

the Parliament of Upper Canada was appointed in 1816 to report upon inland navigation, and in 1821 a commission was named, which in 1823 reported in favour of constructing the Welland Canal (which had been agitated before 1818 by the late Hon. W. H. Merritt) for the class of vessels then navigating the lakes. Instead, however, of being undertaken as a Government work, a joint stock company was formed in 1824, and ground was broken the same year. Their first proposal was a boat canal combined with an inclined railway, instead of locks, and with a tunnel through the summit. This was abandoned the following year for an open canal with locks. It was opened in 1829 (with 40 wooden locks, 110 feet long by 22 feet wide in the chambers, and 8 feet depth of water) by the passage of a British and an American schooner from Lake Ontario into Lake Erie by the route of the Welland, and of the Niagara River into which it flows,—above the Falls of the latter. In 1833 this canal was extended upon the direct line to Lake Erie, but was fed from a higher level in consequence of slides in the summit cut, which took place in 1828. The Grand River, which was the feeder, was deficient in dry seasons; after the Union, therefore, when the canal was purchased by the Government, it was determined (in 1843) to lower the whole summit level (which is more than half the length of the canal), so that Lake Erie could become the feeder. This undertaking proved to be the work of several decades, carried on, as it necessarily was, subject to the maintenance of the navigation, and the necessity of deepening the summit cut (from which the water could not safely be withdrawn) by dredging, and the towing of much of this dredged material half the length of the canal in order to dump it into Lake Erie. The dredging could only be done during the navigation season, and the deepening, elsewhere, only in winter. It was, therefore, not until 1881 that Lake Erie became the feeder. This canal was 27 miles long with 346 feet of lockage, or 16 feet more than the difference of level between Erie and Ontario; but since 1881 the lockage has been reduced by that much and is now the minimum.

Upon the union of Upper and Lower Canada in 1841 steps