society was a parent organization for several county Auxiliary Societies for the Promotion of Internal Improvements. Of these, the most active was that of Crawford County, which demonstrated a remarkable generosity in later contributing $100 to the support of the Pennsylvania Society's efforts. Thus, by the spring of 1825, the Society had made notable achievements in spreading the word regarding the need for as well as describing the several alternative schemes. Probably to its surprise, it was even congratulated by several editors for its efforts in this direction.

As the second part of its program, the Society took steps to fulfill its pledge to send a representative to Great Britain. On October 30, 1824, approximately three weeks after the pledge was made, Gerard Ralston prepared a memorandum for the Acting Committee in which he described places and things to be seen by an agent while abroad. He proposed a tentative route that would have required about 18 months to complete, but this obviously was too lengthy in view of the immediate need for reliable information as well as the limited financial resources available to the Society. For about three months the idea of an agent was talked about but little done, apparently because the necessary funds had yet to be raised. However, on January 19, 1825 (at about the same time as Carey and the Acting Committee were changing their opinion so as more definitely to include the railroad among the available alternatives), the Society resolved “That it is expedient to send an agent to Europe, to collect information of all the valuable improvements in the construction of canals, roads, railways, bridges, steam-engines, and all information calculated to promote the objects of the Society.” Two weeks later, on the Acting Committee's recommendation, William Strickland was ap-

---

21 See the Crawford Messenger, January 20, 1825, to July 13, 1826, passim.
22 Letter, Gerard Ralston to Mathew Carey, October 30, 1824, Manuscript Correspondence on Internal Improvements, Ridgway Branch, Library Company of Philadelphia.
pointed to serve as agent, and together the Committee and Strickland began work on preparing "Heads of Instructions" which were to guide him in his inquiries abroad. This required another fortnight, whereupon these "Heads" were submitted to members of the Society for their "attentive consideration" and comment. Another month passed before the replies were received and integrated; finally on March 17, the instructions were approved. These form one of the most comprehensive statements of their kind and reveal a sophisticated interest in all matters that could contribute to the state's economic well-being.

Strickland (along with one of his pupils, Samuel H. Kneass) was directed to proceed to Liverpool (they left on March 20) and visit England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, France, Holland, and Germany. He was ordered "carefully, accurately, and minutely" to write down all the knowledge and information he could collect and to relay this data as his travel schedule and time permitted. He was cautioned to remember that it was not "a knowledge of abstract principles, nor an indefinite and general account of their application . . ." that was wanted. "These we have in books. . . . What we earnestly wish to obtain, is the means of executing all those works in the best manner, and with the greatest economy and certainty . . . [so that] those who shall undertake the formation of Canals, Railways, and Roads . . . [shall be able] to perform such work without . . . having the science by which such works were originally planned." The Society directed him to procure pertinent working plans, drawings, sections, and estimates so that these works could be undertaken in Pennsylvania without need for a civil engineer of superior skill. Finally, Strickland was directed to point his first efforts toward railways, and to report his findings on this subject at the earliest practicable moment. The Society's determination to carry through this expensive project and the specific instruction relating to railroads are good evidence, at least on the surface, of an open-mindedness regarding canals and railroads and a willingness to give all sides a hearing.

---

25 Letter, Gerard Ralston, Corresponding Secretary, to N. Sellers, February 17, 1825, Sellers Family Papers, II. American Philosophical Society.
The specific instructions concerning canals were focused on construction costs; the Society cautioned Strickland not to be amazed at the elaborate works that he would see in Great Britain for adequate capital was usually available there. But since the supply of capital in Pennsylvania was limited he was warned to be precise about details of canal costs. Regarding railroads, the Society wanted specific information on the cost and method of construction, the greatest angle of ascent that could be overcome, and the best foundations (whether wood or masonry) for supporting the rails. Many other detailed questions were included in these “Heads of Instructions” on the manufacture of iron and on turnpikes, gas lights, and breakwaters—in fact, on almost every technical subject that could be of benefit to Pennsylvania.

Before he left, Strickland was given a special fund of £100 to obtain information about the smelting of iron and another £100 for the purchase of publications, models, and drawings of machines.

Although the details of his travels are not relevant, it should be observed that he spent from March 20 until mid-December, 1825 in the service of the Society, that he confined his travels to the British Isles, that he was generously received by his hosts and was shown much that assisted him in his assignment, and that he submitted at least eight reports on the many subjects that he investigated.27

Since he was instructed to do so, Strickland filed his first two reports on railways; these were eagerly awaited by the Society and provided much of value. On June 5, Strickland wrote a statement that must have gratified the railroad supporters. After making preliminary inquiries in the north of England and in Scotland, he reported that the engineers to whom he had talked unanimously agreed that railroads offered the best means for conveying goods with safety, speed, and economy. Regardless of the terrain to be crossed, he was convinced of the utility and decided superiority of the railway over other modes of conveyance and warmly commended it to the attention of the people of Pennsylvania.28 Then on June 16 he forwarded a very lengthy

28 United States Gazette, August 12, 1825, p. 2.
piece entitled "Railways, Locomotives, &c."; this contained the
detailed information the Society sought about best routes, roadbed,
single and double tracks, and costs. His conclusion put him firmly
in support of railroads: ". . . the introduction of the locomotive
engine has greatly changed the relative value of railroads and
canals; and, where a communication is to be made between places
of commercial or manufacturing character, which maintain a
constant intercourse, and where rapidity of transit becomes im-
portant, it cannot be doubted that railways will receive preference,
in consequence of this powerful auxiliary."\textsuperscript{29} Unintentionally
Strickland had played into the hands of the canal proponents, for
the qualifications he included did not really fit Pennsylvania's
problem, and his injection of the steam locomotive into the dis-
cussion could only mean further delay until someone built and
tested one suitable to this state's particular needs.

Apparently the Acting Committee felt that their agent had not
answered all their questions and consequently sent him another
series in September; these related to the use of railways for
transporting goods and persons and the need for a single or double
track.\textsuperscript{30} Although Strickland had been concentrating on other
subjects he promptly replied, and called for a double line of rail,
built as near to level as was practicable, and using locomotive
engines for the transport of goods, merchandise, and lumber. He
reiterated his earlier stand in favor of locomotive engines and
called them the major reason for building railroads. Finally, he
urged the Society to advocate a railroad between Pennsylvania's
two large cities; he reminded them that men of intelligence and
capital in England were confident that this was the most efficient
way to facilitate trade and commerce.\textsuperscript{31}

Perhaps Strickland went too far, for some could not believe the
validity of his conclusions, while others doubted the thoroughness
of his investigations. Yet had Pennsylvania only waited, until the
Stockton & Darlington (1825) and the Liverpool & Manchester

\textsuperscript{29} Strickland, Reports on Canals, Railways, Roads, pp. 23-31.
\textsuperscript{30} Letter, Acting Committee to William Strickland, September 19, 1825,
\textsuperscript{31} Letter, William Strickland to Pennsylvania Society for the Promotion
of Internal Improvements in the Commonwealth, Liverpool, October 20,
1825, in First Annual Report, pp. 41-44.
(1830) had shown what could be accomplished, this state would have had to commit itself to the railway that Strickland had recommended.

But, because of the impatience with which many Philadelphians viewed New York's continued economic growth, and because Mathew Carey and his canal group were so adamant, the Society moved, also on January 19, 1825, to call a town meeting to crystallize support for a water communication; out of this came the third part of the Society's program. Clearly, as the Society saw it, the crisis was becoming more pressing, and the trade of even Lancaster, Easton, and Pittsburgh was not coming to Philadelphia as it should have. "The struggle," as the Society put it, "assumes a . . . serious aspect. It is to retain what is left—for nothing can be more certain than this, that without opening a communication with the western states, more rapid and less expensive than that which at present exists, we have no chance of retaining what little remains of our trade with that rising quarter of the Union." 

As could be expected this town meeting, held January 24, was dominated by members of the Pennsylvania Society. John Sergeant delivered a lengthy keynote address in which he held that Pennsylvania's resources were adequate to build the much-discussed canal. Then, Mathew Carey presented a series of resolutions calling on the legislature to act immediately on this critically important need. Since additional time to discuss these resolutions was requested and since one speaker wanted the canal to link the Allegheny with Lake Erie and another wanted the expediency of railroads investigated, the chairman of the meeting, Judge William Tilghman, appointed a committee of seventeen (of whom ten were members of the Society) to study the proposals and report. They responded with a unanimous resolution "that . . . a communication by water ought to be opened with all practicable expedition" between the Susquehanna and Allegheny and then to Lake Erie, with the work to be executed at the expense of the

---


33 Minutes, Pennsylvania Society for the Promotion of Internal Improvements, meeting of January 19, 1825, in United States Gazette, January 24, 1825, p. 2.

34 "Important Meeting," United States Gazette, January 26, 1825, p. 2.
state. This was promptly accepted at another town meeting of January 26, and a committee of twenty-four were appointed to prepare a memorial to the legislature and to correspond with others in the state who were in sympathy with these resolutions. 35

In the meantime the Pennsylvania Society recommended that a convention of delegates from different counties be held at Harrisburg during the summer of 1825 to concentrate information on internal improvements. 36 On May 6 the Committee of 24 threw their support behind this tactic (so obviously pointed in favor of a canal), and during the remainder of the late spring and early summer numerous county meetings were held, the convention call enthusiastically endorsed, and delegates elected. From Philadelphia, three of its six delegates (Sergeant, who had just been appointed to the Board of Canal Commissioners by the Governor, Carey, and William Lehman) were members of the Pennsylvania Society, and it was Sergeant who on August 4 delivered the first address before the convention. 37 His theme was the same as before—unless Pennsylvania wanted to be cut off from the West's carrying trade, she would have to put forth every means in her possession to connect the eastern and western waters by a canal. And after some heated debate, centered more on the availability of funds and the time of construction rather than the need, the convention voted by better than a 3 to 1 margin to recommend opening a water communication between the Susquehanna and Lake Erie by way of the Allegheny; further, a Committee of 9 drawn from all parts of the state and chaired by Carey were directed to prepare an address to the people.

Carey was careful in his choice of words in this address, but he found one that seemed better than any other to justify the canal—experience. The Committee made this the essence of their address: "Its is our purpose to rest our assertions upon ascertained and incontrovertible data. Experience is the most certain test of all human undertakings. . . . We can appeal to the experience of Great Britain, of Holland, of France, and of China . . . and to that of New York—cases which are irresistibly convincing on this

37 "Important Meeting," United States Gazette, May 9, 1825, p. 2.
38 Reports of and excerpts from the minutes of this Harrisburg Convention are found in many of the state's newspapers; for these purposes, use was made of the Pennsylvania Intelligencer, August 12, 1825, et sequa.
subject." Then, after describing the history of the Erie Canal, the address concluded "that these favourable results would in themselves be abundantly sufficient to settle the question." Yet Carey was discreet enough not to rule out railroads; admitting that the address had only touched on them, he held that this was not from hostility but because "our information on the subject is not sufficiently matured to warrant us in forming a decisive opinion." On the other hand, Carey genuinely believed that railroads had important advantages, particularly in mountainous regions where the supply of water was too limited for canals; but he insisted that he could not visualize the day when railroads would supersede canals.

The canal proponents had had their way. Now all they had to do was fight off the railroad counterattack, and this the Society and Carey did in a series of eight pamphlets and numerous letters to editors between September, 1825 and February, 1826. Where the advocates of railroads demonstrated that the trend in England was toward this newer system, Carey countered that experience had shown that canals were proven successes. Where the former cited English engineers such as William Jessop, Thomas Tredgold, and Nicholas Wood who favored railroads, Carey replied by insisting that every statement of these men "ought to be received with caution, and not without satisfactory proof." Then when others cited instances of operations successes among British railroads, Carey came back with: "I am warranted in asserting, that there is scarcely an instance, I believe not one, of a successful rail-road for general use in Great Britain." Finally, when he felt he had said all that needed to be said on the relative merits of railroads and canals, he offered what he considered to be the conclusion to the debate: "... we ought to abandon the idea of rail-roads for such general traffic as may be expected be-

30 See a series of pamphlets, authored by FULTON and HAMILTON (Carey's second pseudonym) and generally entitled "Internal Improvements... Canals and Railways," dated from September 26, 1825, to January 31, 1826.
31 HAMILTON, "Internal Improvement—No. 1, Railways and Canals," Philadelphia, September 26, 1825. Tredgold had published his first edition of A Practical Treatise on Rail-roads and Carriages in 1825, and Nicholas Wood's A Practical Treatise on Rail-roads, and Interior Communication In General appeared the same year.
tween Philadelphia and Pittsburg, and all unite to promote the success of a canal.”

When in February, 1826 the legislature was on the threshold of enacting a bill to authorize construction of the Pennsylvania Main Line Canal, the Pennsylvania Society took the opportunity to evaluate their role over the previous sixteen months: “They hope they may be permitted to observe, that they feel a high degree of satisfaction in the belief, that those efforts, made at great expense, have had no small share in producing the state of feeling and concentration of views on the subject, which have rendered the proposed communication between the east and west among the most popular, as it is among the most important measures, that ever attracted the attention of the people of Pennsylvania.”