

For fifteen years the influx of emigration was such as to consume the greater part of the surplus productions that would otherwise have sought the Lakes as its outlet to an Atlantic market.

Emigration has continued and still proceeds with an increased ratio, but the fixed population has so increased, that it is steadily and rapidly gaining in its surplus production over all domestic demands. The Eastern bound tonnage of the Erie Canal derived from the Lakes in the year 1836, was 54,219 tons, and in the year 1853, it was, 1,213,690 tons, or twenty-two fold in 17 years, and the territory for the most part is only in the infancy of settlement, but a large portion of its trade has taken the route of the Mississippi. Nearly all the natural navigation of rivers within its borders is connected with the Mississippi, and until artificial channels of navigation and railroads were opened, trade with the Lake route was restricted to such distances as could bear transportation to its ports, over common roads, and these on the rich soil of the West, were very inferior of their kind.

The railroad improvement has come in, and will prove a vast auxiliary to the Lake trade. It is eminently adapted to produce great influence on the commerce of the West. Their great facilities for light traffic, especially in passengers, and the favourable formation of the country for their construction, permits them to be made and supported, where a canal would be impracticable for want of water, or where, if made, the heavy trade to which it is adapted would not be sufficient for its support. Four years since, the only railroad connecting the waters of the Lakes with those of the Mississippi, were two in Ohio, connecting Cincinnati with Sandusky and Cleveland or Lake Erie. The Galena Railroad was commenced at Chicago, and had extended about 40 miles. There are now three Railroads that connect Chicago or Lake Michigan with the Missouri. One at Galena, one at Rock Island and one at Alton, near the mouth of the Missouri. Other railroads are made and in progress that will more or less affect the Western trade. Their progress within the last four years has been unparalleled, and though now checked by the stringency of monetary affairs, they will be carried forward with little delay to meet the legitimate wants of a growing commerce. By an inspection of the Railway Map, it will be seen, the roads generally point to the Lake Ports, and their promoters look to the Lake trade as their main reliance for traffic.

The effect of canals and railroads is to open greater facilities for intercommunication, extend the settlement of the country from the banks of navigable streams, and cause it to spread over the whole surface, causing thereby a general increase of trade.