

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE CANALS OF CANADA.

Of the great arteries of this Continent none surpasses the St. Lawrence in the length of its navigation, the volume of its waters, or the fertility of the vast area of country of which it forms the highway of communication with the Atlantic Ocean. Following it, not from its remote sources, but from Fond du Lac, at the head of Lake Superior, to the Straits of Belle Isle, the entire distance is 2,392 statute miles. In its course from Lake Superior to the sea, its volume is swelled by the waters of the great Lakes, and smaller expansions, as well as by numerous tributaries of no insignificant size or importance. Between Lakes Superior and Huron, it is known as the Ste. Marie, between Huron and St. Clair, as the St. Clair; between St. Clair and Erie as the Detroit; between Erie and Ontario as the Niagara.

Below Quebec, the breadth of this magnificent river increases until it is about one hundred miles at its junction with the waters of the Gulf.

The importance of the St. Lawrence navigation has always been fully appreciated by the people of Canada, and large sums of public money have been wisely devoted toward the improvement of its facilities, not merely for internal and local, but for the ever increasing commerce of the Basin of the Great Lakes. Not only has the channel of the river been deepened and otherwise improved, but an expensive system of canals constructed to overcome the natural obstructions, and connect the Lakes with tide water. Steamers, and ships of large tonnage can now proceed directly from the Ocean to Quebec and Montreal, a distance of 986 miles. From Montreal, however to Lake Erie the capacity of the vessels is limited to the size of the canals, of which we propose now to give a brief historical and statistical sketch, before proceeding to state the conclusions at which we have arrived from the facts before us, and to shew the immense interests connected with the important question which has been submitted to the consideration of the Commissioners.

The Canals of Canada, now in operation, have been constructed for the purpose of improving the following routes of navigation:

First—The St. Lawrence navigation: