

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Sixty-Seventh Legislature.

SENATE.

No. 17.

STATE OF MAINE.

OFFICE OF SECRETARY OF STATE, }
AUGUSTA, January 16, 1895. }

To the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House:

I have the honor to herewith transmit the report of the Executive Council, in the matter of the proposed bridge at Howland, with accompanying papers.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

NICHOLAS FESSENDEN,

Secretary of State.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN COUNCIL, December 21, 1894.

The Special Committee on Bridge at Howland, to which was referred the accompanying papers, report that we have personally examined the premises; that we gave a public hearing duly advertised to all parties interested; that the enclosed Memorial and papers are so full and explicit, that we need not add anything thereto; that there is no doubt in our minds that said bridge is a public necessity, and that it would prove profitable to the interest of the State, to make a liberal appropriation therefor; that we have good reason to believe that a bridge at Howland would largely increase the material interests in that section of the State, and attract a large amount of "foreign capital."

Which is respectfully submitted,

L. G. DOWNES, *Chairman.*

HOWLAND, December 11, 1894.

To His Excellency, Henry B. Cleaves, Governor of Maine:

Honorables Lemuel G. Downes, Charles A. Harrington, and Fred Atwood, who were appointed a committee, by his Excellency to investigate the matter of the necessity of the State of Maine granting aid to build a bridge at Howland, across the Penobscot river, connecting the said town of Howland with the town of Enfield.

GENTLEMEN:—I take pleasure herewith in submitting the following memorial, which I think truthfully sets forth the urgent necessity for the State of Maine to grant sufficient aid in erecting at this point a suitable highway bridge for the benefit of the travelling public, of eastern Maine.

I sincerely hope that this matter will meet with your approval, and that you will feel justified in recommending the next legislature to grant us the aid which we so badly need; and that you will feel, after perusing the following memorial, that by the construction of a bridge at this point, the State will be further developed to the extent, that in a few years, it will be remunerated by the addition of taxable property, and the development of this section of the State to the extent, that it will be repaid for the outlay, made at this time. I remain

Yours sincerely,

N. M. JONES,

Representative to Sixty-seventh Legislature.

MEMORIAL.

The Penobscot river, the largest river in Maine, the great waterway by which millions of logs from the interior forests are annually floated down to tide water and a market at Bangor, and of inestimable value by reason of its splendid water powers, is yet a serious objection to traffic and intercourse between the Eastern and Central districts of the State, and a hindrance to the settlement and development of many towns and sections, possessing in themselves great natural advantages.

In its whole course of three hundred miles, from the head waters to the sea, the Penobscot river is spanned by only two highway bridges, one at Old Town, the other at Bangor.

The Lower Penobscot, (so called) after the East and West branches have united and been joined by the Mattawamkeag, flows nearly direct to the sea, 120 miles, cutting Penobscot county in two from north to south, and is unbridged above Old Town, twelve miles north of Bangor, with the exception of the railroad bridge, upon which the Canadian Pacific crosses at Mattawamkeag. The Maine Central Railroad extends up the east bank of the river, from Old Town to Mattawamkeag, with prosperous villages and well developed farming towns along its line; while across the river the country is for the most part an almost trackless wilderness—close at hand, yet remote and well-nigh inaccessible, because of the barrier formed by the broad and rapid river that flows between. Yet this wilderness tract is a naturally rich section, capable of infinite industrial development, and of sustaining a large population.

Thirty-five miles above Bangor, in the town of Howland, the Piscataquis river comes into the Penobscot from the west. The Piscataquis furnishes an excellent water power at this point, and around it has grown up a stirring village. But until within a recent period, Howland has been chiefly noted as a crossing place of the Penobscot, where the highway travel from the central and western sections of the State into Eastern Maine and the Aroostook, and the trade and traffic between the respective sections, concentrates over the various country roads, convening at this point, to cross the river by ferry. This ferry was for years, and still is, in fact, the main thoroughfare of communication between Eastern Penobscot and Aroostook on the one hand, and between Penobscot, Piscataquis and Somerset, and Kennebec counties on the other.

Five or six years ago, the hand of industrial enterprise took hold of this section. The "rips" of the Penobscot just above the mouth of the Piscataquis were capable of being developed into a magnificent water power. A company of capitalists secured the rights and proceeded to expend half a million dollars in building a dam across the river, and erecting a large pulp mill on the eastern side, opposite Howland, in the town of Enfield, now known as Montague. Now, where there stood an unbroken forest, is a busy village of over five hundred inhabitants, with more than a hundred houses, a dozen stores, two hotels, two churches, schools, public hall, and various shops and other buildings, while the mill is shipping forty tons of pulp daily, and paying out five thousand dollars a month in wages.

A year or two later another company was the means of a similar transformation on the opposite side of the river in

Howland. In spite of the disadvantages of uncertain ferriage, over the turbulent Penobscot, this company invested about three hundred thousand dollars in erecting a plant for the manufacture of pulp, improving the water power on the Piscataquis, building piers, &c., and in constructing a costly suspension foot bridge over the Piscataquis, and a wire rope tramway across the Penobscot. Since then, more than fifty new dwellings and other buildings have been erected in the village, including churches, schools, stores, etc., at an aggregate cost of nearly fifty thousand dollars, and the population has increased from 171 in 1890 to about 500 in 1894.

This mill was in full tide of successful operation, although only just established upon a paying basis, when, early in the present year, the plant was swept away in a single night by fire—a severe blow and a disastrous check to the new-born hopes of the little village. But, notwithstanding strong inducements held out to the company to locate elsewhere, they decided to rebuild upon the former site, and accordingly, they have invested some two hundred thousand dollars more in a modern plant of fireproof construction, which is now approaching completion, and will go into full operation some time the present winter. *

Here there are two stirring manufacturing communities of half a thousand people each, situated upon opposite banks of the river, with no means of intercourse in summer, but by costly ferriage, often difficult and hazardous, and some of the time entirely impracticable. For at least six weeks of the year, in spring and fall, when the river is at freshet pitch, when ice or logs are running, and crossing on the ice above the dam is unsafe, ferrying is suspended, and there is no way to get from one shore to the other, but by way of Old Town, a trip of more than forty miles. Even in midsummer, ferry-

ing is often difficult and tedious, not to say dangerous, for the heavy scow is not easily navigable in the shoal and quick water, and in times of extreme drought, the bar in midstream at the mouth of the Piscataquis is impossible of passage, necessitating recourse to fording, among rocks and quick-sands, that make disaster imminent.

That a bridge across the Penobscot at this point is most urgently needed—nay that it becomes an imperative necessity unless further development in this section is to be greatly retarded is obvious to whoever studies the situation. The nearest one is at Old Town, twenty miles below, and there is none on the whole stretch of the river above. The need is fully appreciated by the twin towns, Howland and Enfield, but the cost is beyond their means, especially as Howland, whose interest in the project is greater, will soon have to construct a bridge over the Piscataquis, which divides the village, and which is crossed only by a foot bridge, erected by the pulp company. Until the advent of the manufacturing corporations, the towns had less than two hundred inhabitants each, and their increase in population and wealth is wholly due to these enterprises. Furthermore, their present apparent prosperity is prospective rather than actual, for they have also invested largely, in public and private buildings, roads, village improvements, etc., made necessary by the new order of things, while the taxes levied upon the mill properties are as yet only nominal, as a needed encouragement to manufacturing enterprise. And on the other hand, Howland, whose State tax in 1890 was eighty-two dollars, now pays to the State over \$400; while Enfield, which formerly paid \$130, now pays a State tax of nearly \$600.

That the growth of these towns would be greatly facilitated, especially in the manufacturing line, by a bridge con-

necting them, is beyond question, especially Howland, now isolated on the western bank of the river, and which has superb waterpowers, fine farming lands, and is wooded with a heavy growth of valuable timber. Wells' "Water Power of Maine," speaking of the Piscataquis, with its twenty foot fall at the mouth (1,580 horse-power) and of yet another power, unimproved, on the Sebois river, says—

"These, taken in connection with the enormous power on the Penobscot river, carry up the manufacturing resources and capabilities of this town, to a figure not surpassed."

But it is not alone these towns that are interested in bridging the Penobscot at Howland. It is far from being purely a local question, for the Howland ferry is not merely a county, but a State thoroughfare, and a much travelled one, as the ferry records will show. From twenty to forty teams, and from thirty to sixty single passengers a day cross the river at this point, and the ferry's receipts are upwards of twelve hundred dollars for the seven or eight months it is in operation. Many of the travellers come long distances, from Aroostook on the east, and from Piscataquis and parts as remote as Skowhegan on the west. In times of freshet, the ferry is dangerous of passage, and at all times, there is likelihood of delay, while waiting for earlier comers to make the trip, yet travellers take the risk rather than go around by way of Old Town, as it saves thirty to forty miles of travel.

This bridge, therefore is a matter, affecting the interests of not only a considerable section, but of the State at large. Five county roads converge on the river bank in Howland. One on the north, which strikes the Canadian Pacific Railway; one on the south, leading to Edinburg, Old Town and Bangor; one on the southwest, to Lagrange on the Bangor

and Aroostook Railroad ; and two on the west, following the north and south banks of the Piscataquis river, across Piscataquis county, and through to the section beyond. Much more traffic would be developed, moreover, if intercourse between the east and west were facilitated, and the spanning of the river by a bridge, would be speedily followed by the construction of new roads, and the making of new farms in what is now an unbroken wilderness.

The interest of the manufacturing corporations in a bridge is only general, as it would be of no special benefit to them as regards their transportation facilities. A branch track of the eastern bank of the river, extending from the Maine Central Railroad at Enfield Station, three miles distant, fully serves the mill on the Enfield side, while the Howland mill people have been at large expense to perfect a carrier system, which by an elevated wire-rope tramway automatically conveys their product across the river to the railroad and brings back supplies with ease and dispatch and small expense. A bridge would unquestionably prove an added and a powerful incentive to the establishment of a large paper mill in connection with the pulp plant, which is one of the enterprises that the company have in contemplation, providing the bridge is built.

The benefit to this section of the State from the operations of these large manufacturing enterprises can scarcely be estimated. Here, where five or six years ago the only evidences of civilization were a small village and a few scattered farm houses, nearly a million dollars has been expended in building and equipping two manufacturing plants, which together give employment to upwards of four hundred hands and pay out ten thousand dollars a month in wages, and whose

freight bills for railroad transportation amount to over one hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year.

Besides they carry on extensive lumbering operations in the woods in getting out their supply of pulp material, itself no small item.

Their enterprise in turn, have necessitated and stimulated the building of more than one hundred and fifty houses, stores, churches, schools, etc., and enhanced the farming interests of their own and neighboring towns to such a degree that all around, farms which had been running behind have paid their mortgages, and are earning money for their owners; abandoned farms have been again taken up, and new farms are being wrested from the primeval forest.

The benefit is widespread and far reaching, and it seems fitting that it should receive some measure of recognition from the State.

Respectfully submitted by

NATHANIEL M. JONES,

Representative to Sixty-Seventh Legislature.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN SENATE, January 17, 1895.

Read, and on motion by Mr. GORDON of Oxford, laid on table to be printed.

KENDALL M. DUNBAR, *Secretary*.