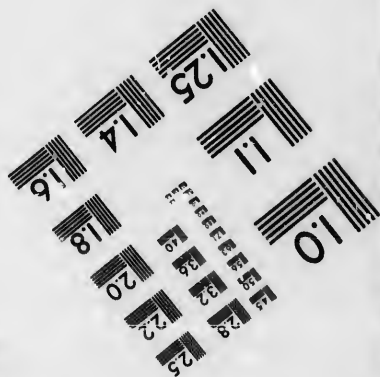
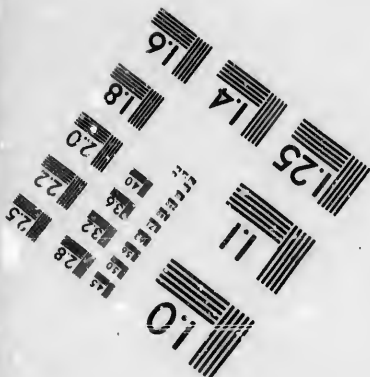
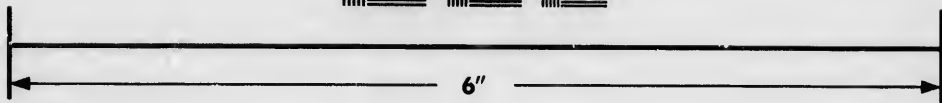
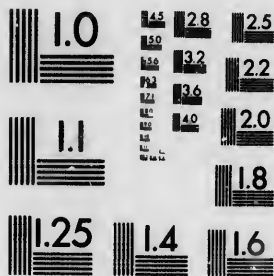


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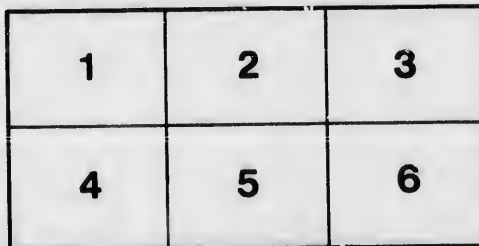
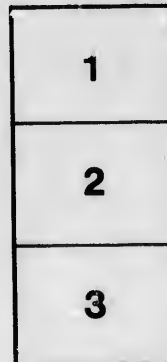
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# State of New-York.

No. 200

IN ASSEMBLY, MAR. 8, 1857.

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TESTIMONY

Reported by Mr. Wakeman from the committee on commerce and navigation in relation to the international bridge.

STATE OF NEW-YORK, }  
City of Buffalo, } ss:

Statement of Capt. Squires, thirty-two years engaged in navigating the lakes, the last three years engaged in running from Fort Erie to Buffalo harbor.

Abiram H. Squires being duly sworn deposes and says: I reside in that part of the city of Buffalo formerly known as Black Rock. I have been acquainted with the navigation of the lakes for thirty-two years, during that period I have acted in the capacity of sailor, mate and captain of sail and steam vessels, running between Buffalo and Chicago and the intermediate ports as well as Niagara river. I have often run down and up the river with steamers, and occasionally with sail vessels, to Tonawanda and Chippewa. I am now, and have been for the last three years, engaged in running a steam ferry boat from Waterloo and Fort Erie, in Canada, up the river through the rapids to Buffalo harbor. I consider that I am well acquainted with the navigation of the river, its shoals, currents and channels; the river is not generally used as a harbor of refuge, scarcely ever, for the last three years while I have been running the ferry (and I have been there constantly) I have not known a single vessel to run into the river for safety, if any had come in I should have known it; there is little safety in running

[Assembly, No. 200.]

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into the river unless the captain is very familiar with the channel, and in such cases they are very liable to get aground before they reach Fort Erie, as they pass from the lake to the river.

If a bridge was constructed at any point between the Horse Shoe Reef Light and the foot of Squaw Island, with a draw of one hundred and seventy-five or two hundred feet wide over the main channel, with suitable lights at each end, it is my opinion it would make the navigation of the river in the night time less dangerous than it is now, and in the day time it would afford a sufficient channel for all vessels to pass and would not impede the free navigation of the river. No vessel can now run up the river without a very strong northeast wind.

ABIRAM H. SQUIRES.

Subscribed and sworn before me }  
this 4th day of April, 1857, }

F. P. STEVENS, *Mayor of Buffalo.*

STATE OF NEW-YORK, } ss:  
*City of Buffalo.* }

Statement of Capt. James Anderson, fifteen years engaged in lake navigation.

James Anderson being duly sworn deposes and says: I have navigated the lakes from Chicago to Buffalo and the intermediate ports, on sailing vessels as mate and master, for the last fifteen years; I have sailed up and down the Niagara river; I am well acquainted with the channel described by captain Dobbins in his deposition; I have never known any vessel run down the river in stress of weather for refuge; I have heard the statement made by D. P. Dobbins and sworn to in his affidavit hereto annexed, and fully concur with him and with the opinions that he has there expressed of the effect which the erection of a bridge over the river at that point would have upon the navigation of the river.

JAMES ANDERSON.

Subscribed and sworn before me }  
this 4th day of April, 1857, }

F. P. STEVENS, *Mayor of Buffalo.*

I, William Dickson, of the city of Buffalo, county of Erie, and State of New-York, having been for the last thirty years, familiar with, and sailing upon the Western lakes and the Niagara river, and having recently read a paper called the "Niagara Falls,

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Gazette Extra," and having given the subject matter therein contained a careful examination, do make the following statement designed to answer the various objections therein urged to bridging the Niagara River. The opponents state that the obstruction of the river by piers would very much accelerate the current and seriously embarrass the free navigation of the river. The undersigned would state that in his opinion the acceleration of the current would be but slight, as at this point, viz: near the head of Bird Island pier, the river is nearly a mile in width, and that the displacement of water by the piers would but slightly hasten the velocity of the current which at this point is between three to four miles per hour, nor would the introduction of piers seriously obstruct the navigation, as the navigable channel at this point, is not to exceed three hundred feet in width, with an average depth of about seventeen feet, while the balance of the stream is shoal water, varying from three to nine feet in depth. With this width of stream, it must be evident to any mind, that no daming of the river could occur from the introduction of the necessary piers for the construction of the proposed bridge.

Again, it is said, by those opposed, that a sail vessel entering the river with a very light breeze dead aft, when reaching the current, its velocity being greater than that of the wind, she will be be-calmed and broach to, and pass down the river broadside to the stream.

In reply the undersigned begs leave to assert that a vessel in passing down the river gathers steerage way by her own weight, and by means of her rudder would have no difficulty in keeping head to, and would readily pass the draw, in the main channel, as it is apparent that the water next the piers on either side of the draws would be somewhat hastened, while in the middle of the span it would be less, this would of itself be a great safeguard and render the passing through the draw, a matter easily done.

It is also asked what will be the result with a vessel sailing up the stream, having passed the bridge some twenty or thirty rods, and the wind at this point lulling, will she drop astern and go foul of the bridge?

In answer the undersigned would state that assuming that the vessel has passed up the river to the point above referred to, she has sailed up a current of from seven to eight miles an hour, and would readily pass through the draw and on above it, where

the velocity of the current is not to exceed from three to four miles per hour, but should she fail from any cause to proceed up the river to the lake—the current being swifter than the speed of the vessel, she can be steered when head to the current and have no difficulty in keeping in it. Then, too, she has good anchorage at any point above Bird Island pier, and this would afford a safeguard in any emergency.

It is also urged, that at the proposed site of this bridge a heavy sea rolls in severe gales.

The undersigned would reply that below the upper reef there is very little sea, and there is *good anchorage* about three-fourths of a mile above the proposed site of this bridge, in the British channel where vessels have laid at anchorage in all weather. Indeed *this was the harbor of Fort Erie*, where the British vessels *shipped and re-shipped all goods, merchandize and products* prior to the construction of Welland canal. There seems to be a disposition on the part of the opposers of the project of bridging this river—to underrate and prejudice the interests of Buffalo harbor proper, and to create *the impression* that it is a terror to the navigators of our inland seas, while on the other hand they magnify and extol the capacity, safety and constant use of the Niagara river as the only sure haven of our Lake Marine.

The undersigned would state, that in thirty years experience, he has in one solitary instance, having had his canvass stripped by the wind, deemed it safer to run down the river than to attempt to make the Buffalo harbor.

It is also said that our harbor at Buffalo, which is now of sufficient capacity to moor the tonnage of our lakes, and which has cost so much of both public and individual means is fast filling up, and will soon require to be abandoned. It is only necessary to say that all artificial harbors require to be dredged occasionally, and this is beyond a question true of Buffalo harbor, and is not by any means a serious objection, and it is a fact that every navigator of the lakes is fully convinced of, that Buffalo harbor is not only as accessible, but as commodious as the majority of harbors on our lakes.

It is also objected, to constructing a bridge across this river, on the account of vessels passing down the stream in the night. In reply the undersigned would state that it is rarely ever that



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a vessel passes down the river in the night but should this ever be necessary from any cause, the lights to be erected upon both sides of the draw in my opinion would be of great service, and a help instead of a detriment, in affording to the pilot or master of such vessel a suitable guide to enable him to keep his vessel in the channel of the river. The undersigned would here state that it is a very small share of the navigators of our lakes that are at all familiar with the channel of this river.

The undersigned would state that he has heard that a project is on foot for constructing a ship canal from a point below Fort Erie on the Canada shore to a point still further below, for the double purpose of a water power and of improving the navigation of the river, by locking past the rapids. The undersigned would simply state that it would be a great benefit to all vessels in passing up the river, thus being enabled to avoid the stiff current.

WILLIAM DICKSON.

Acknowledged before me this 18th }  
day of February, 1857, }

AMOS T. HOLMES, *Commissioner of Deeds.*

Statement of Capt. John N. Gardner, seventeen years experience as a navigator, and engaged in the commerce of the lakes.

STATE OF NEW-YORK, } ss.:  
City of Buffalo, }

John N. Gardner, being duly sworn, deposes and says:—I have sailed upon the lakes for seventeen years in the capacity of sailor, mate and captain. I have been mostly engaged upon sail vessels running from Buffalo to Chicago and the intermediate ports, as well as to the different ports on lake Ontario. I have also been frequently up and down the Niagara river and have become familiar with its currents, channels, shoals and reefs. For the last nine years I have been engaged in the marine insurance business upon the lakes and canals, and for the last two years have been one of *executive committee* of board of lake underwriters. I have heard the statements made and sworn to by Capt. David P. Dobbins, touching the effect upon the navigation of the Niagara river at the point indicated by him, and I fully concur with his statements and opinions as therein set forth and hereto annexed.

JOHN N. GARDNER.

Subscribed and sworn before me this }  
4th day of April, 1857, }

F. P. STEVENS *Mayor of Buffalo.*

STATE OF NEW-YORK, }  
 City of Buffalo, } ss.:

James M. Averell, being duly sworn, deposes and says:—I have navigated the lakes as master on sail and steam vessels for the past sixteen years between Buffalo and Chicago; I have also navigated the Niagara river and am well acquainted with its currents, channels, shoals and reefs. I have heard the statements of Capt. D. P. Dobbins, which he has sworn to in his affidavit hereto annexed in reference to the effect upon the navigation of the Niagara river of building a bridge to the Canada shore on the line indicated by him, and I fully concur in all the statements he has given on that subject.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this } JAS. M. AVERELL.  
 4th day of April, 1857, }  
 F. P. STEVENS, Mayor of Buffalo.

Affidavit of Capt. F. P. Billings, twenty years a navigator of lakes.

STATE OF NEW-YORK, }  
 City of Buffalo, } ss.:

Francis P. Billings, being duly sworn, deposes and says:—I have been a resident of the city of Buffalo for twenty years past; during the seasons of navigation for the first fourteen years of that period, I acted as mate and captain of sail and steam vessels upon the lakes, running between Buffalo and Chicago and the intermediate ports; during that period I became acquainted with the navigation of the Niagara river; I have never undertaken to run down the Niagara river as a place of safety in preference to entering the harbor of Buffalo, nor would I dare to attempt it, (knowing the river as well as I do,) in the night time or in a severe storm. About nine years since I was in the employ of the government with Capt. Bigelow, of the navy, in the survey of the river, for the purpose of locating the Horse Shoe reef light house and the buoys on the American side of the channel, as well as designating the site for the light on the pier of Black Rock harbor, which has since been moved to the main land. I have never known a vessel in the night or in stress of weather to attempt to run into the river as a place of refuge; it has always been considered preferable to make Buffalo harbor, or if that is considered dangerous to haul on the wind and stand up the lake again.

From my intimate acquaintance with the danger of the navigation of the river, I would not dare to enter the river unless with

a fair wind and pleasant weather, without a fair wind it is unsafe to enter the river on account of the rapidity of the current and the dangerous reefs and rocks. If a bridge should be built at any point between Horse Shoe reef and Squaw Island with a suitable draw of one hundred and seventy-five or two hundred feet wide over the main channel, with lights upon each end of the draw it would not increase the dangers or impede the navigation of the stream, or make it less useful as a place of refuge, but on the contrary I believe it would add to its facilities of navigation and improve its usefulness as a place of refuge, by guiding vessels through a safe channel.

F. P. BILLINGS.

Subscribed and sworn before me this }  
4th day of April, 1857. }

F. P. STEVENS, *Mayor of Buffalo.*

Capt. D. P. Dobbin's statement; twenty years engaged in navigation of the lakes, and now engaged in marine insurance.

STATE OF NEW-YORK, }  
*City of Buffalo,* } ss.:

David P. Dobbins, being duly sworn, deposes and says : I have been acquainted with the navigation of the lakes for the last twenty-five years, twenty of which I acted in the capacities of sailor, mate and commander of sail and steam vessels, and run from Buffalo to Chicago and the intermediate ports, as well as to the ports on Lake Ontario. I am well acquainted with the navigation of the Niagara river from Lake Erie down ; I have never while sailing a vessel, or upon a sail vessel as seaman or mate, run down Niagara river as a place of safety in a stress of weather; I never considered it as safe a place for refuge in bad weather as Buffalo harbor. If a bridge was built across from Bird island pier and reef to Lime Kiln flat, which is in nearly a direct line across the river from that point at the head of the rapids, with a draw of one hundred and seventy-five or two hundred feet wide over the main channel, with suitable lights at each end, it would in no possible way impede the navigation of the river; at that point the channel is narrowest, and a vessel running up or down would not vary more than one hundred feet from the centre of that channel either way, on account of the depth of the water, whether the bridge is there or not. The current at this point does not exceed three miles per hour ; it is above all the rapids; they commence immediately below this point, and increase in rapidity until about half a mile

below, the current increases to six and a half miles per hour; from thence it decreases to the foot of Squaw island, where the current is again about three miles per hour, which is about two and a half miles below Bird island pier and reef. I am confident that the placing of a draw at the point indicated would greatly improve the navigation of the river in the day or night time and during all weather. The fact that the piers on either side of the draw with lights, would so palpably mark the main and only channel now existing at that point, that it would be more safe to run up or down the river by day or night, in fair or foul weather than it now is.

For the last three years I have been acting as *secretary of the board of lake underwriters*, and am now acting in that capacity.

D. P. DOBBINS.

Subscribed and sworn to before me, this }  
4th day of April, 1857, }

F. P. STEVENS, *Mayor of Buffalo.*

I, A. D. Perkins, of the city of Buffalo, county of Erie, State of New-York, do depose and make the following statement: I have been for the last seventeen years engaged as a navigator of the western lakes and Niagara river; in that time I have had command of steamers Anthony Wayne, Southerner, Alabama, Baltic, Southern Michigan and Western Metropolis; I have heard and am familiar with the proposed project of bridging the Niagara river, at some point from the city of Buffalo, to the Canada shore. From my experience in navigation, these waters, from my knowledge of the current and channel of the Niagara river, from the location, fitness and capacity of the harbor at Buffalo, and the facility and ease of entering such harbor in calm or in a storm; I am fully satisfied that the said bridge constructed as is proposed with suitable draws, would not materially impede or obstruct the navigation of said river; but on the other hand the lights to be placed upon both ends of such draws as is proposed in the bill, would in my judgment aid the Mariner, and assist him in piloting his way down this difficult channel; (should he, as is rarely if ever the case,) be under the necessity of running down the river in the night time. I have never known a vessel or steamboat to run down this river in the night for the purpose of making a harbor. I have heard of a project to construct a ship canal from a point just below Fort Erie on the Canada shore, from deep water to and past the rapids for a distance of three-

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fourths to one mile; which, when constructed will be of great service, and will render what is now a very difficult and almost unavailable navigation vastly improved by this work; having as I am informed but a single lock of about four and a half feet lift. This work when done must entirely remove all objection now urged by the opponents of this project, as the navigation in this case would not be obstructed but improved. Niagara river is not in any sense, either now or has it within my knowledge ever been, the harbor for the commerce of the lakes or used at all for that purpose at the city of Buffalo; nor is it true as is represented by the opponents of this project that Buffalo harbor is a terror to the mariners upon the western lakes. Buffalo harbor is as accessible, as commodious, as easy of entrance in any and all weather as the majority of harbors on our lakes. Niagara river can never be made available as a harbor for the commerce of the city of Buffalo in my judgment, as the velocity of the current would entirely forbid the use of its waters for such a purpose. The navigation of the river, and the commerce upon its waters was not the last season or two of any great amount or importance, mostly confined to wood and rafts towed up and down by steam tugs. Upon this whole subject I am of the opinion that this proposed bridge built with suitable draws would not injure materially, or prejudice the interests of parties interested in the limited navigation of the river, and that the commerce that would cross this bridge when built would vastly exceed in amount, that which would pass along the waters of the river, and therefore the project should have a favorable consideration at the hands of the Legislature.

ALBANY, April 4, 1857.

A. D. PERKINS,

Subscribed and sworn to this 4th }  
day of April 1857, before me, }

S. WAKEMAN, *Chairman of the Standing Committee on commerce and Navigation.*

STATE OF NEW-YORK, } ss:  
City of Buffalo,

Affidavit of Capt. Wm. Moore, for twenty years engaged as a navigator of the lakes, and for five years engaged as an agent for the business of Marine Insurance.

William Moore being duly sworn, deposes and says: I have been acquainted with the navigation of the lakes for the last twenty

years. I first went on board of a sailing vessel on Lake Erie as a cabin boy and continued in that capacity and that of a sailor for nine years. I then became commander of a sailing vessel and continued as such for five years ; during all of this period was on a sailing vessel running between Buffalo and Chicago, and intermediate ports ; about five years since I ceased to command a vessel ; since that period I have been and am now engaged in Marine Insurance on the lakes, as the agent of various Insurance companies ; I have never known in my experience and observations as a seaman, the Niagara river to have been used as a harbor of refuge in stress of weather. I have never found any difficulty in getting into Buffalo harbor in all kinds of weather ; I have never known a vessel in severe weather to run into the river for shelter ; I understand the reasons to be, that the navigation is dangerous and obstructed with reefs and rocks, and it is not safe to venture down in fair weather without a pilot, unless the captain is himself a pilot ; I do not think that there is one captain in *three hundred* who would dare to venture down the river in bad weather. If a bridge was built across the river at any point between Horse Shoe reef and the lower end of Squaw Island, with a draw one hundred and eighty or two hundred feet wide over the main channel with suitable lights at each end of the draw, it would not in my opinion at all impede the navigation of the river, nor endanger the safety of vessels in any storms or weather that I have experienced ; with this draw and suitable lights, I should consider it more safe to run down the river in the night, whether in a storm or fair weather, than to run down in the condition the river is now in ; it is not possible for a sailing vessel to run up the river without the aid of steam, unless with a fair wind blowing half a gale.

WM. MOORE.

Subscribed and sworn before me }  
 this 4th day of April, 1857, }

F. P. STEVENS, *Mayor of Buffalo.*

Henry P. Smith being sworn deposes and says—that in 1854, in the latter part of the month of April, there was a large fleet of vessels bound down from the upper lakes. Arrived to within four or five miles of Buffalo they approached a large mass of ice, which completely blocked up the passage to Buffalo harbor, and the only space clear of ice was along the canal shore. Some fifteen or twenty of said vessels ventured down into the ice near the entrance to the mouth of the Niagara river. At about the time they arrived at this point the wind shifted to the south, and drove the

ice against the vessels, and the vessels were driven upon the reefs at the mouth of the river. One large brig called the "Chieftain" was carried by the force of the ice and current down the river, carrying away both the cables and forcing her upon Squaw Island, opposite Black Rock dam, her crew having no control over her. Under such circumstances, I believe it would have been utterly impossible to have guided the vessel to a draw in a bridge, and that her escape from total destruction had there been a bridge across the river, below this point, would have been the merest matter of chance.

H. P. SMITH.

Sworn before me this 7th }  
day of April, 1857, }

S. WAKEMAN, *Chairman of the Com. of Com. and Navigation.*

Henry P. Smith, being duly sworn, deposes and says: I reside in the village of Tonawanda, and County of Niagara. Am a lumber merchant, and have been engaged in the business of towing rafts from Canada West, on Lake Erie and Lake Huron, to Tonawanda, for the last thirteen years, during which time I have owned three steamboats and one propeller, all of which were used for towing rafts from Lake Erie to Tonawanda. Have generally had the superintendence of towing said rafts, composed of logs, masts, and timber, and am thoroughly acquainted with the navigation of the Niagara river. I believe it to be one of the best and safest harbors on the lakes, it being easy of access, and perfectly safe to enter in the severest gale. There has been, for the past ten years, a large number of sail vessels and steamboats engaged in the lumber and timber and stave trade between the upper lakes and Tonawanda, and I am firmly of the opinion that a bridge, constructed across the river at any point between Tonawanda and Buffalo, would seriously injure, if not entirely cut off that branch of trade from the Niagara river. I am also well aware of the fact that there has been for the past several years, a large commercial business carried on at Tonawanda, which is now on the increase, and for the accommodation of which an extensive elevator was erected some eight years since and docks and warehouses built for the conveniences of transshipment from the river to the Erie canal. An elevator has also been erected during the past year in connection with one of the most extensive distilleries in the country, which is capable of using 1500 bushels of grain daily. I believe that a bridge across the river as contemplated would have the direct effect to destroy this rapidly accumulating business, and prove highly detrimental to all parties interested in the navigation of Niagara river.

The timber trade alone at the port of Tonawanda will not average less than from three to five hundred thousand dollars per year, and with the navigation of the river unobstructed, there can be no doubt of its steady increase. I am well and personally acquainted with Captain Orson Shepard,—have frequently employed him to tow rafts for me from Lake Erie to Tonawanda. I believe him to be one of the very best, as he has been one of most successful sailors on the Western Lakes, and I have the utmost confidence in his judgment with reference to all matters pertaining to lake and river navigation.

In the year 1852 I was on the steamer Great Western bound up the river from Tonawanda. At the head of the rapids the rudder chain parted and the boat drifted down the current. We cast anchor as soon as we deemed it safe so to do on account of the rapidity of the current. The anchor dragged upon the rock bottom for about one hundred rods when one of the flukes caught in a crevice, and such was the pressure of the current, that the anchor cable was immediately parted, leaving the boat at the mercy of the stream. Had there been a bridge with abutments below the boat, I am sure no earthly power could have saved the boat from utter destruction. I think it practically impossible to anchor a vessel with safety in the Niagara river, at or near the Black Rock rapids.

H. P. SMITH.

Sworn and subscribed before me, }  
this 6th day of April, 1857, }

S. WAKEMAN, *Chairman of the Com. of Com. and Navigation.*

John Simson being duly sworn deposes and says: I am a resident of Tonawanda; have lived there for more than forty years; am well acquainted with the Niagara river from Tonawanda to Lake Erie. Have been up and down the same many times. I have known vessels to sail down from Lake Erie to Tonawanda, and back from Tonawanda to the lake frequently. Have seen as many as twenty-five to thirty vessels, steamers, and propellers, discharging and loading at one time at Tonawanda. Have known as many as twenty vessels to arrive at Tonawanda in one day. I believe there is no better harbor on the lake than the harbor of Tonawanda; and that a bridge constructed across the river at any point above Tonawanda would have the effect to entirely cut off the commerce at this point and below. I believe the business of the river is on the increase. I am well acquainted with Captain Orson Shepard, have known him since 1849; believe him to be a



most excellent mariner, and a man of prudence and integrity. I have the utmost confidence in any statement he may make.

JOHN SIMSON.

Sworn before me this 7th day of }  
April, 1857, }

S. WAKEMAN, *Chairman of the Com. of Com. and Navigation.*

Silas S. Packard being duly sworn, deposes and says: I am a resident of the city of Albany; by occupation superintendent of Bryant & Stratton's mercantile college. I formerly lived for more than three years in the village of Tonawanda, Erie county, New-York; removed there on the first of April, 1853, and remained until the first of August, 1856; had charge for the greater portion of that period, of the books of the Tonawanda Commercial Co.; also published a weekly newspaper, known as the Niagara River Pilot, in both of which capacities it was a part of my duty to take cognizance of the commercial business of the village, and its facilities as a port. I believe it to be an acknowledged and uncontroverted fact, that there is no harbor on the whole line of lakes possessing more natural commercial advantages than the harbor of Tonawanda; the facilities for the transshipment of property from the river to the Erie canal, and from the canal to the river, are of a superior kind. From the mouth of the Tonawanda creek to the Buffalo and Niagara Falls railroad bridge, a fine harbor is afforded for unloading timber, lumber and staves, a large and increasing business in which has been going forward for years. Messrs. Hosmer & Townsend have here a stave-dressing factory, capable of doing an immense business, which is dependent upon the free navigation of the Niagara river. Here, also, during the season; an extensive business in rafting is done, there being a lock communicating with the Erie canal. Below this point, upon the Niagara river there has been erected, during the past year, a most extensive distillery for the manufacture of high-wines, with elevator attached capable of doing a large business, all of which is dependent upon the unobstructed navigation of the river. At the mouth of the creek, also, a large steam flouring mill has been erected within the past two years, by the Messrs. Sweeney, capable of manufacturing daily one hundred barrels of flour. This mill is also to the greatest extent dependent upon western supplies of grain, and would be injuriously affected by any obstruction to the navigation of the river.

Upon the Tonawanda and Elicott creeks in the village of Tonawanda, there are also four large steam saw-mills, all of which

depend for their supplies upon timber which is towed from the lakes down the Niagara river.

I am well acquainted with Captain Orson Shepard, and believe him to be not only a sailor in the broadest sense of that term, but a man of prudence and unimpeachable integrity; I have the utmost confidence in his skill and judgment as a mariner, as also in the truth and fairness of his statement. S. S. PACKARD.

Sworn before me this 6th }  
day of April, 1857, }

S. WAKEMAN, *Ch. of the Com. on Com. and Navigation.*

Uriel Driggs being duly sworn, deposes and says: I am a resident of the village of Tonawanda, county of Erie, State of New-York, where I have resided for more than thirty years past; am well acquainted with the Niagara river from Tonawanda to Lake Erie; have known large fleets of vessels to arrive at Tonawanda from upper lake ports; have seen twenty-five to thirty vessels discharging and loading at Tonawanda at one time; I believe that there is no more commodious harbor in connection with the lakes than the harbor of Tonawanda, and that the business at this port is steadily on the increase; I believe that a bridge constructed across the river at any point between Tonawanda and Lake Erie would have the effect to cut off the commerce of the port of Tonawanda, and prove a vast detriment to her citizens; I have been acquainted with Captain Orson Shepard since 1849; know him to be a man of truth and veracity, and I have the utmost confidence in any statement he may make with reference to lake or river commerce.

U. DRIGGS.

Sworn before me this 7th }  
day of April, 1857, }

S. WAKEMAN, *Chairman of Committee.*

Orson Shepard, being duly sworn, deposes and says: I am a resident of Wheatfield, Niagara county, New-York; I have been a sailor by profession and occupation for thirty years, and have followed my calling upon the western lakes and rivers during that period; I have sailed as master for twenty-two years without encountering any serious misfortune to either life or property; am well acquainted with all the harbors on the western lakes and tributary streams where lake vessels usually trade; and am free to say there is no harbor upon said lakes and streams affording better security for the safety of vessels and mariners under any and all circumstances than that of the Niagara river. In the principal channel the shallowest water from Lake Erie to Tonawanda, Chippewa or Schlosser, within three miles of the brink of

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the Great Falls is fourteen feet in depth. The straight channel at the entrance of the river is from half to three-fourths of a mile in the width. The principle channel on the east of Strawberry Island is from five to six hundred feet in width, which is the narrowest point between Lake Erie and Tonawanda. Upon the western side of Grand Island the narrowest point in the channel between Lake Erie and Chippewa is from six to seven hundred feet in width; have been acquainted with the navigation of the Niagara river and have navigated the same since 1829, more or less, but more particularly since 1849. It has been my business since the latter period to tow vessels up and down the river to and from Tonawanda, Chippewa and Schlosser, and, during that period, have at different times taken my small boat and surveyed the entire channel, its soundings and widths; have been employed by the U. S. government for three different years to place the buoys in said river according to the law for placing the same; was engaged in 1849 and 1850 with the steamer Cleveland by the Tanawanda Commercial Company, to tow vessels to and from Tonawanda and Black Rock, to and from Lake Erie; have since towed for same company and others, with steamers Bunker Hill and Saratoga; have known as many as twenty-one sail vessels, propellers and steamers arrive at Tonawanda from Lake Erie in one day, and have towed out with those which sailed out to the lake twenty-two in one day, and as many as *twelve* at one tow, some of which were the largest class vessels. During the last years, a number of the largest class vessels and propellers have made regular trips from western lake ports to Tonawanda.

I have frequently, during my years of service on the lakes, been on steamers at the opening of navigation that were compelled to go down Niagara river to discharge their freight and passengers in consequence of Buffalo harbor being blocked up with ice from one to two weeks before vessels could get into said Buffalo harbor. I have also towed vessels down the river to Tonawanda to unload, which were bound to Buffalo, and were unable to make that harbor in consequence of ice; have known vessels and large steamers many times to come down the river in stress of weather, rather than attempt to make Buffalo harbor. I consider the Niagara river *in its present condition*, the safest and best harbor on the lakes. If a bridge should be constructed as proposed, at any point between the foot of the lake, and the head of Grand island, I confidently believe there would be more danger in attempting to make the river in a heavy gale, and particularly

upon a dark night, than there now is in encountering the Erie basin pier at Buffalo which is the terror of mariners, and upon which a large number of vessels have been stranded and lost during the past few years, and even during the past year. I have towed rafts from Lake Erie to Tonawanda, for Henry P. Smith, and others, full half a mile in length, and between forty and fifty feet in width. I am confident that from the velocity and shifting course of the current, that with abutments as proposed, in the construction of the bridge, it would be absolutely impossible to navigate and tow a raft with safety down the rapids. I believe also that a similar difficulty would be experienced, in making the harbor of Niagara river with a vessel, in a gale, should a bridge be constructed as proposed, at any point between the lake and the head of Squaw island. From the time a vessel could be discovered, making for the mouth of the river, in a strong gale until it would be upon the bridge, but a very short space of time would elapse; not sufficient as I believe to effect the necessary preparations, and make the draw. In such a dilemma, I think it would be utterly impossible for a vessel to anchor, or in any other manner avert the impending doom of wrecking upon the bridge. This position is materially strengthened in the fact that it would be almost impossible to decide in the night-time whether a vessel before a gale was making for the harbor of Buffalo or of the Niagara river, until it would be too late to make the draw, and even if the vessel should be discovered in time to make the draw, it would need more than the skill of an ordinary sailor to ensure the safe transit of a vessel between the abutments. In short, I am firmly of the opinion that a bridge constructed across the Niagara river at any point between Lake Erie and Tonawanda, would forever cut off the commerce of said river, and prove highly detrimental to the interests of parties interested, of the State of New-York, and of the entire country. I have known a number of vessels bound for Buffalo, to run down the river in a gale, not daring to attempt Buffalo harbor, which vessels have discharged their cargoes at Tonawanda and been towed back into the lake. I have also known between forty and fifty thousand barrels of rolling freight to be transhipped from the river to the canal at Tonawanda within ten days.

ORSON SHEPARD.

Sworn and subscribed before me }  
 this 6th day of April, 1857, }

S. WAKEMAN, *Chairman of the Com. of Com. and Navigation.*

