

It is a very remarkable fact that the portage between these great lakes, and those streams which find an outlet in the Gulf of Mexico, is not more than eight to twelve feet above the level of Lake Michigan, and within ten miles of Chicago. The Chicago river, running into Lake Michigan, and the Desplane river, finding its way into the Mississippi through the Illinois, are within a stone's throw of each other, and, indeed, in high water, the Desplane finds an outlet into Lake Michigan, so that small boats pass directly from Lake Michigan into the Desplane. This portage between Lake Michigan and the navigable waters of the Illinois river has been cut through by the Illinois and Michigan canal, and needs but widening and deepening to open a ship channel from the Mississippi to the lakes, *the most important work for either military or commercial purposes yet suggested on this continent.* This frontier line, from the west end of Lake Superior to the St. Lawrence, is over three thousand miles in extent.

The committee now ask attention to *the growth of the northwest and its present commercial importance.*

The shores of these great lakes where now swarm the busy populations of the most active and enterprising people perhaps in the world, were, at the period of the war of 1812, covered with dark and gloomy forests filled with hostile savages. Here ranged the great Indian warrior Tecumseh, and on the shores of these waters he made the last, desperate struggle for the hunting grounds of his race, now so rich in agriculture, trade, and commerce.

The following table shows the growth in population of the northwest since 1812 :