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THE PROPOSED WATER WAY

FROM

LAKE MICHIGAN TO THE MISSISSIPPI

VIA THE

ILLINOIS AND MISSISSIPPI CANAL

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THE PROPOSED WATER WAY FROM LAKE MICHIGAN TO THE MISSISSIPPI,

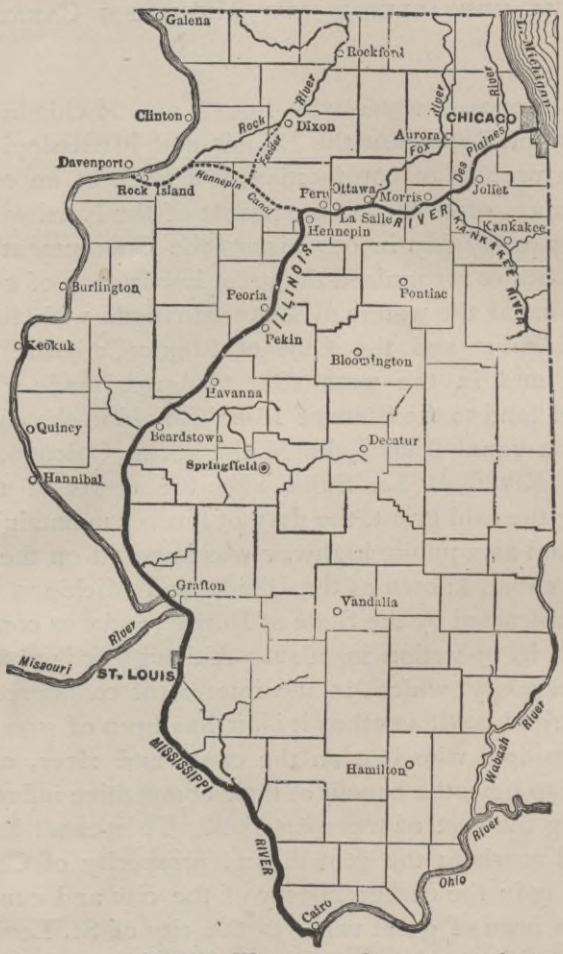
VIA THE ILLINOIS AND MISSISSIPPI CANAL.

The proposed water way from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River, *via* the Illinois and Mississippi Canal, now in process of construction, is a work of no ordinary importance, especially to the people of the Northwest.

At an early day in our history the Government of the United States recognized the great importance of connecting by canal the waters of Lake Michigan with the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico, *via* the Illinois River; and in the year 1827 Congress made a liberal grant of land to the State of Illinois to aid in the construction of a canal from Lake Michigan, at Chicago, to the Illinois River, at La Salle. By the terms of the act making the said grant, the duty of forever maintaining the said canal as a public highway was imposed on the State.

This canal, known as the Illinois and Michigan Canal, was constructed by the State of Illinois, and was completed and put in operation in 1847. Although it is a canal of small capacity, which, in the interest of commerce, must be enlarged, still, small as it is, it has been of great value to the people who live on the canal and river, or near enough to have the benefit of their competitive influence in reducing the cost of transportation. This canal has contributed much to the growth and prosperity of Chicago, especially in the earlier history of the city and canal. It has also been of great value to the city of St. Louis, and to other cities and towns on the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers, in giving to them a competing line of water transportation, and thereby securing to them cheaper railway charges on freights shipped East by railroad from such cities and towns than they would otherwise have had. It

has also contributed largely to the prosperity and building up of some of the largest, most wealthy and prosperous counties in the State of Illinois. But this canal, connecting the Lakes with the Mississippi River *via* the Illinois River,



MAP OF THE WATER WAY FROM CHICAGO TO CAIRO.
From the *Railroad Gazette*, by the courtesy of its editor.

important as it is, and must ever continue to be, creates only a north and south line of transportation, and our channels of trade and commerce are, and have been,

largely east and west channels, not north and south. And so, for many years, the great importance of connecting Lake Michigan with the upper Mississippi River by a canal to be constructed from the Illinois River, at Hennepin, to the Mississippi River, at Rock Island, thereby creating an east and west line of cheap transportation by water, has been felt, and the construction of such canal has been urged upon Congress from year to year, by the Governors and Legislatures of Iowa and Illinois, as well as by municipalities and public assemblies held in the said States and elsewhere throughout the country, especially in the Northwest; and finally, yielding to oft-repeated appeals and memorials, the Fifty-Second Congress, in the act making appropriations for the construction, repair, and preservation of certain public works, on rivers and harbors, and for other purposes, approved on September 19, 1890, provided, among other things, for the construction of a canal from the Illinois River, at or near the town of Hennepin, to the Mississippi River, at the mouth of Rock River, with a branch canal and feeder from the said Rock River to the main line of the said canal; and for the purpose of commencing the construction of the said canal and feeder, appropriated in the said act the sum of $500,000.

By the terms of the said act, the said canal and feeder are to be constructed 80 feet wide at the water line, and 7 feet deep; the locks are to be 170 feet in length and 30 feet in width, and to have a capacity for vessels of at least 280 tons burden. The said canal and feeder are to be constructed with guard gates, waste weirs, locks, lock houses, basins, bridges, and all other erections and fixtures that may be necessary for the safe and convenient navigation of the said canal and feeder, on plans and specifications to be approved by the Secretary of War.

The Fifty-Second Congress, by an act of July 13, 1892, for the improvement of rivers and harbors, made a further appropriation of $500,000 for continuing work on the said canal and feeder; and the work of constructing the same

is now being carried on under the charge of W. L. Marshall, Captain of Engineers of the United States Army; an able and accomplished, as well as competent officer.

The main line of the Illinois and Mississippi River Canal is about 77 miles in length, of which 50 miles is canal, and 27 miles is slack-water navigation in Rock River, by locks and dams. The length of the feeder is about 35 miles. There are to be in all 37 locks, with lifts varying from 3 to 10 feet; 24 from the Illinois River to the summit level, and 13 from the summit level to the mouth of Rock River.

The estimated cost of the canal and feeder, including earthwork, locks, culverts, weirs, bridges, aqueducts, concrete lining, right of way, fencing, special work, and 10 per cent added for contingencies, is $6,425,960. But with the improved methods of canal construction, it is confidently believed that the cost of constructing this canal will be considerably less than the sum named.

A glance at the map of the United States will show that this water way from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River, *via* the Illinois River, will, when completed, give to the country a continuous line of east and west transportation by water, from Minneapolis and St. Paul, on the Mississippi River, by way of Rock Island and Davenport, Chicago, Buffalo, and Albany, to the Atlantic Seaboard, at the city of New York. And it seems to me that no argument is necessary to show the great value of such a water way to the commerce of the country, in the way of reducing the cost of transportation.

It is the province of others in the programme arranged for this Congress, to discuss the respective use of water ways and railways, and their competitive influence in reducing the cost of transportation. And I must not trespass on the ground allotted to them. But I will venture the assertion that the cheapest possible transportation we can have is water transportation. Freights, especially heavy freights, can be transported by water for less than one half of the amount for which they can be carried by rail, at the

cheapest possible remunerative rates. As evidence of this, wheat, corn, oats, and rye were carried in the latter part of June, 1893, by lake, from Chicago to Buffalo, for one cent a bushel, and from Buffalo to New York, by canal and river, for 4, and 4¼ cents per bushel. And the highest charges, in the same month, were 2¼ cents for wheat from Chicago to Buffalo, and 5¼ cents for wheat from Buffalo to New York; making the highest charges for wheat per bushel, in June, 1893, from Chicago to New York, by lake and by canal and river, 7½ cents; and the lowest charges in the same month, 5 cents. And from testimony taken before a Committee of Congress, it was stated by an expert in such matters, that 12 cents per bushel for transporting wheat from Chicago to New York, by rail, was no more than a remunerative rate, even upon the cheapest operated railroad.

For a period of seventeen years the lowest charges for transporting wheat from Chicago to New York, per bushel, by rail, were 13 cents, while the lowest charges during the same period for transporting wheat, per bushel, by lake and canal, from Chicago to New York, were $6\frac{6}{10}$ cents. And during all of said period there was a difference in favor of transportation by lake and canal, as against transportation by rail, of not less than 6 cents, except in the year 1879, when the difference per bushel in favor of water transportation was $5\frac{7}{10}$. This saving in the immense quantity of wheat and other grains shipped during these seventeen years by lake and canal, would amount to hundreds of millions of dollars, and a small percentage of it would reimburse the Government for all the moneys appropriated for deepening the harbors and removing the obstructions to the navigation of the lakes.

This proposed water way from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River, *via* the Illinois and Mississippi Canal, will extend this highly competitive line of cheap water transportation several hundred miles to the west and northwest of this great commercial city of Chicago. It will

make at least 500 miles of the Upper Mississippi River an east and west competitive line of transportation, as well as north and south line. And when we remember that the country contiguous to the Upper Mississippi River is one of the greatest grain and cattle producing sections of the United States, it is not difficult to see the great value of this water way, connecting, as it will, this part of the river with the Lakes.

It has been estimated, by persons familiar with the subject, that with the completion of the Illinois and Mississippi Canal, wheat and other grain can be transported by river and canal from Minneapolis and St. Paul to Chicago for 3, or, at most, 4 cents per bushel; whereas, the railway charges for transportation have been from 7 to 9 cents a bushel. And it is believed that grain cannot be carried from St. Paul and Minneapolis by rail for any less, if rates are to be remunerative, even on the cheapest operated railroad.

If this be correct, then the construction of the Illinois and Mississippi Canal must be of great value to a large section of the country, both East and West, in giving to the people cheaper transportation, and in maintaining more regular and uniform prices for the products of their labor.

With this proposed water way from the Upper Mississippi River to Lake Michigan completed, there will be an immense saving in the cost of transporting wheat, corn, oats, rye, and other products of the farm, as well as coal, lime, cement, lumber, and other heavy freights which do not demand rapid transport. But this proposed water way will not only be a means of cheap transportation in itself, but its greatest value will be as a competing line with railways, in regulating and reducing the cost of transportation by rail. And in this respect, it will more than compensate for the cost of construction, and will be an improvement of great national importance; and in the interest of the people, and of a vast and growing commerce, it should be speedily completed.

PRINCETON, ILLINOIS, July 29, 1893.