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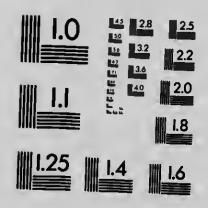
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OF

ERNEST MARCEAU

PRESIDENT

OF

THE CANADIAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS

JANUARY, 1906

Comerbusacean

PRECIDENT'S ADDRESS.

THE ORIGINS OF OUR CANAL SYSTEM

By Ernest Marcenu.

It has for years been one of the writer's cherished hopes that at some date or other, he could afford the time necessary to put together, in presentable shape, some notes and general information, gathered in the course of his service in the Department of Railwaye and Canals of the Dominion, and bearing on the history, the mode of construction and the operation of these canals.

But years have been creeping on, and the work, which is of no amail magnitude and importance, is still untouched, the absorblug exigencies of everyday bread earning having left no place for such a hors d'oeuvre,

A last hope ind, however, been entertained, and this was, that on retiring from the Presidency of the Canadian Society of Civil Engineere, it would be possible to give the book in a abbreviated form, but, owing to the same eause, this hope also had to be abandoned and the paper which is going to be read to you wilt have to be confined to what was intended to be the opening chapter of the writer's ambitious work. It will only be cupplemented with a cummary comparison between the present system of Canadian canais and the results obtained by the early efforte of those whose part it was to inaugurate it. This will, it is hoped, he found of some interest as indicating in a measure the marvellous development of our country in the course of the last century.

EARLY CANALS.

There is something faseinating in going back to the origins of works, the magnitude of which escapes the attention of those who see them in their achieved condition and have no time to even think of the mighty efforts which have been required to realize them. For inetnnce, we of the twentieth century use our canals, benefit by them, even boast of them as being unparalleled in the world, but who among us has taken the trouble to enquire into the first show of activity of our ancestors in this line of progress? The literature of our canal eystem is in a very ruli-

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mentary state, especially us regards the early period. There are, however, some reasons for this neglect. For example, the sources of information with regard to that period are unfortunately very meagre, und it is an undertaking of no email difficulty to gather, from the sennt and incomplete documents which have come down to us, data and facts upon which a clear and comprehensive etatement could be based.

The papers left by the Royai Engineers who, in the last years of the seventeenth century, inaugurated the improvements of our wnterways, have either been destroyed or are at present lying in some unknown place where they may, at some future date, be detected.

In the menutime, he who desires to trace the origins of our cannl eystem must be contented with a few reports and letters written by some of the Royal Engineers, or even by men outside of the profession, such letters containing but scanty details of the work. It must be suid, however, that through the patient and intelligent labours of one of the Dominion archivists,—I refer to the late Douglass Brymner,—the store of documents bearing on the construction of the first Canadian canals has been considerably increased and, since the publication of his report for the year 1886, considerable light has been thrown on the subject, although many points are still obscure. The documents unearthed by Mr. Brymner refer to the smull canals between Lake St. Louis end Lake St. Francis, and also to a lock huilt at Sault Ste. Marie in the early years of the eighteenth century.

There was, however, a previous attempt made at improving annigation, which, it is believed, has never been properly known to Canadians. It was the good fortune of the writer to peruse some of the old manuscripts in the possession of the gentiem of the Seminary of St. Suipice (*) end to find in them an account of the efforts made by former members of their order to overcome the difficulties of annigation between Montreal and Lachine.

A few years only had elapsed since the establishment of the French at Montreal, when the necessity for bettering the means of communication between the rising city and the settlements already existing at Lachine, Ste. Anne, etc., became apparent. It young colony was too poor, however, to think of hullding a canal with locks to overcome the very considerable fall in the nine miles of river from Pointe-à-Calilères to Lachine.

The route followed hy canoes at the time was along the north

^{(&#}x27;) The writer desires to tender his most sincere thanks to Rev. P. Roussesu for the opportunity afforded him to consult those precious documents and for his kindness in guiding the search through them. For the last twenty years the reverend gentlemsn has lived with the old of Montreal.

shore of the St. Lawrence, but it was exceedingly dangerous and many portages intervened between navigable stretches. Even in these so-called navigable stretches, towing had to be resorted to. A number of accidents had bready happened in which men and canoes had been lost. In the year 1700, the Superior of the Satpicians, Mr. Dollier de Casson, undertook to improve the Little River St. Pierre, and to make it novigable for catoes, from its mouth to linke St. Pierre, a sladdow body of water lying about ball way between Montreal and Lachine (this lake has long disappeared, owing chiefly to the works done in connection with the Lochine canai), and to open up o cut from the lake to a point on the St. Lawrence above the worst part of the rapids.

A notacial contract was passed, between the contractor, Gédéon de Ca'alogue and Mr. Dollier de Casson, for the excavation of a canal 24 arpents, or about one mile, in length, twelve feet wide at the surface of the ground and of vnrying width at the bottom, according to the depth of cutting. The water flowing through the canal was to be at least eighteen inches deep ut the period of lowest water in the St. Lawrence.

The work was begun in October, 1700, and in February of the year following the contractor falled, after having performed the greater part of his contract, the whole of the cut being completed at the time, except for a depth of three or four feet on some 2,100 feet in length.

The canal was excavated for about one-third of its length through clay mixed with boulders, the balance being through quarry rock.

A settlement was made with the contractor in the Spring, the amount paid being 12,500 livres, which represents about \$15,000 of our present currency.

The work was left in this unfinished condition, notwithstanding the repeated attempts to push it to completion, the Sidpicians' revenues, which were very unimportant at that time, finding better use in other directions.

in 1708, i.ouls XiV ordered plans and estimates of the work to be submitted to him, the undertaking having been recognized as devolving upon the royal authorities, bot, owing to the conditions of affairs in France during the latter part of the reign, the scheme had to be again postponed.

Almost every year after this, the Canal de la Chine mentioned in the correspondence between the superiors of the Montreal house and the head of the Sulpician Order in Paris, as also in letters addressed to the governors of the colony.

In 1717, Mr. Chaussegros de Léry, who had charge of all military and civil engineering works in Montreal, reported that three-fourths

of the work was done. The Crown could not yet at the time give the necessary help to perfect the canal, but instructions were given not to abandon the idea.

Again in 1733, the same engineer mada a complete survey of the route and prepared fresh plans and estimates. The nid line had evidently been abandoned, as the probable cost of the work is put down at 255,000 livres, or about \$300,000. The new acheme contemplated a causal with locks. Unfortunately, no copy of the report of Mr. Chaossegros is on record in the documents referred to.

From that date nothing can be found in the Seminary papers relating to the canal, which would seem to indicate that the work was never completed. It is quite likely, however, that the imperfect channel could be used by canoes during the periods of high water. Be that as it may, tracee of it in the shape of a haif-filled ditch, are still to be seen in a field near the Canadian Pacific Railway embankment at Rockfield.

The small map accompanying this paper chows approximately the position of the improved waterway at the time of the cession of Canada to Great Britain, in 1763. Thie waterway is deciganted by the name of Canad de la Morandière, the author of the map briving been under the impression that Mr. de ia Morandière, one of the Royal Engineers of Ville Marie, had compteted the work undertaken in 1700. This opinion, however, is not founded on fact, for, had the can'tl been completed at any time during the French regime, an event of such importance would, without doubt, have been recorded in the correspondence of some of the Sulpiciane, who had been so initions to have a work inaugurated by them pushed to completion. Nothing else had been done (and for obvious reasons) towards facilitating communications between the electric

With the rapid development of the territory around the Great Lakes which followed British occupation, the necessity of improving the navigation of the St. Lawrence soon made itself felt and, before twenty years had elapsed, the first cansis with locks were undertaken.

In the year 1779, under the direction of General Haldimand, commander of iiis Majesty's forces in Canada, a series of four canals was put under way by the Royal Engiaeers, the chief engineer of the work being Captain Twise. Their object was to permit cances or York boats to overcome the various rapide between Lske St. Louis and Lake St. Francis. The canals were located as follows:—The lower one a chort distance nbove Cascades Point, at the rapids designated as La Faucille. It was 490 feet in length and had one lock. The second was at the Trou du

Mostly near the mill beinging to the Haron of Longaeuil. This "as a mere cut, 200 feet long, without locks, and was excavated either in the bed of the river or through a projecting point of rock. third canal was situated at the Spilt Rock Rapid. It consisted of one lock built in a side channel formed by a natural opening through the rocky shore. As will be seen by the plan submitted. very little work had to be done to secure the object simed at. The natural waits of the channel were used to form the sides of the lock, as shown by the shape of the chamber, and most important of the series was located at Cotean-du-Luc. Its length was 900 feet and it had three locks. The aggregate length of those canals was about 1,700 feet with five incks. The work was commenced in 1779, and completed in 1783, under the direction of Captain Twiss, as stated above. A fairly complete record of the operations is to be found in extracts of reports from this engineer, published in the "Report on Canadlan Archives," for 1886, pp. xxi-xxv. These original reports form a most precious collection, the reading of which the writer found extremely interesling.

These canais had only been in use for a short time when it was found that the locations adopted for the two lower ness were defective, the lock and other structures being lajured by floating ice every spring. In 1800, Col. Gother Mann recommended certain changes to be made, viz., to increase the opening of the gates of the locks at Coteau-du-Lac and at Split Rock, from 6 9'6', to give an additional breath of 2 feet to the canai prisms and 4 feet to the lock chambers, and to deepen the whole 1't As to the canais at the Trou du Moulin and Faucille Rapids (Cascades Point) he proposed the replacing of them by one canal to avoid both rapids.

"At about nine hundred yards," he says, "above the Cascades, "on the stream leading to the Grand or Ottawn River, and at "nearly the same distance above the Mill Rapid on the Cataraqui "(St. Lawrence) River, a neck of laad is formed, which presents "a favorable situation for a permanent caual. The length across "is fifteen hundred feet in a straight line on the course which I "should propose the canal to run . . . At the extremities of the "section line the wuters of the Cataraqui or St. Lawrence River "were thirteen feet eight inches higher than those of the Ottawa "River . . . I propose the sink the canal three feet below the "surface of the waters, as they were when the level was taken, "at which period they were uncommonly low. This will be more "than sufficient to float the largest boats and will allow for a still "further decrease of the rivers. The canal should be tea feet wide "and the locks tweaty feet wide, and, if they are each 120 feet inng,

"will allow six boats to pass at a time. I suppose that three locks "will be required," etc.

This new work took about four years to build and, up to the time of its opening to navigation in 1805, the old canals were used, as shown by a report from John By, Lleut. R.E., dated 24th April, 1805, which is among the papers in the Archives Department. Another report by Captain Bruyères, R.E., of January, 1805, gives a detailed account of the progress of the work of the new canai. On the 7th March following, the same gives a statement of the cost of the work performed and the sum required to complete it as follows:—

Expenditure up to March, 1805	••	£ 2521 2881	s. 9 0	d. 91 0
Sum remaining to accomplish work Sum proposed to continue work in 1885		359 831	10 13	23 9
Excess		472	3	 61

The total cost of the Cascades new canai was, therefore, about \$17,000, but, if it he horne in mind that icbour was considerably cheaper at that time than it is to-day, it may be said that the expenditure was equivalent to \$30,000 of our present currency.

Some vestiges of this canai are still visible. The lower locks were obliterated by the works of the Soulanges canal. The writer examined the whole line of it in August 1890, when the masonry of the locks was still standing, although considerably dilapidated. Remains of the gates even were in position at the time.

The old channel crossed the line of the Soulanges canal immediately below lock No. 2, and no later than last year, its presence there was feit in the development of a serious leak under the high hank forming the northern side of the present canal at that point, owing to the original cutting in the rock not having been thoroughly fliled. The remains of the other canals are also pialniy visible. The plans accompanying this paper will give a good idea of the whole system.

A curious fact in relation to these csnais is to be noted here:—
For a number of years a local tradition attributed their construction to the French. How this opinion arose and how it became sdopted by people whose fathers must have witnessed the execution of the works, it is not easy to understand. At any rate, it had sequired such a bold on the public mind that it was officially significant as correct in the General Report published by the Depart-

ment of Public Worke in 1867. This opinion was generally accepted until the publication of the report of the Dominion Archiviet for 1886, which gave credit to whom credit was due. The part played by the French in the establishment of the colony is a large one, and it is not necessary to their glory that others be despoiled of any credit they deserved in contributing to its development. Irrespective of the canais and etructures above described, a considerable amount of work was done by the Royal Engineers at that time, in clearing the channel along the shore of boulders and other obstructions.

The communication between Lakes St. Louis and St. Francis, nithough etill very imperfect, had thus been considerably improved, but Lake St. Francis and the Lake of Two Mountains were separated by the Ste. Anne Rapids, which, although of no great importance, effectually blocked navigation.

The current in the channel joining the Ottewa and the St. Lawrence between Isie Perrot and the main shore to the west of it, was also too stiff for boats to ascend it unaided. For a certain number of years at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the worst part of the rapids, which was situated at the point where the Grand Trunk Ry. and Canadian Pacific Ry. lines cross the channel, was overcome by means of a windlass placed on a pier a short distance above, and communication between the Ottawa and St. Lawrence Rivers was thus somewhat improved.

In 1816 the St. Andrew's Steam Forwarding Company built a wooden lock at the eame point. The site of the structure, and of its approaches, is etiil quite discernible from trains going over the bridge. Two narrow channels are there to be seen close to each other along the main shore. The lock was in the outer one and the upper approach was formed by a wing dam extending to the island, now owned by Senator Belque.

The Postmaster of Montreal, Mr. H. S. Harwood, who furnished the above details, states that, up to about twenty-five years ago, remains of the wails and gates were still in exisence.

It has been found impossible to get any information as to the dimensione of this lock, but, in all probability, they were practically the same as were adopted for the locks on the Lachine, Carilion. Crenville, and Rideau canais, during the second period of Canadlan canal construction, viz., about 100' x 32' with some 5 feet of water on the silis.

The owners of thie Vaudreuii iock, who also owned a number of boats plying between Montreal and Carilion, were naturally anxious not to encourage competition and, with that end in view, they made the tolis through their lock so high as to be almost prohibitive. The windiass mentioned above was, therefore, in use for

a number of years after the lock bad been completed, the latter being used almost entirely by the owners.

In 1841, however, "Captain R. W. Shepherd, then in command "of the steumer 'St. David," belonging to a rival company, as the "result of a clever and hazardous experiment, discovered a safo "channel through the rapids at Ste. Anne's, which put an end to "the monopoly. (*)

This quotation, which is taken from the book mentioned in the foot note, is misleading, in as much as the safe channel referred to was not in the Ste. Anne's Rapids, but on the He Perrot side of the Vaudreuii channei.

The lock was in consequence made practically free to ail vessels n short time later and remained in use until 1843, when the Ste. Anne's lock was open to traffic, thus perfecting the system of public canais between Montreal and Kingston, the Carillon, Grenville, and Rideau canais having been completed about fifteen years before that date.

Another canal, the existence of wblcb bad been entirely forgotten, was built about the same time, and we are still indebted to the late Douglass Brymner for the discovery of papers, in which it is mentioned and summarily described. This is the canal on the Canadlan side of Sault Ste. Marle, which was constructed by the original North-West Company after the disagreement which bad the result of dividing the concern into two rival companies.

The work was done between 1798 and 1802. The following description of it, is taken from the "Report on Canadian Archives," for 1886, p. xxix.

"The landing is in a hay immediately at the bottom of the fall "on the nearest channel to the land of the north shore. A good "wharf for boats is built at the landing, on which a storehouse, "60 feet long, 30 feet wide, is erected. The wharf is planked, and "pathways made and planked all around it. Close to the store "a lock is constructed for boats and canoes, being 38 feet long, 8 "feet 9 inches wide. The lower gate lets down by a windlass; "the upper has two folding gates with a sluice. The water rises 9 "feet in the lock. A leading trough of timber framed and planked "300 feet in length, 8 feet 9 inches wide, 6 feet high, supported and "levelied on beams of cedar through the swamp is constructed to "conduct the water from the canal to the lock. A road raised and "planked, 12 feet wide, for cattle extends the whole length of the "trough. The canal begins at the head of it, which is a channel "cleared of rocks and the projecting points excavated to admit the

^(*) Steam navigation and its relation to the commerce of Canada and United States, by Jas. Croil, Montreal, p. 318

"passage of canoes and boats. This canal is about 2,580 feet in "length, with a raised bridge or pathway of round logs at the side "of it, 12 feet wide, for oxen to track the boats. About 170 feet from "the upper part of the canal a storehouse is built, 36 feet long, 23 "feet wide. An excellent saw mill for two saws is constructed and "placed in a line with the lock parallel to it."

It will be noticed that the fall overcome by this lock was 9 feet, or about half the lift in the present locks, both on the Caradian and American sides, und also that the lower gate was of the lifting pattern, the only example in America, as far as the writer is aware, of a structure of this description on a navigable canal.

The reason the memory of this work had so completely passed away in so short a time is evidently that, it being a private undertaking, no record of its construction was kept in any of the public documents; the case is similar to that of the Vaudreuli iock. Here, however, a plan, or rather a sketch, showing the location of the canai has been preserved and is reproduced herewith. It is, indeed, very imperfect, but the report of Capt. Bruyères quoted above, indicates that the lock was located between the two buildings marked B and C on the plan and in close proximity to the shore of the lake below.

Whether built of stone or timber the report does not state, but, in all probability, it was of timber, as no traces of masonry have been found on the spot. In the year 1886, the channel had been so obliterated that it would have been hard to say, but for the documents referred to, whether it was a natural depression of the ground or an artificial cutting to unite both lakes.

Such is, as complete y, it is believed, as it can be summarized, the history of the origins of our present canais, than which there are no larger, better constructed, or better equipped in the world.

Looking back upon the works executed by the pioneer engineers of Cansda and comparing the results of their efforts with those obtained during the following sertury by their successors, one may be inclined to undervaine the merits of the former. It should be borne in mind, bowever, that the canals built by them were not only large enough to meet the requirements of the country at the time, but also that their dimensions compared favourably with those of many canal systems in the world.

Canada was then a poor and undeveloped and, and the expenditure incurred in this first attempt at improving ber inland navigation was considerable for the time. Moreover, in point of engineering the small canals above described were in no way inferior to our present ones.

^(*) Dominion Archives, Series C., No 382, p. 215.

That in a little over a hundred years, we have heen able to spend about \$100,000,000 in perfecting our canal system, is evidence of the marvellous development of Canada, but our present prosperity should not cause us to forget that, ater all, we have only been following in the footsteps of the men who inaugurated the improvements.

The present degree of perfection of ot cansis was not attained at one bound after the first ones had been completed. Three different periods, marking a corresponding development of the population and riches of the country, followed the one ended in 1816.

The history of each of these periods would furnish ample matter for a volume, if the military, political, commercial, and financial aspects of the question as well as the engineering features were to be considered. The intention of the writer, much to your satisfaction and relief, I nm sure, is not to embark here in such an undertaking. There remains only for him to place before your eyes, in a series of tables, a resumé of the works performed by the canal engineers of the country during the last century.

These figures will show, in a concrete and striking form, the wonderful use a young and enterprising people has made of the natural resources with which Providence has endowed their land.

Our system, as summarized in the table referring to the fourth period, although pretty complete, is not yet perfected and the next twenty years will likely see the realization of a project which has, for the better part of a century, baunted the minds of political men and engineers in Canada.

I refer to the Montreal, Ottawa, and Georgisn Bay canal undertaking which, ns you are aware, is well under way.

After these immense works shall have been executed, at a probable cost of another \$100,000,000, Canada will be justified in calling a halt in her canal construction.

FIRST PERIOD

1777-1816

ST. LAWRENCE RIVER ROUTE Canals were built originally 6ft, wide.

		_		
Canals River St. Plerre, depth 2' 6"	Dimensions of lesks.		Water on sills,	
Les Cascades	120'	x	9'	6'
Coteau du Lac			9'	6'
Trou du Moulin or Mill Rapids			9'	6'
Split Rock			01	6'
Sault Ste. Marie	38'	x	0′	1' 6"
OTTAWA RIVER	ROUTI	5		

Canals	Dimensions of locks.	Water on sills.
Vaudreuil, approximatively	100' x 32'	5'

SECOND PERIOD

1816-1840

ST. LAWRENCE RIVER ROUTE

Canals	Dimensions of locks.	Water on sirls.
Lachine	108' x 20'	4' 6"
Welland	110' x 22'	8' 6"

RICHELIEU RIVER ROUTE

Canals	Dimensions of locks.	Water on sills.
Chambly	118' × 99' 8"	421

OTTAWA RIVER ROUTE

Canals	Dimen: of loc	Water on sills.	
Carillon	126' 6" x	32' 6"	6' 6"
(areaville	106' x	19'	6' 6"
Rideau	133' x	33'	5' 6"

THIRD PERIOD

1840-1870

ST. LAWRENCE RIVER ROUTE

Canals	Dimensions of locks.	Water on sills.	
Lachine	of cocke.	on sua,	
Besularnois			
reapide Plat	200' x 45'	0.	
rarrans Point	200 X 49	9′	
Clatolis			
Welland	200' x 45'	10′ 6″	

RICHELIEU RIVER ROUTE

Canals Chambly St. Ours OTTAWA RIVER R	Dimensions of locks. '118' x 22'6' 200' x 45' OUTE	Water on sills, 6'	
Canals St. Annes Carillon Grenville Ruleau Culbute	Dimensions of locks, 200' x 45' 200' x 45' 200' x 45' 133' x 33' 200' x 45'	Water on silis. 9' 0' 5' 5' 6'	

FOURTH PERIOD

1870-1905

ST. LAWRENCE RIVER ROUTE

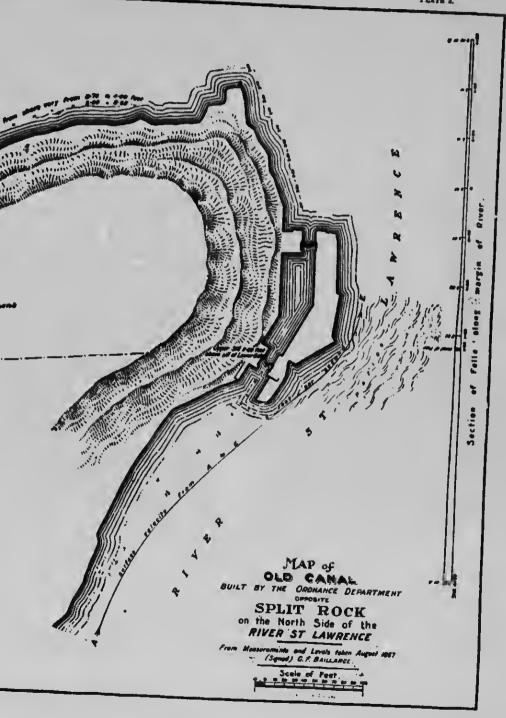
Canals Lachine	Dimensions of locks.	Water on sills,	
Dachine			
Rapide Plat			
Cornwall	270' x 45'	7.4.	
Farrans Point	210 X 49	14'	
Galops,			
Galops			
Sault Ste. Marie	900' x 60'		
	800, x 60,	20'	
RICHELIEU RIVER 1	ROUTE		

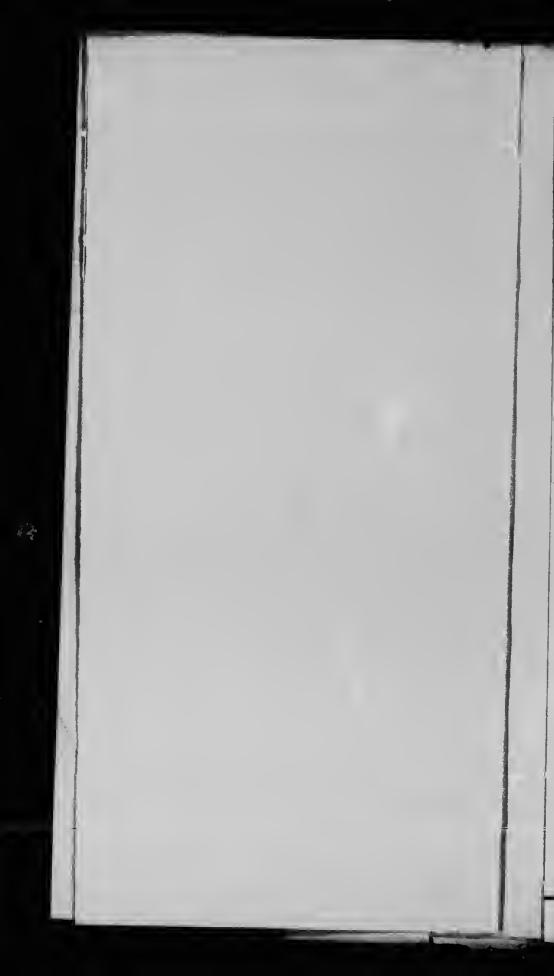
Canals		Dimensions of locks,		
Chambly	118'	х	22'6"	on sills. T
St. Ours	200	x	457	7'

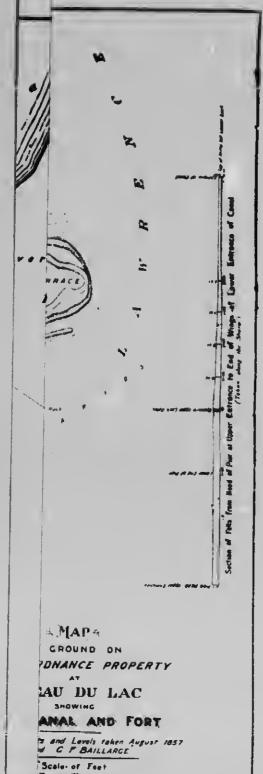
OTTAWA LIVER ROUTE

Dimensions of locks.			Water on sills.
200	x	45'	9′
		_	5' 6"
			5' 8'
	of 200°	of lock 200° x 133′ x 200′ x	

François \ Xarier ; Clement CORNER PUBLIC BOAD Seignlour of Louinness and New Longueuil

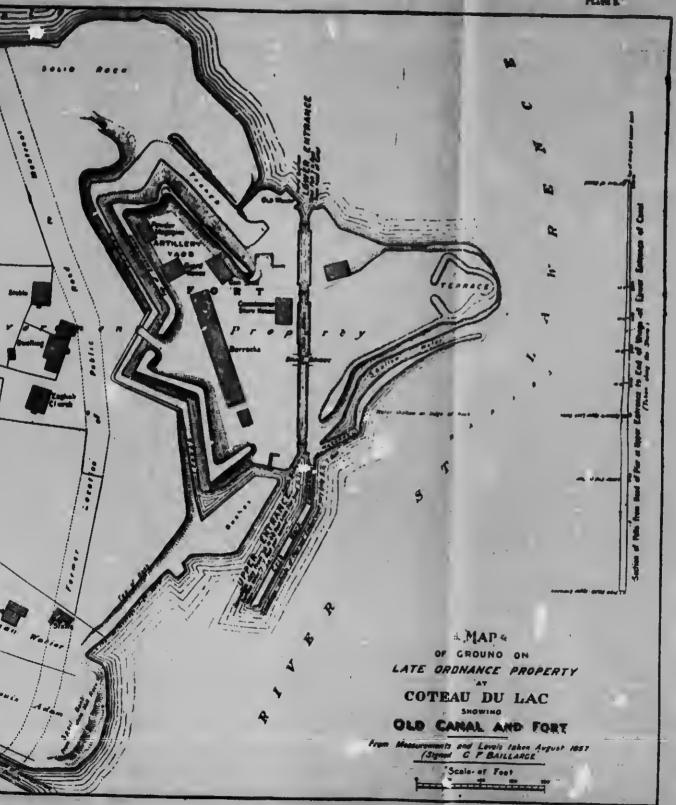






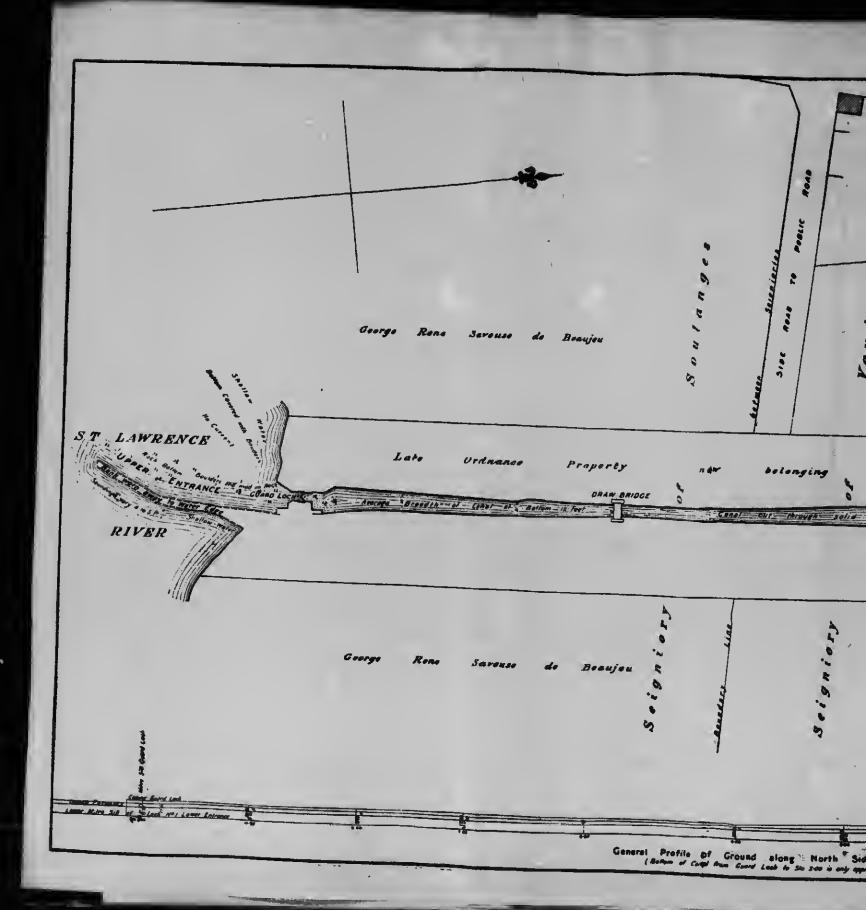
100 HO 100

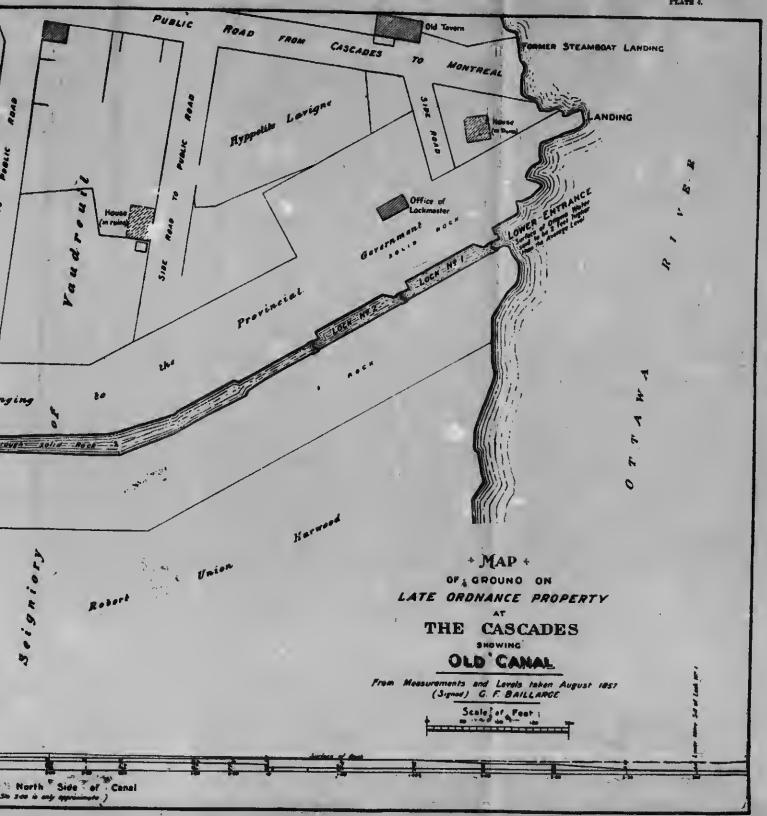






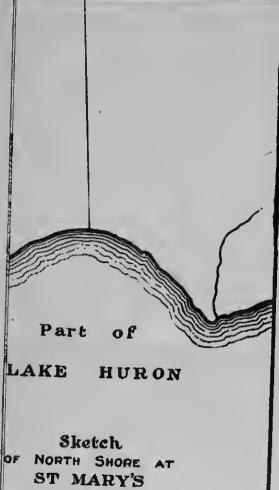
AP + UND ON NCE PROPERTY ASCADES WING CANAL Levels taken August 1857 F. BAILLARGE of Foot





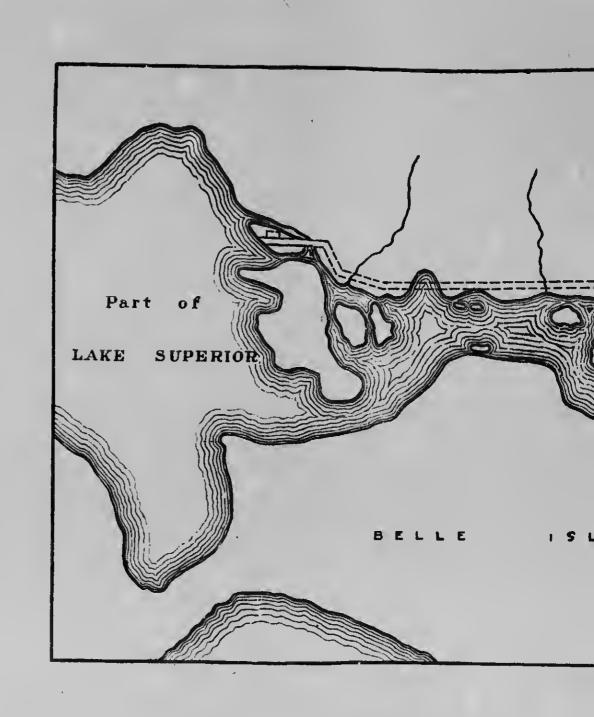


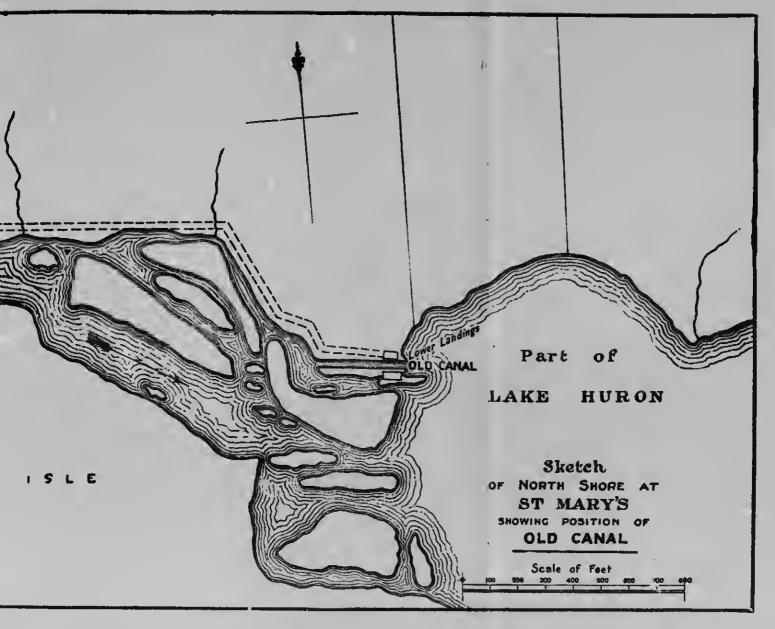
CAN, SOC. C.E. TRANSACTIONS PLATE 5.

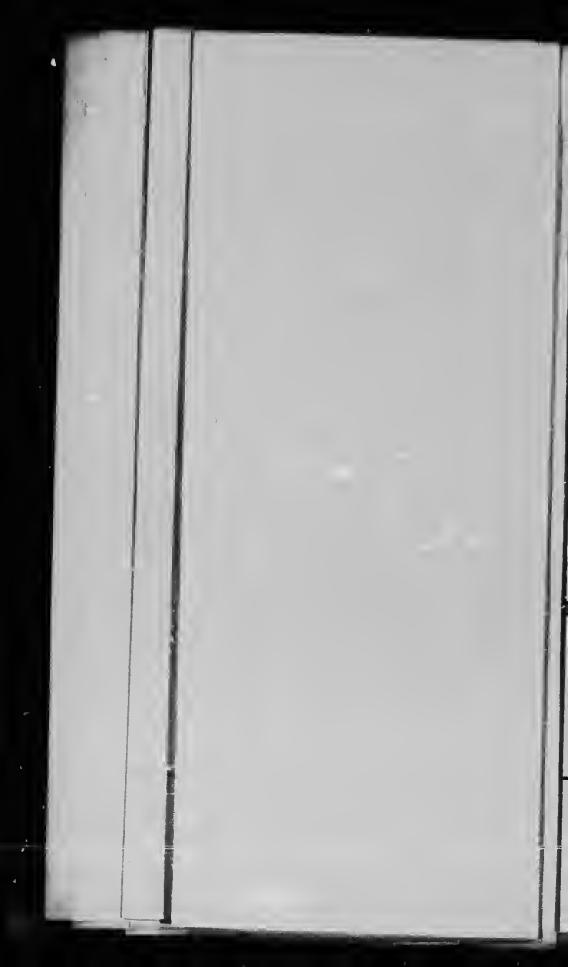


SHOWING POSITION OF OLD CANAL

Scale of Feet







CAN. 800, C. E. TRANSACTIONS PLATE 6.

