

FIRST REPORT

Of the COMMISSIONERS appointed by His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor, in conformity to the provisions of an Act passed in the second year of His Majesty's reign, entitled, "An Act to make provision for the improvement of the internal navigation of this Province."

At an early period after their appointment, the Commissioners met at Kingston, where they made choice of a President, and organized the board.

They deliberated on the best means of carrying into effect the intentions of the Legislature, and being quite inexperienced in details of the nature submitted to their guidance, it was deemed a preliminary of indispensable necessity to send a deputation of two of their number into the State of New York, where, by conferring with the Canal Commissioners, and by a personal inspection of the splendid work, then in successful progress in that State, it was presumed such information would be obtained as would enable the Board to perform, with greater effect, the important duties confided to them.

From the American Commissioners, and the scientific persons employed under them, they were furnished most liberally with every information in their power to communicate.

With Benjamin Wright, Esq. principal Engineer on the New York Canal, they had repeated communications; in all of which he expressed himself decidedly of opinion, that from the nature of the Country, and the great facilities which it afforded for extensive inland navigation, the plans of improvement to which the Government of this Province ought to give its attention, should be on a scale of such magnitude, as to admit Sloops and Schooners of moderate dimensions to proceed direct, without unloading their cargoes, from Lake Erie to the Sea.

The deputation while in the State of New York, endeavoured to engage an experienced and skilful Engineer, but without effect. Letters had been addressed to several persons in Upper Canada, and in the United States, who were supposed to possess some general knowledge of the science, enquiring into their qualifications, when the Board was adjourned until the 8th of October, 1821. On that day, the two Commissioners having returned from a very satisfactory tour, along the Erie and Northern Canals, in the course of which they obtained much useful information, reported to the Board that they had not been able to engage an Engineer of established character abroad, to conduct the surveys. A selection consequently became necessary from among the persons with whom a correspondence had been previously opened, and it was determined, after examining the testimonials of ability, submitted to them, by Mr. Valentine Gill, and finding them highly commendatory, to accept of his tender of services and to engage others as soon as it could be done.

The next object which claimed the attention of the Board, was the direction and number of the Surveys to be undertaken, and to fix on the points from whence their operations should commence. On a general view of the Province from Lake Huron to its eastern boundary, two grand impediments are opposed to ship navigation, viz: the Falls of Niagara, and the shoals and rapids of the St. Lawrence, below Johnstown.

These natural obstacles overcome with the aid of art, vessels of considerable burthen might freely navigate our frontier waters, from the Sault St. Mary's to the Province line, without any transfer of lading, and the communication with the Ocean would be thus essentially facilitated.