PHILADELPHIA AND THE AGITATION IN 1825 FOR THE PENNSYLVANIA CANAL

By the close of the year 1824 the State of New York had promoted so successfully its chief internal improvement project, the Erie Canal, as to feel the economic effects. She was rapidly tapping the commercial resources of the "new west"; trading was brisk; land values were increased; the influx of immigrants was adding to her population, giving rise to towns, and gaining for her even greater potential economic strength. "Clinton's ditch" was already the economic life-line of the Empire State, and it offered a challenge to sister states. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was the first to accept the challenge. Her thoughtful and foresighted citizens were aroused to action. Particularly were the merchants, traders, bankers, and the foremost residents of Philadelphia concerned with the jolt given to their economic bid for Eastern seaboard supremacy. They not only watched with envy the commercial rise of New York as the emporium of western trade but feared equally as much that Pennsylvania, unless she acted in a like manner, was certain to lose all hope of getting a share of the increasingly lucrative transappalachian trade, or indeed, that she would not be able even to retain what was left of her economic prestige in the Union.

It was not surprising, therefore, that during 1825 there was carried on in the Commonwealth an extensive and unceasing campaign in favor of internal improvements. It was only natural, too, that the public-spirited residents of Philadelphia should assume the lead, ably assisted by one small but influential group, "The Pennsylvania Society for the Promotion of Internal Improvements in the Commonwealth," organized in the fall of 1824.

It is true that in the spring of 1824 the Commonwealth itself had taken up the challenge. On March 26 the legislature had passed a bill which authorized the governor to appoint a board of commissioners, comprising three men, for the purpose of collecting data and reporting on the feasibility of undertaking internal improvement.¹ Impor-

¹ Referred to hereafter as the "Pennsylvania Improvement Society."
² After a tortuous course through the House and the Senate the bill was finally passed on March 26 and received the signature of the governor the next day. Journal of the House
tant as was this step, foresighted citizens, particularly those of Philadelphia, were impatient to have created an intelligent and widespread public opinion which would carry enough weight to influence their representatives at Harrisburg to act favorably upon any report made by the board, translating their suggestions into appropriate legislation. In their opinion there was need for a vigorous campaign to disseminate information and consolidate the popular desire for better and more adequate means of transportation.

Gifted publicists friendly to the movement lent their support, and the Pennsylvania Improvement Society swung into immediate action. In fact, at a meeting of the Society held on January 19, a resolution was passed suggesting that a town meeting be held by residents of the city and county of Philadelphia friendly to the internal improvement of the state at the county courthouse, at four o'clock, Monday afternoon, January 24, to consider the propriety of petitioning the legislature in respect to making arrangements for “opening a water communication between the Susquehanna and Allegheny rivers.”

The idea met with the enthusiastic approval of many of the leading residents of Philadelphia who attended the meeting at the appointed time. Chief Justice William Tilghman presided, and Nicholas Biddle, president of the United States Bank, acted as the secretary. The meeting was opened by John Sergeant, president of the Pennsylvania Improvement Society, and Mathew Carey offered resolutions concerning the opening of a water communication between the Susque-
hanna and Allegheny rivers at state expense. Benjamin Chew, Jr., proposed an amendment to include a canal between Lake Erie and the Allegheny, which, though not acceptable in its original form, was adopted when put into another form. The proposition was ably supported, in a speech of some length by Josiah Randall, who, in turn, was followed by Judge Thomas Duncan, Charles J. Ingersoll, William J. Duane, and Thomas Biddle, on the same side. The discussion was interesting and animated, but on the motion of Daniel W. Coxe, all resolutions and propositions were recommended to a general committee of seventeen, to report to an adjourned meeting to reconvene on Wednesday, January 26.

The very next day there appeared in the daily papers of Philadelphia “An Address to the Citizens of Pennsylvania,” prepared by members of the acting committee of the Pennsylvania Improvement Society. This communication contained facts and figures which showed that whereas Philadelphia some years before had enjoyed the largest share of the total value of the imports and exports of the country, New York now outstripped all others. The facts were submitted, they said, with the hope “that they would tend to revive the spirit of energy which formerly distinguished this state, and excite a laudable emulation of the noble career of our sister state, New York.”

At the reconvened meeting of January 26, Sergeant, on behalf of the original committee of seventeen, reported a preamble and resolutions, which were then debated and finally accepted by a large majority. These, in effect, advocated that at the earliest practicable moment there should be opened a system of water communication from the Susquehanna River to the Allegheny, and between the latter and Lake Erie, “at such points as the wisdom of a suitable board of skilful and experienced engineers may select.” It was stated that the large powers needed for the completion of such a great task could not well be trusted to the hands of individuals or of corporations; that it should be divested of all suspicion of local or personal influence; and when finished it should remain in the hands of the state, en-

---

8 These were Chief Justice Tilghman, Judge Duncan, John Sergeant, Nicholas Biddle, Mathew Carey, Richard Peters, Jr., Charles J. Ingersoll, William J. Duane, Josiah Randall, Benjamin Chew, Jr., Thomas Biddle, Paul Beck, Jr., Manuel Eyre, Samuel Wetherill, Cadwalader Evans, Samuel Archer, and Daniel W. Coxe. U. S. Gazette, January 26, 1825.

9 National Gazette, January 25, 1825.

1 U. S. Gazette, January 25, 1825.
trusted to the guardians of the public welfare, in order to meet the
great demands of the Commonwealth. Before the meeting adjourned,
Caleb Newbold, Jr., moved that seven men be appointed in addi-
tion to the original committee of seventeen. It was incumbent upon
this committee to prepare the petition to the legislature. In this
instance, as in the town meeting, the Acting Committee of the Penn-
sylvania Improvement Society gave liberally of their time and
talents.

With characteristic speed and efficiency the committee prepared
the petition. But more was needed than a well-worded, logical me-
memorial; it had to be placed, for signatures, before as many people as
possible. Consequently, in every county of the state district commit-
tees were set up. Public meetings were held in convenient places
in order to place the subject before the citizens and to permit them
to discuss the merits of the issue. During February, town meetings
were held at Carlisle, Butler, Bellefonte, and at the centers of other
counties to consider the propriety of petitioning the legislature.
The editors of the United States Gazette expressed the hope that
every borough and county throughout the state would hold similar
meetings. They even took the liberty to express the willingness of
the Pennsylvania Improvement Society to answer immediately and
satisfactorily any questions which might need elucidation. They also
urged the citizens who were held responsible for getting signatures
to lose no time in sending them to Harrisburg or to 126 Chestnut
Street. Interest was thus aroused throughout the state, and within a
month petitions began to pour into the legislature.

In the meanwhile the board of commissioners appointed on March
31, 1824, had immediately begun their task. Although they were

8 National Gazette, and U. S. Gazette, January 27; Poulson's American Daily Adver-
tiser, January 28, 1825. The seven additional members were George Vaux, Charles Pen-
rose, Isaac W. Morris, Samuel Mifflin, James Ronaldson, Daniel Grooves, and John
Nagle.

9 The members of this committee were Mathew Carey, Joseph Hemphill, Richard

10 In promoting these meetings the Acting Committee mentioned above took an
active lead. Vide a letter of Henry Vethake to Mathew Carey, Carlisle, January 26,

11 In U. S. Gazette, February 12, 14, 25, March 1, and 9, 1825.

12 Ibid., February 11, 1825.

13 Pennsylvania Intelligencer (Harrisburg), February 11, 15, 18, 22, 23, 25, March
1, 4, 8, etc. Practically every day petitions were presented in the Senate and the House.
They were referred to the committees on Inland Navigation of each house. The
unable to obtain the services of a competent engineer, they examined several routes and made surveys bearing the evidence of extensive and painstaking work. They, however, did not report to the legislature as early as some people had hoped they would. This delay was attributed to the opposition of the people of the interior and the general apathy of the public. As the session of the legislature advanced, it was declared that it "was high time to go seriously to work if anything was to be done, in this Great Western Canal." It was February 2, 1825, when the first report of the commissioners was sent to the legislature, and then it was signed by only two members. Treziyulney, who was detained in his home with a badly sprained ankle, wanted more time to consider the report, but promised that he would try to report to the legislature before it adjourned. All the commissioners agreed as to the practicability of a canal between Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, but when the matter of printing the report was considered in the House, in February, there was considerable discussion concerning the advisability of going ahead since Treziyulney had withheld his signature. The matter

*Intelligencer* for March 4 under the caption, "Internal Improvement" carried this indication of public enthusiasm: "This subject is now undoubtedly the hobby of the times, and we hope it may turn out a more profitable hobby, than some on which the public anxiety has been heretofore frequently mounted. . . . We now have lying before us, the *Crawford Messenger*, containing the proceedings of a meeting of citizens of the county, with an address of about three columns, on the subject of a canal from Erie to Philadelphia and a report of the Board of United States Engineers, of 111 pages, octavo." They were also asked to publish other material relating to internal improvements, but as they wished to give a detailed account of all legislative dealings, all other matters for the duration of the legislature had to be considered as of secondary importance.


15 ("Brindley" in Poulson's *American Daily Advertiser*, January 11, 1825; and the *U. S. Gazette* for February 14 carried this: "We regret to see that the spirit of state improvement which appeared to animate a portion of our Legislators, has resolved itself into estate improvement, in other words, their patriotism is local; if a canal is not to enrich their farm or that of their neighbor, they will object to the means by which it may be made."

16 Poulson's *American Daily Advertiser*, February 16, 1825, and a letter to the governor published in the *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1824-1825, II. 287. When Treziyulney did report, he differed from Holgate and Clarke only with regard to passing judgment upon the most suitable route, for he felt there should be further examinations of other routes before any definite action was taken. For his report see *ibid.*, 369-77.
of printing, therefore, was postponed for the time being by a vote of 49 to 33.\footnote{Pennsylvania Intelligencer, February 11, 1825. The idea of the practicability of a canal across the state was given additional support by the report to the Secretary of War, submitted to him by a Board of Engineers for Internal Improvement, on February 14, 1825. They had examined the whole route of the proposed scheme from the Allegheny to the Schuylkill and believed it practicable, but advised further investigation before reaching a definite settlement of the question. See Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser, February 19, 1825.}

Matters did not rest with that decision. Later in the month further discussion revolved around the report. The chief contention centered on the question of whether the governor and the commissioners had fulfilled their duties by merely reporting the matter as practicable. Sectional jealousy and prejudices came to the front during the course of the debate. Some of the representatives favored following the Juniata route and others the western branch of the Susquehanna, while the majority were not so much concerned as to the route to be followed, but only that it should be undertaken by the state.\footnote{Pennsylvania Intelligencer, February 22, 1825.}

The memorial of the Philadelphia committee of twenty-four and the flood of petitions stirred the members of the Inland Navigation Committee to action. Finally, William Lehman, chairman of the latter committee and a representative from Philadelphia, reported a bill on February 28, to repeal the law of March 27, 1824, which recommended the appointment of a Board of Canal Commissioners. The bill also recognized the principle that the state should undertake the task of building a canal between the Susquehanna and Allegheny rivers, and from thence to Lake Erie.\footnote{Journal of the House of Representatives, 1824-1825, II. 384-88.} In the Senate the bill was amended and returned to the House where further changes were made. It was now passed by a vote of 63 to 15. The differences were easily compromised, and the bill received the signature of Governor Shulze on April 11, 1825.\footnote{For the bill in the House, \textit{ibid.}, I. 511, 531, 669, 675, 695, 712, 713, 717, 720-28, 731, and for the vote on third reading, 732, 765, 774, 786, 787, 798, 807, and approval 816. The bill in the Senate, in the \textit{Senate Journal}, 1824-1825, 553, 559, 565, 710, 731, 748, 777, and for settlement of compromises, 788. For approval also see \textit{Pennsylvania Archives}, ninth series, VIII. 6257.}

This “Act to appoint a Board of Canal Commissioners” authorized the governor to appoint five men to the board. They in turn could choose one of their number to act as president and were empowered to select and pay a competent secretary. Their services were to be given gratis, but provision was made to reimburse them for all necessary
expenses incurred in carrying out the work assigned to them. Also into their hands was placed the right to employ, at reasonable salaries, engineers, surveyors, and draftsmen to make the required examinations and surveys. Among other things they were directed to make detailed estimates of the amounts needed to construct the canals, feeders, reservoirs, as recommended in the last report. Moreover, as the project necessarily had to be financed, they were instructed to make recommendations as to a canal fund; terms upon which loans might be secured; and how to meet payments on the interest and to take care of the liquidation of the principal.21

On April 21, Governor Shulze appointed as members of the canal board John Sergeant and Dr. Robert M. Patterson of Philadelphia, Dr. William Darlington of Chester County, David Scott of Luzerne County, and Albert Gallatin of Fayette County.22 The appointments were excellent ones and were received by the public with great satisfaction. The appointees were men of ability and integrity, not very likely to be guided and influenced in carrying on their duties by any local interest, jealousy or prejudice.23 Of the activities of the canal board we shall say more later.

By February 11, 1825, the Pennsylvania Improvement Society had published four essays—one on the formation and repair of turnpike roads, two on the advantages of canals generally, and one on the necessity and benefits of opening a water communication between the Susquehanna and the Allegheny. It had addressed circulars to prominent persons throughout the state to whom papers were forwarded. Of these first four publications, one thousand copies of each were distributed, and many newspapers throughout the state republished them in their columns.24

22 As Gallatin declined to serve, General Abner Laycock of Beaver County was appointed in his place. Pennsylvania Archives, ninth series, VIII. 6264. Editorially the Pennsylvania Intelligencer remarked: “The board is considered an able one, and is we believe, unanimously approved of.” June 24, 1825.
23 Ibid., April 29, 1825, the paper editorially stated: “In the character of the gentlemen selected, we think the public has a perfect security against any undue influence upon their minds, in the selecting of the principle route. The first great object certainly is a connection of the eastern and western waters, by one main communication.” The appointments were considered “an admirable selection” by Niles' Weekly Register, XXVIII (April 30, 1825). 44.
At a meeting held late in February, a committee was appointed to prepare a circular concerning the urgent need of a direct line of communication to the west. This circular, entitled *An Address to the Citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania by Committee of the Pennsylvania Society for the Promotion of Internal Improvements in the Commonwealth*, filled ten pages and was urged to be copied by the newspapers of the state. It was an able presentation of facts concerning the "most important subject ever agitated in Pennsylvania since the time Penn... purchased soil from the original owners." Particular stress was laid upon the fact that the committee favored no particular mode of communication nor any fixed route. The committee deprecated possible objections arising from local or personal views which might bring about a division among those friendly to improvement. Such division certainly would tend to paralyze the object they had in view, and it was earnestly hoped that agitation for any particular route would be postponed until sufficient data was collected by competent and disinterested persons and made known to the public.

The address pointed out that Pennsylvania with its compact territory, its fertile soil, its mild and salubrious climate, was able to support very easily a population of ten millions. The state in addition had an abundance of coal and iron ("the grand sources of the extraordinary wealth of Great Britain"), salt, timber, and agricultural products; and all that was needed to insure the blessings was a "system which shall call forth the energies and resources of the state with wisdom and prudence, and secure their application with skill and judgment."

No comment was made in respect to canal costs and advantages, but New Hampshire's gains as the result of the successful Middlesex canal were cited as proof of what impetus might be given to the dormant energies of Pennsylvania. To bolster their argument the committee pointed to the impressive progress made by New York as the

---

25 This "Address," signed March 4, appeared in *Poulson's* March 22-23; in *U. S. Gazette*, February 28; and in *The Centinel* (Easton), May 13, 1825. The following members of the Society prepared it: Samuel Archer, Nicholas Biddle, John Connelly, Paul Beck, Jr., John Moss, Edward S. Burd, Nathan Sellers, Samuel Wetherill, Thomas Leiper, John Sergeant, Nathaniel Chapman, Samuel D. Ingham, Thomas Cadwalader, and Thomas Biddle.

26 *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, March 22, 1825.

result of the building of the Erie Canal. If New York, which carried chiefly agricultural products over its canal, gained so many economic advantages, certainly, they reasoned, Pennsylvania would be even more favorably blessed, because in addition to the produce of the farm there would be the transportation of huge quantities of coal and iron.\textsuperscript{28}

The economic advantages which would accrue to all citizens of the state were carefully set forth. The farmer would find increased demand, brisker sales, and higher prices for his goods; the merchant and the trader, a greater extension of trade and commerce; the manufacturer and mechanic, more certain employment and better pay for their labors; the capitalist, a better interest for his money; and the proprietors of lands and houses, a rise in rents from 25 to 30 per cent, for “all participate in general prosperity—all suffer in general depression.” Nevertheless, it was pointed out that if the building of such a canal was undertaken by private capital, only a pecuniary remuneration would be sought; but if carried out by the government, the paramount consideration would be to diffuse prosperity throughout the state.\textsuperscript{29}

In closing, the committee laid stress on the fact that the most important measure at the commencement of a system of internal improvement was the need for a board of works, comprised of the most enlightened citizens in the state, aided by competent engineers.\textsuperscript{30}

There can be no doubt that this and other publications of the Pennsylvania Improvement Society did much to create and direct favorable opinion in respect to internal improvements in the state. But that enterprising group was not satisfied merely to put before the public unbiased facts. It sought to add to the information of how best to improve methods of transportation in general by studying what had been accomplished by those countries which had made the greatest progress along such lines. With that object in view, on January 19, 1825, the Society resolved:\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid. The lumber industry of New Hampshire had been enhanced by $5,000,000 and the construction of the Middlesex canal cost $700,000. The writers of the address asked, “Was not the money well bestowed?”

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., March 23, 1825.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid. This can also be found in the \textit{U. S. Gazette}, March 22, 1825, \textit{cf.} Bishop, \textit{op. cit.}, 176-78.

\textsuperscript{31} The Pennsylvania Society for the Promotion of Internal Improvements in the Commonwealth, first \textit{Annual Report} (Philadelphia, 1826), 10. The report can also be found on the first page of the \textit{Aurora and Franklin Gazette}, January 18, 1826.
That it is expedient to send an agent to Europe to collect information of the valuable improvement in the construction of canals, roads, rail-ways, bridges, steam engines, and all other information calculated to promote the objects of the Society.

On February 3, William Strickland, a prominent architect and engineer of Philadelphia, a member of the Society, was appointed as the European agent.32 With careful consideration the Society drew up his instructions and adopted them at a meeting on March 17. Three days later Mr. Strickland and his young assistant, Samuel Honeywell Kneass, sailed from Philadelphia for Liverpool.33 They spent most of their time in England, Wales, and Scotland, not returning until December. The agents lost no time in gathering information; and beginning in June their reports, accompanied by plans and drawings, were sent to the United States. These reports (or at least portions of them) the Society put to immediate use. Information gleaned from them helped to support the arguments sent out in pamphlet form or contributed to the newspapers. Several of these pamphlets were advantageously distributed among the members of the Canal Convention which met at Harrisburg in early August of 1825.34

The dissemination of such helpful information, the flood of favorable petitions to the legislature, and the appointment of a board of canal commissioners were three important factors which gave heart to the friends of internal improvement. They felt, however, that their aims were only partly realized. To them the battle was only begun; and they realized that a more impressive influence had to be brought to bear upon the government, urging it to provide for the immediate

32 Ibid., 11.
33 Ibid., 13.
34 See the speeches of J. M. Porter and Thomas H. Crawford made in the convention: Pennsylvania Intelligencer, August 26 and September 2, 1825. The Society did not publish all the reports until August, 1826—Reports on Canals, Railways, Roads and other Subjects, made to The Pennsylvania Society for the Promotion of Internal Improvements in the Commonwealth, by William Strickland, Architect and Engineer, while engaged in the service of the Society (Philadelphia, 1826). It contained 57 pages and 72 plates. The edition numbered possibly 500, of which 334 were taken by 134 subscribers, at ten dollars a volume. Although published too late to have any effect upon the agitation for internal improvements in 1825, it did influence the mode of the construction of the Pennsylvania Canal and other projects carried on in the state, as well as throughout the country. William Strickland was later appointed the engineer for the Pennsylvania Canal, and years later served in a like capacity for other projects. See Dictionary of American Biography, XVIII. 137-38.
commencement of a line of communication between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. The solution was found in the suggestion made by Benjamin Chew, Jr., one of the Philadelphia committee of twenty-four, who advocated the calling of a general canal convention to meet at Harrisburg, to discuss the whole subject of internal improvements.

At the instigation of the committee of twenty-four, a town meeting of the citizens of the city and county of Philadelphia was called on May 3 for the purpose of setting up preliminary arrangements for the proposed convention. Not much that was constructive took place at the first meeting, and another was held on May 6. Justice Tilghman again presided and Nicholas Biddle acted as secretary. A large number of the city's most prominent residents attended. John Sergeant introduced the business by some very appropriate remarks on the subject of the canal policy of Pennsylvania. He urged the necessity of exciting and arousing the energies of the state; he referred to the example set by New York as proof that the first successful impulse to similar projects resulted from public meetings; he adverted to the supineness of the citizens of the state in general, and the difficulty of producing unanimity of sentiment and its necessity and power of action. He spoke very highly of the personal exertions of Mathew Carey, saying they were worthy of the gratitude of the whole Commonwealth. He remarked that the committee of twenty-four approved of the late action of the legislature in the appoint-

---

85 Bishop, _op. cit._, 180. The apathy of Pennsylvania was made the subject of an editorial in the _Washington Whig_, Bridgeton, N.J. The editorial was very sarcastic and urged Pennsylvania to act, for her best interests were at stake. A friend of internal improvements, “Brindley,” commented on the editorial and in part wrote: “Let us arouse from our slumbers, and put on the armour of self-preservation. Let us rise up in the majesty of our strength, and bring into activity the hidden treasures of industry, and wealth, which the great Benefactor of mankind, has placed within our reach.” To which the _U. S. Gazette_, the same day, March 11, 1825, added, that there was plenty of knowledge concerning internal improvements, but there was “wanting with us . . . energy in the executive.”


87 _U. S. Gazette_, April 28, 1825.

88 There was a lively debate, for some of those present thought it too early to call such a meeting at Harrisburg. The _U. S. Gazette_ (May 5) expected more concrete opinion at the next meeting, adding: “It is particularly desirable that a goodly number assemble, and it is hoped that a large proportion will be ‘more ready to hear than to offer’ crude undigested facts.”
ing of a Board of Canal Commissioners, but added that in their opinion it was altogether fit and in the spirit of our institutions, that the hands of the Government should be strengthened, and its exertions stimulated and encouraged by the assurance of public support, while at the same time the public mind may be enlightened, and more energetically strengthened by a free interchange of opinion and information among our fellow citizens. . . . And we might add, if were not almost too obvious to remark, that it is a subject in relation to which is much valuable knowledge in the different parts of the Commonwealth, well worthy to be collected and eminently calculated to invigorate the proposed enterprise.

Entertaining such ideas, he concluded, the committee resolved that a general convention, for discussing internal improvements in general, be held at Harrisburg, the first Thursday in August; and recommended to other communities that they select delegates in whatever manner suitable, as soon as possible. As for himself he felt confident that the proposed convention would be guided not by local prejudices, but animated with a regard to the general welfare of the Commonwealth.\(^{39}\)

Caleb Newbold, Jr., then took the floor and expressed a doubt as to the expediency of the proposed measure. He said that the executive and the legislature had already done all that was reasonable to expect of them; and, until the canal commissioners made a report, it was impossible to say what was the true policy of the state. Furthermore, he added, the diversity of views of many of the citizens on incidental points could be remedied only by giving them more accurate knowledge than had as yet been collected. Rather than move ahead too quickly and force the hand of the legislature, he proposed a resolution as a substitute for that of the committee of twenty-four.\(^{40}\)

Newbold was followed in debate by Charles J. Ingersoll who alluded in a humorous manner to the remarks previously made, adding that they were entitled to serious consideration. With a burst of eloquence he spoke in glowing terms of what Pennsylvania had already done:

Let us recollect what Pennsylvania has done, thirty years since, and by that recollection, let us be prompted to further exertions, not only for the advancement and aggrandizement, but that we may not sink into insignificance. The first steamboat that moved upon the waters in this country, hung out its ban-

\(^{39}\)Aurora and Franklin Gazette, May 10, 1825. See also Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser, May 9; National Gazette, May 7; and U. S. Gazette, May 7, 1825.

\(^{40}\)Ibid. He had merely expressed approval of what the legislature had already done.
ners in the port of Philadelphia; the first turnpike that disturbed the virgin soil of America, the road from this city to Lancaster, was the work of Philadelphia; the first canal projected and begun in the union, that of the Union Company, for connecting the Schuylkill and the Susquehanna, was the result of the enterprise of Philadelphia.

This he followed by arguments in favor of the original resolutions, asserting that the legislature had been reluctant to act even in authorizing the appointment of canal commissioners, taking action only after a committee from Philadelphia had visited Harrisburg and pressed the matter. By that action, he said, the legislature seemed to think it had conferred a boon upon the people. It was such an attitude, he inferred, which warranted the holding of the proposed convention.41

Mr. Kane, in reply, took exception to Ingersoll’s comments on the reluctance of the legislature to act in respect to internal improvements. Moreover, he felt that the convention would do more harm than good; particularly so as the people in the interior would consider a canal convention as useless and dangerous. Furthermore, he doubted that many would attend and a small convention would do harm by giving countenance to the remark that a small number of people wanted a canal; or, if the convention was well attended, there would be too many discordant factors, leading to disharmony. The stakes were too high to be lightly put in hazard.42

William Lehman than spoke in support of the original resolutions. In his speech he recapitulated the arguments already set forth in favor of the convention and called attention to the activities of New York, Ohio, North Carolina and other states in promoting internal improvements. With telling effect he concluded his remarks by saying that to stir up popular opinion on questions like this would have the effect of destroying the political distinctions then existing in Pennsylvania, and would create on their ruins an improvement party!43

After Lehman had sat down, the question was taken on the sub-

41 Ibid. The quoted remarks of Ingersoll also appeared in Niles’ Weekly Register, XVIII (May 14, 1825). 164. This magazine, however, questioned that Pennsylvania had projected and built the first canal in the Union. But Niles gives credit to New York for the Middlesex Canal, when it should go to Massachusetts.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid. Two gentlemen, Mr. Earle and Colonel Jack, harangued the meeting, and seemed to be quite unwelcome to most of the audience. Repeated attempts to silence them, produced disorder which did not “comport with the character of the assembly in general, nor with the dignity of the occasion.” The U. S. Gazette, May 9, also was bitter in its denunciation of the haranguers.
stitute resolutions offered by Newbold, and they were rejected; the original resolutions were agreed to by a large majority. The resolutions having been adopted, the chairman appointed from among those present a committee of seven, consisting of Cadwalader Evans, William Duncan, Josiah Randall, George Vaux, Charles S. Coxe, Paul Beck, Jr., and Peter Hertzog, to select the delegates to the proposed convention. It had been determined that the number of delegates should correspond with the number of representatives from each political division assigned to the lower house of the legislature and consequently, six were appointed from the city and seven from the county.

Before the meeting adjourned Benjamin Chew, Jr., offered a resolution requesting that the legislature set up a Board of Public Works, but he withdrew it immediately.

It had been a lively meeting, and the arguments revealed that the friends of internal improvements by no means had clear sailing. Unquestionably it served to stimulate them to greater efforts and fired them with a determination to make the most of the proposed convention.

Within a few weeks other communities held meetings to select delegates or else to consider the advisability of doing so. On May 10, the citizens of Crawford County met at Meadville and selected a delegate; the next day there was a meeting held at Pittsburgh by the
citizens of Allegheny County; by May 27 Union County had acted; and by July 1, at least twenty-one other counties had selected their delegates.

The opposition shown in the Philadelphia meeting repeated itself in more than one locality, and other arguments were advanced against the proposed central canal. Chief of these contentions was that all the counties of the state would have to bear the expense of constructing a canal, but the advantages would accrue to only certain centers, like Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, and particularly Philadelphia. Even the conservative elements in various parts of the state were inclined to question the practicability of a canal and considered the promises of gaining the western trade as being too optimistic.

Nevertheless, in spite of the opposition and objections, which were raised against both the proposed canal and the convention, the movement gained momentum with the passing weeks. Of the fifty-one counties then in existence, forty-eight sent delegates, there being 111 in attendance at Harrisburg. The convention met in the House of Representatives on August 4. On the motion of Carey the convention was organized and Joseph Lawrence, of Washington County, was

---

*aurora and franklin gazette*, May 12, 1825.

*Pennsylvania intelligencer*, May 27, 1825.

*Ibid.*, July 1—see also June 10, 17, and 24, 1825. The citizens of Dauphin County were stirred to action by the *Intelligencer*. That paper suggested that a town meeting be held on May 30, and it had printed and distributed the following handbill:

**Canal Convention**

Citizens from town and country who feel interested in this subject, are invited to meet at Mr. Eberman's, corner of Market and Third Streets, this evening, at early candle-lighting.

May 30, 1825

The *Harrisburg Chronicle* criticized the *Intelligencer* for not giving the country folk sufficient notice. For the reply see *Intelligencer*, June 10, 1825.

Bishop, op. cit., 181-83. See *U. S. Gazette*, June 1, 3, and 4 for the replies to the *Miner's Journal* (Pottsville) which was the severest critic. Again on July 11, the *U. S. Gazette*, expressed implicit faith in the delegates chosen to the convention and deplored the imputations of political jockeying.

To these must be added the representation from the city of Philadelphia, numbering six, bringing the total representation to 117. The three counties not represented were Beaver, Jefferson, and Indiana. Two of the delegates from Fayette went to Buffalo, thence eastward on the Erie Canal, in order to gain first hand information which would stand them in good stead at the convention. Their action was highly commended.

*U. S. Gazette*, July 20, 1825.
elected president, and Nathaniel Hobart and Francis R. Shunk were made secretaries.53

Sergeant then took the floor and in a speech of forty-five minutes, made an earnest and able plea for a canal between the Susquehanna and Allegheny rivers, to be built at state expense.54 The fact that every part of the state was represented in the convention by gentlemen who had left their homes and businesses at great expense and inconvenience to themselves, to deliberate on measures best adapted to the ends sought, was, in his opinion, an indication of the earnest disposition of the citizens of the Commonwealth to see to it that Pennsylvania retained her relative standing in the Union. As an indication of the state's ability to undertake such an enterprise, Sergeant spoke of her great natural wealth, and cited the expenditure of $16,649,779 over a period of fourteen years (1808 to 1822) for bridges, turnpikes, navigation projects, and penal institutions, as conclusive evidence of her financial capacity.55

He expressed a hope that the enterprise would be undertaken by the state and not by private enterprise, pointing to the lesson to be learned from the experience gained from the building of the turnpike road to Pittsburgh, in which the public good had been held secondary to the earning of high dividends.56 In concluding his speech he moved that a committee be appointed to prepare and report appropriate resolutions for the consideration of the convention. The motion was adopted, and a committee consisting of Sergeant, Kennedy, Ingham, Holgate, Patterson, Markley, Sill, Forster, and T. H. Baird was appointed.57 The convention then adjourned to give the committee time to report.58

53 It was through the efforts of Lehman, chairman of the Inland Navigation and Internal Improvement Committee of the House, that the Hall of the House was tendered to the delegates. On the last day of the 1824-1825 session of the legislature he had submitted a resolution to that effect, which passed by a vote of 41-26. *Journal of the House of Representatives, 1824-1825*, I. 791, and *Pennsylvania Intelligencer*, April 12, 1825. Hobart and Shunk were the regular clerks of the House, 1824-25.

54 Commenting on this speech the *Pennsylvania Intelligencer*, August 5, 1825, wrote: "It was a plain, cool, cogent, common place argument, upon the ability of the state to persevere in the subject of connecting the east and the west. . . ."

55 Of the sum given above the state itself had expended $2,373,542, and in addition there was the $5,000,000 late war debt which had been paid—"enough to build the canal."

56 This speech appears in the *Pennsylvania Intelligencer*, August 19, 1825.


Friday morning, August 5, Sergeant read the following preamble and resolutions:  

WHEREAS, The great interests of the State of Pennsylvania require that there should be a steady perseverance in improving the resources of wealth and strength, and social comfort which abound within her limits; and

WHEREAS, The time has arrived when she is called upon by every consideration of regard for her character and standing, as well as for her permanent prosperity and happiness, to make a vigorous and united exertion for accomplishing, without delay, the connection of the eastern and the western waters by a line of communication within her borders; and

WHEREAS, A distinct and solemn expression of the deliberate opinion of the people is always a powerful efficacy, and is especially fit and requisite upon an occasion like the present, where extraordinary effort is necessary for the common advantage of the whole, the public will bring the only sure authority for the undertaking and the best pledge for its energetic and zealous prosecution; therefore

Resolved, That the improvement of the Commonwealth will best be promoted, and the foundations of her prosperity and happiness most securely established, by opening an entire and complete communication, [within her borders,] from the Susquehanna to the Allegheny to Lake Erie, by the nearest and best practicable route, and that such work is indispensably necessary to maintain the character and the standing of the State, and to preserve her strength and resources.

Resolved, That the application of the resources of the State to this undertaking ought not be regarded as an expenditure, but as a most beneficial investment; for its successful execution will increase the public wealth, improve the public revenue, and greatly enlarge the ability of the State to extend her aid to every quarter where it may be wanted, and, at the same time, will encourage industry, create circulation, extend trade and commerce, enhance the value of land, and of agricultural and mineral products, and thereby augment the means of the citizens to promote his own and the public welfare by contributions to similar works.

Resolved, That all local objects, tending to a diffusive and unconnected application of the public means, ought, for the present, to yield so as to allow an undivided exertion of the public strength in this great undertaking, which is essential to its speedy and successful prosecution; for, though it be certain,

These were the resolutions as finally adopted by the Canal Convention. In the first resolution the words in brackets were dropped. Mr. James Todd, of Fayette County, felt that those words had a "left-handed bearing upon a particular route," and if they were stricken out the state would be at liberty to take the Chesapeake and Ohio route, if that should be found more advisable. Upon his motion they were stricken out. The fourth resolution was inserted upon the motion of Sergeant and Eyre. Pennsylvania Intelligencer, August 12, 1825. See also a pamphlet, Proceedings of the Pennsylvania Canal Convention (Harrisburg, 1825), 18-19. The striking out of the words "within her borders" gave rise to a very bitter editorial in the Lancaster Gazette, heaping abuse upon Philadelphia—"Their widespread patriotism, under the guidance of southwestern management, seconded by Philadelphia's IGNORANCE & STUPIDITY, pledged, etc." Quoted in U. S. Gazette, August 19, 1825.
that, whatever may be its location, the benefit will be most sensibly felt, in the first instance in the immediate neighborhood, yet it is also true that its invigorating influence will pervade every part of the Commonwealth, and, in a short time, its branches will spread in all directions, wherever the bounty of Providence has furnished the means of access to the great channel thus provided, and, encouraged by this example, new channels will be successfully opened as occasion may offer, or the public exigencies and the demands of the country may require.

Resolved, That, in our opinion, the people of Pennsylvania will fully sustain the Legislature in all such measures as may be necessary for effectuating this highly important and interesting object, as we believe them to be fully sensible to its political and social value, and they have never refused to support, to the utmost of their ability, what their enlightened and patriotic judgment approved as fit to be done for the common good.

*Resolved, That this convention regards with satisfaction the efforts which have heretofore been made and are still being made under the authority of this Commonwealth, to improve the navigation of the river Susquehanna, and of the other great rivers of Pennsylvania.

Resolved, That we regard, with satisfaction, the efforts of our sister states to make extended improvements, and that, in our opinion, a wise and liberal policy requires of Pennsylvania to grant to them every just and legal facility, whenever her concurrence may be necessary to their successful prosecution, and that we have witnessed, with pleasure, the progress made towards laying out a canal from the Potomac to the Ohio, as well as the steps taken by the state of New York for forming a connection with the north branch of the Susquehanna.

Resolved, That a general committee of correspondence be appointed, and that they be requested to prepare an address to the people of Pennsylvania upon the subject of internal improvements.

These resolutions were ordered to be read a second time, and as soon as the first resolution was under consideration, a storm of protest arose. A consideration of the most important arguments will reveal the nature of the opposition. First, there was the contention that the movement was premature. The opponents more than once stressed the fact that it was unwise to proceed with the proposed east to west communication before its practicability was actually determined by the board of the canal commissioners. James M. Porter of Northampton County cited the error made by Mr. Weston, an English engineer, who had underestimated the available water supply for the Union Canal. As a result of his miscalculations it was necessary later to bring water from the Swatara River at additional expense. "Who knows," he added, "but that hereafter another Weston might

*Proceedings of the Canal Convention (Harrisburg, 1825).*
Thomas Hartley Crawford, of Franklin County, emphasized the need of definite information before acting, for only then, he contended, could an intelligent public opinion be created. That public opinion was not ready to be solidified and focussed upon one definite route and mode of communication was evident, because he and others in the convention had only recently received a very informative pamphlet containing a letter from Strickland, giving preference to railways. What passed for public opinion today, he asserted, would not be public opinion hereafter, under different circumstances. To clinch his argument, Crawford mentioned the surveys made by the United States Army engineers who examined the routes between the Potomac and the Ohio in 1824. They had, he remarked, examined nine routes, that one was thought at first the most practicable, but only recently a better one had been determined. James Buchanan, of Lancaster County, also asked, "How is it possible to proceed without the desired information?" In their opinion, the measures proposed were decidedly premature.

A second argument was that the state was not in a financial position to carry out the project. The cost of the canal Porter estimated at seven million dollars—and very likely that sum would be doubled due to the expense of cutting a tunnel through the mountains to connect the Juniata and Kiskiminitas rivers. The state debt he placed at nearly two million dollars, and to meet it the state had only her bank stock, receipts from auction duties, tavern licenses, bank tax, shop tax, unpatented lands, etc., barely enough to cover the current expenses of the government. After subtracting the expenditures from the income, said Porter, the state would have about $137,000 in the treasury to commence the great work. That being the case, he could not regard as sound the contention of the proponents that "the application of the resources of the state to this undertaking ought not to be regarded as an expenditure, but as a most beneficial invest-

---

61 Porter's speech made on Friday afternoon, August 5, appears in the Pennsylvania Intelligencer for August 26, 1825.
62 Crawford's speech of the same day, ibid., September 2, 1825.
63 Buchanan's speech of the same day, ibid., and that of Robert Smith, of Franklin County, ibid., September 16, 1825.
64 This tunnel was to be four miles, one hundred twenty-seven perches in length. As it would have to be drilled through solid rock (not as easily perforated as the chalk hills of England), Porter estimated it would take 31 years, 9 months, and 22 days to drill it, during which time the line of communication would be incomplete!
Crawford painted an even more dismal picture, relying upon more detailed accounts, which placed the state deficits for the year ending December 1, 1824, at $330,870.91.\textsuperscript{66}

Closely allied to this question of cost and financial status of the state was the issue of how to meet the inevitable expenses which would accrue. A third argument was, therefore, that the people would not submit to taxation. On this issue Porter said that he knew that his constituents would not approve of taxation and neither he nor his colleagues would vote for a measure, "the necessary consequence of which would be the imposition of taxes." He remarked that though the people had submitted to taxation to bear the expenses of the War of 1812, they had yielded only because it was for a common cause. From the burden of that taxation, which had left them exhausted, they were only beginning to recover, and now it was absurdly proposed to enter upon a course which would mean excessive burdens not only for the present generation, but for several future generations.\textsuperscript{67} Crawford added to this argument the contention that such a tax would have to be levied on all the people. Moreover, as he understood the proposal made in the essays published by the Pennsylvania Improvement Society, the tax would be in the form of a per capita or poll tax. A more odious form of taxation did not exist, he contended, for it meant "that Mr. Girard should pay no more than a man whose daily bread was provided by his daily labor."\textsuperscript{68}

A fourth argument revealed the extent of local prejudices. It was contended that only those places along the route and its termini would be in any way substantially aided by the building of the canal. Particularly was Philadelphia held to be the place most likely to be favorably benefited. Crawford expressed pride and a kindly feel-

\textsuperscript{66} Porter's speech, \textit{loc. cit.}
\textsuperscript{67} Crawford's speech, \textit{loc. cit.} For a summary of the state resources, December 1, 1823, to November 30, 1824, see \textit{Niles' Weekly Register}, XXVII (January 1, 1825), 276, and for December 1, 1824, to November 30, 1825, \textit{ibid.}, XXXIX (January 21, 1826), 324-25.
\textsuperscript{68} Porter's speech, \textit{loc. cit.} Robert Smith, of Franklin County, speaking on this matter of taxation said that it would mean that Lancaster, which would receive no benefit from the canal, would pay more than all the country through which it would pass from Harrisburg to Pittsburgh. As for Franklin County, its burden would be greater than all counties from Beaver, "round the west and north line of state including Wayne." Smith's speech, \textit{loc. cit.} Porter expressed the opinion that before the project was entirely completed the cost would be large enough to burden the Commonwealth with an interest charge of upwards of $1130 per day!
\textsuperscript{68} Crawford's speech, \textit{loc. cit.}
ing toward Philadelphia as a metropolis, but he held it an axiom of politics "that the constituted authorities of the commonwealth should never expend the public money, but for the common good—in execution of measures operating for the advantage, not of the few but the many, perhaps I ought to say the whole." To do otherwise would destroy the unity of the state, and would actually amount to furnishing the "torch that fires its own buildings."369

The prominent part played by Philadelphia as a prime mover in the agitation aroused this jealousy. Her representatives were declared to be overzealous and too anxious to create the impression that the opinions of the conventions were "the voice of the people." Furthermore, the Pennsylvania Improvement Society was accused of prejudicing the public and of being insincere in not abiding by the original proposals set forth in their circulars in which they had advocated north and south connections to the main line.70 Buchanan, however, was not so critical of the activities of the Philadelphia delegation, crediting them with the best of motives. Furthermore, he stated, he was not philanthropic enough "to be indifferent as to whether Baltimore or Philadelphia reaps the advantages of western trade."71

A fifth argument advanced was that the action of the convention tended to usurp the functions of the legislature. It was Buchanan who was the chief contender on this point. He felt that the legislature needed no goading, and that the action of the convention if carried out would set a dangerous precedent, for it virtually resolved itself into forcing the hand of the legislature. He reminded the delegates that the legislature was held responsible to the people, but not so the convention, and, he asked, "is not this calculated to prostrate the existing rights of the people?"72

A sixth argument was that the canal would injure the turnpikes. Smith reminded them that one of the chief sources of revenue to the state came from the tolls collected on the commodities hauled by wagons which plied between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. The erection of a canal would deprive the state of this toll, the roads

369 Ibid.
370 Porter's speech, loc. cit.
371 Buchanan's speech, loc. cit. Criticism was not confined to the halls of the convention. The Bradford Settler, too, was suspicious of the Philadelphians' actions, but the Pennsylvania Intelligencer, September 9, 1825, stanchly defended them.
372 Ibid.
would go into ruin, and farmers who depended upon them for carrying goods to their local markets would be given a severe economic jolt.\textsuperscript{73}

The seventh argument advanced was in opposition to the building of the canal at public expense. Several of the members favored the undertaking of such an enterprise only by private corporations. It was declared that if it were built by the state the cost would be excessive. Buchanan pointed to the experience the national government had had in the building of the Cumberland road, and added that the cost involved taught it to hesitate in making an investment in the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal until it became known that that enterprise was to be carried on by private endeavor. It was true, he confessed, that the advocates of a state-owned canal could cite the splendid work of New York, but he considered that an exception from the general rule. There the political fortunes of men were at stake, and so they devoted themselves to the task, with as much ardor and devotion as if they were the actual proprietors.\textsuperscript{74} Robert Smith supported Buchanan on this point and cited other examples of the excessive cost of projects built by the state, for example, the state powder magazine, the President's house, and the penitentiaries at Pittsburgh and Philadelphia.\textsuperscript{75}

During the course of the debates substitute measures were proposed. Porter's pet scheme was to have the state undertake the improvement of its great rivers by cutting down the heads of the falls and making straight channels. This proposal, he said, would cost the Commonwealth about one and a half million dollars as compared with ten millions for the canal.\textsuperscript{76} Buchanan went so far as to introduce a set of resolutions as substitutes for all but the first of those set before the convention by John Sergeant.\textsuperscript{77} His resolutions, however, were turned down by a vote of 90 to 27.\textsuperscript{78} The consideration
\textsuperscript{73} Robert Smith's speech, \textit{loc. cit.}
\textsuperscript{74} Buchanan's speech, \textit{loc. cit.}
\textsuperscript{75} Smith's speech, \textit{loc. cit.}
\textsuperscript{76} Porter's speech, \textit{loc. cit.}
\textsuperscript{77} Buchanan's speech, \textit{loc. cit.} The Centinel (Easton), August 12, 1825, commenting on Buchanan's resolutions wrote: "... they do not vary the question materially. ... We think, however, that if this river [the Susquehanna] were introduced, that all the principal rivers should have been embraced, either generally or by name."
\textsuperscript{78} Proceedings of the Canal Convention.
of the remaining original resolutions followed, marked by considerable debate, and they were all adopted.\(^9\)

An analysis of the votes recorded in the course of the convention shows that the delegates, as a whole or in part, from the following counties opposed the resolutions as originally introduced: Bedford, Bradford, Chester, Cumberland, Franklin, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lehigh, Mercer, Northampton, Pike, Tioga, Wayne, and York. The explanation of their opposition is well set forth, as given below, by Bishop.\(^{60}\)

An examination of [a] map of Pennsylvania shows that [six] of these counties are situated in the southern part of the state. Their exports, consisting of grain, flour and other farm products, were marketed principally in Baltimore and the Neighboring counties of Maryland and Virginia. The turnpike through Lancaster gave a direct communication to Philadelphia satisfactory to the inhabitants of that county. The other districts whose delegates unanimously opposed the resolutions was [sic] in the northeastern part of the state. These counties had no chance of sharing the benefits of the proposed improvements. Moreover, those of the northern border of the state carried on their limited trade with New York. With little or no chance of participating in the proposed canal to the West, except to help pay for it, it is no wonder that the representatives of the opposition states [sic] took the stand they did.

After it was certain that all the original resolutions would be adopted, Ingersoll and Duane of Philadelphia moved to insert the following new resolution:\(^{81}\)

*Resolved, That the subject of railways from the Western to the Eastern waters of Pennsylvania, with lateral railways to the north and south, be also recommended by this Convention to the early and earnest consideration of the constituted authorities of the state.*

This was naturally turned down, but it was a clever move and showed that the Pennsylvania Improvement Society members were alert. They had been shrewd enough to wait until the chief resolutions were adopted, for to have introduced them earlier would have meant discord. Their action no doubt left a new impression upon the minds of the internal improvement enthusiasts—a new idea to toy with.

Able as were the arguments of the opponents of a state built canal, the friends of internal improvement were in the majority and ably

\(^9\) Ibid.

\(^{60}\) Bishop, *op. cit.*, 184. Bishop in his account fails to mention Chester County. Then, too, Lehigh and Northampton's vote was split. These two counties had access to the canals and rivers that bore their products to Philadelphia. In the west there was Mercer County which had split its votes.

\(^{81}\) *Pennsylvania Intelligencer*, August 12, 1825.
refuted their arguments. So well did they marshall their facts and arguments that almost from the outset there was little question as to the final outcome. Nevertheless the convention lasted three days, adjourning at ten o'clock Saturday night, August 6, 1825.\textsuperscript{82}

It is now necessary to go back and pick up the threads of the agitation for internal improvements. As soon as the 1824-1825 session of the legislature was over, the newspapers had more space to devote to articles dealing with canals, railways, and even breakwaters. Until the legislature again convened in December, 1825, there much propaganda in favor of internal improvements in general was disseminated.\textsuperscript{83} Not for a day was the agitation permitted to lag. Public meetings were held throughout the state and resolutions were adopted favoring the stand taken by the Canal Convention.\textsuperscript{84}

We have noted before that the refusal of Albert Gallatin to serve as one of the five members of the canal board delayed the organization of that group. In consequence of the delay, the board was not formally organized until July 4, when John Sergeant was elected president and Joseph McIlwaine secretary. All the notes, plans, maps, and papers of the old board were placed in the possession of the new board. No time was lost in going ahead with their task. As chief engineer, William Wilson, of Lycoming County, made a report to

\textsuperscript{82} Nathaniel Loring, of Lebanon County, and others entered into the debate in opposition to the original resolutions; Denny, Sutherland, Ingersoll, Scott, Lehman, Chambers, Burnside, and Patterson in support.

\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Poulson's American Daily Advertiser}, August 12, 1825, for Strickland's letter in regard to railways, dated Edinburgh, June 5; one from Liverpool on the same subject, dated October 20, 1825, in the \textit{Pennsylvania Intelligencer}, January 3, 1826. See notice for a town meeting in Philadelphia to consider the formation of a company to build a railway from the Schuylkill to the Delaware, \textit{Poulson's American Daily Advertiser}, September 27, 1825; discussion concerning a breakwater in Delaware Bay, see \textit{ibid.}, October 14, 1825. For a full page devoted to the subject of railways see \textit{Pennsylvania Intelligencer}, October 7, 1825; for a series of articles on "Canaling" see \textit{ibid.}, June 10 to August 5, 1825 inclusive—one appeared each Friday; for Strickland's report on marine railways, dated Liverpool, July 18, 1825, see \textit{Poulson's American Daily Advertiser}, October 28, 1825; and for comments on the proposed state canal based upon information furnished by General Laycock see \textit{The Statesman} (Pittsburgh), October 29, 1825. The \textit{U. S. Gazette} in particular gave much space (October 1, 11; November 8, 11; December 3, 12, 26, and 28 are but a few definite references) to internal improvements and when they were requested by a person living in the "interior" to publish a letter on the slave question they refused. It was considered more important to give space to the former topic "which must be published now or be useless." \textit{Ibid.}, December 17, 1825.

\textsuperscript{84} See \textit{Pennsylvania Intelligencer}, January 27 and February 3, 1826; and \textit{Poulson's American Daily Advertiser}, February 23, 1826.
the board on October 26. This report included the data on surveys made by Wilson and John Mitchell of Centre County. In December, closely following his return from England as a representative of the Pennsylvania Improvement Society, William Strickland was engaged as a consulting engineer. It was he who prepared the maps and the estimates to be used by the board. The final report, however, was not ready until December 30, 1825, and a few days later it was placed in the hands of the governor.

In the meantime, the special committee of the Canal Convention, appointed just before it adjourned, had prepared its report and published it in the newspapers. The report recapitulated the arguments already advanced in favor of the canal as given in the debates of the convention and the articles sent to the newspapers, particularly such arguments as were supplied by the Pennsylvania Improvement Society. Again the singular success of the Erie Canal was cited as ample proof of the feasibility of building and operating a canal as a state project. As an answer to those who feared the canal would bring ruin to the turnpikes, it was pointed out that the carriage of more goods in the commerce of the state, as the result of having a canal, would create greater activity on the turnpikes themselves, and furthermore, as the heavier wagons with their heavy loads would no longer be required, the roads would be in less need of constant repair.

In referring to the cost and financing of the project, the committee was most sanguine. The cost was fixed at $8,000,000, to be borrowed in yearly instalments at five per cent. It was estimated that it would

---

85 John Davis, of Lycoming County, and Francis W. Rawle, of Clearfield County, were two other men who helped to make the surveys.

86 In the *Aurora & Franklin Gazette*, February 10, 1826, commenting on the canal report is this passage: "... will no doubt excite honorable pride of our citizens in this additional display of talents of our fellow townsman, William Strickland.

87 It was entitled, "The Address of the Committee of the Canal Convention to the Citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania." It filled ten columns of closely printed material in the *Pennsylvania Intelligencer*, September 23, 1825. On this committee were Mathew Carey of Philadelphia, the chairman; John Kennedy of Fayette County; Samuel D. Ingham of Bucks County; Jacob Holgate of Philadelphia County; Joseph Patterson of Allegheny County; Philip S. Markley of Montgomery County; Thomas H. Sill of Erie County; John Forster of Dauphin County; and Thomas H. Baird of Washington County. John Sergeant was appointed to serve as chairman but declined in favor of Carey. *Ibid.*, August 12, 1825.

88 A friend of internal improvement, "Brindley" was warm in his approval of the "Address," and ventured to say that Europe would take the loans at four per cent. *U. S. Gazette*, September 15, 1825.
take eight years to build the canal, and that the interest for the first year would be but $50,000, and for the eighth year it was set at $400,000. Such expenditures would be easily borne by a state, it was contended, which in 1815 had an assessed value of $346,633,389, and which without difficulty paid internal revenues of no less than $1,087,057 annually.

In reply to the contention of the opponents that the enterprise should be undertaken by private corporations rather than by the state, two arguments were advanced: private enterprise could not command the necessary capital needed; and the advantages that would accrue from such a canal were too numerous and important to the whole public welfare to surrender into the hands of individuals. The subject of railroads was approached with caution and the feeling was expressed that railways could only be "eminently servicable as subsidiary to canals, in surmounting elevated regions where there is a scarcity of water."

Sanguine, too, were the hopes held out for trade and business; for an increase of the population; for the stimulation which would be given to employment in general; for the increases of revenue to the state from greater tolls, larger fees from retail and tavern licenses; and the enhanced value given to land. This report unquestionably did much to strengthen and forward the whole movement. It appeared early enough to permit the people of the state to read and digest its contents before the legislature convened in December.

It was the action of the Canal Convention and its address to the people which gained a decided victory for the supporters of internal improvement. They now felt that the legislature had, in the proceedings of that body, an undeniable evidence of the wishes of the citizens of the Commonwealth. It was natural then that the public looked forward with keen interest and confidence to the convening of the 1825-1826 session of the legislature.

---

89 *Pennsylvania Intelligencer*, September 23, 1825.
90 Editorially the *U. S. Gazette* for September 9, 1825, had this to say of the "Address": "The importance of the subject recommended in the address, its value to such an immense majority of our citizens, its increasing worth to every successive generation, will commend the paper we refer to every individual in the state, whom it may reach. The statements in the address are all correct, and the arguments conclusively drawn; and their [sic] needs now nothing but the sanction of the Legislature to the voice of the people, to give our state every facility of internal communication that is possessed by our neighbour; let the people require it of their representatives, that the state be suffered to have the exercise of its own means."
It was Tuesday, December 6, 1825 that the legislature convened at Harrisburg. The next day Governor Andrew A. Shulze delivered his message, the tone of which was conservative throughout. In reference to the proposed canal he reviewed the steps which had already been taken by the legislature; he expressed a fear that insurmountable difficulties would be encountered; he showed concern about the right course to follow; and he remarked that there was need for a careful inquiry into the state of finances of the Commonwealth before engaging millions of dollars and the labors of thousands of men. His attitude was summed up in this passage:

Desirable as it is to facilitate intercourse between all parts of the commonwealth, and to do it speedily still this desire will not induce the representatives of a prudent people to engage in such enterprises without having before them all the information and the knowledge which are essential to entering upon and completing the work in the best, most durable, and most economical manner.

On the same day William Lehman, chairman of the Inland Navigation and Internal Improvement Committee of the House, introduced these resolutions:

Resolved, That the Committee on Inland Navigation and Internal Improvement, be instructed to consider the expediency of commencing forthwith, at the expense of the State, the construction of a navigable Canal, from the termination of the Union Canal, on the Susquehanna, to the mouth of the Juniata, from Pittsburg [sic] on the Ohio to the mouth of the Kisiminitas, and as soon thereafter as practicable, to extend such Canals, either by means of the waters of the West Branch, or Juniata; so as to connect the Susquehanna with the

The political set-up in the legislature was as follows: Senate, 26 Democrats and 7 Federalists; House, 77 Democrats and 23 Federalists. The Statesman (Pittsburgh), November 26, 1825. Mr. Alexander Mahon, of Cumberland and Perry counties was elected president of the Senate on the fourth ballot; Mr. Joseph Ritner, of Washington County, the speaker of the House, on the second ballot. Pennsylvania Intelligencer, December 9, 1825.

The message in Pennsylvania Archives, fourth series, “Papers of the Governors, 1817-1832,” (12 volumes, Harrisburg, 1900-1902), 588-993; Journal of the House of Representatives, 1825-1826, II, No. I.; and in Pennsylvania Intelligencer, December 9, 1825. The U. S. Gazette thought that the Governor had no deep-rooted prejudices against canals, but “Brindley” expressed disappointment in Shulze’s message, for he wrote that the Governor may not have wanted to throw “cold water upon the Canal in this early stage of it; but it certainly has that appearance.” U. S. Gazette, December 13, 1825.

On this committee were Lehman, Lawson, Burden, Irwin, Cunningham, Overfield, Brobst, W. B. Foster, Huling, Ellis, and Scudder. On the corresponding committee in the senate were Burnside, Knight, Herbert, Emlen, and Kelley. Pennsylvania Intelligencer, December 9, 1825.

Journal of House of Representatives, 1825-1826, I, 11. The idea of creating a board of public works was one of the pet schemes advocated consistently by the Pennsylvania Improvement Society.
Ohio; and, also, by the most navigable route, to connect the Allegheny with Lake Erie.

Resolved, That the Committee on Inland Navigation and Internal Improvement, be instructed to consider the expediency of establishing a board of public works, for the purpose of promoting the interest of the Commonwealth, in existing roads, bridges and canals, superintending the execution of such canals as may be undertaken by the state, and devising new schemes of internal improvement.

On December 10 Lehman brought up these resolutions for debate. Immediately Moses Maclean, of Dauphin County, proposed an amendment on the ground that they interfered with the vested rights of the Harrisburg Canal Company and that it was impossible to create two canals upon the same route laid down in the Act incorporating the Harrisburg Canal Company, March 27, 1823. Lehman, Brown, Clarke, Beatty, and Baker, however, came to the support of the original resolutions, and urged the importance of the proposed examination of the whole scheme of internal improvement, contending that the legislature in granting corporate powers to the Harrisburg Canal Company intended that the canal should supply the town of Harrisburg with water, without making it a part of the proposed communication with the east and west. Scudder then moved to postpone any consideration of the amendments and the resolutions, but afterwards he withdrew this motion. Then Ner Middleswarth renewed it, asserting that the resolutions were premature and likely to create a schism among the friends of an east to west canal, and added, that before the subject was further discussed they ought to have the report of the existing Board of Canal Commissioners. Petrikin also supported the postponement on the same grounds. However, a vote on postponement having been called for, it was defeated by a vote of 44 to 46. Maclean’s amendments were not agreed to and the original resolutions were adopted.

This paved the way for going ahead with the preparations for canal legislation. Early in January, 1826, the governor communicated to the Senate and the House the first report of the Canal Commissioners, dated December 30, 1825. With this information at

---

95 Ibid., 321; Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser, December 13, 1825.
96 Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser, January 9, 1826; Aurora & Franklin Gazette, January 10, 1826. It was submitted to the legislature on Thursday, January 5. The Pennsylvania Intelligencer, February 10, mentions the fact that the governor regularly transmitted the report on that day, but he had a day earlier sent it with a note in which he stated that he had thus departed from the usual practice in order to satisfy the anxiety
their disposal it did not take long for the legislature to formulate definite steps. On Monday, January 16, the House Committee of Inland Navigation and Internal Improvement introduced a bill entitled, "An Act to Provide for the Commencement of a Canal, to be constructed at the Expense of the State, and to be styled, 'The Pennsylvania Canal.'"97

There was considerable debate in the following two weeks, but on February 1, the bill was ordered to be transcribed for a third reading.98 It passed the third reading on February 2, by a vote of 61 to 32.99 The bill was then sent to the Senate, where minor amendments were made, and it passed its third reading there on February 22, by a vote of 19 to 14.100 That same day the house concurred in the amendments and the bill was approved by a vote of 65 to 23.101 Only the governor's signature was now needed to make it a law, and his approval was given February 25, 1826.102 A year of ceaseless agitation had not been in vain!

which was necessarily felt in relation to so important a matter. This action the paper commended and added: "The governor is not opposed to any rational project of internal improvement. It bespeaks a disposition in him to furnish the legislature, at the earliest possible moment, with information on that, and all other subjects which appertain to their official duties."

98 Ibid., I. 295.
100 The principal amendments authorized the commissioners to construct a navigable feeder from French Creek to Conneaut Lake; to fix the wages of the acting commissioners at four dollars a day; and to advertise for proposals to execute the work. Aurora & Franklin Gazette, February 25, 1826. The votes were as follows: Yeas, 19; Allhouse, Burnside, Dewart, Duncan, Emlen, Garber, Groves, Hawkins, Kelley, Kelton, Kerlin, Kitchen, Knight, Leech, Power, Ryon, St. Clair, Sullivan, and Sutherland. Nays, 14; Audendreid, Dunlop, Hamilton, Henderson, Herbert, King, Mann, McIlvain, Moore, Ogle, Ritscher, Schall, Winter, and Mahon, the president of the Senate. Journal of the House of Representatives, 1825-1826, I. 437; Pennsylvania Intelligencer, February 28, 1826. Editorially The Statesman (Pittsburgh), March 4, 1826, congratulated the citizens of Pennsylvania on the passage of the bill—"With the great natural advantages our city possesses—with the industry, skill and enterprise of our citizens—with the extensive manufactories, and profitable commerce which here hold their seat—aided by great facilities that will be afforded by our contemplated public works, by which an outlet will be found in every direction for time is not far distant when Pittsburg will be ranked among the first cities of the Union, both in point of wealth and population."
101 Journal of the House of Representatives, 1825-1826, I. 437; Pennsylvania Intelligencer, February 28, 1826. Editorially The Statesman (Pittsburgh), March 4, 1826, congratulated the citizens of Pennsylvania on the passage of the bill—"With the great natural advantages our city possesses—with the industry, skill and enterprise of our citizens—with the extensive manufactories, and profitable commerce which here hold their seat—aided by great facilities that will be afforded by our contemplated public works, by which an outlet will be found in every direction for time is not far distant when Pittsburg will be ranked among the first cities of the Union, both in point of wealth and population."
102 Pennsylvania Archives, ninth series, VIII. 6408.
In promoting the agitation, residents of Philadelphia played a most conspicuous part. It was the Pennsylvania Improvement Society, whose members were all Philadelphians, which initiated the idea of creating sound public opinion on internal improvements. This Society unceasingly gathered and disseminated vital information, and by extensive correspondence awakened and kept alive the interest of the public in the need for more adequate transportation facilities. The president of that society, John Sergeant, was one of Philadelphia's most prominent lawyers, and he took a leading part in the town meetings, the Canal Convention at Harrisburg, and as the chairman of the canal board. Mathew Carey, eminent political economist and publicist, did more than any other one citizen of Pennsylvania to disseminate information on internal improvements. These two men were the foremost leaders in the battle for a state canal. In the legislature it was Dr. William Lehman, of Philadelphia, who, as chairman of the Inland Navigation and Internal Improvement Committee, assumed the task of steering the bills through that body. It was William Strickland who furnished sound engineering data which did so much to bolster the arguments of internal improvement enthusiasts. Last but by no means the least important factor in the creating of favorable public opinion were the leading newspapers of the city. The indomitable perseverance of Philadelphians was largely responsible for the enactment of the law creating the Pennsylvania Canal.

Easton, Pennsylvania

Richard I. Shelling