The era of internal improvements in America was delayed some ten years by foreign and then domestic wars. The original impulse to provide adequate commercial arteries culminated in Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin's famed 1808 "Report on Roads and Canals." For the first time, the numerous local turnpike and canal schemes were embraced in a national plan, which, according to Gallatin's estimate, could be accomplished by the government in ten years. Annual outlays of two million dollars, a total of $20,000,000, would be needed.¹

Although the Senate was pleased to receive the report and was inclined to implement Gallatin's program as outlined, the times were unpropitious. Napoleon's Continental System, the retaliatory British Orders in Council, and Jefferson's embargo, all in effect just shortly before Gallatin submitted his recommendations, already had begun

to stifle commerce. Not until after the War of 1812 were large-scale internal improvements, excepting only the National Road, undertaken. Then, according to John Bach McMaster, America suddenly turned her back on Europe and faced westward, reviving and urging “every old scheme of inland communication by turnpike, canal, or steamboat.”

No longer unable but now unwilling, Congress refused, largely on constitutional grounds, to appropriate the required funds. Even though they may have had national import, internal improvement projects were left to the province of the state or community.

New York made the first significant effort. Construction began in 1817 on the Grand Union—or Erie—Canal, designed to unite the waters of Lake Erie with those of the Hudson River. Its completion in 1825 stimulated other groups, from time to time, to follow New York’s enterprising example. Among the new or revitalized projects was the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, an often proposed waterway across the narrow neck of land separating the Chesapeake and Delaware bays.

The Chesapeake and Delaware Canal has been called “the parent of all canal projects” because it had been proposed and surveyed by 1769. At the start, interest in the waterway was centered in Philadelphia, and until its successful completion in 1829 Philadelphia’s role in the canal’s history was decisive. An abortive construction attempt was made in the early nineteenth century, but the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal Company was forced to suspend operations after eighteen months “from no other cause than the failure of funds.” For sixteen years the work was necessarily neglected, but the company’s corporate existence was maintained by a board of directors, which continued to meet and to hope. Repeated appeals to state and federal legislatures were unsuccessful until the canal project was revived in Philadelphia in 1821–1823. Only Philadelphia capital, marshaled by Mathew Carey and supplemented by state and

2 McMaster, IV, 397.

3 The only exception, the National Road, was solely a government project and not one in which the government subscribed to the stock of a private company. This road, begun in 1811, was completed as far as Wheeling by 1818. See Philip Dillon Jordan, The National Road (Indianapolis, Ind., 1948).

4 George Armroyd, A Connected View of the Whole Internal Navigation of the United States, Natural and Artificial; Present and Prospective (Philadelphia, 1826), 80.

5 Memorial of the Directors of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal Company ([Washington], 1817), 2.
federal stock subscriptions, made resumption and completion of the canal possible.6

Philadelphia's interest was one of long standing. Thomas Gilpin, a successful miller and merchant of the Eastern Shore, recognized the need for a waterway connection between the Chesapeake and Delaware bays in the early 1760's. Much of central Pennsylvania's produce was descending to market via the Susquehanna River, which flows into Chesapeake Bay. With Baltimore enjoying easier communications from the head of Chesapeake Bay than Philadelphia, the Maryland city was reaping profits from a trade Philadelphia considered rightfully her own. After moving to Philadelphia in 1764, Gilpin became the leading proponent of a Chesapeake and Delaware canal as one way to divert the lucrative Susquehanna Valley trade to Philadelphia. His articles urging construction of the canal began to appear in the Philadelphia newspapers, the support of other Philadelphia merchants was enlisted, and, finally, a meeting of merchants interested in the "improvement of the trade of the province" was held to consider the canal project.7

Gilpin's proposals were more than mere academic exercises. He had made extensive explorations and surveys of possible routes across Delaware and the Eastern Shore of Maryland. As a result, his report was detailed and practical. The merchants were favorably impressed, but, in order to verify or correct Gilpin's findings, the aid of the American Philosophical Society was enlisted. With this scientific body supplying the personnel, equipment, and skills, and with the merchants supplying the funds, an eight-man Committee of Survey roamed the Lower Counties (Delaware) peninsula in 1769 and 1770, braving ill weather and physical hardship to conduct its surveys.8

7 Joshua Gilpin, A Memoir on the Rise, Progress, and Present State of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, Accompanied with Original Documents and Maps (Wilmington, Del., 1821), 3.
8 The original committee members were John Lukens, surveyor general of Pennsylvania, Matthew Clarkson, John Sellers, and William Rumsey, appointed by the Philosophical Society; the merchants named Joseph Ellicott, R. Sittiforth, William Killen, and John Stapler to
Charged with the task of determining how water communications could best be opened between Maryland and Pennsylvania, "particularly by what means the large and increasing number of frontier-settlers, especially those on the Susquehannah and its branches, might be enabled to bring their produce to market at the cheapest rate, whether by land or water," the committee set out in May, 1769. Two canal routes were examined, found practical, and their construction expenses estimated. It was decided, however, that the one between the Bohemia and Appoquinimink rivers was too costly, and that the southern route was too distant from Philadelphia. "It would carry," the committee reported, "all the navigation of the river Susquehannah (which is the great object in view,) too far down into Chesopeak-Bay, for an advantageous communication with Philadelphia."

Other routes were then examined, including a road which led from Peach Bottom Ferry on the Susquehanna to Christiana Bridge in New Castle County. The most extensive survey, however, was made of a northern canal route, also terminating at Christiana Bridge. In all, four canals and three roads were laid out, with the committee recommending the canal and the road leading to Christiana Bridge, from which the communication with Philadelphia "is known to be safe and easy." Both projects were thought to be well calculated to capture the trade of the Susquehanna River, "the natural channel through which the produce of three-fourths of this Province must in time be conveyed to market for exportation."

Philadelphia's activity relative to a Chesapeake and Delaware Canal was soon interrupted. Further progress had to await the end of the Revolutionary War, when Pennsylvania led the way in reviving the canal project. Unable at first to get the support of Maryland
and Delaware in building the waterway, Pennsylvania turned to alternate schemes to be effected within the boundaries of the state. A Susquehanna-Schuylkill canal plan was revived, and a movement for improved roads between the Susquehanna Valley and Philadelphia was started. The Lancaster Turnpike, begun in 1792 and completed four years later, was only a partial solution to the transportation problem, and the need for improved inland communications continued. Agitation for a Chesapeake and Delaware canal became stronger.

Maryland and Delaware were either hostile or just not interested in the canal. Maryland feared a precipitous decline in Baltimore’s trade if the canal were built; Delaware feared the loss of its lucrative carrying trade across the peninsula. There were, however, concessions that each state wanted to pry from Pennsylvania, and the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal was used as the lever. Maryland wanted the Susquehanna navigation below Wright’s Ferry (Columbia) improved so that boatmen descending the river could continue their trip to tidewater without risking the rocks, rapids, shoals and other obstructions that Pennsylvania had steadfastly refused to remove. The impeded navigation of the lower Susquehanna caused goods that otherwise would have gone by water to Baltimore to be transshipped and carried overland to Philadelphia.

So much did Pennsylvanians, chiefly Philadelphians, want the canal, and so great was their confidence that it would cancel the benefits accruing to Baltimore from improved Susquehanna navigation, that Pennsylvania agreed to Maryland’s terms in return for the chartering of a Chesapeake and Delaware canal company. Maryland agreed to the charter in December, 1799, in a conditional act—

13 For an articulate statement of Baltimore’s opposition to the canal, see the anonymous pamphlet, probably written by a citizen of Baltimore, entitled Reflections on the Proposition to Communicate by a Navigable Canal the Waters of the Chesapeake with those of Delaware Bay, addressed to the Citizens of Maryland (Annapolis, Md., 1797). Both the Duke de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, Travels Through the United States of America ... in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797 (London, 1800), III, 695, and Christoph Daniel Ebeling, Erdbeschreibung und Geschichte von Amerika: Die vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika (Hamburg, 1799), V, 20–21, give the above-mentioned factor as the basis of Delaware’s early opposition to the canal.

14 A 1771 law specifically forbade the clearing of the river below Wright’s Ferry. MacGill, 212.

15 As the canal was chiefly a Pennsylvania project, but was to pass through portions of both Maryland and Delaware, the canal company had to be authorized by each of the three states.
one that was to be of no effect until Pennsylvania provided for clearing the Susquehanna and until Delaware and Pennsylvania similarly incorporated the canal company.\textsuperscript{16}

Delaware gave the Pennsylvania canal backers more trouble. After a prolonged battle in the House of Representatives in 1800, a bill authorizing the canal company was passed, but the Senate withheld its approval. No compromise on the bill could be reached, and matters were postponed. The following year, however, the bill passed both houses. Two factors were involved in this reversal. In the fall election of 1800, the Federalists had been attacked by the Democrats for failing to enact the canal bill;\textsuperscript{17} its passage in 1801 may have been an attempt by the Federalists, now with a reduced majority, to regain some of their former popular support. The second factor was the presence at the Delaware legislature of three commissioners from Pennsylvania, Dr. George Logan, Captain John Hunn, and Presley Carr Lane, who had been appointed by the Pennsylvania legislature to negotiate terms which would be acceptable to both sides. It was finally agreed that, in return for passage of the act of incorporation, Pennsylvania was to turn over to Delaware or permit her to transcribe all papers in the Pennsylvania land office relating to the three Lower Counties. Pennsylvania was, moreover, to rescind certain portions of her quarantine laws objectionable to Delawareans.\textsuperscript{18}

Having thus secured the incorporation of a canal company in Maryland and Delaware, Pennsylvania quickly adopted its own act of incorporation, one which also provided for carrying out the conditions established by the other two states. The Chesapeake and Delaware Canal Company was duly organized in 1803, after a subscription drive conducted in the three incorporating states had secured the required number of subscribers.\textsuperscript{19} The company's first meeting

\textsuperscript{16}See \textit{A Collection of the Laws Relative to the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal; Passed by the Legislatures of the States of Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania, subsequent to the Year 1798} (Philadelphia, 1823), 3-15.

\textsuperscript{17}John A. Munroe, \textit{Federalist Delaware, 1775-1815} (New Brunswick, N. J., 1954), 244.

\textsuperscript{18}\textit{Laws of the State of Delaware}, III (Wilmington, Del., 1816), 170-188. By 1808, a total of 1,656 land records were transferred to Delaware. In 1946, sixty-eight additional records relating to Delaware were uncovered in the Pennsylvania land office, and, in accordance with the 1801 law, these too were turned over. \textit{Wilmington Morning News}, Feb. 21, 1946.

\textsuperscript{19}A total of 1,792 shares were sold: 824 in Pennsylvania, 712 in Delaware, and 256 in Maryland. Pennsylvanians paid a total of $73,400 on their shares, however, as compared to $29,600 paid by both Maryland and Delaware subscribers. Gilpin, 44-45.
was held on May 3, 1803, in Wilmington, at which time Philadelphia men were elected to four of the nine board directorships. The president of the board was Joseph Tatnall, a Wilmington miller.

A surveying committee was immediately organized, engineers and surveyors were employed, and work on selecting the canal location was initiated. Director Joshua Gilpin, son of the far-sighted Thomas Gilpin who had originally sparked the canal activity, was a member of the committee. The architect Benjamin H. Latrobe, later to be chief engineer of the canal company, was put in charge of the surveying. No possibility was overlooked during the year the committee spent in determining the best route for the canal. Among the many factors considered were the nature of the soil, the water supply, terminal harbors, the directness of the line, traffic accommodations, and estimated expenses.

A chronic shortage of funds—an ominous portent—was experienced even during the preliminary surveying stage, but on the anniversary of the organization of the company in May, 1804, construction of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal was begun. It had been decided to build a small feeder canal first to supply the main canal with water and to serve as a convenient route for construction transportation needs. Work on the feeder occupied the remainder of the year 1804 and all of 1805, during which time the funds of the company were seriously depleted. The stockholders became discouraged, for not a shovelful of earth had yet been removed from the main canal line. Many refused to pay the installments on their subscriptions when they fell due. On December 1, 1805, all canal employees were released and construction work was halted while additional funds were solicited.

The canal company directors pleaded for money from the state legislatures. It was all to no avail, despite the forcefulness, eloquence, and soundness of the arguments supporting their pleas. As Joshua Gilpin explained to Secretary Gallatin in 1808, the project was beyond the capabilities of any one state or community:

The city of Philadelphia has zealously supported, and still remains highly interested in its progress, but the representatives of Pennsylvania have so many local objects of the kind in the interior counties, that these are constantly brought into competition with it, so as to prevent its obtaining any aid from thence. The State of Delaware is too feeble in its resources to
grant supplies for any work of the kind; and in the State of Maryland, although the interest of the counties contiguous to the Chesapeake are partial to the canal, the city of Baltimore and other parts of the State view it with no little jealousy.\(^{20}\)

Congress was the only hope of the company.

Three times, bills providing assistance to the canal company passed the United States Senate only to be killed in the House. Even the want of adequate transportation facilities across the peninsula in the War of 1812 failed to inspire Congress to action, although it occasioned well-meaning but futile acts on the part of the Pennsylvania and Maryland legislatures. In 1813 each state authorized a subscription to the canal company if the United States government and Delaware would similarly subscribe a proportional amount.\(^{21}\)

Joshua Gilpin, who had assumed the leading role in keeping alive the legal existence and the hopes of the canal company, now privately despaired of ever getting assistance from Congress. The project seemed doomed until a group in Philadelphia revived the work in the early 1820’s. As Gilpin wrote in 1821, the renewed canal activity in Philadelphia was the first really encouraging sign the canal board had encountered for fifteen years.\(^{22}\)

Insofar as credit for reviving the canal project can be given to anyone, it belongs to Mathew Carey.\(^{23}\) The fiery Irishman had become increasingly aware of Philadelphia’s need for improved communications with the Pennsylvania hinterland.\(^{24}\) Alarmed at the growing loss of its trade to Baltimore, and realizing that more trade would be siphoned off to the north with the completion of the Erie Canal, Carey sprang into action. He initiated the program which led

\(^{20}\) *American State Papers, Class X: Miscellaneous*, I, 754.

\(^{21}\) *Collection of Laws Relative to the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal*, 16, 47–48. Pennsylvania agreed to purchase 375 shares and Maryland 250, if Congress would take 750 and Delaware 100, but these conditions were not met.

\(^{22}\) Gilpin, 37.

\(^{23}\) Carey is well known as a publisher, author, and economist, and for his ceaseless advocacy of internal improvements, universal education, and protective tariffs. Born in Ireland in 1760, he arrived in Philadelphia at the age of twenty-five and soon took his place among the leaders of the city. *Dictionary of American Biography*; Kenneth Wyer Rowe, *Mathew Carey: A Study in American Economic Development* (Baltimore, Md., 1933).

\(^{24}\) Carey’s pet internal improvement projects were the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal and the Union Canal, both designed to capture more of the ever-growing western trade for Philadelphia. *Ibid.*, 107–108.
to the reorganization and renewed activity of the canal company in 1821–1822, and, a year later, when failure was again imminent from a lack of public support, it was Carey who sparked a great subscription drive which rescued the faltering company.

A remarkably full account of the revival of the canal company in Philadelphia can be obtained from Carey’s many writings, from the newspapers of the day, and from a body of letters relating to internal improvements which Carey collected and later presented to the Library Company of Philadelphia. Carey wrote of his efforts in 1820 and 1821: “I repeatedly urged gentlemen of great standing and influence to exert themselves, to resuscitate a project promising such extensive benefit to the city”—the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal. But these early attempts to persuade others to lead the campaign were futile. Much as Carey preferred to remain inconspicuous in the movement, he at length was forced to act. His first step was to issue invitations to a hundred or so of Philadelphia’s leading citizens, requesting them to attend a meeting at Judd’s Hotel on September 11, 1821.

In the meantime, at a special meeting of the American Philosophical Society on September 10, a committee of eight was appointed to make another Chesapeake and Delaware canal survey. Significantly, this committee was “authorized to confer, or to act in concert with, any committee that may be appointed by the meeting of the citizens, which it is understood is about to be called for the same objects.” When Joshua Gilpin heard of the society’s plans for a new survey, he lamented it as a “premature measure,” one that would arouse all the old antagonisms regarding the canal location. A bitter, lengthy

26 This information is contained on page 2 of an untitled publication written and printed by Carey for private distribution, hereinafter cited as Letter to a Few Friends (Philadelphia, 1825).
27 Early Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society for the Promotion of Useful Knowledge, Compiled by One of the Secretaries, from the Manuscript Minutes of Its Meetings from 1744 to 1838 (Philadelphia, 1884), 504. The survey committee members were William Strickland, J. G. Biddle, R. Haines, Dr. R. M. Patterson, and Dr. James Mease of Pennsylvania; E. I. du Pont of Delaware; John Adlum and Dr. DeButts of Maryland. Joshua Gilpin’s name was added to the list on Sept. 21.
28 Joshua Gilpin to Paul Beck, Jr., Kentmere, Sept. 24, 1821, Correspondence on Internal Improvements, 5, Carey Collection, Library Company of Philadelphia, hereinafter cited as Carey Collection.
debate over the best route, a debate fully aired in the Delaware newspapers, had occurred during the surveying in 1803 and 1804, and Gilpin wished to avoid a repetition of this at all costs. He was much more pleased with the procedure outlined at Carey's meeting on September 11.

John K. Kane, a young, civic-minded lawyer who happened to be in Mathew Carey's printing office the day of the meeting, described the events of that day in his charming and candid autobiography:

Mr. Carey had imagined a scheme for recalling the [Chesapeake and Delaware] project to favour, and called a meeting at one of the hotels to begin his operations. But though he could write and print with a rapidity that before the days of locomotives and electric telegraphs defied all parallel, he could never speak six words without boggling. . . . Mr. Carey, who never had room in his mind for two ideas at once, broached his Canal meeting, and insisted that I should take charge of it. It was in vain that I protested ignorance, total and hopeless: it was afternoon, and the meeting was to be in three hours after. But there was no getting off without a quarrel: indeed our whole colloquy might have been well mistaken for one. Carey crammed me with documents: I made the speech; electrified an assemblage of mercantile grannies with my overflowing knowledge of Engineering, topography, and statistics, was placed on the Committee of Five, and became the leading member of the new board of Directors, and what was more important to my finances, its lawyer.29

Carey himself gave a less florid account of the well-attended meeting, at which the resolutions he had prepared were adopted. A committee of twenty-five leading citizens was appointed to add prestige to the undertaking, but the working committee was composed of only five members. This group, instead of starting anew as the American Philosophical Society planned, set about gathering all the information possible on the original canal company, its finances, stockholders, officers, and the reasons for the failure of the first construction attempt. Carey and his committee wanted to benefit from every experience of the old canal board. Everyone sensed, even if they did not often express it, that another failure would be disastrous.

29 Autobiography of the Honorable John K. Kane, 1795-1858 (Philadelphia, 1949), 21–22. According to contemporary correspondence, Kane is mistaken about his membership on the original Committee of Five. Besides Carey, who served as chairman, the committee consisted of Paul Beck, Jr., Simon Gratz, William Lehman, and William Meredith.
Joshua Gilpin was delighted to learn of Philadelphia's renewed interest in the project so close to his heart. He wrote to Paul Beck, Jr., a Philadelphia merchant and a strong advocate of internal improvements, on the day before Carey's meeting was held: "The board of directors of whom I am one, have long had nothing but adverse circumstances to contend with. . . . It is not indeed until the present moment that they have felt sufficient encouragement to bring the business before the public." He offered to give Beck and his colleagues "full information" about the canal, and revealed to them that he had prepared a brief history of it which he intended to publish now that attention was once again focused on the waterway. "It is so long since there have been any publications on the subject," Gilpin explained, "that matters which were once well impressed on the public, have been forgotten, & many crude and ignorant opinions have gained ground, which have done inconceivable injury." In December, 1821, Gilpin's *A Memoir on the Rise, Progress, and Present State of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, Accompanied with Original Documents and Maps* was published in Wilmington.

Gilpin blamed false rumors about the canal with destroying all hope for financial assistance from Congress. "Our city"—Philadelphia—must now undertake the work alone, "without waiting for other aid, as all other is utterly hopeless." He cautioned, however, against offending others across whose states the canal must run. "Here," he wrote from Delaware, "the powers of the state lie in a little compass and are easily acted upon—and it is worse in Maryland." If any attempts are made "to disturb the acts of incorporation," he warned, "or [if there are] any violent deviations in the outset, it will be attended with great danger to the basis of the undertaking." Gilpin reminded the Philadelphians of the great difficulty encountered in securing Delaware's act of incorporation, "even when the enthusiasm in favor of the canal was at its height," adding that "conciliation therefore is absolutely essential." He further warned that Delaware and Maryland must continue to have representation

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30 Sept. 10, 1821, Carey Collection, 3.
on the canal board. There were already five Philadelphians on the inactive board, "which perhaps is as great a number, or at least if we could obtain one more, as we can ever expect to have with any satisfaction to Maryland and this state."^35

As would be expected, Gilpin urged the committee in Philadelphia to work through the present board of directors. Kensey Johns, chief justice of Delaware and Tatnall's successor as president of the canal company, joined Gilpin in urging that respect should be paid to the board which is the constitutional organ of the company, whose interests they are sworn to protect, and merit attention by the services of nearly twenty years. There is indeed, sir, one plain mode of proceeding by which this work may be almost instantaneously revived, and that is, instead of wasting the time and patience of the public in desultory experiments, which will only increase the spirit of party, till perhaps every thing be lost—to bestow a generous confidence upon the present board and on what they have done, and enable them to recommence the work where they left it off.^36

If action were taken at once, Gilpin and Johns believed that preparations could be made during the winter, that active operations could begin in the spring. They naturally assumed that the location would be the same, at least that the western half, on which the board had unanimously agreed in 1804, would not be changed, and they strongly recommended that work begin there as soon as possible. The eastern termination, either New Castle or Wilmington, on which the board had divided, could be determined later.

The Philadelphia newspapers in the latter part of 1821 reflect the renewed interest in the canal. Editors kept their readers informed about meetings relating to it, and correspondents began writing internal improvement letters, all endorsing the project. "An Old Observer," alarmed at the declining state of Pennsylvania's agriculture, commerce, and, consequently, influence, cried out: "Let the plans so long since suggested by Franklin, and occasionally stirred by intelligent and patriotic men, during the last half-century—the opening of a spacious canal from the Bay of Chesapeake to the River Delaware, be pursued to completion."^37 Another contributor, "Brind-

^36 Gilpin to Beck, Sept. 24, 1821, ibid., 5.
^37 Aurora & General Advertiser (Phila.), Sept. 20, 1821.
ley,” boasted of Philadelphia’s ability to do the work alone. The entire cost was to be met by “patriotic” citizens, without calling upon either the Pennsylvania legislature or the citizens of Baltimore for aid. “The work will be undertaken quietly, and accomplished speedily, by public spirited individuals in this city, now ready to subscribe an amount fully adequate to the cost, free from ridiculous bombast, or pompous annunciation, and without interfering in the smallest degree, with the other great public improvements of the state.”

Precisely what Gilpin wanted to avoid, however, was brought up by “A Subscriber,” who called for still another examination of the routes. He hoped that a “thorough cut,” or sea-level canal, would be proposed. “Money invested under the present charter, the original plan being pursued, would not yield 1 per cent. to the stockholders.”

Whether this writer’s voice had effect or not, the actions of the citizens’ committee ultimately corresponded to his advice more than to Gilpin’s.

In October, 1821, the Committee of Five wrote to the board of directors, not offering their assistance and co-operation, but rather asking the present board to give up their seats in favor of Philadelphians. “The canal,” they reasoned, “if completed at all, must, it is evident, be completed by Philadelphia funds”; why should it not also be directed by Philadelphia men? Gilpin, previous to a board meeting, made an unofficial reply to the committee’s rather unusual inquiry, stating that as far as he knew no board member was disposed to resign his seat. He repeated his views on the proper make-up of a new board, and again urged co-operation between the committee and the board.

A meeting between representatives of the two groups was arranged. In December, 1821, Gilpin and Johns met the Philadelphia committee and made a tentative agreement about membership on a new board of directors. Carey, “in order to prevent those Mistakes & misconceptions to which verbal communications are liable,” requested that Gilpin put the terms agreed upon in writing: “That you & your friends in Wilmington would support a ticket for Directors

38 United States Gazette (Phila.), Sept. 18, 1821.
39 Ibid., Sept. 26, 1821.
40 Carey, Beck, Gratz, Lehman, and Meredith to the President and Directors of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal Company, Philadelphia, Oct. 9, 1821, Carey Collection, 6.
of the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal, containing the names of five Citizens residing in Philadelphia." Gilpin immediately complied, and it was decided to hold a general stockholders' meeting as soon as possible. Since the charter required at least a month's notice, January 28, 1822, was the day set for the meeting to be held at the company office in Wilmington.

Mathew Carey was quite upset at these delays. Since September 11, 1821, the date of his citizens' meeting, Philadelphia's interest in the canal had been aroused. The time was right—action was demanded now. He particularly deplored delaying the general meeting until late January, and sought immediate action. Gilpin replied to Carey's impatience, suggesting that if the committee wanted to act at once, it could begin to receive subscriptions with the understanding that they would be held in safekeeping until the regular company subscription books could be opened, probably around March 1.

For some reason, Carey did not follow Gilpin's suggestion, but neither did he remain inactive while waiting for the stockholders' meeting. His committee obtained a list of the Pennsylvania stockholders in the company—429 persons in the state had subscribed to 824 shares—and proceeded to collect proxies from them. The Philadelphia contingent arrived at the Wilmington meeting armed with proxies on 511 shares of stock. Of course, they controlled the meeting. Whether merely chafed by the delays experienced since September, or angered by some intervening event, the Philadelphia committee reneged on its agreement with the board of directors, naming a Philadelphia-dominated "board of managers" to direct the affairs of the company until the terms of the regularly elected board members expired in June, 1823. Except for Joshua Gilpin, who still considered himself a Philadelphian despite his residence since 1815 in Delaware, Kensey Johns was the only outsider named to the interim board of managers. It was also voted to move the company office and books to Philadelphia.

Following this coup by the Philadelphia committee, "a numerous and very respectable meeting of the citizens of Philadelphia" was

42 Carey to Gilpin, Phila., Dec. 7, 1821, ibid., 47.
43 Gilpin to Carey, Kentmere, Dec. 21, 1821, ibid., 14.
44 Subscription Book, 1822, Chesapeake and Delaware Canal Company Papers, Historical Society of Delaware, Wilmington.
held on February 8, 1822, to hear the committee’s report, which was adopted and ordered published. In addition to recounting the events at the stockholders’ meeting in Wilmington, the committee reported that it had collected all the laws relating to the canal passed by the three states involved. None of these laws needed revision prior to recommencement of the work. Accurate information about company affairs, its previous construction attempt, and the causes for its failure was also assembled. The committee announced that much factual information had been gained from Joshua Gilpin’s book, *Memoir on . . . the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal*, although it felt that the author’s opinions as to the best route should be tested by additional surveys. The report concluded with the recommendation that the entire citizenry of Philadelphia support this project, for their very prosperity was dependent upon it.

The following week, on February 15, 1822, at a large meeting of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal Company stockholders, the new board was authorized to receive subscriptions to the amount of $600,000. Interest in the project was high. The September meetings, the newspaper campaign, the circulation of the proxy list, and the two meetings in February, as well as the publication of Gilpin’s history of the canal, which had been dedicated to the “Citizens of Philadelphia, and particularly the Committees of the Philosophical Society and of the City,” had attracted wide public attention. Receipt of the necessary subscriptions seemed assured. Two of the canal company directors predicted that the entire $600,000 would be obtained within two weeks. Carey returned to his printing establishment secure in the belief that the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal would soon be a reality.

But delay and disappointment still plagued the project. No time was lost in arranging for new surveys to be handled by William Strickland, but not until May 22, 1822, did the new board begin its campaign for new subscriptions. The results were negligible. Less than $20,000 of the authorized $600,000 was received. What had started out so hopefully and full of promise again seemed doomed to failure.

Mathew Carey reluctantly assumed the reins of leadership once more. By now, he had come to believe that state aid, often promised

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45 *Delaware Gazette* (Wilmington), Feb. 12, 1822.

46 Ibid.
but never bestowed, was necessary to induce sufficient private subscriptions. He decided to memorialize the state legislature on the subject. On November 13, 1822, Carey recorded in his diary:

This day issued about 50 or 55 circular notices for a meeting to be held at Judd's Hotel, for the purpose of taking into consideration a memorial to the legislature praying aid in the completion of the Canal from the Delaware to the Chesapeake. The memorial was enclosed. The persons addressed were requested to bring a respectable friend or two. . . . Important as were the subjects, only five persons besides myself attended.47

Despite this slight response, Carey continued his work. Two memorials to the legislature eventually were sent, one, according to Carey, signed by 3,500 people and the other signed by 4,400, but nothing occurred in 1822 to relieve the gloom of the canal supporters. By December, even Carey sensed the futility of his labors: "Why should I waste my time, my money, debar myself of enjoyments, and even my rest at night, as well as make myself scores of deadly enemies, laboring to serve a community in which there is not the shadow of public spirit [but rather] sluggish apathy [and] sordid meanness."48 But, characteristically, Carey's optimism returned. He vowed to make one more effort.

Meanwhile, the canal company petitions and the supplementary memorials to the three state legislatures were finally being acted upon, and in February and March, both Delaware and Pennsylvania subscribed to the stock of the canal company on condition that at least $200,000 in subscriptions be obtained elsewhere. Delaware subscribed to 125 shares, the $25,000 to be paid in five annual installments of $5,000 each. Pennsylvania's subscription, obtained after much quibbling in the legislature and after a special report had been received from the board of directors of the canal company, was for $100,000.49 Maryland, too, in a series of acts passed between December, 1822, and February, 1824, subscribed for $50,000. Some trouble was experienced with the Maryland grant, since it was contingent upon Delaware's prior subscription. Although the state was reluctant to meet its pledge until the last installment on the Delaware sub-

47 Diary of Mathew Carey, University of Pennsylvania Library (UPL).
48 Ibid., Dec. 15, 1822.
49 The special report was the Communication from the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal Company; and a Report and Estimate of William Strickland, to the President and Directors (Philadelphia, 1823).
scription was paid, Maryland nevertheless made its grant in February, 1824.\textsuperscript{50}

In view of these developments, Carey issued a call on April 10, 1823, for a general meeting to consider ways to promote the canal undertaking. The states had all stipulated that private sources must supply $200,000 if their subscriptions were to be valid, and Carey was determined to meet their condition. His call met with a good response, although, strangely enough, no canal board member attended the meeting. Carey believed the board was offended at his usurpation of their prerogative.\textsuperscript{51} At the meeting, Carey read the long \textit{Address to the Citizens of Philadelphia}, couched in energetic terms and giving a realistic picture of the situation, that he had prepared and printed. His detailed study of the company's finances led Carey to conclude that an additional $412,500 was needed to construct the canal. According to Strickland's recent report, a total of $700,000 was required. Added to the state subscriptions and the few private subscriptions obtained in 1822, approximately $100,000 could be relied on from old subscriptions, making a total of $287,500 on hand. Just over 2,000 more shares would have to be sold, but with 120,000 inhabitants in Philadelphia, Carey thought this could easily be done. He discounted the aid which reasonably could be expected from Delaware and Maryland citizens, expressing his faith that the "object can easily be accomplished by Philadelphia alone."\textsuperscript{52} He reiterated a plea for a halt to the arguments over the route, stating that any of those being considered would serve Philadelphia equally well, and concluded with statistics which demonstrated that the city's economic decline, both relative and absolute, in the past decade was most serious. Immediate action was necessary.\textsuperscript{53}

Once again, Carey's report was unanimously adopted at the meeting and 2,000 copies were ordered distributed. Another committee of twenty-five was appointed to circulate the \textit{Address}, prepare subscription books, and make the necessary arrangements with the company's board of directors. The group further agreed to recom-

\textsuperscript{50} See Correspondence of the Treasurer of the Western Shore and H. D. Gilpin, Relative to the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal (Annapolis, Md., n.d.); Subscription Book, 1824, Chesapeake and Delaware Canal Company Papers.

\textsuperscript{51} Letter to a Few Friends, 4.

\textsuperscript{52} Mathew Carey, \textit{Address to the Citizens of Philadelphia} (Philadelphia, 1823), 4.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 6.
mend the project to their fellow citizens, and to encourage them to support its completion in proportion to their "wishes to promote, and interest in, the prosperity of Philadelphia." The appointment of committees in the several wards of the city and liberties to procure subscriptions was also authorized.

A feeling of excitement once again pervaded the city. The day after the meeting, four men pledged to subscribe $20,000, more than was obtained during the whole of 1822. Newspapers devoted much space to the new subscription drive, and even printed the names of the larger subscribers. In spite of the auspicious start, success was not instantaneous. Carey was distressed by the slow response throughout the first week. On April 16, he despaired to his diary:

This day produced a most remarkable instance of the apathy, torpor, and destitution of public spirit, which are so characteristic of Philada. Subscription Books for the Chesapeake and Delaware canal were sent to the U. S. Philada. Farmers Commercial, N. A. and Schuylkill Banks—and to five insurance companies, with a request that the presidents would exert themselves to procure subscriptions. But not one of them procured a single subscription—nor does it appear that they made the least exertion.—And though a genteel man was out all day with 48 Books, he procured but $1000 of subscriptions, being five shares, from three persons. Yesterday, there were $9000 worth of subscriptions recd.66

"From the manner in which the affair was explained to the public, & its great importance," Carey went on, "I had flattered myself into the opinion that I should be able to procure 50 or 60,000 Dollars worth of subscriptions Yesterday & today."67

Carey's ambitious dreams were finally realized. Ward committees, as authorized, were formed to solicit subscriptions within prescribed areas, and a continuous press campaign was waged. "Every property holder, nay, every individual permanently resident here," stated one newspaper report, "is deeply interested in promoting this useful undertaking; and all, that have two hundred dollars to spare, ought cheerfully to give it their positive aid and support."68

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64 Ibid., 1.
65 The four benefactors were James C. Fisher, then president of the "board of managers" and later president of the canal company, Edward Burd, William Short, and Samuel Richards. United States Gazette, Apr. 12, 1823.
66 Diary of Mathew Carey, UPL.
67 Ibid.
68 United States Gazette, Apr. 12, 1823.
scribed his own tireless activity during the campaign: "I abandoned everything for this grand object—devoted my whole mind to it from an early hour in the morning till late at night—wrote paragraphs and essays from day to day for such of the newsprinters as were disposed to admit them—and for some time published the names of the subscribers, with the amount . . . , as is done in London, in order to excite emulation." The results were "surprising and pleasing"—within five weeks $360,000 was obtained.

In an attempt to induce subscriptions from all classes of people, Carey had included a calculation in his Address to the Citizens designed to show that laborers earning six to eight dollars a week could afford to subscribe for single shares. Assuming three years for the construction of the canal, only $67 a year, or approximately $1.25 a week, need be paid on the $200 pledge. This calculation, Carey believed, "procured a very considerable addition to subscriptions of one or two shares." Two hundred and seventy people purchased single shares, and 172 took double shares, thus contributing $122,800.

The special terms on all subscriptions were announced at the beginning of the campaign. Shares were priced at $200 each, on which $20 was to be paid whenever a total of $300,000 was pledged. The remainder was to be paid in twelve quarterly installments of $15 each. In case the minimum $300,000 was not obtained within five months, the pledges were not to be binding.

Under these terms, Carey's subscription drive gradually picked up speed. In the first nine days, $80,000 was obtained, and the momentum was increasing. Three days later, Carey proudly announced that "the subscriptions amount to $230,000, of which 200,000 have been subscribed within one week." The names of the more prominent subscribers were then given, the double-column list running half the length of the page. Among them were the Schuylkill Bank, $10,000; the Commercial Bank, $10,000; the Delaware Insurance

59 Letter to a Few Friends, 4.
60 Ibid.
61 This calculation was repeated in the Philadelphia newspapers. See the Aurora & General Advertiser, Apr. 19, 1823, and the United States Gazette, Apr. 21, 1823. The laborer's reward, besides eventual dividends, was to be an increase in and certainty of employment.
62 Aurora & General Advertiser, Apr. 14, 1823.
63 United States Gazette, Apr. 21, 1823.
64 Ibid., Apr. 24, 1823.
Company, $6,000; the Hand-in-Hand Insurance Company, $5,000; Mathew Carey, $4,000; Thomas P. Cope, $2,000; Simon Gratz, $2,000; William Strickland, $1,400; Nicholas Biddle, $1,000; and many other business institutions and private individuals. In the days that followed, the Insurance Company of North America and the Mutual Assurance Company signed up for $5,000 each, and the Mechanics’ Bank and the Farmers’ and Mechanics’ Bank for $10,000 each. One writer, probably Carey, published a letter in the United States Gazette, in which he chided many “immense holders of real estate or funded property” for putting their names down to “such miserable sums as 1000 or 2000 dollars!!” Such amounts would be liberal as a donation, but since the canal was to be to their advantage and to the advantage of the community and the nation, then, he said, paraphrasing Shakespeare, “‘tis pitiful—‘tis wondrous pitiful”.

As the campaign neared its goal of $300,000, the pressure of public opinion became evident. Prominent persons and institutions that had not yet subscribed were made to realize that a pledge was expected. One writer thought it necessary to explain why the Bank of Philadelphia, with a capital of $2,500,000, had not subscribed to the canal stock while four other banks with less resources had each contributed $10,000. He pointed out that the bank’s charter forbade subscriptions to any stock other than its own; “otherwise there cannot be a doubt that this bank would have displayed an equal degree of liberality.”

Five weeks after Carey launched his subscription campaign, one entirely separate from the canal board’s meager efforts, a total of $360,000 in subscription pledges had been obtained. As the terms on which the pledges were made had been met, the first installment on the shares was requested. On July 15, 1823, the money was turned over to the canal company and the names of the subscribers were entered on the company ledgers.

65 Ibid.
66 Ibid., Apr. 25 and 26, 1823.
67 Ibid., Apr. 26, 1823.
68 Ibid., Apr. 28, 1823.
News of the canal activity in Philadelphia spread quickly. The Washington *Daily National Intelligencer*, on April 30, 1823, reprinted an article from the *Baltimore American* on the “spirited exertions which are making by our neighbours of Philadelphia” for the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal. “We observe that some of the most intelligent and wealthy of her citizens are ardently engaged in promoting the subscription to this canal stock, and so successfully have their efforts been crowned, within the last 10 or 12 days, that upwards of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars have been subscribed.” The Baltimore author stated that Philadelphians saw the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal as an object of vital importance to their prosperity, and their perseverance assured him the canal would be completed. “And precisely in the same degree,” he declared, “that this canal will be important and advantageous to Philadelphia, so must it take from the trade of Baltimore.” The writer’s purpose was not to oppose the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, but to spur on the efforts of Baltimoreans in the field of internal improvements.

Other cities, in fact, joined with Philadelphia in subscribing to the canal stock. In the vicinity of West Chester, Pennsylvania, David Townsend obtained pledges for $4,000 in one day. “This is a sample of what might be done in the Country,” he noted, “if suitable persons would undertake to procure subscriptions. The above amount has principally been subscribed since 5 o’clock this afternoon, without using any extraordinary exertions; and the whole procured since 10 o’clock this morning.” Wilmington, Delaware, held its own subscription drive in late April, which brought in “upwards of $30,000.” It must be said, however, that these subscriptions were given mainly in the belief that the canal was to pass through the vicinity of Wilmington, as recommended in 1769, as attempted in 1804-1805, and as contemplated ever since until 1821. Indeed, it was hoped that Wilmington’s generosity would be an added inducement to the Philadelphia directors not to change the location of the canal. The Philadelphia board, however, was determined to review the entire question of the route. Whether from sound engineering advice or from “mean jealousy” toward the people of Wilmington, as some

70 *Daily National Intelligencer*, Apr. 30, 1823.
71 Ibid.
72 Townsend to Benjamin Tilghman, West Chester, May 2, 1823, Carey Collection, 21.
73 *Daily National Intelligencer*, May 3, 1823.
Delawareans later claimed, in January, 1824, a route well to the south of Wilmington was selected.\(^\text{74}\)

After Carey’s successful subscription drive, the eventual completion of the canal was assured. The July 15, 1823, meeting of the stockholders was looked forward to with keen anticipation. The regular election of a new board was to be held and construction of the long-awaited canal was to be vigorously undertaken. It seemed likely that Carey, both as a reward for his subscription drive efforts and because of his interest in and knowledge of internal improvements, would be one of the new directors. In fact, a caucus held early in July, with representatives from Philadelphia and Wilmington present, adopted a ticket naming Carey. “But by some juggle,” grumbled Carey later, “the mystery of which has never been developed, on the morning of the day of election, another ticket was clandestinely substituted, in which my name was omitted.” According to Carey, James C. Fisher, who held 760 proxies, including twenty of Carey’s own, “allowed himself to be prevailed on” to nominate not Carey but another man who had not yet subscribed to the canal stock.\(^\text{75}\) Carey’s wounded pride was assuaged the following year, when, at the annual meeting of the stockholders, the following resolution was adopted: “Resolved unanimously, That the thanks of the Stockholders be presented to Mathew Carey, Esquire, for the zeal and ability with which he promoted a new subscription to this work in the year 1823.”\(^\text{76}\)

As the stockholders had recognized, it was Carey above all who had revived the canal project.\(^\text{77}\) He had restored public confidence in the work, and the company was thus enabled to resume its construction work after a nineteen-year interval. Proof of that confidence is seen in the fact that Congress authorized a subscription of $300,000 to the work in 1825, twenty years after receiving its first

\(^{74}\) On the entire question of rivalry between Wilmington and Philadelphia over the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal route, see the Delaware Gazette, Jan. 30, 1824, and subsequent issues; James Weston Livingood, The Philadelphia-Baltimore Trade Rivalry, 1780-1860 (Harrisburg, 1947), 81–97; and Gray, “The Early History of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal.”

\(^{75}\) Letter to a Few Friends, 5–6.

\(^{76}\) Ibid., 8.

\(^{77}\) Carey recognized this, too. He once wrote, in a fit of pique at another who claimed credit for the deed: “I aver that from the first meeting on the subject in 1821, till the election in 1823, every measure of importance . . . originated with me.” Ibid., 5.
petition for assistance from the canal company. In 1829, a second government purchase, one of $150,000, was made of Chesapeake and Delaware Canal stock.

Even before the government subscription, however, work on the relocated and enlarged canal had begun. Construction started in April, 1824, and five years later the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal—Philadelphia’s canal—was a reality. The sixty-year-old dream of Philadelphia had been fulfilled; the extraordinary efforts of Mathew Carey and his fellow citizens in 1821–1823 had been capped with success. Shorter than the “upper route” waterway through Wilmington originally planned, and with but two instead of sixteen lift locks, the canal was built large enough to permit the passage of ordinary bay craft.

Water was let into the full length of the canal in July, 1829, but the official opening was celebrated, with appropriate ceremony, some months later, on October 17. The usual vicissitudes of canal history—breaks, floods, slips, vigorous railroad competition, exorbitant upkeep expenses—and a few unusual troubles—damages of $226,000 awarded to a contractor suing for breach of contract, a $600,000 loss through embezzlement—prevented the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal from being profitable to its owners in the way of stock dividends, but the canal’s benefit to Philadelphia’s commercial life fully justified its existence.

The volume of trade on the canal steadily increased after 1829, reaching its peak tonnage of 1,318,772 in 1873. Transportation requirements in the twentieth century made the old lock canal obsolete, but the debt-ridden canal company was unable to modernize its property. In 1919, the United States government purchased the canal. It was subsequently enlarged to its current dimensions, 250 feet wide and 27 feet deep, and made toll-free and lock-free. The sea-level canal, with its annual traffic now approaching 10,000,000 tons, continues to play an important role in the economic life of the area.

University of Illinois

RALPH D. GRAY

The Chesapeake and Delaware Canal was the first project of those recommended by Gallatin in 1808 to receive financial assistance from Congress. Aid to other canals, notably the Louisville and Portland and the Chesapeake and Ohio, followed soon after. Carter Goodrich, “National Planning of Internal Improvements,” Political Science Quarterly, LXIII (1948), 34–35.