

The President of the United States has called the attention of congress, in his late message, to but *one* canal route, by which the navigation and commerce of the Chesapeake may be extended; and that too, a route passing along a line of the controverted boundary between this state and the state of Virginia. But, there are *two* other routes, along which, for great *national* purposes, canal and river navigation may be extended from the tide waters of the Chesapeake. The one reaching up the Susquehanna to the Seneca lake, and thence through the New York canals, to the lakes Ontario and Erie; and the other by the way of the Susquehanna, Juniata and Allegany to Pittsburg on the Ohio river. Which of these *three* routes is most practicable, cheapest and best? and every circumstance relative to their comparative merits, benefits and advantages, in a *national point of view*, and as affording *national* facilities and advantages cannot be in any manner correctly and fairly considered and determined until each of them has been carefully and accurately surveyed; until the capacity and cost of a canal, and the expense and delays of transportation on each shall have been properly estimated and ascertained from actual observation and measurement; and not until then.

This assembly, therefore, do most highly approve, not only of the Presidents proposition "to examine the unexplored ground," but of an examination of the whole ground, along the Potomac line, from the city of Washington to Pittsburg, or some other suitable point on the Ohio river; because the explorations, that have been hitherto made, so far as they have come to the knowledge of this assembly, have not been in all respects so perfectly satisfactory as could be wished; because there should not be the least inaccuracy in so important a survey; and because it should be exhibited in one entire, continuous and well connected estimate. But at the same time, they do most earnestly hope, that the other proposed *national* canal routes, leading from the Chesapeake, either to the westward, or to the northward, may not be overlooked or neglected. There is, it must be acknowledged, great truth and force in the remark, that a *national* canal line, passing through or from the seat of government, "would contribute essentially to strengthen the bond of Union itself;" and such a canal line would, also, most assuredly contribute largely to promote the interest and aggrandisement of the city and district, which has been selected as the permanent seat of the general government. But, if self interest, reciprocity of benefits, and general utility be the only, or the chief principles in which the canal bonds of union consist, then those canal routes along which the most important military operations may be conducted, and the greatest amount of commerce would be likely to pass, and could be transported cheapest, safest and soonest, would, in a *national point of view*, be the strongest and most important bonds of union. And in these respects, those routes, which lead through the Susquehanna, will surely bear to be placed in comparison with that by the Potomac. As regards the nation, however, it is a mere question of relative *national* advantage, which it belongs to the *nation* exclusively to decide; but as regards the people of this state, and all who dwell upon the tide waters of the Chesapeake, those canal lines are, all of them, fraught with the most important interests.

But there is a subject intimately blended with the examination of the Potomac canal route to the westward, in which this state has, from a remote period, had a very deep interest. The boundary line between this state and the state of Virginia had become a subject of controversy even while they were under their colonial governments. In the year 1785 a compact was made and entered into, between the two states, to regulate and settle the jurisdiction, and navigation of Potomac and Pocomoke rivers, and that part of Chesapeake bay which lies within the territory of Virginia—(Kely's L. M. 1785, ch. 1, sec. 1785, No. 1.) But from the head of tide, in the Potomac, westwardly and northerly, every thing remains entirely as under the original charters, and is wholly unadjusted to the present day, notwithstanding the repeated overtures and invitations on the part of Maryland. The deliberations of the commissioners, who formed this compact, led to a more extensive view of the subject, and gave birth to another meeting in the year 1786, at which five states, on or near the Chesapeake, were represented—The object was in a great measure confined to the navigation of that immense bay, which divides two states and approaches three more. The more the subject was examined, the greater the necessity appeared for extending the plan to a national system of commerce, and a radical reform of the articles of confederation. And thus the federal constitution itself originated from causes associated with those conflicting claims and pretensions of Maryland and Virginia relative to the boundary between them—S Ram. History U. S. 49. It is a subject which this state has at no time, regarded with indifference; and in relation to which, no neglect or carelessness can be imputed to its government—(Reso. 1795, No. 34—1796, No. 5—1810, No. 10—1806, No. 10—1801, No. 3.)

It appears, that the charter of Maryland calls for the following southern boundary—Sec. 3, "passing from the said bay called Delaware bay, in a right line by the degree aforesaid, unto the true meridian of the first fountain of the river Potomac, thence verging towards the south unto the further bank of the said river, and following the same on the west and south unto a certain place called Cinquack, situate near the mouth of said river, where it disembogues into the aforesaid Chesapeake, and thence by the shortest line unto the aforesaid promontory or place called Walken's point." This call for "the first fountain of the river Potomac," would seem to be one so very distinct and unequivocal in its nature, that it could not possibly be misunderstood or misapplied by any person. It must, on all hands, be allowed to refer to the highest fountain, or the most remote and westerly head spring of that river and none other. And that which now appears, by all the maps of the country to be the highest and most westerly, by many miles, is that of the south branch of the Potomac. It appears, however, that until a short period before the commencement of our revolutionary war, the country being un-