

efforts had been undertaken in Virginia to build canals along the banks of the Potomac between 1812 and 1823.⁴

In 1820 the Virginia Board of Public Works was authorized to survey the land between the Potomac and the southern branches of the Ohio to determine whether the two rivers could be connected by a canal. Two inspections were made, both concluding that such a connection was feasible. One report estimated the cost to be \$1,100,000, the other \$1,574,000.⁵

In 1823 Virginia, forsaking the Potomac Company, incorporated the Potomac Canal Company to undertake the task of building a canal to the Ohio but made the incorporation contingent upon confirmation by Maryland. Twice the matter was presented to the Maryland General Assembly without success. Not only did the state have a considerable investment in the existing Potomac Company, but the Baltimore City interests could see little advantage to themselves from such an enterprise. Unless a way were found to connect the city to the proposed canal, the city might in fact suffer a great deal from the project.⁶

By 1825, however, a campaign to develop support for the project, initiated by a convention of canal supporters in 1823, had aroused sufficient interest in the Maryland counties to cause the General Assembly, at its 1824 session, to confirm the act of the Virginia legislature.⁷ Following a preliminary report by the U.S. Board of Engineers in February 1825, which concluded that a canal was practicable, both the U.S. Congress and the Pennsylvania legislature also confirmed the charter, with the company thereafter to be known as the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company.

The General Assembly, now having provided for both the primary and the lateral canals, turned its attention to the Eastern Shore projects mentioned in the act creating the board. In section 21 of the internal improvement act (chapter 180), it appropriated \$200,000

to drain, embank, and render dry and arable the low lands on the margins of such rivers and creeks of the Eastern Shore of this state, as the board of public works may think proper and recommend, and to complete and carry into effect such plans for opening and improving the navigation of the Pocomoke, Manokin, Wicomico, Great Choptank, Chester, Elk and North East rivers, as the board of public works may devise, recommend and contract for on behalf of the state of Maryland.

Section 21 then added certain conditions to the expenditure of the sums so appropriated as well as to the subscriptions for new stock in the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company or the Maryland Canal Company. Those provisos were that (1) Congress authorize a subscription for 10,000 shares of the capital stock of "the eastern section of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal"; (2) the Board of Public Works ascertain and certify the practicability of connecting the C & O Canal with the Patapsco River at the city of Baltimore "by the canal described in this act"; (3) unless the Board of Public Works adopted "for the said canal, a line wholly within the State of Maryland," Congress authorize the state and any company incorporated by it, to cut through the District of Columbia in connecting the C & O Canal with Baltimore; and (4) the governor be satisfied that the amount estimated by the U.S. Board of Engineers to be needed to complete the eastern section of the C & O Canal, after deducting the subscriptions by the state of Maryland and the United States, has been actually subscribed by "bona fide and competent subscribers."

Moving counterclockwise around the state, the legislature, in section 22 of the act, provided that

4. Sanderlin, *Great National Project*, p. 49.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

6. Andrews, *History of Maryland*, p. 454; Van Ness, "Economic Development," pp. 192-93.

7. Acts of 1824, ch. 79.