

upon a dark night, than there now is in encountering the Erie basin pier at Buffalo which is the terror of mariners, and upon which a large number of vessels have been stranded and lost during the past few years, and even during the past year. I have towed rafts from Lake Erie to Tonawanda, for Henry P. Smith, and others, full half a mile in length, and between forty and fifty feet in width. I am confident that from the velocity and shifting course of the current, that with abutments as proposed, in the construction of the bridge, it would be absolutely impossible to navigate and tow a raft with safety down the rapids. I believe also that a similar difficulty would be experienced, in making the harbor of Niagara river with a vessel, in a gale, should a bridge be constructed as proposed, at any point between the lake and the head of Squaw island. From the time a vessel could be discovered, making for the mouth of the river, in a strong gale until it would be upon the bridge, but a very short space of time would elapse; not sufficient as I believe to effect the necessary preparations, and make the draw. In such a dilemma, I think it would be utterly impossible for a vessel to anchor, or in any other manner avert the impending doom of wrecking upon the bridge. This position is materially strengthened in the fact that it would be almost impossible to decide in the night-time whether a vessel before a gale was making for the harbor of Buffalo or of the Niagara river, until it would be too late to make the draw, and even if the vessel should be discovered in time to make the draw, it would need more than the skill of an ordinary sailor to ensure the safe transit of a vessel between the abutments. In short, I am firmly of the opinion that a bridge constructed across the Niagara river at any point between Lake Erie and Tonawanda, would forever cut off the commerce of said river, and prove highly detrimental to the interests of parties interested, of the State of New-York, and of the entire country. I have known a number of vessels bound for Buffalo, to run down the river in a gale, not daring to attempt Buffalo harbor, which vessels have discharged their cargoes at Tonawanda and been towed back into the lake. I have also known between forty and fifty thousand barrels of rolling freight to be transhipped from the river to the canal at Tonawanda within ten days.

ORSON SHEPARD.

Sworn and subscribed before me }
 this 6th day of April, 1857, }

S. WAKEMAN, *Chairman of the Com. of Com. and Navigation.*