

in Sandford Fleming. C2
with all good water &

[From Dr. Kingsford's History of Canada, Volume X.]

THE WELLAND CANAL.

This, the most important of the Canadian canals, connects lakes Erie and Ontario, and has within the last few years been finally deepened to a navigation of 14 feet, the locks being in length 270 ft. x 45 ft. in width. The enlarged canal is $26\frac{3}{4}$ miles in length, with a guard lock at lake Erie (where the supply is obtained) and 25 locks of 12 to 14 ft. lift, the mean difference of elevation between the two lakes being 326 ft. 3 in. There are two distinct lines at the northern end, with two distinct entrances, which discharge at Port Dalhousie into lake Ontario. From Allanburg to Port Colborne, 15 miles, the old and enlarged line is followed to lake Erie.

In connection with the canal, there is a descending lock to the river Welland, over which the main line is carried by aqueducts. There is also a branch of 21 miles to the Grand river, the waters of that stream having been the source of supply before the lake Erie level was established, the feeder having been made navigable. A branch also of $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles from the feeder gives an opening to lake Erie at Port Maitland. The Grand Trunk Railway passes by a tunnel under the canal, so there is no impediment to traffic on either side, and the accidents incident to railways crossing navigable channels are here made impossible.

Nearly three-quarters of a century have passed since its inception until this canal obtained its remarkable and perfect extension.

As early as 1816 a bill was introduced in the legislature for a grant for a survey. It was referred to a committee, but no report was made. In 1819 provision was made for the survey of the Saint Lawrence. In 1821 a commission was appointed to examine into the best means of improving the navigation which, in 1823, reported that the canal should be adapted to admit vessels navigating the lakes. In 1824 an act of incorporation was obtained, of which one of the most active promoters was Mr. William Hamilton Merritt. The canal designed was to admit boats of 40 tons. The capital was \$150,000, in shares of \$50 each. The work was commenced on the 30th of November, 1824: as has since been proved, on means so insufficient as to make it a matter of wonder it was ever completed. Indeed, without the constant intervention of the province, the project must have ended in failure.

We are told "as a proof of how little the subject had attracted public enterprise at the time, not half a dozen gentlemen of capital or influence in the district attended the ceremony." There had been little stock subscribed in Upper Canada. In 1836, twelve years later, the total amount was only \$14,850. It, however, had found some favour in Lower Canada and the United States. In 1825 the charter was amended to raise the stock to \$800,000, upon which the president of the company proceeded to New York, and obtained subscriptions to the amount of \$300,000.

The first theory of the route was to make a connection with the Welland river, then regarded as the virtual connection with lake Erie. It was admitted that the current of the river Niagara was strong, nevertheless that vessels could sail up against it. There are stretches, however, in the neighbourhood of the

1898

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