

## DOCUMENTS

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# THE LEGISLATURE

OF THE

# STATE OF MAINE,

DUBING ITS SESSION

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# TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE.

HOUSE.

# STATE OF MAINE.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, July 8, 1848.

The joint select committee on the petition of the mayor, aldermen and common council of the city of Portland, ask leave to report a statement of facts on the subject of said petition, to accompany the report heretofore made by them.

> NATHAN D. APPLETON, Per order.

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### STATEMENT OF FACTS,

Accompanying the bill entitled "an act to authorize the city of Portland to aid the construction of the Atlantic and St. Lawrence Rail Road." Submitted by the joint select committee on that subject.

The charter of the Atlantic and St. Lawrence Rail Road Company, was granted in 1845, by a nearly unanimous vote in each branch of the legislature.

The importance of the enterprise to the whole state, was distinctly urged by the petitioners for the charter. They represented that Maine could command, by this improvement, a most valuable share in the trade of the great west, and become "the great thoroughfare of the Canadas."

Petitions in aid of this object were presented to the legislature, signed by several hundred citizens of numerons towns, in nearly every county in the state.

The enterprise originated from a similar and kindred project in 1839, when the legislature appropriated \$4,000, for the survey of a rail road route from Portland to lake Champlain—provided the city of Portland would pay one-fifth of all the cost of the survey. And the city was authorized to borrow or raise a sum not exceeding \$1,000, for that purpose—a large part of which was expended accordingly.

Subsequently, in 1845, the legislature authorized the city to raise a further sum not exceeding \$1,000, for the actual exploration of the route to Montreal. [See resolve Feb. 28, 1839, and special acts March 14, 1839, and Feb. 13, 1845.]

The same year—1845—a charter was granted by the Canadian government for a rail road from Montreal to the boundary line, to connect with the road leading to Portland.

The two companies immediately entered upon plans for coöperation and agreement upon a common system, to connect the St. Lawrence at Montreal, with the Atlantic at Portland.

The object is to open to the ocean, by the shortest and best route, the great and lucrative western trade, which descends the St. Lawrence to Montreal—and to facilitate also, the large and valuable return trade in foreign commodities.

The valley of the St. Lawrence, including the great lakes, presents the greatest extent of inland navigation for large burden ships, known in the world.

The falls in the St. Lawrence above Montreal, are now surmounted by ship canals, constructed by government, and opened the present year.

By means of these canals, and the Welland canal around the falls of Niagara, merchant ships of 300 to 400 tons burthen, carrying not less than 3,500 barrels of flour, are now performing regular voyages between Montreal and the upper lakes.

Thus, a cargo taken in at Chicago can be transported, without breaking bulk, to the terminus of the rail road at Montreal, and thence, delivered in one day, at Portland harbor.

By the testimony of leading merchants in Canada, there is no other route by which the products of the west can be transported so cheaply to the ocean.

Montreal is now the seat of the government of Canada. It is an active and prosperous city, of upwards of 50,000 inhabitants.

They prefer to adopt *this* route to the seaboard. They have diligently informed themselves of the facilities of the route through Maine, and of the advantageous geographical position of Portland harbor---of its convenience of access, exemption from the delay and cost of pilotage, and freedom from ice in winter.

The directors of the Canadian company speak also with confidence of the desirableness of this route, with its connecting lines, as the great medium of communication with the provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

The charter of the Atlantic and St. Lawrence Rail Road required the sum of \$1,000,000 to be subscribed before the company could be organized. That amount was obtained in August, 1845 more than three quarters of it in the city of Portland—and the first instalment to the amount of \$50,000 paid in.

The work of construction was commenced in July, 1846—surveys over the whole route having been diligently prosecuted for more than a year preceding.

When the petition for the present act was presented to this legislature, the company had received from assessments and expended on the work upwards of \$500,000.

The road is now finished as far as North Yarmouth, and has been opened and run to that point. The regular running of trains over that portion will commence about the 20th of the present month.

The grading and bridging are nearly completed to Danville, sixteen miles beyond North Yarmouth, being twenty-seven miles from Portland. This part will be opened as fast as the iron can be laid. The work is also in an advanced state, to a point above Mechanic Falls, forty miles distant from Portland. The iron is contracted for, as far as Mechanic Falls. Three cargoes of iron have been delivered; a fourth is on the way.

The work is under contract to South Paris, in Oxford county. The whole road can be opened to the borders of that county within the present year.

Upon the completion of the road to Paris, it will attract, besides the local travel, a large amount of travel and business from the northern parts of New Hampshire and Vermont.

The grades of the road are so remarkably light and favorable to the descending trade, that the timber, wood, and other bulky products of Oxford county and the adjacent region can at once be cheaply transported to the sea-board. At present, the forests of that region are entirely unproductive. At an early day the road will derive an important revenue from its connecting roads in this state, which are now in advanced stages of progress.

The connecting road in Canada is under effective progress. Thirty miles of it will be opened next fall. It is not doubted, in Canada, that that road will receive important public aid.

The cost of the Portland road is estimated at not far from \$3,000,000, one third part of which is now secured. An additional million will give assurance of its construction to the New Hamshire line. A favorable charter through that state has already been granted, and the inhabitants on the route are deeply interested in the enterprise. Upon assurance that provision is made to bring the road to the line of their state, they will take a large part of the remainder of the stock. The northern parts of New Hampshire and Vermont, in the valley of the Connecticut, constitute one of the finest and most prosperous agricultural districts in New England.

An active competition is pressing other rail roads, from the city of Boston, to the Canadian fromtier and the valley of the St. Lawrence. The petitioners for the present act, represent that Portland is one hundred miles nearer to Montreal than Boston is by any practicable rail road route, and that this undeniable advantage of geographical position, if they are allowed the privilege of helping themselves, according to the present project, and of doing it quickly, will secure to them, and to this state, a superiority over all such rivalry.

The population of Portland is about 20,000. Its valuation, as last estimated, is \$4,076,303. Property has already been much enhanced, in the city, by the influence of this enterprise.

The subject was first brought before the inhabitants at a general town meeting, called according to the city charter, by a warrant specifying this object. At that meeting no objection whatever was made to the scheme.

The city council also voted, unanimously, to apply to the legislature for this authority. Petitions in aid have been presented, signed by about one thousand four hundred and fifty inhabitants, tax-payers and voters.

One remonstrance only has appeared, signed by eighteen persons, two of whom, under their hands, have since disavowed that procedure.

The whole amount of of tax raised by the city the present year is 61,829.27, of which amount the remonstrants are assessed 1,728— or two and eight-tenths per cent., nearly.

July 7, 1848.

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### STATE OF MAINE.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, July 8, 1848.

ORDERED, That seven hundred copies of the foregoing statement of facts be printed for the use of the Legislature.

SAMUEL BELCHER, Clerk.