

FIRST REPORT
OF THE
GRAND RIVER
Navigation Company,
December 24, 1834.

BRANTFORD :

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FIRST REPORT OF THE GRAND RIVER NAVIGATION COMPANY.

A PRIVATE Subscription was entered into, a survey made with plans, estimates, and a report by Messrs. Lewis and Cusack, in the year 1828, for the purpose of making the Grand River navigable from the Welland Canal to Brantford.

From various obstacles a Charter was not obtained incorporating a Company until the session of 1832.

The ensuing year a portion of the stock was subscribed—Directors chosen—the Company organized—further surveys made, and the necessary preparations entered into for prosecuting the work, after the land considered necessary for the future operations of the Company was occupied, the banks of the river thoroughly explored, the extent of the plaster beds and other productions fully and satisfactorily ascertained, obstacles arose which induced the Directors not to commence the work although proposals had been received for its execution.

In that state the project continued until April last, when the principal obstacle which had heretofore retarded the undertaking was supposed to have been removed, and it was again undertaken with the sanction and approbation of His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor, under the express condition that the whole amount of capital should be subscribed, the Six Nations of Indians retaining one quarter.

The necessary arrangements were made in May the stock subscribed—the Company formed—Surveys made—and, after due notice for tenders, the contracts for all the work was entered into early in June; a series of obstacles again intervened, the inhabitants generally opposing the work. However they were gradually removed, although at a very great additional expense on the part of the Company, by departing from the natural channel of the river, to meet the mistaken views then most unhappily imbibed, which is already admitted and acknowledged by those who entertained them.

The work was placed under the direction of Mr. John Jackson, the Engineer, who completed the Perth navigation the year before; and was prosecuted with a degree of vigor highly creditable to the contractors. In August the Cholera made its appearance, and carried off a fearful portion of those employed in a very short time, at the lower end of the work; it scarcely made its appearance on the two uppermost sections at that time, where the Contractors admitted no liquor on the works. We merely state the fact without drawing any further inference as to the disease. All practical experience proves that any work can be much better conducted without the use of liquor than with it; and it is desirable that those entrusted with their management should give every encouragement to those Contractors who make the attempt. In November a part of the West and unfinished dam, above lock number one, was carried away. Great credit is due to Mr. Jedediah Jackson, of Brantford, for his perseverance in replacing it at so inclement a season of the year. Great difficulty was experienced in keeping the water out of the different lock pits, all being sunk near to the bed of the river. The lower lock baffled all exertions to keep the pit free. Attempts are yet making by steam power which we trust may prove successful; if so, the materials being on the spot, the lock may be finished by the first of May.

To those who are not aware of the object or magnitude of this improvement, the following brief sketch may not prove unexceptionable:

The Grand River is by far the largest stream which discharges into Lake Erie: it enters it forty miles above Fort Erie or Buffalo. Five miles above its mouth, at Dunnville, a dam is thrown across by the Welland Canal Company, for the purpose of a feeder for the Welland Canal, which forms one continued level of fifty-two miles, reaching from the first lock at the lower part of the Deep Cut, (Allenburgh) thirty miles below Dunnville to Indiana, twenty-two miles up the river, where the first lock is placed by this Company with a lift of twelve feet. The second lock at York, (Nellis Rapid) a lift of five feet. Third do, at Upper Plaster Bed, eight feet lift. No. 4, at Stony Creek, seven feet lift, all within eight miles distance, when we enter another level of about thirty miles, to within about two miles of Brantford. By a recent examination another lock and dam of five or six feet lift is found necessary on this level, the dams being placed at the head of the rapids, and a side cut extending to the slack water below, where the locks are placed, overcomes the ascent, without raising the dams to overflow the banks.

The river extends from this a great distance into the country passing Paris, Galt, Dumfries, Waterloo, Guelph, Wilmot, Nichol, and other townships equal in soil and situation to any part of the interior of the Province. It is also intersected by various streams, Horner's or Whiteman's Creek, the river Neith, (heretofore called Smith's Creek) forming the forks of the river extending through Blenheim, a large distance in the interior, abounding with pine and other valuable timber.

From the extent of country to which this noble river forms a frontier, or the natural centre for the concentration of its products, the Directors determined on making stone locks of sufficient dimensions to admit steam navigation, 115 feet long by 32 feet wide.

A glance at the map of the Western Country will at once demonstrate the unrivalled advantages possessed by this route, when brought into complete operation. The time is not far distant when a similar improvement may be expected on the Thames as far up as London, thus opening a steam navigation between Buffalo and Detroit, with the exception of sixty miles of land carriage between London and Brantford. Those who have witnessed the extent of the intercourse between those places at the present moment, may form a just conception of the number of travellers who will be induced in a few years to take this short, safe, and expeditious route to avoid the boisterous and dangerous navigation of the lakes, particularly at the opening and closing of the season.

We already perceive a spirit of enterprise prevailing among the inhabitants living between the Thames and Grand River. From the best information yet obtained, no serious obstacle intervenes to unite those streams by a navigable canal. It is desirable that those interested should lose no time in procuring the necessary surveys to determine the best route. The effect produced by those improvements in increasing the wealth, industry and comfort of all within their influence is now so clearly established by experience, that it is deemed unnecessary to offer any arguments in their favor. We understand two steamers are intended to ply daily between Brantford and Thorold, the ensuing season, for the accommodation of travellers, emigrants, &c. from Toronto or any port on Lake Ontario, or any part of the Niagara frontier to any part of the interior west of Brantford. We trust the enterprising proprietors will meet a reward from the cheap and expeditious mode of conveyance this will offer on the opening of the navigation.

The necessity of a cordial and zealous co-operation cannot be too forcibly impressed on the minds of all interested in opening a new line of communication in providing the means of an early transit. This early co-operation on the part of the citizens in the State of New York, gave an instantaneous impulse to that undertaking. Before the navigation was opened boats were built, and ready to launch the moment the level was filled; and to this want of enterprise and co-operation on the part of those interested in the Welland Canal may be attributed in a great measure the delay which has attended its usefulness being generally felt on its first opening.

From present appearances we have every reason to believe the three upper locks will be finished by the 1st April, or 15th at farthest, when one transshipment only will be necessary at the lower lock, (Indiana.) This may be effected by bringing wheat in bags from Brantford, and putting it in boats in bulk on the lower level, until the lock is finished which may be as late as the first of June. In case the water is not removed by steam power, which a few days will determine; a slip is now building at the lower dam not to obstruct the early passage of arks, scows, or rafts.

It would be desirable that those interested at or near Brantford, should establish regular lines of boats, barges, or scows for the transportation of merchandise and produce to and from Lake Ontario, or the American frontier, they should visit the works this winter, see the Engineer, Mr. Jackson, and the contractors, and from a personal examination satisfy themselves that the navigation will be opened as early as they require it.

The land heretofore laid out was occupied by the Company early in the season, and an award made of the value as the law directs. Obstacles have been presented to retard a satisfactory adjustment of this question. They have still a hope that it will be settled with no greater injury than the delay of another season. It is the only obstacle to the final and successful completion of an undertaking equal in point of public advantages to any other local improvement in any other part of the Province.

December 24, 1834.

JAMES WINNETT,	} PRESIDENT.	
WM. HAMILTON MERRITT		} DIRECTORS.
SAMUEL STREET.		
DAVID THOMPSON,		
WILLIAM RICHARDSON,		