

them, were greater than any of his cotemporaries who wrote on these subjects; and that DEWITT CLINTON was well and correctly informed on the same subjects need not be proven here.

It was claimed by me, and the gentlemen of the club approved the proposition, that a question of this kind should be determined by the actions or the unambiguous writings or statements of the persons, recorded or known at the time of their occurrence; instead of relying upon the memory of other persons through a long course of years, or on a forced and erroneous construction of one letter, rendered ambiguous, perhaps, by events subsequent to its date, when other writings of the same person give abundant evidence of his meaning.

This latter method was the only one available to Mr. GEDDES, by which to advocate his claim in behalf of Mr. MORRIS as the "first projector," and also the claim that JAMES GEDDES was entitled to precedence over JESSE HAWLEY in connection with the project; arguing that JAMES GEDDES had "received the idea" second-handed from Mr. MORRIS, and had communicated it to Mr. HAWLEY.

I have no desire to open this question; but reasons already indicated seem to require a further exposition of some of the facts and their attendant circumstances as they appear on the pages of history; and while doing this, I feel justified in adopting, to a small extent, the same basis of reasoning used by GEORGE GEDDES, for the purpose of showing in what manner JAMES GEDDES and his friend JOSHUA FORMAN received their first intimation of the project for an overland canal from Lake Erie to tidewater.

In the paper read by me on the third of February, 1868, previously referred to, it is shown that it is impossible to reconcile the letter of Mr. MORRIS to JOHN PARISH, dated December 20th, 1800, with the proposition that MORRIS had in his mind, when writing that letter, any idea of a communication by water with Lake Erie by the overland route, or by any