

States granted monopolies, particularly of transportation, until they were forbidden to do so by judicial decision.

The first Patent Act provided that an examining board, consisting of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of War, and the Attorney-General, or any two of them, might grant a patent for fourteen years, if they deemed the invention useful and important. The patent itself was to be engrossed and signed by the President, the Secretary of State, and the Attorney-General. And the cost was to be three dollars and seventy cents, plus the cost of copying the specifications at ten cents a sheet.

The first inventor to avail himself of the advantages of the new Patent Act was Samuel Hopkins of Vermont, who received a patent on the 31st of July for an improved method of "Making Pot and Pearl Ashes." The world knows nothing of this Samuel Hopkins, but the potash industry, which was evidently on his mind, was quite important in his day. Potash, that is, crude potassium carbonate, useful in making soap and in the manufacture of glass, was made by leaching wood ashes and boiling down the lye. To produce a ton of potash, the trees on an acre of ground would be