MICHIGAN RAILROADS, 1837-1846: A STUDY IN INTERNAL IMPROVEMENTS

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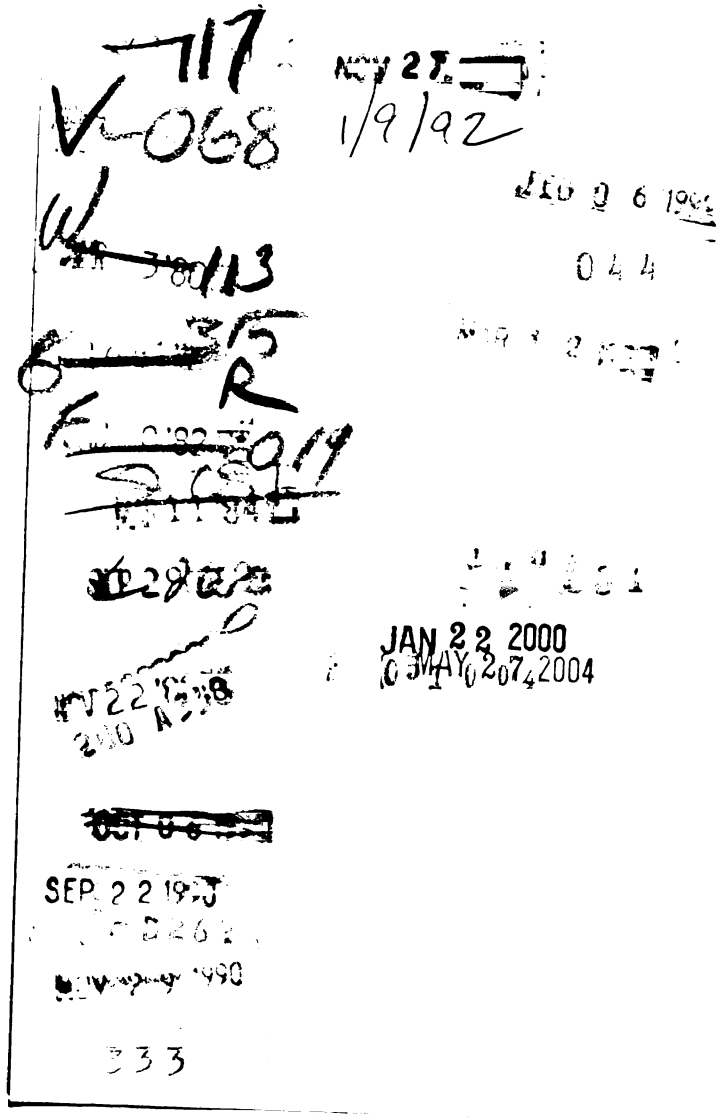
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ABSTRACT

MICHIGAN RAILROADS, 1837-1846:
A STUDY IN INTERNAL IMPROVEMENTS

by Clarence Fredrick Berndt, Jr.

As the people of the young United States pushed into the frontier areas of the great West, a variety of problems confronted them. As the various areas were settled, and became territories and states, questions involving the establishment of governments, settlement of population, promotion of internal growth, and improvement of transportation presented themselves. Michigan was no exception.

When Michigan became a state in 1837, her people were already hard at work. They had claimed and worked farms, located and settled towns, and cleared some roads. More and more people, however, were flooding to the new state, and the few roads which existed were inadequate to meet the needs. If Michigan was to grow economically, more and better means of transportation must be provided. Thus the men of Michigan included in the Constitution of 1835 a provision that the state encourage internal improvements and provide, by law, "proper objects of improvement."

With the confidence and optimism characteristic of the frontier, the men of Michigan saw a state-owned railroad as a means of assuring the economic growth of the state. A railroad across the peninsula, it was argued, would enable settlers to move rapidly to their new homes, supplies to reach the frontier, and agricultural products to go quickly to market at moderate cost. In addition, they said, the railroad would bring new industry to the state, increase land values, remove the need for taxation, and make Michigan a link in the chain of transportation between East and West.

Thus the first Michigan Legislature, meeting in early 1837, needed little prompting from Governor Stevens Thomson Mason to authorize a huge internal improvements program. A modest proposal to construct one railroad, several canals, and to improve roads and rivers, under sectional prodding soon mushroomed into a program which included three trans-peninsular railroads, two canals, and a large number of road and river improvements. A five million dollar loan and income from land sales were to finance the program.

Work on the various projects began almost immediately. The state purchased the Detroit and St. Joseph Railway Company, which was building a railroad from Detroit to the mouth of the St. Joseph River, and renamed it the Michigan Central. Surveys of the Northern, Central, and Southern railroads were made. Governor Mason traveled east and successfully negotiated the five million dollar loan with the Morris Canal and Banking Company of New Jersey and the United States Bank of Pennsylvania.

As the boom times of early 1837 changed to the depression times of late 1837, the optimism and enthusiasm for internal improvements in Michigan waned. When the Morris Canal and Banking Company and the United States Bank defaulted on their loan payments in 1840 and 1841, Michigan was forced to abandon work on the Northern Railroad and the canals. Sectional interests, however, pointing to the income of the Central and Southern railroads as the only means of paying the debt which the state had incurred when it released the five million dollars in bonds to the Morris Canal Company, were able to persuade the state to continue work on the two railroads for several years. The income, however, was used largely to make repairs and to extend the two railroads

to Kalamazoo and Hillsdale. Finally, with increased taxation imminent, the 1846 Legislature agreed to sell both railroads to Eastern interests.

For years afterwards, the internal improvements projects were looked upon as tragic enterprises which had produced only financial disaster for the young state. But this is only one side of the picture. While the financial reputation of Michigan was damaged, the building of the railroads brought many benefits to the state which otherwise might have been delayed for many years. In those parts of the state served by the Central and the Southern, transportation was improved markedly. Building of the railroads stimulated both migration and agricultural production. Land values increased. Perhaps the biggest benefit to accrue to Michigan was that the venture into railroad building provided the people of the state with an opportunity to evaluate and determine the roles of government and private enterprise in a democratic society operating with a free enterprise economic system. Viewed in perspective, the internal improvement projects of Michigan were worth the effort.

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By

Clarence Fredrick Berndt, Jr.

A THESIS

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The Michigan which John T. Blois described in his Gazetteer of Michigan (1838) was vastly different from the Michigan which Lewis Cass saw when he became the governor of the Michigan Territory in 1813.

Between 1813 and 1838 control of the land in Michigan passed from the Indians to the federal government. During the intervening years, Lewis Cass, as ex-officio superintendent of Indian affairs for the Michigan Territory, negotiated with various Indian tribes for the cession of their land to the federal government. Together with Governor McArthur of Ohio, Cass acquired Indian land in Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan in 1817. In 1819 Cass obtained 6,000,000 acres of land in Michigan from the Chippewas; in an 1821 treaty with the Chippewas, Ottawas, and Pottawatomies, he completed the acquisition of all Indian lands south of the peninsula's Grand River. By the time Cass resigned from the governorship in 1831, he had completed twenty-two treaties with the Indians in which he gained both land and respect. The remainder of the lower peninsula was acquired by treaty in 1837. This shift in land control was one area of contrast between the Michigans of 1813 and 1838.[1]

There was also a decided contrast between the image of Michigan prevalent in the East in 1813 and that prevalent in 1838. Blois

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[1]F. Clever Bald, Michigan in Four Centuries (New York, 1954), p. 146; Michigan Centennial History, ed. George N. Fuller (Chicago, 1939), I, 141-42. Michigan in Four Centuries will hereafter be cited as Bald. Michigan Centennial History will be cited hereafter as Fuller, Centennial History.

published his Gazetteer of Michigan to provide the Michigan resident and the prospective emigrant to Michigan a handbook of information on the area. It was a work which culminated a campaign begun by Cass to publicize Michigan. Cass began writing to his friends in the East about the magnificent forests and rich soil of Michigan to counter the ill effects of an 1815 report of the Surveyor General of the United States, Edward Tiffin.

At the close of the War of 1812, Congress passed a law providing that two million acres of land be surveyed and given to soldiers for their service in the war. When Tiffin sent surveyors to the Michigan Territory, they encountered many disagreeable swamps and lakes. As a result, they reported to the Surveyor General about the upland sandhills, the lowland marshes, the generally bad country, and declared that there were "not more than one acre in a hundred, if there were one out of a thousand that would in any case admit to cultivation." The report persuaded Congress to designate lands in Illinois and Missouri for the veterans of the war and diverted settlers from Michigan for several years.[2]

Cass was highly displeased with the report and demanded another, more complete, survey; it was begun in 1816.[3] With the permission of Secretary of War John C. Calhoun, Cass outfitted and led an 1820 expedition to explore the southern shore of Lake Superior and the

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[2]Bald, pp. 145-46; American State Papers: Public Lands, III, 164-65; Clarence Frost, "The Early Railroads of Southern Michigan," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, XXXVIII (1912), 498-99. Hereafter this collection will be designated as MPHC.

[3]A. C. McLaughlin, "The Influence of Governor Cass on the Expansion of the Northwest," American Historical Association Papers, III (1889), 315-18.

upper course of the Mississippi. Captain David B. Douglas was taken along to make detailed maps of the area. The accounts of the expedition by Henry R. Schoolcraft, a geologist, and Cass helped to improve Michigan's image in the East. Other surveys and expeditions provided more complete knowledge of the area.[4]

But Cass and Schoolcraft were not the only ones who wrote the East concerning the natural resources, beauty, and opportunities in the Territory. In both letters and diaries, it was the object of many plaudits. As early as July, 1827, Mark Norris, a leading settler of Washtenaw County, recorded in his diary his reaction to some of the things which must have attracted settlers to Michigan. While visiting in Washtenaw County, he wrote,

> July 20. Today viewed S., M. and W.'s farms; find them good, better, best; more beautiful farms than M's and W's I never saw. They possess all the advantages of old cleared land, with the richness of a garden, and a prospect like Wadsworth's flats in the Genesee. July 21. Slept at M's place last night; this morning started for Mill Creek (near Dexter). Passed some fine lands near the clear and rapid Huron.[5]

Bela Hubbard was describing Oakland County when, in September, 1837, he wrote,

> The surrounding country seemed far enough removed from the gloomy morass which wild imaginations had depicted it twenty years before. It appeared to me the most beautiful [country] the sun had ever shown upon. It was of the character then beginning to be classed as 'openings' characterized by a gravelly soil and a sparse growth of oaks and hickories.... climbing a tree on one of the most elevated

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[4]Bald, pp. 147-50.

[5]Henry M. Utley and Byron M. Cutcheon, Michigan as a Province, Territory, and State (New York, 1906), III, 181. Hereafter cited as Utley.

> knobs, seven lakes lay at my feet; on the north and west undulations like heavy swells of the sea, and on the east a level plain stretching to the horizon, like an Ocean's verge.[6]

The existence of an ample supply of fresh water, oak openings with large enough spaces between the trees to permit almost immediate plowing and planting, and trees which would provide sufficient timber for the settler's first house and other buildings made Michigan attractive to the New England family contemplating a move west.[7]

Articles in Michigan newspapers, many of which were quoted or reprinted in Eastern newspapers, reported on the bountiful crops being raised in Michigan. A letter to the editor of the Detroit Free Press stated that "Mr. Clark W. Mockey, of Sand-Stone, Jackson County, M.T., raised the last season upon nine acres of ground, four hundred and eleven bushels of first rate wheat; two acres in the same field yielded a little more than fifty bushels to the acre." The letter went on to say that if the men of New England could see the richness and beauty of Michigan, "they would soon dispose of their property" and "migrate to a country where their habitual industry and economy would speedily place them in a situation to be independent as those who have inherited large fortunes from their ancestors."[8]

The cumulative effect of these letters, diaries, expedition reports, newspaper articles, and personal testimony was an improved picture of Michigan in the East. The means of travel available to people

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[6]Utley, III, 182.

[7]Warren R. Atkins, "Early Routes of Travel in Michigan," unpublished summary of a lecture delivered before the Kalamazoo Valley Geneological Society, January 8, 1960, p. 4, available at the Michigan State Library, Lansing. Hereafter cited as Atkins.

[8]Detroit Democratic Free Press, March 5, 1834.

desiring to emigrate to Michigan also presented an improved picture between 1813 and 1838.

The immediate stimulus to emigration to Michigan Territory was the improvement of navigation on the Great Lakes. When the 338 ton steamer Walk-in-the-Water reached Detroit from Buffalo on August 27, 1818, steam navigation to Michigan was inaugurated. The steamer greatly facilitated transportation and communication between Detroit and the East.

After the Walk-in-the-Water was wrecked in a storm in 1821, the machinery was salvaged and installed in the newly-built steamer Superior, which made its maiden voyage on Lake Erie in 1822. This steamer plied Lake Erie until 1834. Beginning with 1824, one steamer per year was added to the lake fleet, so that by 1831 nine boats were in operation. By 1833 twelve additional boats were making regular trips between Buffalo and Detroit; in both 1834 and 1835 seven new steamers were placed in operation, so that in 1836, thirty-four boats, with a combined tonnage of 8,000, made thirty to thirty-five trips per season. Each trip brought between 100 and 200 emigrants to Michigan.[9]

Another transportation development which greatly benefited Michigan Territory was the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825. Michigan, with its steamer link to Buffalo, was ideally situated to receive the fruits of this transportational funnel. The Erie Canal was significant for Michigan in that it changed the direction of westward migration from the Ohio Valley toward the Canal and the Great Lakes area. Before the

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[9]John Anthony Caruso, The Great Lakes Frontier (Indianapolis, 1961), p. 363. Hereafter cited as Caruso. Caroline E. MacGill, et al., History of Transportation in the United States Before 1860 (Washington, 1917), p. 208. Hereafter cited as MacGill. Detroit Free Press, April 20, 1836.

steamboat and the Erie Canal, the march of emigration "had been through the Cumberland Gap to the Ohio River, and thence via the Ohio to the West, but now [after 1825] it was through the Erie Canal to Buffalo, across the lakes to Detroit, and thence through Michigan."[10]

Together the canal and steamboat provided a route by which Michigan could be reached easily. As compared to a long and hazardous journey by land, to a treacherous journey down the Ohio, or to a combination of the two, the canal and steamer furnished a leisurely trip to the West. The low $15 steamer fare from Buffalo to Detroit led many emigrants to choose Michigan as their destination.[11]

During the 1820's and after, the commerce on the upper lakes grew considerably. Nearly all of the commerce was west-bound and consisted of supplies for the growing settlements. The carrying of passengers, however, was the main portion of the trade. As the population of Michigan increased, the east-bound commerce increased and changed in character. Furs were the chief export of the Michigan area in the early 1800's. By the 1830's Michigan exports consisted chiefly of agricultural products, such as wheat, flour, and other frontier products. The markets of the East were brought closer to Michigan by the improved water transportation.[12]

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[10]Caruso, p. 364; George R. Taylor, The Transportation Revolution: 1815-1860 (New York, 1958), pp. 61-62; Albert S. Hill, "The Romance of a Railway," Michigan History Magazine, XXIII (Winter, 1939), 54. Hereafter this periodical will be designated MHM.

[11]Caruso, p. 364; Fuller, Centennial History, I, 149; Hannah Emily Keith, "An Historical Sketch of Internal Improvements in Michigan, 1836-1846," Michigan Political Science Association Publications, IV (Ann Arbor, 1900-1902), 13. Hereafter cited as Keith.

[12]MacGill, p. 298.

Michigan thus presented a contrast in population between 1813 and 1838. In the early 1800's there were about 40,000 Indians in Michigan; Blois reported that there were 7,914 Indians in the state in 1838.[13] In 1800 the Michigan area had a white population of 3,106; twenty years later the population was 8,765. Following 1820 Michigan's population increased at a phenomenal rate, mostly by immigration. By 1830 the United States Census showed Michigan Territory with a population of 31,460. A territorial census taken in 1834 reported that the lower peninsula alone had a population of 83,797. The population in 1837, when Michigan became a state, was estimated at 175,000, an increase of more than 87,000 in three years. In 1840, two years after Blois' Gazetteer, the population was 212,267, a gain of almost 700 per cent in ten years, excluding land west of Lake Michigan. No state could show a rate of growth from 1820 to 1840 as great as that of Michigan Territory and the state of Michigan for the same period. From 1820 to 1830 the rate of increase was 225 per cent; from 1830 to 1840 the rate was 622 per cent, or from 28,004 to 212,267.[14]

Throughout the 1830's Detroit newspapers were replete with glowing accounts of the steady migration to Michigan. Early in May of 1830 the Detroit Journal estimated that "since the first of April 2,400 [settlers] have landed at Detroit alone."[15] In 1832 the Niles' Weekly

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[13]John T. Blois, Gazetteer of Michigan (Detroit, 1838), p. 156. Hereafter cited as Blois, Gazetteer.

[14]Bald, pp. 110, 151, 155, 205; Charles M. Perry, "Dr. Tappan Comes to Michigan," MHM, X (April, 1926), 194; Keith, p. 11; see also Niles' Weekly Register, November 29, 1834, p. 201, and December 6, 1834, p. 219; Detroit Journal, November 14, 1834; Jeremiah Hughes, Niles' National Register, LXV (October 28, 1843), 138.

[15]Detroit Journal, May 12, 1830.

Register reported that a "hardy and enterprising population" was constantly flowing into Michigan,[16] and in 1834 it declared that "There is a mighty emigration to the west by way of Buffalo, Lake Erie, and Detroit. On the 7th instant, four steamboats arrived with 8 or 9,000 emigrants who soon left Detroit for the yet further west. But many are stopping in Michigan."[17]

Later in the same decade the Detroit Free Press reported,

> The tide of emigration increases with every coming day. People from the east are pouring in upon us through every avenue. Every steamboat that arrives at our wharves come [sic] literally groaning with passengers. The United States came in yesterday with between seven and eight hundred. Boats of largest class last week each brought about an equal number. The schooners and stages also come in full. A very large number besides come by land through Ohio in their wagons with families and household effects. During a period of ten days 318 of these wagons passed through Chatham Co. on their way to Michigan. One day last week the ferry boat Argo brought over 20 covered wagons between 9 and 12 o'clock in the morning.[18]

During that same summer of 1836 the steamboats Daniel Webster and North America were bringing between seven and eight hundred passengers to Detroit per trip. Early in 1836 a man met, between Detroit and Ann Arbor, ninety-five families who were heading west.[19] The Michigan of John T. Blois was experiencing a tremendous influx of emigrants from the East.

Perhaps the clearest evidence of the population growth was in the towns. Most of the emigrants passed through Detroit, for in 1800

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[16]Niles' Weekly Register, November 3, 1832, p. 148.

[17]Niles' Weekly Register, October 25, 1834, p. 116.

[18]Detroit Free Press, May 24, 1836.

[19]Detroit Free Press, June 1, 1836.

Detroit's population was only about 1,000 and in 1837 only a little over 8,000. But growth was very evident here also. Niles' Weekly Register, quoting the Detroit Journal, reported in 1832 that "the city of Detroit is beginning to exhibit evidences of decided advance in population and improvement." On one portion of Jefferson Avenue, ten or twelve three-story brick buildings were being built, and "the improvements in other parts of the city are in proportion considerable."[20]

Throughout the lower peninsula, towns sprang up. The greatest determiner of a town's location was the availability of water. Where the old Indian trails or the early roads crossed a river or a creek was a likely spot for a town; Pontiac, Flint, Saginaw, Mount Clemens, and Port Huron all were located where the territorial roads crossed rivers. Towns such as Ypsilanti, Saline, Clinton, Jonesville, and Niles grew along the Chicago Road; Ann Arbor, Jackson, Albion, Marshall, Battle Creek, Kalamazoo, and St. Joseph prospered on the Territorial Road; Farmington, Brighton, Howell, Grand Rapids, and Grand Haven sprang up along the Grand River Road. During the immigration of the 1830's each of these towns grew. For example, before the migration of 1836 began, Jackson was reported to have a population of over 4,000, and it was predicted that it would "become one of the most flourishing towns in the interior of the Peninsula."[21] While towns did flourish throughout

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[20]Niles' Weekly Register, November 3, 1832, p. 148.

[21]Detroit Free Press, January 20, 1836.

the peninsula, the bulk of the population of Michigan in the 1830's was concentrated in the southeastern counties.[22]

Perhaps the biggest contrast between the Michigan of Cass and that of Blois was the vast change in transportation within the peninsula. As the population grew, inadequate transportation to the interior of the Territory was an ever-increasing problem which faced Governor Cass. During the years of French and British control of the region, little had been done to provide routes of travel to the interior; little had been necessary.

French and British settlements were not built to develop the area, but to foster the fur trade. The French at Detroit and elsewhere depended on streams for their transportation. Each French farm was built facing the Detroit River or one of its tributaries. Except for a few months during the summer, the few roads which were cleared were seas of mud; ox-drawn, two-wheeled carts were the only means of land transportation.

After France relinquished her territory east of the Mississippi River to England in the Peace of Paris of 1763, the English continued to foster the fur trade. Fort Malden, opposite the mouth of the Huron River on the east side of the Detroit River, became the site of annual pow-wows. "The Indian trails funneling into the Detroit-Fort Malden area were well-worn during the British occupation and became the

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[22]Bald, pp. 161-73; Lawton T. Hemans, Life and Times of Stevens Thomson Mason (Lansing, 1920), pp. 40-41. Hereafter cited as Hemans, Mason. Utley, III, 109; Charles M. Perry, "Dr. Tappan Comes to Michigan," MHM, X (April, 1926), 194; William Hathaway, "County Organization in Michigan," MHM, II (July, 1918), 573-629; Hill, MHM, XXIII, 54.

forerunners of the white man's first roads into the interior of Michigan."[23]

From the beginning of America's nominal control of the area in 1783 to the War of 1812, water routes, including rivers, lakes, straits, and portages, provided the main access to the interior of Michigan. Travel north and south was usually done via the great lakes on either side of the peninsula. Few portages existed within the peninsula. The prominence of water routes as means of transportation into and out of the interior continued throughout the territorial period (1805-1837) and into the period of statehood.[24]

During these early years the rivers of the Michigan Territory were much more suited for navigation than at present. The Maple River was large and navigable, and the St. Joseph River had an average width of about thirty rods. Other rivers used for access to the interior included the Shiawassee, Kalamazoo, Thornapple, Lookingglass, Huron, Grand, Clinton, and Saginaw.

These rivers were not without obstacles which impeded movement on them. Recognizing this, the Territorial Council took action at various times to remove obstructions and straighten watercourses. An act of 1836 required the installation of locks and dams on the main rivers, indicating, to some extent, the importance placed on river navigation.[25] No really significant river improvements were made prior

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[23]Atkins, pp. 1-2.

[24]MacGill, pp. 26-27.

[25]Lew Allen Chase, "Michigan's Share in the Establishment of Improved Transportation Between the East and the West," MPHC, XXXVIII (1912), 594.

to statehood, but the rivers still were important, at least as outlets to the lakes and as lanes for shipping furs and produce to market.

One attempt at river navigation was reported by the Detroit Journal and Advertiser of May 21, 1834. Through the use of a flat-bottomed boat, aptly christened the Experiment, a successful attempt was made to navigate the Huron River between Ypsilanti and Detroit. Said the paper, hopefully,

> Last week a boat arrived in this place from Ypsilanti with a load of flour consisting of one hundred and twenty-five barrels, the entire distance being performed in thirty-six hours. . . . The flour was brought here at an expense of about 38¢ per barrel, the usual price by land being from 63¢ to 75¢. After the slight impediments to the navigation are removed, the transportation will be greatly reduced, and it is ascertained by competent and well-judging individuals that by expending a trifling sum of money, the Huron River may be rendered navigable as far as Ypsilanti or Ann Arbor for steamboats of from 30 to 40 tons. The result of this adventure justifies the expectation that hereafter the produce and importations of a considerable portion of Washtenaw (County) will be transported by water, at a much less expense than the usual tedious and tardy mode of land conveyance.[26]

To solve the problem of the "usual tedious and tardy mode of land conveyance" was a major challenge to the ingenuity of early Michigan settlers. Before Michigan could be settled and become prosperous, an adequate system of land transportation to all sections of the state had to be provided.

The early Indian trails, as already noted, were the forerunners of the first roads. The most important of these Indian trails was the north-south trail to Michilimackinac and Sault Ste. Marie, sometimes called the Saginaw and Mackinaw Trail. The main east-west trail

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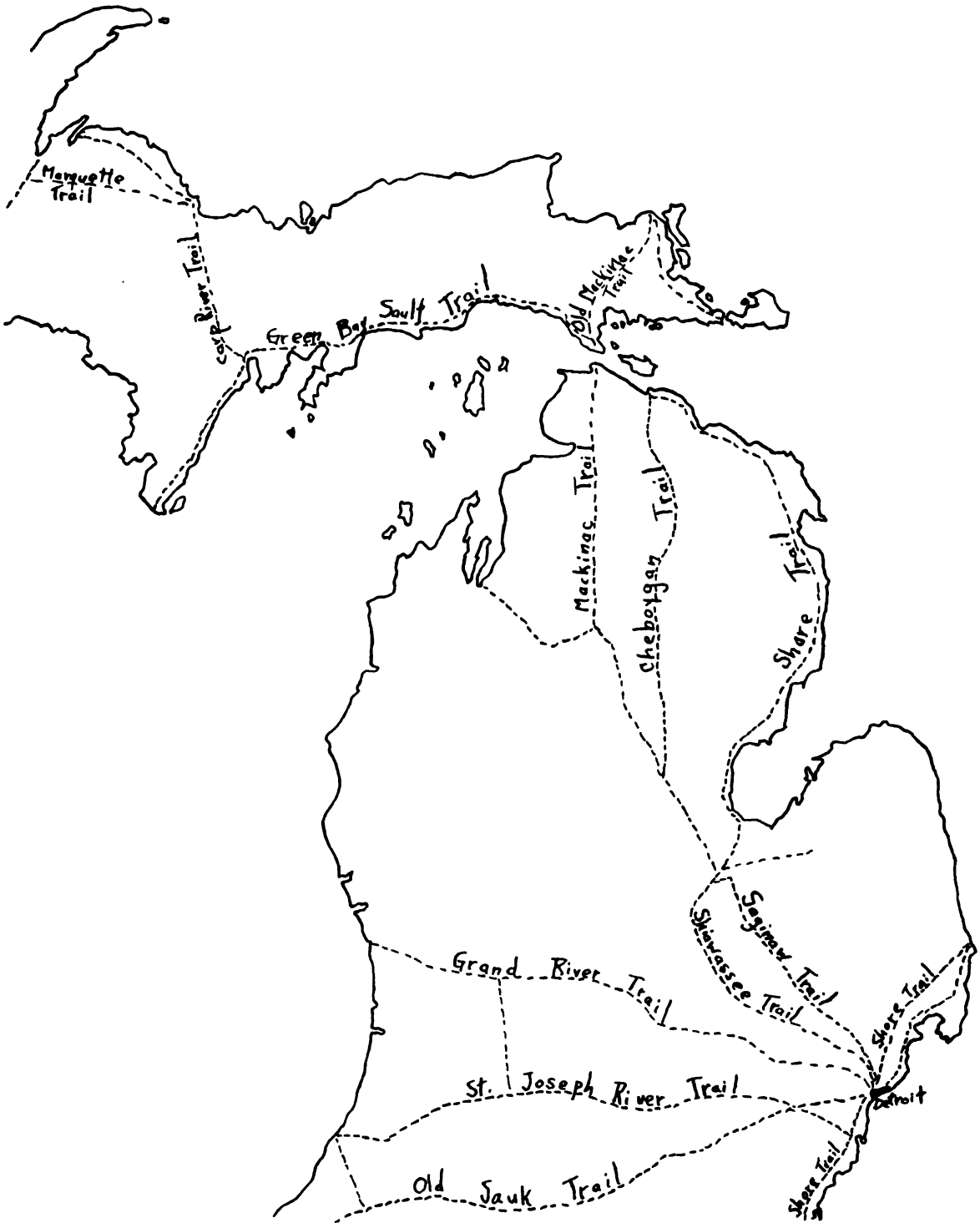
[26]Silas Farmer, History of Detroit and Michigan (Detroit, 1884), p. 889.



Map 1. -- Indian Trails of Michigan

was the St. Joseph River Trail. Other trails within Michigan were the Shore Trail, which skirted Lake Erie and the Detroit River to Lake St. Clair; the Grand River Trail; and the Old Sauk Trail, leading southwest to the Illinois Territory. These trails furnished the only means of travel by land to the interior of Michigan during the period 1807-1812.[27]

In contrast to this problem of land transportation which Cass knew in 1813 was the report which John T. Blois included in his 1838 Gazetteer of Michigan. Concerning the availability of roads Blois wrote,

> The principal turnpike roads in Michigan are what are termed the Territorial or State roads. They were all constructed by authority of the general government previous to her admission into the Union as a State. They are six rods wide, and they were originally well constructed. They all commence at Detroit, and have their termination in different sections of the State. There are five of them.[28]

The first territorial road mentioned by Blois was the Detroit and Perrysburg State Road from Detroit south through Monroe to Perrysburg in Ohio, a distance of sixty-five miles.[29] Sometimes called the Black Swamp Road, it was the key road leading from Ohio to Michigan. It generally followed the old Shore Trail. As a military road earlier, it ran from Fort Meigs on the Maumee River to Detroit. Because of the swampy, level character of the area, travel on it was limited to the summer months. In 1823 Congress allocated funds for the construction

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[27]MacGill, pp. 26-27; Atkins, pp. 2-3; Edmund A. Calkins, "Old Trails of Central Michigan," MHM, XII (April, 1928), 327-49; Utley, II, 161.

[28]Blois, Gazetteer, p. 96.

[29]Blois, Gazetteer, p. 96.

Map 2. -- Roads of Michigan, 1838

of a Detroit to Monroe turnpike which was later extended to the Toledo area. By 1829 the road was fairly useable, but there were no travel accommodations before Monroe, sometimes called Frenchtown because of the French origin of many of the residents. The road became one of the early stage routes and was used by many early travelers.[30]

The second road described by Blois was the Chicago State Road which ran from Detroit to Chicago through Ypsilanti, Saline, Clinton, Jonesville, Coldwater, Sturgis, White Pigeon, Mottville, Adamsville, and Bertrand in Michigan, then through northern Indiana along the southern shore of Lake Michigan to Chicago in Illinois.[31] Following the path of the Old Sauk Trail, construction had been begun in 1825 and was completed in 1835.

Tecumseh was not originally included in the plans for the Chicago Road, but when actual construction reached Clinton, however, it was decided to jog five miles south to Tecumseh and then angle back northwest to Cambridge Junction. In so doing, the Chicago Road avoided what became known as the Irish Hills. It is also possible that the planners foresaw the future need of not only a by-pass to Tecumseh, but also two other connecting roads. One of these would lead north from Cambridge Junction to Jackson, there connecting with the Territorial Road and then continuing northwest to the Grand River along the old Clinton Trail.[32]

The second of these connecting roads was under construction before the Chicago Road was completed. Begun in 1833, the LaPlaisance Road connected the Black Swamp Road and Monroe with the Chicago Road at

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[30]Atkins, p. 5.

[31]Blois, Gazetteer, p. 96.

[32]Atkins, p. 7.

Tecumseh. Since the establishment of the second Michigan Territory land office in Monroe in 1823, the emigrant heading to the interior no longer had to make the trip to the Detroit office to purchase his land. Until the LaPlaisance Road was completed, however, the westward bound settler still had to make a circuitous sixty mile trip via Detroit to reach Tecumseh and points beyond. The road was completed in 1837, having been built entirely with territorial funds.[33]

At Dearborn was the junction of the Territorial and the Chicago Roads. Although not mentioned by Blois--probably because it was not a distinct road when it entered Detroit, but was the same as the Chicago Road--the Territorial Road, following the Old St. Joseph Trail through Ann Arbor, Jackson, and Marshall, carried heavy traffic to the interior of Michigan, through the second tier of counties.[34]

Despite their sometimes impassable condition, the Chicago and Territorial Roads did serve to open the first and second tiers of southern counties to settlement.[35] The Chicago Road, especially, was noted for the heavy traffic which it carried. Blois estimated that on it "the travel . . . is immense, equal to, if not more, than on any other in the United States of the same length. Its whole length is 254 miles."[36]

The third road brought to the attention of prospective settlers by Blois was the Grand River State Road which began at Detroit

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[33]Atkins, p. 7.

[34]Atkins, p. 6; Hathaway, MHM, II, 582.

[35]Atkins, p. 5.

[36]Blois, Gazetteer, p. 96; Hathaway, MHM, II, 581.

and passed through Redford, Farmington, Kensington, Brighton, and Howell and was to continue to some point, yet undetermined in 1838, on the Grand River. This road, too, branched off the Chicago Road at Dearborn, and also branched off the Territorial Road at Plymouth, traveling north to Farmington and Novi. Eventually the road was extended to Grand Rapids.

The rolling land in the Pontiac area was an early attraction for settlers. The old trail--The Saginaw-Mackinaw--traversed the rich Pontiac, Flint, and Saginaw country. Before construction of a road was begun with Federal aid in 1828, it was quicker and easier to travel to Pontiac by boat than by land. Construction of the road met many difficulties, especially through the swamp north of Royal Oak. Here piles frequently were driven to support the logs which were used as the road foundation. By 1836 construction had advanced to only a few miles north of Flint, but by 1838 Blois could write that the one hundred mile Saginaw State Road, the fourth of his major state roads, led through Pontiac and Flint to Saginaw.

The last state road recommended by Blois to emigrants was the Fort Gratiot Road leading from Detroit through Mount Clemens to Fort Gratiot, on the St. Clair River, a distance of fifty-five miles. Begun in 1830, this road had Federal support because it connected Fort Detroit with Fort Gratiot. On this road, also, great construction difficulties (because of the low and flat terrain) had to be overcome. The road was completed in 1835.[37]

Early Michigan roads, no matter who constructed or paid for them or how much they were advertised, were only slight improvements

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[37]Atkins, p. 6; Blois, Gazetteer, p. 96.

over no roads at all. To make a primitive road, the early Indian trail was widened to a width of from fifty to one hundred feet, thus giving the sun a chance to dry out the road. Tree stumps were cut just low enough to permit oxen or horse drawn wagons to pass over them without difficulty. Where the road passed through marshy or poorly drained areas, a section of corduroy road was constructed. This was a rough type of road made by laying logs cut to a standard length crossways over the dirt or mud with the ends of the logs fastened together for stability. In very bad places the corduroy had to be supported by piles driven down to solid earth. With the increasing use of the primitive road with its corduroy sections, provisions had to be made for road drainage. This was done by building up the center of the road, leaving trenches on either side so that moisture would have a place to run. "With the establishment of regular stage lines, most of the major roads were improved to the graded, or crowned, type of road. Even so, maintenance of the roads was mostly a local responsibility and left much to be desired."[38]

All of the roads in Michigan in the early 1830's had their drawbacks. The road from Detroit to Port Lawrence (Toledo) was built through swamps and was under water much of the time. The roads to the interior were in such condition that it took a week to make a round trip with a loaded wagon from Detroit to Ann Arbor, and the trip from Detroit to Mount Clemens took a full day.[39] As George C. Bates describes it,

> Through a forest, where elm, beech, walnut, fir, and basswood sprang to the very skies shutting

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[38]Atkins, p. 7.

[39]Hill, MHM, XXIII, 54.

> out the rays of a midday sun, a black, sticky road was cut, and when the rush of emigration commenced in 1830, all those highways were cut up with slough holes, dugways, and morasses, through which it seemed impossible to drag a stage coach or a heavily laden wagon. Yet all the roads leading from Detroit were crowded with them, and it was no unusual sight in those days to see in early morning half a dozen superbly covered coaches starting away, while a whole day would be used up making Mount Clemens, Pontiac, Monroe, or Ypsilanti, and members of the bar, elegantly mounted in going the circuit, would spend twelve hours on horseback in reaching the Huron bridge at Ypsilanti. Except the road through the Black Swamp from Toledo to Lower Sandusky, there were no more fearful and horrid roads to be found than all those leading out of Detroit in 1833 to 1837.[40]

Mrs. Prudence Tower recalled that the group of Ionia-bound settlers led by her father, Samuel Dexter, on their first day out from Detroit traveling westward, "could make but seven miles because the roads were so heavy."[41] She also said that "most of the teams that brought us through from Detroit were ox teams. We had much trouble in crossing marshes and fording streams. Many women walked, and sometimes when we got stuck in the marshes, the men had to carry them ashore."[42]

The sad condition of the roads prompted Territorial Governor George B. Porter, in 1833 and again in his 1834 message to the Legislative Council, to remind the Council that "the condition of the Public Roads is such as to demand our special attention. The laws with respect to their construction and repairs are defective. The advantages which would result to all from keeping them in better condition are obvious. The cost of the work would be trifling compared with the benefits to be derived."[43] The death of Governor Porter in July, 1834, the threatening

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[40]George C. Bates, "The Beginning of the Michigan Central," MPHC, XXII (1893), 348.

[41]Mrs. Prudence Tower, "The Journey of Ionia's First Settlers," MPHC, XXVIII (1897-98), 145.

[42]Tower, p. 146.

[43]Messages of the Governors of Michigan, ed. George N. Fuller (Lansing, 1925), I, 90, 104. Hereafter cited as Fuller, Messages. Detroit Democratic Free Press, January 8, 1834.

Toledo War over the location of the southern boundary of Michigan, and the movement for statehood all combined to occupy the attention of the Council, and massive work on the roads went undone.

Amid the events of the Toledo War, the Constitutional Convention met at Detroit. By June 24, 1835, the Constitution was completed. The voters ratified the new Constitution and elected state officers all on the same day, October 5, 1835. Thus Michigan had a state government in operation before it had been admitted to the Union. Quarreling over the boundary with Ohio continued in Congress for well over a year, but on July 26, 1836, still before Michigan had been officially admitted to the Union, the State Legislature passed an act providing for sixty state roads,[44] which Blois said were "too numerous to mention."[45]

In 1836 Harriet Martineau traveled on the Old Sauk Trail, then the Chicago Road, between Detroit and Niles. She thought that Juggernaut's car would have been demolished by it. In fact, it must have been a chore to travel with "such hopping and jumping, such slipping and sliding; such looks of despair from the middle of a pond; such shifting of logs and carrying of planks, and handing along the fallen trunks of trees."[46]

The Detroit Daily Advertiser of December 2, 1836, stated that the Chicago Road "from this point to Ypsilanti looks at certain times as if it had been the route of a retreating army, so great is the number

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[44]Bald, pp. 194-202; Chase, MPHC, XXXVIII, 644.

[45]Blois, Gazetteer, pp. 96-97.

[46]Caruso, p. 363; Harriet Martineau, Society in America, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (London, 1837), I, 319, 322-23.

of wrecks of different kinds which it exhibits."[47] Apparently when a pioneer venturesome enough to use the road, and there were many, did wreck his wagon beyond repair, the wreck was left behind.

Thus when Michigan entered the Union in 1837, a system of roads of sorts was available. Blois summed up the condition of the system when he wrote, "The roads from the eastern, or rather south-eastern border of the State, a distance of 15 or 20 miles west, are not good, especially in a wet season. After passing over that distance, the soil and surface are more congenial, and the roads are tolerable across the peninsula."[48] Although Michigan was growing and people were traveling to the interior, it was obvious that more adequate land transportation to the interior than the roads could provide was necessary if economic growth was to assume the proportions of population growth.

Concern for improving land transportation to the interior of Michigan by means of railroads was in evidence several years before Michigan became a state.[49] On July 31, 1830, the Territorial Council granted a charter to the Pontiac and Detroit Railway Company; it was the first railroad charter in the Northwest Territory. Although the charter stipulated that the road had to be completed between the two cities

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[47]Detroit Daily Advertiser, December 2, 1836.

[48]Blois, Gazetteer, p. 97.

[49]George N. Fuller, Economic and Social Beginnings of Michigan (Lansing, 1916), I, 79.

within five years, nothing was done, and on March 7, 1834, a new corporation, the Detroit and Pontiac Railroad Company, received the charter.[50]

Meanwhile, the Detroit and St. Joseph Railroad Company had been chartered January 29, 1832, to construct a railroad connecting Detroit and the mouth of the St. Joseph River. The act of incorporation authorized John Biddle and others to obtain subscriptions to $1,500,000 worth of capital stock.[51]

Sale of the stock did not begin, however, until July, 1835. Then, in the office of Bates and Talbot, Lewis Cass and John Biddle, along with two "old Siamese Detroit bachelors," Robert Smart and a Dr. Brown, each purchased $25,000 worth.[52] The more usual manner was to sell individual shares for $2 each. After the Territorial Council authorized the railroad to establish a bank at Ypsilanti, on one day alone between eight and nine thousand dollars were invested, and five per cent of the amount was paid in cash. At Detroit $80,000 worth was purchased between October 13, 1835, and January 2, 1836. During 1836 the city of Detroit, by action of the Common Council, subscribed to $60,000 worth of stock. Thus the city of Detroit became involved in municipal ownership of transportation at an early date.[53]

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[50]Chase, MPHC, XXXVIII, 596-97; Silas Farmer, History of Detroit and Michigan (Detroit, 1884), I, 893; Michigan Territorial Laws, III, 884; Keith, p. 26; Hemans, Mason, pp. 116-17; John T. Percival, "Railroads in Ottawa County," MPHC, IX (1886), 273.

[51]George C. Bates, MPHC, XXII, 348; Hemans, Mason, pp. 116-17.

[52]Bates, p. 349.

[53]Bates, p. 349; Farmer, History of Detroit, I, 896; Hill, MHM, XXIII, 58.

About the time that the special session of the Legislative Council met in September, 1834, John M. Berrien was sent by the Army to survey a railroad route across the peninsula from Detroit to the mouth of the St. Joseph River. Acting Governor Stevens T. Mason requested an appropriation to cover the expenses. Berrien, later to become closely associated with the railroad projects of Michigan, made the survey and estimated the cost at $3,200 per mile, an enormous amount in a time when the average daily wage was about one dollar, but it was nowhere near the final cost.[54] During the summer of 1835 Berrien surveyed and located the route of the Detroit and St. Joseph Railroad.

In January, 1836, contracts for grubbing the first forty miles of the road were let and 720 tons of strap iron were ordered for $60,000--all of this before all of the stock was purchased. By November, 1836, the right of way had been cleared to a width of 100 feet to Ypsilanti and ten miles of this had been graded.[55] Such was the state of the Detroit and St. Joseph Railroad when Michigan became a state in January, 1837.

The railroads to Pontiac and the mouth of the St. Joseph were not the only ones chartered from 1833 to 1837. On April 22, 1833, the Erie and Kalamazoo Railroad had been chartered to connect Port Lawrence, now Toledo, with Adrian and the Kalamazoo River. By 1838 no less than twenty-five railroad companies, with a total capital of $10,050,000, had

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[54]Fuller, Messages, I, 123; Hemans, Mason, p. 124; Detroit Democratic Free Press, September 3, 1834. Also the report of J. M. Berrien in Annual Report of the Board of Internal Improvements, dated December 8, 1838, in Michigan House Documents, 1838, p. 197.

[55]Hemans, Mason, p. 395; Keith, p. 26; Farmer, History of Detroit, p. 896.

been granted charters.[56] Many of these roads were never begun, with the notable exception of the Erie and Kalamazoo.

Territorial and State officials, councils, and legislatures took a more active interest in railroads than in simply granting charters. The transition from granting charters to state building of railroads was a long but swiftly traveled one.

On January 8, 1834, Territorial Governor George B. Porter urged the Legislative Council to ask the federal government to construct a railroad from the Detroit River to Lake Michigan "forming as it does, so important a link in the chain of communication between the Atlantic and the Mississippi;--in which all the North, Northeast and Western sections of the Union are so deeply interested."[57]

Governmental support of internal improvements, in general, was made evident in the Michigan Constitution of 1835 which included the following provision: "Internal improvements shall be encouraged by the Government of this State; and it shall be the duty of the Legislature, as soon as may be, to make provision by law for ascertaining the proper objects of improvement in relation to roads, canals, and navigable waters."[58]

The pace with which Michigan traveled toward state ownership and construction of railroads was indicated by Governor Stevens T.

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[56]Utley, III, 59-64, 119; Hemans, Mason, pp. 116-17, 215; Chase, MPHC, XXXVIII, 646.

[57]Fuller, Messages, I, 104-05; Hemans, Mason, p. 117; Detroit Democratic Free Press, January 8, 1834.

[58]William J. Cox, A Primer of Michigan History (Lansing, 1893), p. 50; Harold M. Dorr, The Michigan Constitutional Conventions of 1835-36 (Ann Arbor, 1940), pp. 25, 34, 394, 479.

Mason's suggestions to the Legislature in his messages. Anticipating almost immediate admission into the Union, Mason, in February, 1836, suggested "the appointment of a competent engineer, commission, or board of commissioners," an appeal by the Legislature to Congress "for a donation of lands for purposes of internal improvement," and the obtaining of a loan to enable the new state to purchase "partial control" of the railroads under construction by private corporations so as to facilitate their construction and to protect the public interest. He hinted at a Michigan tie-up with works of internal improvement of other states. Ironically, he looked to internal improvements to annihilate sectional prejudices in the Union, rather than intensify them as the projects did.[59]

Later that same year, in a message to the Senate in which he vetoed the incorporation of the St. Clair and Grand River Railroad, he hinted at state construction in a passing statement when he said "the time was not distant, when the state could with greater security to the interests of the people, take improvement into its own hands."[60]

Finally, in his January 2, 1837, message Mason declared that "the state is amply competent to the construction of her own internal improvements." This statement followed suggestions to provide for a board of commissioners and to make several surveys for railroads. He also reported that he had inquired of all the railroads in the state concerning state purchase of the charters, as had been directed by the Legislature, and two companies had replied that they would sell. He

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[59]Fuller, Messages, I, 169-71.

[60]Fuller, Messages, I, 186.

also advocated the negotiation of a five million dollar loan to finance the improvements.[61]

Throughout these years Mason advocated state construction of canals. He seemed willing, at the outset, to let private companies construct the railroads, so long as the state would maintain a certain amount of control to protect the public interest. This control, in his mind, was to be obtained through state purchase of stock of the various railroad companies. The function of a board of internal improvement was to provide guidance in the planning and construction of canals, the chartering of railroads, and improving of rivers so that the state would have a unified and complementary system of internal improvements which would be of benefit to the entire state. While he made no statements which clearly advocated state construction of railroads, there were several which could be taken as suggesting such construction. Where railroads were willing to sell their partially or wholly completed roads to the state, he was willing to purchase and operate them, and complete them if necessary.

The Legislature did not lag behind Governor Mason in moving toward state construction of internal improvements, and in some cases it moved faster than he anticipated.

The first session of Michigan's first Legislature, elected even though Michigan had not been admitted to the Union, met for only twelve days beginning November 2, 1835. Because the legislators wanted to do nothing which might interfere with the admission of Michigan into the Union, no important legislation was passed. Both Houses, however, did provide for committees on internal improvements when they moved to

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[61]Fuller, Messages, I, 194-97.

complete state organization. During the second session, which began February 1, 1836, the Legislature continued its cautious progress. It chartered many railroads and authorized a number of canals, state roads, and river improvements, but again no internal improvement system was undertaken by the extra-legal state.[62] No surveys or railroad stock purchases were authorized as Mason had suggested.[63]

The pace of the second Legislature, meeting at the beginning of 1837, was drastically different from that of the first. In the interim Michigan had been formally admitted to the Union. Urged on by the tide of immigration, soaring land sales, and the optimistic spirit of the times, the Legislature rushed to catch up with Mason by providing a state system of internal improvements, and in their eagerness completely surpassed him. The race ended in a dead heat when Mason signed the bills which were to bring the state to the brink of bankruptcy.

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[62]Utley, III, 63-64; Keith, pp. 2-3.

[63]It should be mentioned that Mason left it up to the Legislature whether to proceed with state action or await final Congressional action on statehood. He suggested areas for legislation, should the Legislature decide to proceed; they chose to wait. See Fuller, Messages, I, 168; Utley, III, 60.

II. BEGINNING THE ROAD TO PROSPERITY

Enthusiasm in Michigan for building internal improvements came to a head in January, 1837. The battle for admission into the Union, for all intents and purposes, ended when the admission bill passed the United States Senate on January 5, 1837.[1] With admission immiment, the Legislature passed laws providing an internal improvement system, using Governor Mason's suggestions as guides.

On January 24, 1837, the House Committee on Internal Improvements submitted a long, idealistic report[2] which furnished a hint of the enthusiastic, contemporary rationale behind an internal improvement system and which reflects the effect which the expansion of Michigan had on the imagination of the people.

The report and its supporters cited several reasons why the road to prosperity was internal improvements. Internal improvements were no longer experiments, for Eastern projects had shown them to be of value. They would bring immigrants to the state, which in turn would bring a corresponding increase in industry. Land value would increase. Michigan was the "missing link" in the chain of communication between

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[1]Henry M. Utley and Byron M. Cutcheon, Michigan as a Province, Territory, and State (New York, 1906), III, 76. Hereafter cited as Utley.

[2]"Annual Report of the Board of Internal Improvement," Documents Accompanying the Journal of the House of Representatives (Detroit, 1838), pp. 113-14. Hereafter cited as Annual Report, House Documents, 1838. Annual reports for subsequent years will be cited similarly with the appropriate year.

the Atlantic and the Mississippi. Internal improvements would gain for Michigan the markets of the East; she would become the center of exchange for products of the Northwest. The money would be an investment in the future; at the end of twenty years there would be annual profits to the state of three million dollars. Even fears for the future of the horse figured in the argument. The horse, according to the report, would still be used to transport goods to the railroads and canals, but the feed bill would be reduced about one third.[3] Representative Ely of Allegan saw internal improvements as the means whereby Michigan could "attain the political importance so necessary to protect her from the want of a due weight in the councils of the nation."[4] The public was convinced and, in general, supported the Legislature in its determination to build a state system of internal improvements.[5]

A few days after the committee report, three bills were reported to the House which eventually were the foundation of the state system of internal improvement. One bill proposed building roads, canals, and one railroad. Another bill proposed borrowing $5,000,000, and still another would establish a Board of Internal Improvements. Alpheus Felch recalled later that the members of the Legislature from northern and southern counties felt that if their areas were to pay

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[3]House Journal, 1837, p. 113 ff. Hannah Emily Keith, "An Historical Sketch of Internal Improvements in Michigan,1836-1846," Michigan Political Science Association Publications, IV (Ann Arbor, 1900-1902), 4-5. Hereafter cited as Keith.

[4]Lawton T. Hemans, Life and Times of Stephens Thomson Mason (Lansing, 1920), p. 277. Hereafter cited as Hemans, Mason.

[5]Detroit Advertiser, February 2, 1837; Keith, p. 15.

$5,000,000, these areas should receive some of the railroads. As a result, Felch presented an amendment providing for three railroads. The committee and the Detroit representatives interpreted the move as an attempt to defeat the bill. When it was explained that the intention was to save the bill, implying that north and south would not have supported a bill to build only one railroad, the north, south, and Detroit representatives joined to pass all three bills with the amendment.[6]

One of the canals was to extend from Mount Clemens on the Clinton River to the mouth of the Kalamazoo; it was called the Clinton and Kalamazoo Canal. The second canal was to connect the Saginaw and Maple Rivers.[7] The authorized railroads included the Southern to connect Monroe with New Buffalo on Lake Michigan, traversing the southern tier of counties; the Central, to connect Detroit with the mouth of the St. Joseph, traversing the second tier of counties; and the Northern, to connect either Palmer or the mouth of the Black River with the mouth of the Grand River, traversing the fourth tier of counties. The Southern received a $100,000 appropriation; the Central, a $400,000 appropriation; and the Northern, a $50,000 appropriation.[8] The railroads were to be constructed from east to west; a motion in the House to begin construction from east and west simultaneously had been defeated earlier.[9]

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[6]Alpheus Felch, "Minutes of June 7 and 8, 1893," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, XXII (Lansing, 1894), 15. Hereafter the collection will be cited MPHC.

[7]Michigan Centennial History, ed. George N. Fuller (Chicago, 1939), I, 277-78. Hereafter cited as Fuller, Centennial History.

[8]See Laws of Michigan (Detroit, 1837), pp. 130-33; Hemans, Mason, pp. 277-80; Keith, pp. 7-8; Milo M. Quaife, Michigan: From Primitive Wilderness to Industrial Commonwealth (New York, 1948), pp. 177-78.

[9]Detroit Free Press, March 17, 1837.

The final vote in the House was unanimous, and in the Senate there was only one dissent.[10]

On March 21, 1837, a bill authorizing the appointment by the governor, with the consent of the Legislature, of a Board of Internal Improvements was passed. The seven-member Board was to hold office until January, 1838, and was to plan, construct, and regulate the authorized projects. The Board of Commissioners was given a wide range of powers. It could elect its own officers; hire as many agents, engineers, surveyors, and other people as it needed to complete the work; and determine the salaries of these people. It could erect toll houses, set toll rates, receive grants, and could enter any land which was needed for the construction of a canal or railroad. It could determine the manner of letting contracts, the only stipulation being that thirty days notice had to be given in at least three state newspapers prior to the letting of the contract.[11]

Two powers were given to the Board of Commissioners which were severely criticized later. One of these was the power which authorized the Board to order any sum of money not over $40,000 to be paid to an acting commissioner which he, in turn, could use to pay expenses of the work under his charge. Before he could obtain an additional amount, he

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[10] F. Clever Bald, Michigan in Four Centuries (New York, 1954), p. 212.

[11] As finally worked out by the Board, each route was divided into sections, and sealed proposals were taken on each section. The work went to the lowest bidder. Monthly payments were to be made to each contractor, but fifteen per cent of the payment was withheld as security in case the work was abandoned or unforeseen costs arose. When the work was completed, the retained sums were paid the contractor. The Act is in Laws of Michigan (Detroit, 1837), pp. 193-99. Keith, pp. 17-18.

had to show vouchers that he had paid out $30,000. The other criticized power was the broad authority given to the auditor of the Board.[12]

On March 21, 1837, the Legislature also authorized the Governor to negotiate a loan not to exceed five millions of dollars; interest was not to exceed 5½ per cent per year redeemable at the pleasure of the state within twenty-five years after January 1, 1838. Bonds could not be sold at less than par, and all proceeds were to be paid into the internal improvement fund. A sinking fund was to receive the expected earnings of the railroads and canals and from it was to be made the payments for the bonds.[13]

One of the laws of 1837 authorized the Board of Internal Improvements to purchase the Detroit and St. Joseph Railway. As of January 24, 1837, the railroad had spent $102,000 for the purchase of one locomotive, one car, wheels and iron for six freight cars, and spikes and rails for thirty miles of track. John M. Berrien, who was chief engineer for the railroad and continued in that capacity after the road's sale to the state, reported that the roadway had been cut and grubbed (cleared of roots and stumps) between Detroit and Ypsilanti, and eleven miles of this were graded and ready for the superstructure. The remaining sections of the road were under contract, and the right of way had been purchased three miles west of Ann Arbor.[14]

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[12]Keith, pp. 17-18.

[13]Fuller, Centennial History, I, 285; Keith, pp. 7, 17; Hemans, Mason, pp. 279-80.

[14]Laws of Michigan, 1837, p. 131; Lew Allen Chase, "Michigan's Share in the Establishment of Improved Transportation between the East and the West," MPHC, XXXVIII (1912), 599; John T. Blois, Gazetteer of Michigan (Detroit, 1838), p. 80, hereafter cited as Blois, Gazetteer; Annual Report, House Documents, 1838, pp. 110, 137-38.

As could be expected, the press was generous in its praise of the contemplated system.[15] In the enthusiasm of the times, however, ominous signs of things to come--conditions which would defeat the attempt to build a state system of internal improvements--went unnoticed. In the issue of the Free Press immediately following the issue which carried the internal improvement acts, a note reported the failure of several New Orleans banks and the suspension of specie payments by a New York bank.[16] In previous issues, the Free Press itself had carried notices of some Detroit firms which would accept notes of some banks, but not of others.[17]

Work on the railroads began immediately. The same day that the Legislature passed the last internal improvement law, it met in an evening session and approved all but one of Governor Mason's appointments to the Board of Internal Improvements.[18] By April 7 the Board of the Detroit and St. Joseph Railroad was requesting stockholders "to place on file . . . their certificates of stock, in order to facilitate . . . a transfer of the road to the state."[19] The Board of Internal Improvements itself met on May 1 and organized, selecting officers and

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[15]For examples, see the Detroit Free Press, March 24, 1837, and April 4, 1837; Detroit Semi-Weekly Free Press, April 18, 1837.

[16]Detroit Free Press, March 31, 1837.

[17]See Detroit Free Press issues of February 28, March 10, 17, 24, of 1837.

[18]The original appointees were Hart L. Stewart, John M. Barbour, Gardner D. Williams, Levi S. Humphrey, Justus Burdick, David C. McKinstry, and David LeRoy. All but LeRoy were approved; James B. Hunt was appointed and approved in his place. See the Detroit Semi-Weekly Free Press, March 28, 1837.

[19]Detroit Free Press, April 7, 1837.

assigning duties. It then began the task of appointing chief engineers for each of the major enterprises; hiring the necessary surveyors and laborers; purchasing the required equipment, tools, supplies, and stores; and tending to the many details connected with such an undertaking.[20] All money in the internal improvement fund the Board lent to the Michigan State Bank at six per cent interest.[21] On May 11, 1837, the Board purchased the Detroit and St. Joseph Railroad for $116,900 and agreed to pay all claims against the road, which later amounted to $22,800.[22] The road was renamed the Michigan Central Railroad. Thus the stage was set for the state to begin construction of its railroads.

The only actual construction done on any of the railroads during 1837 was on the sections of the Central between Detroit and Ypsilanti and between Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor. This route was the only one of the works which had been surveyed previously. Thus, through the summer, autumn, and early winter of 1837 construction crews cleared and grubbed the land;[23] then followed grading crews, then crews constructing the superstructure, and finally came the men laying the rails. Some of

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[20]Hemans, Mason, p. 390. Principal engineers on each of the works were as follows: John M. Berrien on Central, J. S. Dutton on Southern, Tracy McCracken on Northern. See Detroit Semi-Weekly Free Press, May 23, 1837; Annual Report, House Documents, 1838, p. 131, and Senate Documents, 1838, pp. 155-56. Each of the chief engineers was to receive $2,000 per year; assistants received $1,500 per year. Under the sale contract, Berrien received $2,500. Keith, p. 18.

[21]Annual Report, House Documents, 1838, p. 131; Senate Documents, 1838, p. 155.

[22]Chase, MPHC, XXXVIII, 599; Annual Report, House Documents, 1838, p. 322.

[23]Many of these men had to supply their own tools. See Detroit Free Press advertisement of August 11, 1837.

the work was done under contract, while some was performed by day labor.[24] Other crews, meanwhile, built depots, water stations, sidings, and other necessary facilities.[25] A similar sequence in construction procedures was followed on all the railroad projects in succeeding years.

Chief Engineer Berrien continued the mode of constructing superstructure which he had adopted for the Detroit and St. Joseph. In a special report to the Board he described this superstructure as consisting of "longitudinal sills not less than 5 by 12 inches, bedded in two parallel trenches, with 2 by 12 inch connecting plank under their ends, cross ties framed in the usual way, placed three feet from center to center, with white oak rails 5" by 7" keyed into them; the whole to be surmounted by iron plate rails; the road surface being prepared in the usual way."[26] This method required grading the roadway its entire length.

Grading, however, was a time-consuming job, and before long the Board urged that the construction pace be increased. Berrien's report reveals that, because the Board wanted to open the road to traffic on the earliest possible date, he changed the mode of construction from the usual one of grading the whole distance to a mode utilizing wood blocks as the foundation. By this method blocks two feet in diameter were set in pits excavated to solid ground at distances of eight feet

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[24]Annual Report, House Documents, 1838, p. 138.

[25]See a newspaper advertisement of the Board in Detroit Free Press, July 29, 1837; Annual Report, House Documents, 1838, p. 140.

[26]John M. Berrien, "Report B," Annual Report, House Documents, 1838, p. 179.

apart lengthwise and five feet apart crosswise. Twelve inch timbers, 16, 24, 32, and 40 feet in length, were spotted on these blocks. The top surface of these timbers was dressed to coincide with the established grade. Spiked to the timbers were the cross ties, and into the ties were wedged the wooden rails.

This second mode of construction could be used only where timber was plentiful. It did have the advantage, however, of allowing work to proceed without having to wait for embankments to settle, of permitting grading after the work was completed, and of permitting use of the road itself to carry earth to build the embankments. Berrien reported that "a roadway founded on blocks" was "constructed upon 16 miles of the line, which is believed to possess all the solidity and permanency which is possible to give to a timbered road."[27] He assured the Board that the block road was firm enough to travel on at moderate speed without embankments, and with the consequent settling of the earth around the timbers, the road was strengthened and the rapid passage of heavy trains would not bring a "derangement" of the block foundations.

To fasten the strap iron rails to the wooden streamers, or rails, pressed spikes 4½ inches long were used. The iron bars were 2¼ by ½ inch, fifteen feet long. Connecting plates ¼ inch thick and 6 inches long were placed under the joints. The width between inner edges of the rails was 4 feet 8½ inches.[28]

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[27]Berrien, "Report B," Annual Report, House Documents, 1838, p. 180.

[28]This discussion of construction is based on Berrien, "Reports B and C," Annual Report, House Documents, 1838, pp. 179-80, 186-87.

Since the River Rouge flooded frequently, the road was constructed on piles "firmly driven into the ground, leaving an open waterway the whole width of the flats" on each side of the river. The bridge over the river was built on a plan of Colonel S. H. Long. It had a span of 142 feet and was wide enough for a double track. The entire length of the bridge, including approaches, was 1260 feet. Berrien noted in his report that most of the culverts and bridges were being built wide enough to accommodate a double track because in two or three years a double track would be necessary.[29]

Despite the great efforts made to achieve stability and sound construction, the engineering methods and construction materials of the time were still exploratory in nature and left much to be desired. George C. Bates described the construction as being "in the cheapest and easiest style." One of the greatest hazards was the iron rails which frequently became loosened and "rolled over the wheels," says Bates, and "rushed in the form of 'snakes' heads' through the cars." Bates claimed to have seen a rail pin a woman to the top of a car "as boys do flies with a pin."[30]

While construction on the Detroit to Ann Arbor sections of the Central progressed, decisions locating the remainder of the Central route and the route of the Southern and Northern railroads in their entirety had to be made. Only the eastern and western termini of these routes had been designated by the Legislature; the Board of Internal

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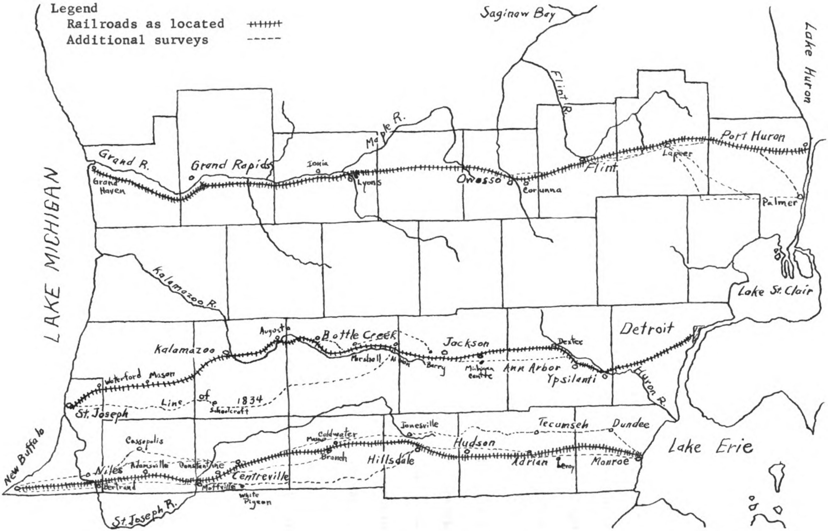
[29]Berrien, "Report C," Annual Report, House Documents, 1838, p. 188.

[30]George C. Bates, "The Beginning of the Michigan Central," MPHC, XXII (1893), 350.



Map 3. -- Michigan Railroad Surveys

Improvements was empowered to locate the routes of the railroads between these termini.[31] Locating the routes was to be a ticklish project, for each town and hamlet along each prospective route, and the Legislature itself, was determined to have some voice in the decisions.

To assist it in making its decisions, the Board conducted surveys on all three routes during 1837. Using Berrien's survey of 1834 as the starting point for the survey of the remainder of the Central route, the surveyors examined and estimated the costs for alternate routes near Ann Arbor, Dexter, and Albion.[32] West of Albion they surveyed an entirely new route to serve the towns of Marshall, Battle Creek, Augusta, Comstock, and Kalamazoo. The 1834 line was longer, but had a lower estimated cost than did the 1837 line along the Kalamazoo River.[33]

On December 8, 1837, the Board held hearings in Detroit to provide interested persons and communities an opportunity to present their views concerning the location of the Central.[34] The next day it made its decision by unanimous vote, establishing the route through Dexter, Leoni, Michigan Centre, Jacksonburgh, Barry, Albion, Marshall, Battle Creek, Augusta, Comstock, Kalamazoo, LaFayette, Mason (a small town then the county seat of Van Buren County), and Waterford to St. Joseph.[35]

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[31] Laws of Michigan, 1837, p. 130.

[32] John M. Berrien, "Report B," and Jacob Brown Report, House Documents, 1838, pp. 174 and 192, and the Annual Report, House Documents, 1838, p. 141.

[33] Annual Report, House Documents, 1838, pp. 141-42, and 204-08; John M. Berrien, "Report B," House Documents, 1838, p. 175.

[34] Detroit Free Press, October 25, 1837.

[35] Detroit Free Press, December 11, 1837; Annual Report, House Documents, 1838, p. 141; Blois, Gazetteer, p. 80.

Surveying and locating the Northern Railroad route was also completed during 1837. The internal improvement act had broadly specified that the Northern Railroad was to begin "at Palmer, or at or near the mouth of the Black River, in the county of St. Clair."[36]

As a result, Tracy McCracken, engineer on the Northern, was instructed to make several surveys beginning at both Palmer and the mouth of the Black River, Port Huron. From Port Huron to Lapeer McCracken surveyed one route, while from Palmer he surveyed three routes, two of which intersected the Port Huron to Lapeer survey. He was later instructed by the Board to survey another route from Palmer to Lapeer.[37]

After holding hearings at Flint on October 17, 1837, and at Palmer and Port Huron on December 4 and 5, on whether to locate the eastern terminus of the Northern at Palmer or Port Huron, the Board decided in favor of Port Huron.[38] In support of its decision the Board noted that Port Huron was near the foot of Lake Huron; the nearby rapids of the St. Clair River kept the passage to Canada free of ice throughout the year, which would be a doubly important consideration when the Canadian railway from the head of Lake Ontario to the St. Clair River was completed; the location would enable the Northern to be part of the line between the Atlantic and the Mississippi; the federal government

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[36]Laws of Michigan, 1837, p. 130.

[37]Report of Tracy McCracken in Annual Report, Senate Documents, 1838, pp. 222-23; also "Report F on the Northern Road," Annual Report, Senate Documents, 1838, pp. 235-36.

[38]Detroit Free Press, October 25, 1837; Annual Report, Senate Documents, 1838, p. 166.

had established a military road to Port Huron, ensuring year-round communication with Detroit. It also expressed its belief that the route should be located as far north as possible to serve the northern tier of counties most effectively.[39]

From Lapeer westward the Northern route presented few problems. The surveyed route passed through or near Flint, Owosso, Corunna, Lyons, through the valleys of the Grand River and Cascade Creek to Grand Rapids, or Kent, and then to Grand Haven on Lake Michigan.[40] The Board accepted the route as surveyed to Grand Rapids, where steamboat navigation was available.[41]

During the summer of 1837 surveying under the direction of engineer John S. Dutton also began on the Southern route. Of the three Michigan roads, the Southern faced the most difficulties. Problems arose almost immediately.

The act had specified that "the roads shall be located on the most direct and eligible routes between the termini."[42] For the Southern this meant from the mouth of the River Raisin near Monroe to New Buffalo. Dutton set as his aim "to pursue the shortest route which presents the least inclination of grade and curvature, and is least

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[39]Annual Report, Senate Documents, 1838, p. 167; Hemans Mason, pp. 391-92. Also see McCracken's Report in Annual Report, Senate Documents, 1838, p. 217 ff.

[40]Annual Report, Senate Documents, 1838, pp. 225-26; also, McCracken's Reports E and F, Senate Documents, 1838, pp. 224-26, 231, 236.

[41]Annual Report, Senate Documents, 1838, p. 221; Blois, Gazetteer, p. 81.

[42]Laws of Michigan, 1837, p. 130.

expensive."[43] His maximum grade was 40 feet per mile, and the maximum radius of curvature was 2,000 feet.[44]

Despite much sickness in his surveying parties which made necessary a complete reorganization and the hiring of two new surveying teams, Dutton surveyed two separate routes across southern Michigan, plus the route of the Havre Railroad from Havre on Lake Erie to the line of the Erie and Kalamazoo Railroad, intersecting it about three miles north of the Ohio line.[45] This road was to divert Erie and Kalamazoo traffic from Toledo to the projected Michigan port of Havre. The northernmost of the two trans-peninsular surveys passed through the towns of Dundee, Tecumseh, Jonesville, Mason (another town with this name near Coldwater), Centreville, and Niles, to New Buffalo. The southernmost of the two surveys passed through Petersburg, Adrian, Hillsdale, Coldwater, Constantine, Mottville, and Bertrand, to New Buffalo.[46]

No sooner were the surveys completed than petitions from many localities requesting additional surveys flooded the commissioners. As a result, Dutton ran the equivalent of two more cross-state surveys. One of these practically paralleled a previous survey on the south, passing through or near Petersburg, Leroy, Adrian; then it crossed the original survey and paralleled it on the north to near Hillsdale; it then cut south to White Pigeon, Mottville, Bertrand, Sherman, and New

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[43]John S. Dutton Report in Annual Report, Senate Documents, 1838, pp. 226-27, 235.

[44]Dutton, pp. 175-76.

[45]Dutton, pp. 174-75.

[46]Annual Report, Senate Documents, 1838, pp. 157-60. Also original maps of the surveys at the State Records Center, Lansing.

Buffalo. Numerous other towns, such as Branch, Constantine, and Cassopolis, requested still other surveys.[47]

After the additional surveys were completed, the Board held a hearing at Monroe on November 28, 1837,[48] after which it located the road part of the distance. At a subsequent meeting the Board resolved to begin the Southern on the navigable waters of the River Raisin and pass near or through Monroe, Adrian, Hillsdale, Coldwater, Mason, Branch, Centreville, Constantine, Mottville, Adamsville, Edwardsburgh, Bertrand, and terminating at New Buffalo.[49]

Because of the many petitions which had been made concerning the location of the Southern, the Board explained at length its reasons for locating the road as it did. It did not run the railroad through Tecumseh and Jonesville because it did not want to hurt the stockholders of the River Raisin and Grand River Railroad. Trade competition between Monroe and Toledo prompted the Board to locate the Southern through Adrian so as to direct to Michigan any trade which otherwise might flow to Ohio via the Erie and Kalamazoo Railroad. West of Adrian the availability of water power and land figured in the decision; the water power would attract settlers, and on other surveys some farmers refused to sell their land to the state. The Board also wanted to stay as close as possible to the center of the various counties. Topography of the land on other surveys on the western end, the Board emphasized, would

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[47]Annual Report, Senate Documents, 1838, pp. 156, 159-60, and the maps at the State Records Center.

[48]Detroit Free Press, October 25, 1837, and Annual Report, Senate Documents, 1838, pp. 156-57.

[49]Annual Report, Senate Documents, 1838, pp. 156-57.

increase the cost over the located line. Finally, by choosing the more southerly line on the western end of the road the Board hoped to win for Michigan much of the grain sales of the Indiana counties of Laporte, Elkhart, and St. Joseph and to keep Indiana and Ohio from building a railroad from Toledo to Michigan City and thereby divert settlers, travel, and trade from southern Michigan. All in all, the Board was of the opinion that the line as located would serve more people and larger towns than any of the other proposed routes.[50] Despite these many reasons, arguments concerning the location of the route did not subside for several years.

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[50]Annual Report, Senate Documents, 1838, pp. 157-61.

III. CONSTRUCTING WITH DIFFICULTY

Once the lines had been located and the construction pattern set, work on all three railroads began almost immediately. Despite frequent delays, political and sectional wranglings, financial uncertainties, and sickness, some progress on the construction of the two southerly railroads was made each year between 1838 and 1846. On both railroads, work proceeded at a slower rate than anticipated. The history of the Northern, shaped by the same forces as that of the Central and Southern, drew to a close before 1846.

During 1838 work on the Northern Railroad was confined to making final locations of the line, clearing, and grubbing. Since a previous resolution had not specified on which side of the Black River the Northern should begin, the Board located the line on the south side, as had been indicated by the 1837 survey. The Board also directed that the road be run through both Corunna and Owosso.[1]

Concentrated efforts were made to clear and grub the line of the Northern during 1838 and 1839. All of the section from the Black River to Lyons was placed under contract for this work; this was about 130 miles of the 201 mile total length of the road. The Port Huron to

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[1]"Annual Report of the Board of Internal Improvement," Documents Accompanying the Journal of the House of Representatives (Detroit, 1839), p. 275. Hereafter cited as Annual Report, House Documents, 1839, Annual and special reports submitted during subsequent years will be cited similarly, with the appropriate year.

Lapeer contracts were let in July, 1838, with the work to be completed by January 1, 1839. Work was slow, however, and on January 11, 1839, Tracy McCracken, the engineer on the route, reported that only half of this work was done and that it would take another four months to complete the job.

At the same time the Lapeer to Flint section of the road was being cleared and grubbed. Large damage claims on land near Flint forced the Board to reroute the Northern into Flint. Clearing and grubbing of the Flint to Lyons section was begun in August, 1838.

Contracts for grading fourteen miles of the route were made in December, 1838. The grading to be done was the ten miles east of Lyons and the four miles west of Flint.[2]

Although no new contracts were made during 1839, some transfers of contracts enabled the clearing and grubbing of the Northern to continue. In his 1840 report to the Legislature McCracken noted that "the clearing and grubbing of about one hundred and ten, out of the one hundred and thirty miles . . . have been completed; but in most cases an extension of time has been required by the contractor for the completion of his work."[3] Some of the work had gone slower than anticipated because of the nature of the work or because too much work had been included in some of the contracts. When the state's financial difficulties prevented it from making payments, some of the work was

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[2]Annual Report, House Documents, 1839, p. 275; Burt Report, House Documents, 1839, pp. 321-22; McCracken Report, House Documents, 1839, pp. 326-28; Lawton T. Hemans, Life and Times of Stevens Thomson Mason (Lansing, 1920), p. 414. Hereafter cited as Hemans, Mason.

[3]McCracken Report, House Documents, 1840, pp. 36-37.

abandoned; other contractors continued work with the understanding that they would be paid in state treasury orders.[4]

One hundred and fifty thousand dollars was appropriated for the Northern from 1837-1839, but only about $75,900 was spent. The Whig austerity program of 1840 included no further appropriations for internal improvements. In 1841 the Legislature directed the Board to use $30,000 of the unexpended appropriations to grade and bridge the Northern route to make it "a good and passable wagon road."[5] Before contracts could be signed for this work, the Board, learning that the United States Bank of Pennsylvania would probably fail to pay the installment of the $5,000,000 loan which was due October 1, 1841, let the matter drop. In 1843 another act authorized construction of a wagon route along the route, to be paid for by a 20,000 acre land grant and taxation. A little more than $9,000 was spent, bringing the total spent on the Northern to $80,230.43.[6] In 1847 the right of way was granted to the Port Huron & Michigan Company.[7]

In terms of financial difficulties and delays, the story of the Central and Southern railroads was much the same as that of the Northern. These two roads, however, were able to produce some income

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[4]McCracken Report, House Documents, 1840, pp. 37-38.

[5]Annual Report, Joint Documents, 1842, p. 181.

[6]Hannah Emily Keith, "An Historical Sketch of Internal Improvements in Michigan,1836-1846," Michigan Political Science Association Publications, IV (Ann Arbor, 1900-1902), 37-38. Hereafter cited as Keith. Annual Report, Joint Documents, 1842, p. 181; Detroit Daily Free Press, April 1, 1843.

[7]Michigan Centennial History, ed. George N. Fuller (Chicago, 1939), I, 281. Hereafter cited as Fuller, Centennial History.

for the state. While this income generally was used for iron purchases or construction, it enabled supporters of the roads to argue that the increased income, should the roads be extended westward, would rescue the state from financial chaos. As a result, these two roads received appropriations which permitted their construction to Kalamazoo and Hillsdale.

During 1837 construction on the Central between Detroit and Ypsilanti proceeded. In January, 1838, the Board reported that "the sills, cross ties, and rails are down and prepared for iron, twenty-one miles of the iron is laid, and it is expected that the balance [to Ypsilanti] will be completed" by January 25, 1838. The entire line, including bridges, sidings, and water stations, was ready for trains by February 1, 1838.[8]

On February 3, 1838, Governor Mason, state officials, members of the Legislature, leading citizens of Detroit, and the Brady Guards boarded the train for the first trip to Ypsilanti. That morning was a memorable one for Detroit.

The train itself was a curious spectacle. Heading it was a crude, little engine with a tender piled high with cord wood. Next came four coaches, two of them similar to the Concord coaches with doors on the side. The first, the "Governor Mason," was fitted with all the elegant features of the late 1830's. The remaining three coaches, fitted in lesser elegance, were followed by three flat cars hurriedly

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[8]Annual Report, House Documents, 1839, p. 162.

improvised for the occasion. Newspapers boasted that the train could achieve speeds as high as fifteen miles per hour.[9]

The celebration which greeted the train in Ypsilanti was typical of those held in other towns when the Central or the Southern was completed and service inaugurated. An early morning snowfall could neither delay the train nor keep the village population from appearing en masse to welcome the train heartily. When little Theodore Potter arrived with his father, he "found the one street finely decorated with flags, and a brass band filling the air with music."[10]

As the train came up the slight grade near the village, two men could be seen seated on opposite ends of a cross beam in front of the engine; they were using large splint brooms to sweep the light snowfall from the tracks. Such was the first Michigan railroad snowplow.[11]

Following a hearty meal of roast ox, baked potatoes, pumpkin pie, and ginger bread, the crowd of several hundred heard speeches by General Cass, Governor Mason, General John Van Fossen on behalf of Ypsilanti, and various railroad officials. After a few selections by the band, the train departed for Detroit.[12]

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[9]Hemans, Mason, p. 408.

[10]Theodore E. Potter, "A Boy's Story of Pioneer Life in Michigan," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, XXXV (Lansing, 1907), 394. Hereafter the collection will be cited as MPHC.

[11]Potter, p. 394.

[12]Potter, pp. 394-95; Hemans, Mason, p. 408.

Although the return trip was marred by mechanical difficulties and the train had to be towed back to Detroit by teams of horses,[13] the trip marked the beginning of daily trips between the two cities. During the remainder of 1838 two trains a day made round trips. One way fare was $1.50, the trip taking about 1 3/4 hours, while all merchandise was transported at the rate of 30¢ per 100 pounds. Travel and freight shipments increased steadily; for the year 1838 receipts totaled about $83,000. Profits amounted to $37,283.55.[14]

While the train made its daily jaunts between Detroit and Ypsilanti, work on the road continued, though somewhat slowly, on both the eastern and western ends. Within Detroit an extension down Woodward Avenue from Congress Street to Atwater Street was constructed during 1838 and 1839. An earlier plan to dig a cut 14 feet wide and as deep as necessary down Woodward was abandoned. The cost of the extension was less than $5,000, but it was so little used because of the steep grades that the rails were taken up in 1844.[15]

Two other efforts to improve service on the eastern end of the Central met defeat. One was an attempt to build a car house on

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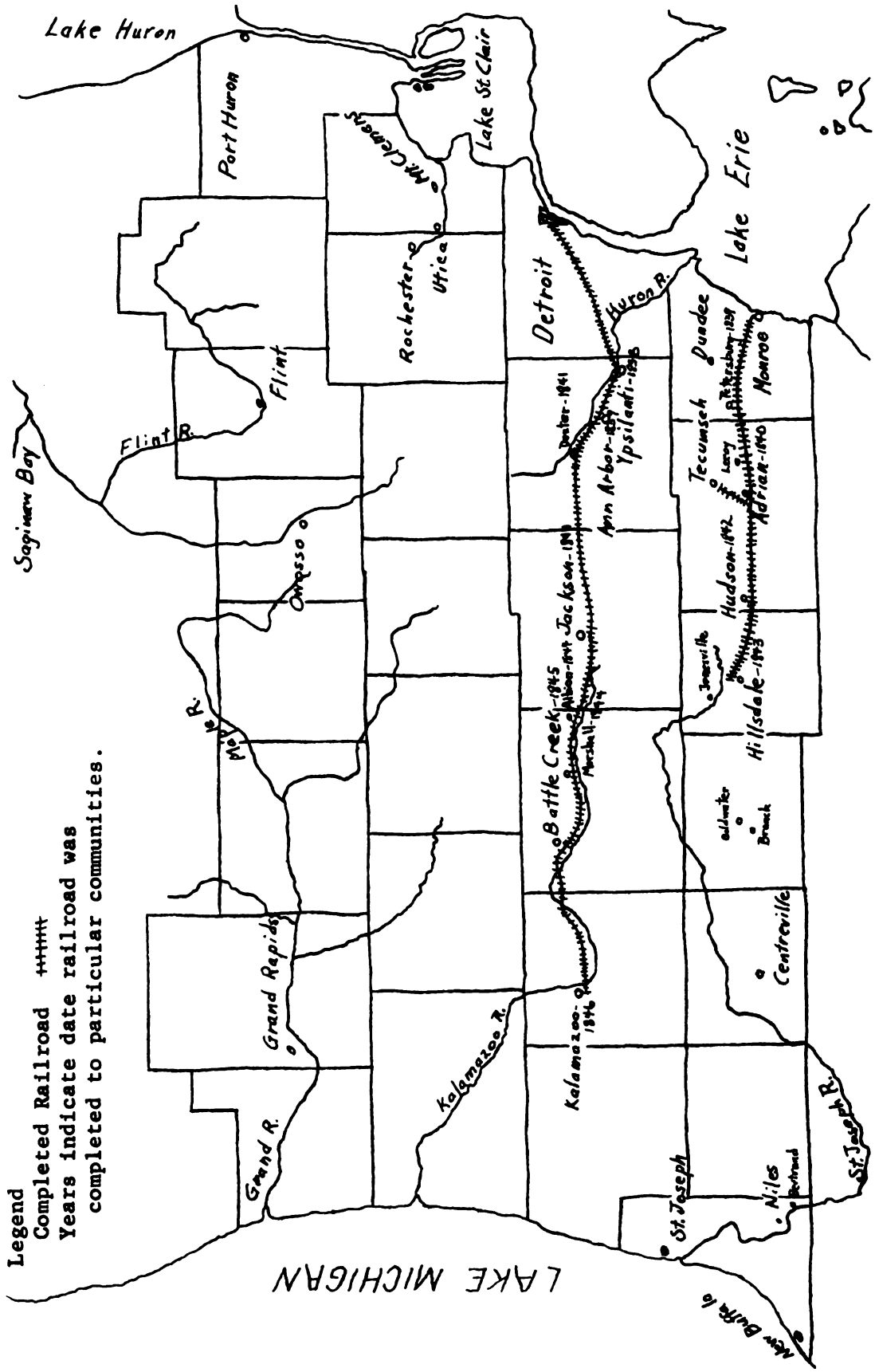
[13]Hemans, Mason, pp. 408-409. An interesting experience of Alpheus Felch in which he walked back to Detroit on this occasion is related in "Minutes of June 7 and 8, 1893," MPHC (1893), XXII, 15.

[14]Keith, p. 27; Albert S. Hill, "The Romance of a Railway," Michigan History Magazine, XXIII (Winter, 1939), 612. John T. Blois, Gazetteer of Michigan (Detroit, 1838), p. 81. Hereafter cited as Blois, Gazetteer. Hemans, Mason, p. 412; Silas Farmer, History of Detroit and Michigan (Detroit, 1884), p. 897. Hereafter cited as Farmer. Lothrop Report, House Documents, 1839, p. 289. "Statement of Tolls Received Upon the Central Railroad, from February first to December, 1838," House Documents, 1839, pp. 37-38. Hereafter Michigan History Magazine will be cited as MHM.

[15]Farmer, p. 898; Keith, pp. 27-28; Blois, Gazetteer, p. 81; Annual Report, House Documents, 1840, p. 5; Hill, MHM, XXIII, 62.



Map 4. -- Progress on Michigan Railroads, 1837-1846

Michigan Avenue at the rear of the old City Hall; opposition by two property owners prevented completion of the building. An attempt to build a passenger depot was halted by court action in 1839.[16] One successful effort to improve service was achieved in 1838 when private businesses were permitted to place cars on the Central.[17]

Toward the end of January, 1838, the Board contracted with Colonel D. C. McKinstry to do the clearing, grubbing, grading, and laying of superstructure between Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor. The work was to be completed by October 1, 1838, but because of sickness and the huge amount of work included in the contract, lack of iron, and a certain amount of incompetence, the work was not done on time. A House Committee investigating the matter in April, 1839, concluded that the deadline for completing the work should be June 1, 1839, after which McKinstry should be charged for damages. William Thompson, who became Commissioner of the Central in 1839, urged McKinstry to hire additional workers and to push the work. These efforts bringing few results, Thompson employed an extra force of men on his own. In this way, the Central was opened to Ann Arbor on October 17, 1839, although it was not completely finished to that town until the end of November. The usual festivities greeted the arrival of the first train in Ann Arbor. Four locomotives pulled four trains, with a total of 800 people aboard, to

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[16]Farmer, p. 898; Hill, MHM, XXIII, 61; Lothrop Report, House Documents, 1839, p. 288.

[17]Detroit Free Press, March 19, 1838; Farmer, p. 897; Hill, MHM, XXIII, 62; Annual Report, House Documents, 1839, pp. 281-82.

the celebration.[18] The hasty construction led to shoddy work; in 1840 Daniel Brown, who was in charge of repairs on the Central, had to spend most of his time widening excavations, raising the road where it had sunk, replacing decaying timber, and in general finishing construction.[19]

Work was also undertaken on the Central route west of Ann Arbor in 1838. In accord with a Board resolution, contracts for the clearing, grubbing, and grading of the route between Ann Arbor and Jacksonburgh were let. Work began well enough on this section, although the Board did urge the Legislature to extend the deadline for completion beyond January 1, 1839. During the session of 1839, however, the Legislature passed a bill limiting the number of engineers which could be hired and reducing the salaries of those already employed to $800 per year. As a result, many of the engineers resigned; this necessitated a reorganization of the engineering department and caused delays in the work. At the end of 1839, John M. Berrien, engineer on the Central, estimated that about half of the excavating and grading between Ann Arbor and Jacksonburgh was completed.[20]

When the Whig-controlled Legislature of 1840 made no appropriations for the railroads, the Board made an arrangement with the Bank of Michigan whereby the Bank advanced about $34,000 to the contractors; the Board in turn assured the bank it would work for the

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[18]Detroit Free Press, April 11, 1839, and October 19, 1839; Annual Report, House Documents, 1840, pp. 7-8; Thompson Report, House Documents, 1840, pp. 14-15; Hill, MHM, XXIII, 62-63; Keith, p. 27.

[19]Brown Report, Joint Documents, 1841, p. 201.

[20]Berrien Report, House Documents, 1840, pp. 24-27; Niles' Weekly Register, July 27, 1839, p. 352.

necessary appropriations. In this way work continued on the Ann Arbor to Jackson section of the Central during 1840, iron being laid to within four miles of Dexter.[21]

A controversy developed at the end of 1840 which illustrates the intensity of sectional feelings at this time. It so happened that there was available only enough iron to complete the Central to a point 2½ miles east of Dexter. Since there was a small surplus of iron on the Southern, transfer of enough iron to complete the work was authorized by the Board. Monroe citizens resisted; they refused to send the iron and militantly resisted a group sent from Detroit to obtain the iron. As a result, the last 2½ miles of road to Dexter was not completed until the summer of 1841. On July 4, 1841, the Central was finally opened from Detroit to Dexter.[22]

Construction had been progressing satisfactorily on the Dexter to Jackson section of the route. The $450,000 appropriation made for the Central in 1841 stimulated progress, though actual payment was no more sure in 1841 than it had been in 1840. On December 29, 1841, the Central was opened to Jackson; the first trains made the eighty mile trip in six hours.[23] Constructing of side tracks and water stations and some finishing work was done during 1842.[24]

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[21]Annual Report, Joint Documents, 1841, pp. 157-59.

[22]Annual Report, Joint Documents, 1841, pp. 159-60; Keith, p. 41.

[23]Annual Report, Joint Documents, 1842, pp. 191-92; Hill, MHM, XXIII, p. 63; Michael Shoemaker, "Historical Sketch of the City of Jackson," MPHC, II (1880), 319; Detroit Free Press, December 29, 30, 31, 1841.

[24]Berrien Report, Joint Documents, 1843, p. 176.

Although the Board had discontinued one trip on the Central in August, 1840,[25] the extension of the line to Dexter and Jackson greatly increased business. During the harvest seasons of both 1841 and 1842 the trains had to be run during the night and on Sunday. In 1841 receipts were about $71,200 and profits about $25,600; in 1842 the receipts were about $114,300 and profits about $72,000. To handle the increased business, two new locomotives, thirty-two new freight cars, and one new passenger car were placed into service during October, 1842.[26] Other stimuli to travel on the Central were the regular stage trips between Jackson and St. Joseph and the beginning of daily steamboat service between St. Joseph and Chicago.[27]

The 1841 Legislature also authorized extension of the Central to Kalamazoo. Contracts for grubbing, clearing, and grading the Jackson to Marshall section of the road were let in October, 1841, and work was begun in December. The cooperation of the residents along the route of the road enabled the Board to sign favorable contracts, many of them below the estimates of the engineers. In view of the fact that contracts could be signed which relieved the state of all liability for damages done by a failure on the part of the state, the Board reported that the line was being prepared for letting to contract as far as Battle Creek; the contracts, the Board promised, would not exceed the appropriation.[28]

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[25]Annual Report, Joint Documents, 1841, p. 156.

[26]Annual Report, Joint Documents, 1843, pp. 153-54, 162; Keith, p. 29.

[27]Keith, p. 29.

[28]Annual Report, Joint Documents, 1842, pp. 191-92.

In January, 1842, the Legislature passed a joint resolution prohibiting the Board from signing any new contracts. Just prior to this resolution, the Board let several contracts for additional work on the Jackson to Marshall section. The work on this section of the Central proceeded so rapidly during 1842 that the Board and engineers were confident it would be ready for laying the superstructure by the spring of 1843.[29] The Marshall to Battle Creek section of the route was ready for contracting by the end of 1842; the remainder of the line from Battle Creek to Kalamazoo was to be ready for contracting in the spring of 1843.[30]

The legislative session of 1843 was significant as far as the internal improvement system is concerned, for Hillsdale and Kalamazoo were set as the western limits of the Southern and Central railroads respectively. A $119,000 appropriation, to be taken from the income of the public works, was made for purchasing railroad iron, and 150,000 acres of land granted to the state by the federal government were appropriated for extending the Central to Kalamazoo. The joint resolution prohibiting the signing of new contracts on the Central and Southern was rescinded.[31]

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[29]Annual Report, Joint Documents, 1843, p. 153; Berrien Report, Joint Documents, 1843, p. 179; Keith, p. 29.

[30]Berrien Report, Joint Documents, 1843, p. 180.

[31]Henry M. Utley and Byron M. Cutcheon, Michigan as a Province, Territory, and State (New York, 1906), III, 266. F. Clever Bald, Michigan in Four Centuries (New York, 1954), p. 225. Hereafter cited as Bald.

A bill appropriating $250,000 for extension of the Central was defeated.[32]

Construction on the Central made steady progress during 1843, but the anticipated completion of the road to Marshall was not achieved.[33] By December the grading of the route as far as Marshall was completed and three or four weeks of work would complete the bridging. Contracts for foundations for the carhouses in Jackson and Marshall were made during 1843; contracts for the buildings were let in 1844.[34] Two reasons were given for the failure to complete the road to Marshall. One was the "low state of the credit of the warrants with which payments are made;" this credit improved during the year, according to the Board.[35] The second reason was the difficulty encountered in obtaining timber for the superstructure. The legislative prohibition on the signing of contracts was removed too late for the Board to contract for the cutting of the timber at the best time.[36] The Board assured the

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[32]Detroit Daily Free Press, February 14, 1843. The McLeod Amendment substituted the 150,000 acres of land for the $250,000 appropriation. There was considerable debate in the House on the issue of extending the Central. See Detroit Daily Free Press, February 10, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 1843. The House bill was pushed through the Senate on February 18, 1843. See Detroit Daily Free Press, February 21, 1843, for the unusual procedure. The act is in the Detroit Daily Free Press, February 27, 1843.

[33]Annual Report, Document No. 5, Joint Documents, 1844, pp. 1 and 21. The Niles' Register, August 31, 1844, p. 444, reported that the Central was completed to Marshall in September, 1843; this misinformation or typographical error was perpetuated in Caroline E. MacGill, History of Transportation in the United States Before 1860 (Washington, 1917), p. 513.

[34]Berrien Report in Annual Report, Document No. 5, Joint Documents, 1844, p. 22.

[35]Annual Report, Document No. 5, Joint Documents, 1844, p. 1.

[36]Berrien Report in Annual Report, Document No. 5, Joint Documents, 1844, p. 22.

Legislature that the Central would be completed to Marshall in the spring of 1844, but a $75,000 appropriation was needed to complete the work and purchase iron.[37]

Constructing the superstructure and laying the iron between Jackson and Marshall progressed steadily in 1844. Early in June the Central began regular trips to Gidley's Station ten miles west of Jackson; one month later "the road was in tolerable running order to Albion," and on August 10, 1844, it was opened to Marshall.[38]

In October, 1843, contracts for grading, bridging, and furnishing materials on the Marshall to Kalamazoo section were let. Most of this work was completed within one year.[39] Contracts for laying the iron were let in September, 1844.[40] The Board had hoped to complete the Central in 1845,[41] but difficulty in obtaining sawed timber and a delay in the shipment of iron and spike made this impossible.[42] The Central reached Battle Creek in December, 1845, and Kalamazoo on February 1, 1846.[43] It was to be built no further under state auspices.

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[37]Annual Report, Document No. 5, Joint Documents, 1844, p. 1.

[38]Annual Report, Document No. 4, Joint Documents, 1845, p. 1, and Governor Barry's message, Joint Documents, 1845, p. 8. Berrien, in his report, gives slightly different dates. He says track was laid to the first station west of Jackson by the middle of May, the road was opened to Albion on July 2 and to Marshall on August 12, 1844. Berrien Report in Annual Report, Document No. 4, Joint Documents, 1845, p. 38.

[39]Annual Report, Document No. 4, Joint Documents, 1845, p. 2.

[40]Berrien Report in Annual Report, Document No. 4, Joint Documents, 1845, p. 39.

[41]Annual Report, Document No. 5, Joint Documents, 1844, p. 3.

[42]Annual Report, Document No. 4, Joint Documents, 1845, p. 1.

[43]W. G. Coburn, "Public Schools of Battle Creek," MHM, V (April, 1921), p. 221; Annual Report, Document No. 4, Joint Documents, 1847, pp. 2-3.

Since the legislation and financial difficulties of the period shaped the environment in which both the Central and the Southern railroads were constructed, the Southern faced legislative and financial problems very similar to those encountered by the Central. The sectional conflicts faced by the Southern, however, were more intense than those of the Central; in many cases this resulted from the fact that the Southern was constructed in the shadow of the Central. In addition, the Southern encountered competition from an already operational railroad which had its eastern terminus in Ohio; the Southern, meanwhile, had no ready outlet to Lake Erie. The history of the Southern, then, is a mixture of legislative log-rolling, financial embarrassment and delay, sectional competition, and pioneer enthusiasm.

Soon after the resolution of the Board of Internal Improvements locating the Southern Railroad was passed in late 1837, the Board contracted for the grubbing and clearing of the Monroe to Adrian section of the route.[44] Almost immediately after the announcement of the location, however, many people signed petitions requesting that the Legislature investigate the matter.[45]

Sectional controversies within the southern tier of counties had developed. The commissioners had selected a route which would be near the center of the counties, but this meant missing such towns as Dundee, Tecumseh, Jonesville, Cassopolis, and Niles. Amid charges that the commissioners were influenced in their decision by their own

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[44]Humphrey Report, House Documents, 1839, p. 304.

[45]Hemans, Mason, p. 406; Detroit Daily Free Press, February 1, 1838, p. 2.

private interests, the citizens of these communities and their representatives in the Legislature vigorously urged the alteration of the route.[46]

A joint investigating committee was appointed. While the committee studied the issue, construction on the Southern was suspended for thirty days and the letting of contracts on the Havre Branch Railroad was postponed until April 18, 1838.[47]

Reaction against the commissioners took several forms. A Senate committee report charged that the commissioners' salaries were too high. The House resolved that the Board of Internal Improvements be appointed by joint vote of the Houses of the Legislature rather than be appointed by the Governor. The House also moved to write a bill reducing the number of commissioners from seven to four. In addition, an amendment to the Internal Improvement Act of 1837 reducing from $40,000 to $5,000 the amount which could be advanced to an acting commissioner was passed. The accounts also were to be audited by the Auditor General. These actions did give vent to some of the feelings of the people on the issue of locating the Southern Railroad. No doubt they were also the beginning of a re-evaluation of the system as a whole.[48]

Despite the recommendation by the majority of the joint investigating committee to change the route, the route of the Southern

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[46]There were petitions both for and against altering the route. See for example the Detroit Free Press, February 1, 1838, and subsequent issues where such petitions are reported.

[47]Hemans, Mason, p. 406.

[48]Keith, pp. 19-20; Hemans, Mason, p. 409; Detroit Daily Free Press, February 1, 1838; Annual Report, Senate Documents, 1838, p. 530.

as located by the Board was, in the main, retained.[49] After a blanket change of the route through Dundee, Tecumseh, Jonesville, and Branch was defeated, each community attempted to go it alone. Only Dundee was able to gain a concession, for the final resolution of April 6, 1838, directed the Board to curve the Southern between Monroe and Petersburg to serve Dundee if this change would be as cheap as a branch road; otherwise the Board was to construct a branch to Dundee. In either case, Dundee was to provide land and water power for the use of the state.[50]

Levi Humphrey, commissioner of the Southern, reported later that surveys indicated curving the line would cost $40,000, while a branch line could be constructed for $25,000. The commissioners decided to construct the branch line, and contracts were made for the work. Before the end of 1838, about $2,000 had been spent on the line.[51] The three and one-half mile branch was never completed, and the embankment was used as a wagon road, known as the "plug road."[52]

Controversy also surrounded the location of the road on the western end. One point of controversy was that the route passed through

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[49]For some reason the committee had a Whig majority, though the Legislature had a Democratic majority. See Detroit Free Press, March 1, 1838.

[50]Annual Report, House Documents, 1839, p. 274; Humphrey Report, House Documents, 1839, p. 308; Detroit Free Press issues of March 1, 5, 8, 9, 19, 20, 24, 1838. See especially the Buel-McClelland debate of March 17, 1838.

[51]Humphrey Report, House Documents, 1839, p. 308; Annual Report, House Documents, 1839, p. 274.

[52]Keith, p. 34.

Bertrand rather than Niles. After "warm and excited discussion," an act was passed March 22, 1838, providing that the road pass through Niles.[53]

A second controversy resulted from the fact that the southernmost survey did not include the northerly communities of Lockport and Cassopolis. The House passed a resolution relocating the route west of Centreville to include Lockport, Cassopolis, and Niles, but reconsidered the matter and then voted to have more surveys made west of Centreville.[54] During the rest of 1838 Erastus Hurd, who was in charge of the new surveying project, made two surveys between the points specified by the Legislature. He reported in February, 1839, that the route from Centreville via Lockport, Geneva, Cassopolis, and Niles was about 40 miles in length and would cost over $300,000; the second route from Centreville via Lockport, Lagrange, Summerville, and Niles was 42 miles long and would cost about $175,000.[55] The Board or the Legislature never had to make a choice between the two.

Legislative appropriations and construction in 1838 stimulated the enthusiasm and hopes of the people in the southern tier of counties. When southern partisans added up the $350,000 appropriation for the Southern, the $120,000 which the Board had agreed to spend for fifty miles of railroad iron and the $75,000 remaining from the previous

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[53]Detroit Free Press, March 19, 20, 23, and April 7, 1838; Farmer, pp. 901-02.

[54]Detroit Free Press, March 17, 19, 27, and 28, 1838.

[55]Annual Report, House Documents, 1839, p. 274; "Communication from the President of the Board for Internal Improvement, transmitting the survey and estimates for a Railroad from Centreville, via Lockport, Geneva and Cassopolis, to Niles," dated February 9, 1839, in House Documents, 1839, pp. 512, 538, 540.

year's appropriation, the total was $545,000 which should be spent on the Southern that year. Board promises to have cars in operation to Hillsdale by fall and to excavate the hills west of Hillsdale during the summer built up the hopes of the people as far west as Constantine.[56] When ground was broken for the Southern in Monroe on May 14, 1838, the day was hailed as the beginning of "Monroe's prosperity and Michigan's redemption from embarrassments." The large number of Monroe citizens gathered to witness the laying of the cornerstone thought of the railroad as "second to none in its importance to the western country."[57]

When the thirty day work suspension for the Southern came to an end, construction on the eastern section was continued. In April, 1838, Humphrey contracted for the remainder of the work on the Monroe to Adrian division; included were grading culverts, constructing drains, laying superstructure, and building bridges. This work was to be completed by January 1, 1838. During 1838, however, sickness and a limited labor supply made it impossible to complete the work on time, though Humphrey reported that the work was "far advanced (the timber being mostly laid) and is still steadily advancing." He believed that the work would be completed by the early part of the 1839 work season and that the state would suffer no damage.[58]

At the end of 1838 the superstructure on the first thirty-one miles of the road from Monroe to Leroy was "mostly laid;" the block

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[56]See excerpt from the Constantine Republican in Detroit Free Press, April 25, 1838.

[57]See excerpt from the Monroe Gazette in Detroit Free Press, May 21, 1838.

[58]Humphrey Report, House Documents, 1839, p. 304.

foundation plan of construction was utilized. Several factors, however, increased the cost of this section. In several places the presence of quicksand required the use of additional blocks in the foundation; additional ditching was necessary in other places. Furthermore, some contracts had been let at extremely low rates; when the contractor could not complete the work at the agreed on rate, the work had to be re-let at a higher rate.[59] From Leroy to Adrian the common method of construction, i.e., mud sill, tie, and sawed rail, was used because there were many high banks and deep cuts.[60]

Further west, the grubbing and clearing of the section between Adrian and Hillsdale was contracted for in September, 1838; by January, 1839, this work was nearly finished. Contracts for grading, building bridges, and superstructure were signed on October 10, 1838; this work progressed rapidly during the rest of the year.[61] On the third division of the Southern between Hillsdale and Branch a corps of engineers made final surveys for the location of the road during 1838. To avoid an expensive crossing of Sandy Creek and several miles of steep grades a slight change in the route, running it northward toward Jonesville, was made.[62]

Construction of depots in Monroe and Adrian was authorized by the Board in 1838. By the end of the year the Monroe depot was nearly

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[59]Humphrey Report, House Documents, 1839, pp. 304-05.

[60]Humphrey Report, House Documents, 1839, pp. 305-06.

[61]Annual Report, House Documents, 1839, pp. 275-76; Humphrey Report, House Documents, 1839, p. 307.

[62]Annual Report, House Documents, 1839, p. 276; Humphrey Report, House Documents, 1839, pp. 307-08.

completed, but Humphrey was of the opinion that it was too small "to handle the anticipated business of the road." Lots near the depot were purchased and construction began on an engine house, repair shop, and lumber yard.[63]

The location of the depot at Adrian caused some discussion because Humphrey located it a quarter mile from the depot of the Erie and Kalamazoo Railroad and a quarter mile from the intersection of the Erie and Kalamazoo and the Southern. Both stations were a quarter mile east of Adrian. Humphrey explained that his understanding was that Michigan wanted to take no chance of losing business to Ohio, so no opportunity to transfer cargo from one road to the other was to be given by locating the two roads close together. He also defended the Southern depot location on the grounds that the route was cheaper than any other and that the depot was located on level ground, whereas the Erie and Kalamazoo depot was not.[64]

With respect to the route of the Havre Branch road, the charter of which had been obtained in 1837, Humphrey reported that he had surveyed it during 1838, but that he had not let any contracts for work, for several reasons. First, the interested parties which were to have obtained the right of way free of charge to the state had done this only to a small extent. Second, some people believed the road would be unprofitable to the state because it would not benefit those who wanted the route to Havre. Third, several persons had urged that the Southern

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[63]Humphrey Report, House Documents, 1839, p. 306; excerpt from Monroe Times in Detroit Free Press, August 1, 1838.

[64]Humphrey Report, House Documents, 1839, pp. 306-07.

be connected with a contemplated route around Lake Erie. Humphrey thus delayed work and requested further legislation or instruction.[65]

In 1839 the idea of constructing a Havre Branch Railroad was dropped by the Legislature. When in 1840 came a proposal to connect the Southern to an Ohio railroad via a proposed Maumee branch railroad, a House committee favored making the Southern a link in a "continuous chain of communication between the Atlantic cities and the valley of the Mississippi,"[66] but, because of the financial difficulties, the House Ways and Means Committee recommended "indefinite postponement of the whole subject."[67]

Failure of the United States Bank of Pennsylvania to make its October, 1841, payment on the $5,000,000 loan to the internal improvement fund was not the first serious financial obstacle which the Southern had to face. John S. Dutton, its engineer, reported that progress was slow during 1839 because the contractors did not receive their payments regularly and used this as their excuse for not completing work. The Board had hoped to complete the work from Monroe to Adrian during the summer of 1839; by November 1, 1839, all of the superstructure had been laid on this section, but eight or ten miles of ribbon had to be laid and only ten miles of the strap

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[65]Annual Report, House Documents, 1838, pp. 170-71; Humphrey Report, House Documents, 1839, pp. 308-09; Blois, Gazetteer, pp. 79-80.

[66]"Report of the committee on internal improvement, to whom was referred the proposition of the agents of the Ohio and Maumee branch railroad company," Document No. 13, House Documents, 1841, pp. 269-70.

[67]"Report of the committee on ways and means, in regard to granting aid to the Maumee branch railroad company, by loaning the credit of the state," Document No. 80, House Documents, 1841, p. 285.

iron had been laid.[68] By December 1, the route was completed to Petersburg.[69]

Between Adrian and Hillsdale the work progressed rapidly during 1839, despite the financial uncertainty faced by the contractors. Humphrey estimated that about half of the work was done by November and that two-thirds of it would be done by January 1, 1840.[70]

When the Whig-controlled Legislature of 1840 made no appropriations for internal improvements, the Board, now consisting of the State Treasurer, the Secretary of State, and a member appointed by the Governor, was limited to supervising work for which appropriations had been made. A study made that year found, however, that approximately $57,000 in work had been completed for which no appropriations had been made.[71]

Reports indicate that the Board felt it necessary to make "verbal contracts" to prevent the deterioration of completed sections of the road. Under the direction of R. M. Morrison, new superintendent of the Southern, the laying of the last eight miles of iron completed the line from Monroe to Adrian; he also erected water stations at Monroe, Ida, Petersburg, Palmyra, and Adrian. Wood and well houses were completed, under construction, or contracted for at each of these towns

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[68]Dutton Report, House Documents, 1840, pp. 64-65.

[69]Humphrey Report, House Documents, 1840, pp. 49-50.

[70]Humphrey Report, House Documents, 1840, pp. 50-51.

[71]Annual Report, Joint Documents, 1841, p. 158; Keith, p. 22.

also. The turnout at Petersburg was completed during 1840. The work between Adrian and Hillsdale also progressed rapidly.[72]

To begin operations on the Southern, locomotives and cars were needed. In April, 1840, the Board authorized placing a train on the Southern whenever the line was completed from Monroe to Adrian. To do this the commissioners were authorized to transfer machinery and cars from the Central to the Southern; a $1,000 loan was obtained from the Bank of Michigan to set up a work shop on the Southern.[73] In May Benjamin Briscoe, superintendent of machinery on the Central, shipped one locomotive, two freight cars, two passenger cars, and other equipment to Monroe.[74] Several cars were built in Monroe also.[75] In this way, on November 24, 1840, the Southern was opened from Monroe to Adrian, again with the customary celebration.[76]

Since the Southern had no outlet to Lake Erie, the Board purchased the River Raisin and Lake Erie Railroad for $32,500. During much of 1840 this road from Monroe to LaPlaisance Bay was repaired. The Board also constructed a two thousand foot extension of the Southern to

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[72]Morrison Report, Joint Documents, 1841, pp. 204-05; Metcalf Report, Joint Documents, 1841, p. 215.

[73]Annual Report, Joint Documents, 1841, p. 157.

[74]"Report of Benjamin Briscoe, Supt. machinery, Central railroad," Joint Documents, 1841, p. 198.

[75]Morrison Report, Joint Documents, 1841, p. 204.

[76]Annual Report, Joint Documents, 1841, p. 157; Detroit Free Press, November 30, 1840.

connect it with this road. Morrison estimated that it would cost $800 to complete the road to the bay, exclusive of iron.[77]

As has been noted, the 1841 Legislature was faced with the decision whether to appropriate money for railroad construction or to follow the 1840 Legislature and make no appropriation. With respect to the Southern, there were some additional decisions which had to be made. The Southern was in operation between Monroe and Adrian, but in many places it was unfinished or in bad condition.[78] On its eastern end it had no adequate outlet to Lake Erie, and on its western end it faced the competition of the Erie and Kalamazoo. There was also debate concerning whether the route should go through Hillsdale or Jonesville.

The Legislature dealt with each problem in turn. When the House would not approve a Senate bill to have the Southern route pass through Jonesville, the Senate reversed itself, and a $200,000 appropriation was made to complete the Southern to Hillsdale.[79] The bill also directed the commissioners to pay the contractors in drafts on the $5,000,000 loan installments, with no claims for damages against the state should the installments be delayed. If contracts could not be let at reasonable prices, none were to be made.[80] Thus the Legislature

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[77]Morrison Report, Joint Documents, 1841, pp. 204-05; Annual Report, Joint Documents, 1841, pp. 157, 172; "Report of the commissioners appointed to settle with the River Raisin and Lake Erie railroad company," House Documents II, 1841, 196-98.

[78]Morrison Report, Joint Documents, 1841, p. 204.

[79]Detroit Free Press, February 12, 13, 20, 23, 27 and March 1, 3, 22, and April 2, 1841.

[80]Detroit Free Press, February 27, 1841.

attempted to meet the competition of the Erie and Kalamazoo by improving the condition of the Southern and by extending it westward.

During 1841 Thomas Cole, new superintendent of the Southern, attempted to improve, repair, and refurbish the run-down railroad which he found. The damage caused by a spring freshet to the bridge at Petersburg was repaired, old cars were fixed, five new freight cars were added to the road, the two cars begun by the previous Board were completed, improvements to the machine shop were made, and tools were added. While a rigid economy was practiced, Cole maintained that "no necessary expense [was] spared in keeping every thing in perfect repair."[81]

Wells which had been dug the previous year were a constant annoyance to the Southern during 1841. The wells had not been dug deep enough; when the dry 1841 season came, pure water for the engines was rare and often there was no water at all.

Cole reported that the buildings at the various stations had not been completed, and much of the work that had been done was of poor quality. During late 1841 these buildings were repaired and completed.

After the work season of 1841 the Southern between Monroe and Adrian was in good condition, according to the Board, although it had not been fully spiked because the spike which had been purchased during the summer was "of a quality unfit for use."[82] Trains were operated daily, but profits suffered from the competition and lack of an outlet

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[81]Cole Report, Joint Documents, 1842, p. 223.

[82]Annual Report, Joint Documents, 1842, p. 186; also Cole Report, Joint Documents, 1842, p. 223.

on Lake Erie,[83] even though a new locomotive had been placed into service in July.[84]

Work on the Adrian to Hillsdale division progressed slowly. A bridge over a heavy tamarack swamp near Hillsdale needed a large number of piles to make it safe; this construction took extra time. Crossing of several other marshes also required additional time. The biggest cause of delay, however, was the poor financial condition of the internal improvement fund. When the October, 1841, installment was not met, with the resulting reduction in state scrip which could be issued--scrip needed by the contractors to pay their men--the work could not be completed as scheduled.[85] Alvin Turner, engineer on the Southern, hoped to have the entire route ready for iron by February or March, 1842. By November, 1841, water stations and turnouts had been established where necessary, but no contracts for buildings had been let; land for a depot in Hillsdale had been leased.[86]

Although the Board estimated that it needed 1,152 tons of 2½" by 3/4" iron bars to complete the Adrian to Hillsdale section, the Board contracted for the purchase of only 875 tons because it expected that enough iron would be left after completing the Central to Jackson to complete the Southern to Hillsdale. The agreement with E. Corning and Company of Albany stipulated that if the Bank of the United States of Pennsylvania failed to make the October 1, 1841, payment on the loan

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[83]Turner Report, Joint Documents, 1842, p. 213.

[84]Cole Report, Joint Documents, 1842, p. 221.

[85]Turner Report, Joint Documents, 1842, p. 216.

[86]Turner Report, Joint Documents, 1842, pp. 216-17.

or failed entirely, the contract would be void and the state would be under no obligation to purchase the iron.[87] When the October payment was not met, the delivery of the iron was delayed, and the Southern could not be completed to Adrian in 1841.[88]

To provide an outlet to Lake Erie the 1841 Legislature passed a joint resolution making the River Raisin and Lake Erie Railroad part of the Southern. Passing a resolution was not enough, however, for the road was "in a very dilapidated condition and badly constructed."[89] Since the Legislature did not decide whether the ultimate termination of the Southern should be at the dock at Brest, the mouth of the River Raisin ship canal which was then being constructed by the federal government, or LaPlaisance Bay, the Board made only enough repairs on the road to allow it to be used with horse power during 1841.[90] Thomas Cole, superintendent of the Southern, reported that one curve on the route was too sharp for locomotives and that the superstructure had so decayed that it could not hold the weight of a locomotive. To repair the road so that locomotives could be used was impossible because the only financial resources available were the receipts of the road, and these had to be used to defray all operational expenses of the Southern. Repairs which were made included replacing iron on two and one-half miles of the road and rebuilding part of a bridge.[91]

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[87]Annual Report, Joint Documents, 1842, pp. 185-86.

[88]Turner Report, Joint Documents, 1842, p. 216.

[89]Detroit Free Press, April 13, 1841.

[90]Annual Report, Joint Documents, 1842, pp. 186-87.

[91]Cole Report, Joint Documents, 1842, p. 220.

In its 1842 report the Board urged the Legislature to provide a Lake Erie termination for the Southern and to provide funds for extending the road so that the locomotives could travel to the port facilities. The money being used to transfer the cargo from one train to the other at Monroe, it was pointed out, could be used to defray the costs of construction. The Board, after delineating the advantages and disadvantages of both LaPlaisance Bay and the mouth of the ship canal as possible termini, favored the ship canal termination because of the excellent harbor and because no one company claimed the right of controlling the business of the harbor, as was the case at LaPlaisance Bay harbor.[92]

When Joseph Dutton again took over the duties of engineer on the Southern in March, 1842, he found a total of six miles of construction of various types to complete, but the work was scattered in little patches over the thirty-two mile Adrian to Hillsdale section and was in the hands of dozens of contractors. Because the nature of the work required the use of railroad cars, there was much delay because only three or four dilapidated dirt-carrying cars were available.[93] In addition, many contractors delayed completing their work because the state warrants which the contractors received as payment depreciated in value.[94]

The real difficulty for the Southern during 1842, however, was that the state could purchase no iron to complete the work. With a

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[92]Annual Report, Joint Documents, 1842, pp. 187-88; Cole Report, Joint Documents, 1842, p. 222; Turner Report, Joint Documents, 1842, pp. 213-14.

[93]Dutton Report, Joint Documents, 1843, pp. 186-88.

[94]Dutton Report, Joint Documents, 1843, p. 187.

few exceptions, the entire route from Adrian to Hillsdale was ready for iron by the end of 1842.[95] The Legislature of 1842 authorized the Board to pledge the receipts of the Southern for the next five years to pay for iron. During 1842 the Board was unable to purchase the iron on those terms; money or a very short credit was necessary.[96]

Sometime during 1842 iron for about ten miles of the road was found lying idle. This iron was placed on the Southern west of Adrian. It was not quite enough to complete the road to Hudson, so approximately five miles of maple ribbon, two by four inches, was used on the remaining portion to Hudson. In this way the Southern was put in operation to Hudson, a distance of fifty-one miles from Monroe, during the winter of 1842.[97]

Receipts increased during 1842, but they did not meet expectations because of the same difficulties of previous years. Progress in other areas included completion of stations, side tracks, and a turning platform.[98]

Since no iron could be purchased by pledging the income of the Southern for five years, the 1843 Legislature appropriated $119,000 from the net proceeds of all the internal improvement works to purchase iron to complete the Southern to Hillsdale and the Central to Marshall.

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[95]Dutton Report, Joint Documents, 1843, p. 187.

[96]Annual Report, Joint Documents, 1843, p. 154; Detroit Daily Free Press, August 6, 1842; Keith, p. 24.

[97]Annual Report, Joint Documents, 1843, p. 154; Dutton Report, Joint Documents, 1843, p. 187; Keith, p. 25.

[98]Dutton Report, Joint Documents, 1843, p. 187; Annual Report, Joint Documents, 1843, pp. 154-55; Detroit Daily Free Press, June 13, October 7, 15, 1842.

Warrants were to be drawn on the internal improvement fund, which received the income from the railroads; these warrants, in turn, would be accepted as payment for land sold by the state for the university and primary school funds. The Legislature also set Hillsdale as the western terminus of the Southern.[99]

The arrival of the iron, together with the suspension of the 1842 resolution forbidding the signing of new contracts, permitted work to be continued on the Southern. The Southern was completed to Hillsdale in October, 1843, but this was too late to benefit from the business of the harvest season; for 1843 the receipts of the Southern were about $24,000.[100]

A variety of projects to improve the Southern also were undertaken in 1843. The timber of the superstructure on the Monroe to Adrian section was replaced. On that part of the road which had been only half spiked, the remaining spiking was done. The Board placed two new locomotives on the road, and new cars were built. The public-spirited citizens of Monroe worked to extend the ship canal of the River Raisin to Monroe so that the River Raisin and Lake Erie Railroad would not have to be rebuilt by the state. Thus the Board expected an increase in income during 1844 which could be used to replace more timber on the eastern section and to purchase more cars.[101]

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[99] Detroit Daily Free Press, February 10, 1843; Michigan Laws, 1843, p. 27.

[100] Bald, p. 225; Keith, p. 24; Governor Barry's message to the Legislature, Joint Documents, 1844, p. 16; Annual Report, Document No. 5, Joint Documents, 1844, pp. 8-9.

[101] Annual Report, Joint Documents, 1843, p. 155; Governor Barry's message to the Legislature, Joint Documents, 1844, p. 16; Annual Report, Document No. 5, Joint Documents, 1844, pp. 2-5, 9, 17-18.

All of the receipts on the Southern for 1844, approximately $60,000, was used to run the railroad and make repairs. Much of the road from LaPlaisance Bay to Adrian was rebuilt, as were many of the bridges along the route, especially the one at Petersburg. Ditches were excavated, and much of the road was re-spiked with a better quality spike. The side tracks and switches at Monroe were also rebuilt. Sixteen new freight cars and two new passenger cars were added to the road. With much of the money coming from receipts on the Central Railroad, two new locomotives were purchased for use on the Southern.[102]

During 1845 the Tecumseh branch of the Palmyra and Jacksonburg Railroad was rebuilt, as was the bridge over the River Raisin four miles south of Tecumseh. When funds ran out, Tecumseh citizens completed the work. In 1846 the Board urged that the branch be extended to Clinton.

During 1845 and the first eleven months of 1846 receipts on the Southern increased steadily; in 1845 the income was $62,735.62; during the first eleven months of 1846 it was $88,394.30. Despite these steady increases, financial pressures on the state and the need to rebuild the roads with T or H rail prompted Michigan to dispose of its railroads.[103] The attempt to build a state railroad system had been a difficult and discouraging experience; it was to leave its mark for years to come.

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[102]Governor Barry's message to the Legislature, Joint Documents, 1845, p. 9; Annual Report, Document No. 4, Joint Documents, 1845, pp. 3-5, 29; Cleveland Report in Annual Report, Document No. 4, Joint Documents, 1845, pp. 29-31.

[103]Cleveland Report in Annual Report, Document No. 4, Joint Documents, 1846, p. 20; Annual Report, Document No. 4, Joint Documents, 1846, pp. 3-6, 11; Annual Report, Document No. 4, Joint Documents, p. 16.

IV. AN INCREASE IN THE BENEFITS

When infant Michigan passed legislation to build a system of internal improvements, it also adopted a plan to finance those improvements. As the years passed and new problems arose, the plan was modified in attempts to meet the exigencies of the situation.

At the outset, Michigan planned to finance its improvements from four sources, namely, its share of the surplus revenue which was distributed by the federal government in 1837, income from a percentage of the receipts of the sale of public land in Michigan, a state loan, and unnamed miscellaneous receipts. Later, a federal government land grant, the proceeds from the sale of state salt lands, and another federal distribution also helped finance construction.

At the time when statehood for the Michigan Territory was being discussed in Congress, the problem of the constantly increasing surplus in the federal treasury was also being considered. Revenue from two sources, the high protective tariff and public land sales, swelled the treasury. Land sales totalled $14,757,600 in 1835 and $24,877,179 in 1836. The tariff produced $16,200,000 in 1834; $19,400,000 in 1835; and $23,400,000 in 1836. By June, 1836, the surplus was $41,500,000.[1]

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[1]Edward G. Bourne, The History of the Surplus Revenue of 1837 (New York, 1885), pp. 15-16. Hereafter cited as Bourne.

To prevent further increases in the surplus, in June, 1836, Congress passed, and President Jackson signed into law, a bill which provided that ten per cent of the money from land sales should be given to new states; the remainder of the money was to be distributed to all the states. The bill also provided that the surplus was to be deposited with the states; the federal government could, however, call for its money at any time.[2]

Since the deposit bill did not prevent further increases in the surplus, President Jackson issued the Specie Circular in July, 1836, requiring payment in gold or silver, or Virginia land scrip in some cases, for federal land after August 15, 1836. The effects of the Circular were not immediately felt, for the surplus rose to more than $46,000,000 in October, 1836. By December 1, however, the surplus was down to approximately $42,100,000. After deducting a reserve of $5,000,000, the surplus remaining to be deposited with the states on January 1, 1837, was over $37,000,000.[3]

Michigan accepted its share of the surplus revenue deposit on July 22, 1836; its share was about $287,000. By an act of the Legislature it was placed in the internal improvement fund as a loan on March 22, 1837, and was to be returned to the state treasury when the five million dollar loan for internal improvements was obtained or when the Legislature required it. The Board of Internal Improvements was permitted to lend any money not immediately needed to any specie-paying

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[2]Bourne, pp. 18-21.

[3]Bourne, pp. 27-29.

bank for not less than five per cent interest payable semi-annually.[4] Almost immediately the Board lent the entire amount to the Michigan State Bank at six per cent.[5]

The internal improvement system did not benefit from the federal deposit as much as was anticipated. In both 1838 and 1839 the sum of $80,000 was withdrawn from the surplus fund to pay current expenses of the state.[6] In January, 1840, $100,000 was withdrawn for the same purpose,[7] leaving about $26,000 to be used for internal improvements.[8]

The federal surplus revenue did Michigan more harm than good since it probably prompted Michigan to undertake an internal improvement system larger than it might otherwise have done. One of the factors which prompted the people of Michigan to accept the unsatisfactory Congressional settlement of the border dispute with Ohio was the fear that Michigan would not receive her share of the surplus, a situation which would mean a postponement of many internal improvement projects.[9]

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[4]Bourne, pp. 75-76.

[5]Annual Report, House Documents, 1838, p. 131; Senate Documents, 1838, p. 155.

[6]Laws of Michigan, 1837-38, p. 244; Laws of Michigan, 1839, p. 179.

[7]Laws of Michigan, 1840, p. 46.

[8]Bourne, p. 76.

[9]Bourne, p. 76; Lawton T. Hemans, Life and Times of Stevens Thomson Mason (Lansing, 1920), pp. 243-44. Hereafter cited as Hemans, Mason. Hannah Emily Keith, "An Historical Sketch of Internal Improvements in Michigan, 1836-1846," Michigan Political Science Association Publications, IV (Ann Arbor, 1900-1902), 16. Hereafter cited as Keith.

Although Michigan had anticipated receiving $382,000 from the federal government as its share of the surplus revenue distribution, the last installment was never paid, and Michigan received only the initial $287,000. In 1843 another distribution act was passed. As a result of this legislation, Michigan received an additional $9,700.[10]

Proceeds from public land sales was another source of revenue which Michigan hoped to use to finance its system of internal improvements. Henry Clay's land bill of 1836 provided for distribution to the state of the proceeds of the public lands according to representation; the bill was later amended to include any new states which might be added to the Union. As a result of this legislation, Michigan received about $174,000 which were used for internal improvements.[11]

Federal land grants were to be another means of financing Michigan internal improvements. Efforts by Michigan to obtain federal land grants for this purpose began in 1835. To the first Michigan Constitution submitted to Congress for approval was appended "An Ordinance" requesting a grant of 700 sections of land for internal improvements.[12] While land grants for education were made, those for internal improvements were denied when Congress approved the Constitution and agreed to Michigan's entrance into the Union. A special session of the first Legislature renewed the request for land, this time for 500,000 acres.[13]

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[10]Keith, p. 45; Bourne, p. 35.

[11]Detroit Free Press, May 11 and July 13, 1836; Keith, p. 45.

[12]Henry M. Utley and Byron M. Cutcheon, Michigan as a Province, Territory, and State (New York, 1906), III, 50. Hereafter cited as Utley.

[13]Utley, III, 67.

In 1838 William Woodbridge wrote John Norvell, Michigan's representative in the House, to press for a large land grant to enable Michigan to continue her internal improvements.[14] It was not until September 4, 1841, however, that Congress granted 500,000 acres of land to Michigan for this purpose. At various times these lands were appropriated by the state for construction of the railroads.[15] Contractors on the various projects were paid in land warrants which authorized them to sell state land. Since the land was not in demand (few people had money to purchase it), these warrants eventually depreciated to the point where land could be purchased for about fifty cents per acre.[16] When the contractors were able to obtain money from neither the state nor from land sales, work stoppages were inevitable. In January, 1846, a Michigan Senate investigating committee reported that 305,000 of the 500,000 acres of land granted by Congress in 1841 had been allocated for the internal improvement system.[17]

By far the largest source of revenue for financing the internal improvements system was to be a $5,000,000 loan which the state hoped to obtain from Eastern capitalists. Governor Mason proposed obtaining such a loan in 1836.[18] In March, 1837, after Michigan became a

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[14]William Woodbridge to John Norvell, March 9, 1838, William Woodbridge Papers, February-December, 1838, No. 4280, in Burton Collection, Detroit Public Library, Detroit, Michigan.

[15]Keith, p. 24.

[16]Keith, p. 24; Annual Report, Document No. 9, Senate Documents, 1846, p. 5.

[17]Utley, III, 168.

[18]Messages of the Governors of Michigan, ed. George N. Fuller (Lansing, 1925), I, 169-71. Hereafter cited as Fuller, Messages.

state, the Legislature authorized the Governor to obtain a loan of $5,000,000, with interest not to exceed 5½ per cent, redeemable at the pleasure of the state within twenty-five years after January 1, 1838. Bonds were not to be sold at less than par; all proceeds were designated for internal improvements. At the same time a sinking fund was created. It was to receive the anticipated receipts of the railroads and canals, and from it payments on the bonds were to be made.[19] Also to be paid into this sinking fund was the interest received on loans which might be made from the internal improvement fund and all dividends which might be earned from bank stock owned by the state.[20]

During the remainder of 1837 Governor Mason made two trips to New York to negotiate the loan. On the advice of John Delafield, a New York banker, Mason requested amendments to the 1837 law permitting sale of the bonds in Europe and raising the interest rate from 5½ to 6 per cent. The Legislature complied.[21]

During 1837 Mason also negotiated a sale of $500,000 in bonds to Oliver Newberry of Detroit, but Newberry was able to complete the purchase of only $200,000 worth. Since the Legislature had authorized two $100,000 loans to private railroad companies, the Newberry bond

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[19]Michigan Centennial History, ed. George N. Fuller (Chicago, 1939), I, 285. Hereafter cited as Fuller, Centennial History. Keith, pp. 7, 17. Hemans, Mason, pp. 279-80.

[20]Keith, p. 17.

[21]Journal of the House of Representatives (Detroit, 1837), pp. 5-6.

purchase and the two loans counter-balanced each other, and did not figure in subsequent discussions of the five million dollar loan.[22]

During 1838 Mason negotiated a contract with the Morris Canal and Banking Company of New Jersey. It was a respected financial institution of the time; its vice-president was Edward R. Biddle, a cousin of Nicholas Biddle, president of the United States Bank of Pennsylvania. Under terms of the contract, the company was to sell the Michigan bonds and receive a 2½ per cent commission on the proceeds.

The $5,000,000 bond issue was divided into two groups, according to a payment schedule. In the first group were $1,300,000 in bonds which were turned over to the company at the signing of the contract on June 1, 1838. The company, in turn, was to make a $250,000 payment at that time and was to pay the remaining $1,050,000 as the state required it from time to time.

In the second group were $3,700,000 in bonds. The bonds in this group were to be sent to the company as the bonds in the first group were sold, so that the company would always have $1,000,000 in bonds on hand. The company, in turn, was to make quarterly installment payments of $250,000 beginning July 1, 1839, until the full amount was paid.[23]

Two significant changes were made in this contract later. In one change the company was permitted to make the $250,000 payment on

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[22]Fuller, Centennial History, I, 286.

[23]Fuller, Centennial History, I, 286; William L. Jenks, "Michigan's Five Million Dollar Loan," Michigan History Magazine, XV (Autumn, 1931), 582. Hereafter Michigan History Magazine will be cited as MHM.

August 1, 1838, rather than on June 1; the company was then to make $100,000 payments on the first of each succeeding month. Still later it was agreed that all of the bonds would be turned over to the company immediately. The company thus obtained possession of $5,000,000 in securities without making any payment on them. The only security given the state was the promise that the United States Bank of Pennsylvania would meet the payments on three-fourths of all the bonds should the Morris Canal and Banking Company not be able to do so. The company and the bank agreed to make quarterly payments totalling $250,000 beginning July 1, 1839.[24]

The company and the bank both took advantage of the situation by placing the bonds on the market, both in America and in Europe. Those bonds sent to Europe were out of control of both institutions. This meant that the state would be held responsible for redeeming the bonds, even though it had, as yet, received no payment for them.

Although the records and studies are confusing, the Morris Canal and Banking Company seems to have met its obligations with respect to the first group of bonds ($1,300,000); after deducting its 2½ per cent interest, it forwarded to the state approximately $1,100,000.[25]

Both the company and the bank made all required payments during 1839. On April 1, 1840, however, the Morris Canal and Banking Company defaulted on its installment. Still owing on $737,500 worth of

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[24]Fuller, Centennial History, I, 286-87; Jenks, MHM, XV, 583-86.

[25]Fuller, Centennial History, I, 287.

bonds, none of which could be recalled by the company, the company agreed to turn over to the state various securities valued at $621,000 and to pay $100,000 before January 1, 1844, and regular amounts thereafter until the entire amount with interest was paid. The state, however, received only $23,835.50 for the securities.[26]

The United States Bank of Pennsylvania continued its payments until October 1, 1841, when it too defaulted.[27] It had paid about $1,208,615 by that time, but still owed $1,087,500.[28] The state received no payment from either the company or the bank for about $2,343,000 worth of bonds.[29]

An approximation of the amount which the state received from the $5,000,000 loan which could be applied to internal improvements is $2,332,000. From all sources the state received $2,543,155.95 divided as follows:

Federal distributions (1836)	$ 26,751.49
Federal distribution (1843)	9,729.57
Land sales	174,224.17
Loan	2,332,450.72
Total	$2,543,155.95

An additional sum was derived from the 305,000 acres of land sold by the state. Because of depreciating land value and the use of state scrip in these transactions, it is difficult to determine a monetary value for this land. These transactions would come close to

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[26]Jenks, MHM, XV, 591-92 and 614.

[27]For a quarterly listing of bank payments see Jenks, MHM, XV, 614.

[28]Jenks, MHM, XV, 593.

[29]Jenks, MHM, XV, 603.

barter, land being traded for work done on the railroads. If seventy-five cents per acre is allowed as the monetary value of these lands, the sum available to the state from all sources approximates $2,780,000, not a great sum for building three railroads and two canals across the peninsula.

This sad state of financial affairs, coupled with the totally inadequate system of Michigan wildcat banks, which circulated ever-depreciating currency, the failure of many reputable banks in the wake of the depression of 1837, and the tightening of credit here and abroad made it impossible for Michigan to meet its commitments to the various contractors on the railroads as it had hoped. As a result, work was frequently interrupted; supplies, especially iron, ran short; the Legislature discontinued work on the Northern Railroad and designated Kalamazoo and Hillsdale, rather than St. Joseph and New Buffalo, as the western termini of the Central and Southern railroads. Ultimately, however, sale of the railroads and the abandonment of the idea of a state-owned railroad system was the only course of action deemed prudent by the state Legislature.

That the state should be relieved of its railroad building burden was not a new idea in 1846. In late 1839 E. P. Hastings advised governor-elect William Woodbridge that "the present system of Internal [sic] improvements should be at once abandoned" and the balance of the funds used to finish one of the railroads. The other two railroads, he said, should be retained and finished when the state could afford it.[30]

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[30]E. P. Hastings to William Woodbridge, December 14, 1839, in William Woodbridge Papers, Burton Collection, the Detroit Public Library, Detroit, October-December, 1839 Box.

On January 21, 1840, a resolution to have the House Committee on Internal Improvements inquire into the possibility of selling the Southern Railroad to anyone who would complete it to Hillsdale and then keep it in repair was tabled by the House,[31] but the idea was present. This same House Committee later presented a proposal to lease the Central Railroad, but no action was taken.[32]

A year later the Senate defeated a resolution to lease the Central Railroad. The opposition to the resolution agreed that a company or an individual could run the Central more cheaply than could the state, but they doubted whether any company would be able to finance and successfully operate a railroad, since few of the construction companies could meet their obligations to the state.[33]

Even the strict economies of the administration of Governor John S. Barry could not prevent further proposals to dispose of the railroads. In February, 1842, the Senate approved a resolution to lease the Central Railroad to Austin Wales and Alfred Williams for five years. They were to pay the state half of all monies received. The House approved a similar resolution, but a committee assigned to complete the terms did not consider the propositions favorable to the state, and the matter was dropped.[34] The committee emphasized, however, that the leasing of the road would be sound policy because the state could not run the road successfully.[35]

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[31]Detroit Free Press, January 23, 1840.

[32]Detroit Free Press, January 25, 1840.

[33]Detroit Free Press, January 25, 1841.

[34]Detroit Free Press, February 11, 1842; Keith, p. 29.

[35]Keith, p. 41.

In the long 1843 debate over internal improvement appropriations, Representative Bush of Livingston County wanted to insert a clause in the bill which would empower the Auditor General to sell both the Central and Southern railroads at no less than the cost of the roads plus interest. He reasoned that the system was "too heavy" for the young state and that the wisest course would be to complete the roads as far as ground was broken and then sell them to the bondholders. He urged the House to lay aside sectional interests and candidly consider the matter.[36]

The opposition argued that sale of the railroads, especially the Central, would leave the state without a means of repaying the loans; income from the railroads was expected to pay the debt and the interest. They accused Bush of "an inveterate and eternal hatred to the works of internal improvement."[37]

The 1843 Legislature, however, did set Hillsdale and Marshall as termini on the Southern and Central railroads. Only after some maneuvering was a $240,000 appropriation made to extend the Central to Kalamazoo.[38]

Early in the 1844 session of the Legislature the House Ways and Means Committee recommended passage of a bill "to incorporate the Michigan Rail-road Company, and to authorize the sale of the Southern and Central railroads" to the company for $2,588,796, plus any amount spent by the state on the railroads after December 1, 1843. By July,

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[36]Detroit Daily Free Press, February 10, 1843.

[37]Detroit Daily Free Press, February 10, 1843.

[38]Detroit Daily Free Press, February 13, 1843.

1844, the committee estimated, the state would spend an additional $187,500, so the recommended sale price was $2,776,298; sale of the railroads at that figure would leave a debt of $355,707.[39]

The committee marshaled all the reasons it could to support its recommendation. It asserted that the current two mill on the dollar tax rate applied to the increasing property values in the state would pay the costs of government, gradually diminish the debt, and pay the interest on the debt. The committee doubted that the state works would pay the interest on the state debt. The report further asserted that, in a democratic society, government should not complete with private enterprise as the state was doing. To sell the railroads would be in keeping with the democratic ideal. The committee was of the opinion that the welfare of the state would be served if the railroads were sold. The report noted that a great deal of legislative time was required to deal with the business of the railroads and that every discussion of the railroads aroused much unhealthy sectional feeling, both of which were detrimental to Michigan. The spectre of political corruption in connection with the state operation of the railroads further convinced the committee that the railroads should be sold.[40]

On February 1, 1844, the House referred the bill to a select committee of nine, and political maneuvering and legislative debate began. A move in the House to appropriate $75,000 for the Central

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[39]Detroit Free Press, January 24, 1844; the complete committee report is in Detroit Free Press, January 25, 1844.

[40]Detroit Free Press, January 25, 1844.

Railroad was postponed indefinitely.[41] A similar fate met a Senate bill authorizing the governor to receive sales proposals on the various works.[42] After considerable debate in the House,[43] a bill to sell the public works was defeated because of a lack of a two-thirds majority; the vote was 26-23 in favor of sale.[44] The vote was an indication of the changing attitude of the people toward state operation of the railroads.

After the defeat of the move to sell the railroads, legislative attention turned to the appropriations bills. Sectionalism marked these discussions.[45] On March 1, 1844, the House appropriated $75,000 in land and $75,000 out of the proceeds of the Central to purchase iron to complete the Central to Kalamazoo; the Senate passed the same bill the next day.[46] A bill permitting work to continue on the Southern was also passed. While work continued, income on the two roads increased, but not nearly as much as had been hoped; the income fell far short of paying operating expenses and the interest on the loan.

By the beginning of 1845 many people in Michigan were convinced that the state should sell the railroads, and a group of Eastern capitalists was reported willing to purchase the Central and complete

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[41]See debate in Detroit Free Press, February 16 and 17, 1844.

[42]Detroit Free Press, February 22, 1844.

[43]Detroit Free Press, April 8, 9, 10, 1844.

[44]Detroit Free Press, February 26, 1844.

[45]See Detroit Free Press, March 26, 1844, for account of the debate over the appropriation for the Central Railroad.

[46]Detroit Free Press, March 2 and 4, 1844.

it to St. Joseph in one or two years.[47] Even the Board of Internal Improvements made no requests for additional appropriations, although the members still believed that the receipts of the railroads, especially the Central, would cover the cost of the iron needed to complete the route between Marshall and Kalamazoo.[48]

All members of the Legislature, however, were not convinced that the state should curtail or drop the projects. Early in 1845 the House Committee on Internal Improvements presented a bill appropriating 140,000 acres of land to complete the Central from Kalamazoo to St. Joseph and 45,000 acres to extend the Southern from Hillsdale to Coldwater. The bill also proposed that the Board of Internal Improvements sign contracts for grubbing, clearing, and grading these sections.[49]

Action by the minority who favored using state land to pay the debt and completing the Central to Kalamazoo had little effect. One of their bills proposing that the Internal Improvement Commissioners be elected by the people was defeated when sarcastic amendments to the effect that the state treasurer, prosecuting attorneys, and notaries public also should be elected and that such offices should go to the highest bidder were added.[50]

Sectional interests moved the House to increase land appropriations even beyond what had been recommended by the committee. When Northern representatives requested 30,000 acres to turn the line of the

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[47] Detroit Free Press, January 2, 1845.

[48] Detroit Free Press, January 21, 1845.

[49] Detroit Free Press, February 8, 1845.

[50] Detroit Free Press, February 14, 1845.

Northern Railroad into a wagon road, their request had to be honored in some way. As finally passed by both House and Senate, the bills appropriated 243,000 acres for internal improvements, including 20,000 acres to complete construction of the Central to Kalamazoo, 140,000 acres to extend the Central beyond Kalamazoo, 15,000 acres to turn the route of the Northern into a wagon road, 45,000 acres to extend the Southern to Coldwater or Branch, and the remainder to finance canals, roads, or river improvements.[51]

The decision whether to call a halt to the program or to continue appropriating money and land in the hope that soon the railroads would begin paying for themselves fell to Governor John S. Barry, noted both for his desire to extend the railroads and for his determination to recover the financial reputation of the state. His veto message indicates that financial considerations gave him no choice. Total land appropriations would take 365,000 acres, should the bill be signed, he noted, and this was more land than the state had to appropriate. Furthermore, there were monetary liabilities which totalled $321,250 for 1845 alone, and the land was the one means left to the state to meet those obligations before additional taxes would have to be imposed. In addition, he said, expenses would inevitably be higher than anticipated, since no provisions had been made in the bills for paying engineers, securing right of way, or purchasing iron. He also asserted that the

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[51]Detroit Free Press, February 2, 19, 23; March 15, 21; and April 2 and 23, 1845.

state should be able to make necessary repairs on the roads now in operation, something they could not do if the state went further into debt. The Legislature was unable to override the veto.[52]

The bills which Governor Barry vetoed were the last serious attempts to have the state complete the railroads to their originally planned destinations. Now the attention of the state turned to keeping the railroads in repair, completing what construction had been begun, and convincing those opposed to sale that selling the railroads was the solution to the problems facing the state. Some of those opposed to sale had argued that the state should struggle on and hope the federal government would provide some kind of assistance. Others said that if the railroads were worth selling or buying, they were worth keeping. Still others were of the opinion that it was unwise to place so much power in the hands of a private company. Reasons, or a good offer to purchase the railroads, had to be found to meet these arguments.[53]

The events of the 1845 legislative session, coupled with the 1845 fall election, stimulated much discussion concerning sale of the railroads. The Whigs generally emphasized the large size of the state debt, minimized the state's resources, and favored sale of the railroads, with the proceeds to be used to pay the state debt. They asserted that reduction of state taxes could then follow. The Democrats, on the other hand, deplored Whig attacks on the credit and resources of the state. They agreed with the Whigs that if the works were sold, the

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[52]Detroit Free Press, March 15 and 17, 1845. The veto message is in Fuller, Messages, I, 521-27.

[53]Detroit Free Press, June 10, 18, 19, 20, 26, 1845.

sale price should cover most of the state debt. However, they maintained that they would agree to sell the railroads only if the tax necessary to pay interest on the state bonds--after the net income of the railroads was applied to the interest payment--was too much for the people.[54]

Meanwhile, Michigan men were becoming increasingly interested in the possibility that Eastern capitalists might be willing to purchase the railroads, especially the Central. In June, 1845, Henry Wells wrote to John W. Brooks, the young and ambitious engineer and superintendent of the Auburn and Rochester Railroad in upper New York, and informed him that the Michigan Central, according to his information, was charging just enough less than carters to get business; he was of the opinion that if it reduced rates, it would have more business than it could handle. He wrote that "an iron road would pay there better than any road now built, and that the state would be already [sic] to sell next winter."[55] Perhaps Brooks, who had already risen from assistant engineer on the Boston and Maine Railroad to superintendent of the Auburn and Rochester, was looking for greener pastures. No doubt his familiarity with the railroad business had given him some knowledge of the Michigan Central and the plight of the state. Perhaps, too, the idea of purchasing the Michigan Central was already brewing in his mind. The letter must have prompted more thought on his part.

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[54]Paul A. Randall, "Gubernatorial Platforms for the Political Parties of Michigan, 1834-1864" (unpublished Master's Thesis, Wayne University, Detroit, Michigan, 1937), pp. 51-57, 64-70.

[55]Henry Wells to John W. Brooks, June 11, 1845, in James Fredrick Joy Papers, Michigan Historical Collections, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. These papers will hereafter be cited as JFJ Papers.

In September, 1845, several letters appeared in Detroit newspapers; in these letters the writers ably presented the idea that sale of the railroads would be best for Michigan, its people, and the financiers involved. One writer, identified only as "Franklin," urged the state to sell the railroads because the income from them would not be enough in the near future to pay the interest on the debt and the debt itself, as neighboring states were discovering with respect to their own roads. To increase the income, he reasoned, would require extension of the railroads to St. Joseph or around Lake Michigan to Chicago. He did not say so, but the readers knew that Michigan did not have the funds to complete such extensions. He urged the state to sell the railroads to a company which had money to complete them and could thereby make them produce revenue.[56]

Two days later, a letter from James F. Joy, writing under the pseudonym of "Taxpayer," appeared in the Detroit Free Press. He generally agreed with the position taken by "Franklin" and presented the far-fetched idea that all land owners in the state should give the state one-fifth of their land to pay the debt of the state. In this way, he said, resort to taxation, which would discourage people from settling in Michigan, would not have to be made to pay the debt.[57]

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[56]Detroit Free Press, September 15, 1845. I have found no one willing to venture a guess concerning the identity of "Franklin." Was it a member of the Legislature; George F. Porter, James Joy's law partner; or a leading Detroit business man? In view of the "Taxpayer" letters which follow, it seems unlikely that "Franklin" was James F. Joy himself, although he may have been.

[57]Detroit Free Press, September 17, 1845. Joy later identified himself as the author of the "Taxpayer" letters. Detroit Free Press, May 1, 1892, in James F. Joy, "Railroad History of Michigan," MPHC (Lansing, 1894), XXII, 301.

Several days later "Taxpayer" wrote again, this time urging the state to sell the railroads. He argued that it would not endanger state interests to sell the railroads, but that it would be contrary to the best interests of the state to retain them because completion of the railroads, something which the state could not do, would connect Michigan with the East. On the other hand, he wrote, if the railroads were not completed, travel would go south of Michigan. He defended sale of the railroads to private companies by noting that the companies would have to complete the roads in order to make a profit. He pointed out that the companies would try to please the public because they depended on the public for business, and he assured the readers that railroad companies would be too busy operating the roads to become embroiled in politics. He concluded his letter by noting that the companies, for their own advantage, would purchase the railroads with state scrip, paying only about $3 million for $3,850,000 in bonds; the state would thereby regain possession of its bonds.[58]

While the discussion continued, other developments caused a mounting of the pressure to sell the railroads. First, dissatisfaction with the service and the condition of the Central increased.[59] Second, Canada was discussing the construction of a railroad from a point opposite Buffalo to a point opposite Detroit. Boston and Michigan men were beginning to work to complete a railroad connection between Boston and the West, with a Boston to Buffalo railroad being the eastern portion,

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[58]Detroit Free Press, September 23, 1845.

[59]Silas Farmer, A History of Detroit and Michigan (Detroit, 1884), p. 897. Hereafter cited as Farmer.

the contemplated Niagara and Detroit Rivers Railroad the middle section, and a completed Michigan Central the western portion.[60] Completion of the Central required sale of the Central. Third, the amount and number of claims against the state for the killing or maiming of animals by the trains were increasing.[61] Fourth, it was generally recognized that the railroads would soon have to be rebuilt with T or H rail because the strap iron rail could not stand the increasing traffic and weight of the trains.[62] Finally, on January 1, 1846, over $52,000 interest on the $5,000,000 loan became due. In a circular to all County Boards of Supervisors Auditor General John J. Adam informed them that a tax of one and four-fifths mills on the 1845 valuation would be needed to pay the interest. Although income from the railroads was used to make this first interest payment, later during the 1846 legislative session the Auditor General informed the Boards of Supervisors that at their October 1 meetings they would have to levy a tax to meet internal improvement fund interest payments unless money from the sale of the railroads was available. It seemed that taxation for internal improvements was imminent.[63] Under these pressures, state officials began to seek purchasers for the railroads.

Sometime during the latter part of 1845 a meeting of state officials was held at which it was decided to seek purchasers for the

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[60]Detroit Free Press, August 5, 1845. See also a form letter in JFJ Papers dated November, 1845.

[61]Annual Report, Document No. 4, Joint Documents, 1846, p. 11.

[62]Annual Report, Document No. 4, Joint Documents, 1846, pp. 6-10.

[63]Keith, p. 46; Detroit Free Press, January 3, 1846; George E. Hand to John W. Brooks, April 26, 1846, in JFJ Papers.

roads. Henry N. Walker, Attorney General of Michigan, was chosen to journey to New York and attempt to organize a company which would then purchase the railroads. Walker went to Albany, where he discussed the situation with Erastus Corning, who held a large amount of Michigan bonds which he had obtained for thirty cents on the dollar. At this point, apparently, John Brooks was consulted concerning the proposed company, and a rough draft of a charter was written.[64] Corning and two Boston capitalists, John E. and Nathaniel Thayer, gave Brooks letters of introduction, and he agreed to travel to Michigan to evaluate the Central and determine whether or not it was a worthy investment. By the beginning of January, 1846, Brooks was back in New York, optimistic about the prospects of the Central, but fully aware also that the superstructure of the road was in bad condition and would require rebuilding and that there were too few depots along the route. His impressions later appeared in a report which he wrote to interest Eastern capitalists in investing in the railroad.[65]

His report persuaded Corning and the Thayers to attempt to purchase the Central, for in mid-January, 1846, John E. Thayer wrote to Henry B. Gibson, president of the Auburn and Rochester Railroad, requesting permission for Brooks to go to Detroit to try to persuade

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[64]Farmer, p. 897.

[65]Irene Neu, Erastus Corning: Merchant and Financier (Ithaca, 1960), pp. 74-75; John W. Brooks, Report Upon the Merits of the Michigan Central Railroad as an Investment for Eastern Capitalists, with the charter (New York, Van Norden and Amerman, 1846), p. 5. Also see M. C. McConkey, "James F. Joy" (manuscript biography in Michigan Historical Collections, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor), III, 233-38. Hereafter cited as McConkey.

the Legislature to sell on terms agreeable to a private corporation.[66] The same day Thayer wrote to Brooks and included a proposed charter which spelled out the conditions which they desired. These included provisions that no parallel competing railroad be chartered and that there be little or no tax.[67]

As the Legislature debated the sale of the railroads and then the proposed charter, Brooks and James F. Joy carefully guided the bills through each branch. Together they rewrote the proposed charter so that it would be acceptable both to Michigan interests and Eastern financiers. Brooks appeared before committees almost daily; sometimes Joy also appeared. They sent sample petitions requesting sale of the railroads to many parts of the state; many of these were returned signed, and every day several were presented to each branch of the Legislature. Joy was instrumental in helping outmaneuver several interests which opposed sale of the railroads, including shipping interests which did not want to see their lake trade injured by a completed Michigan Central; Northern and Southern railroad interests determined to preserve their sectional rights; and interior towns jealous of Detroit. He also brought Brooks into contact with influential business and political leaders in Detroit.[68]

At one point in the deliberations an annual one per cent tax was proposed to the Legislature. In a letter to Brooks, Thayer

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[66]John E. Thayer to Henry B. Gibson, January 19, 1846, JFJ Papers.

[67]John E. Thayer to John W. Brooks, January 19, 1846, JFJ Papers.

[68]McConkey, pp. 239-43.

emphasized that "they would not touch the Central if it was loaded with a one per cent tax after 1850." The most that would be acceptable, he asserted, was one-half per cent, and he really wanted no tax.[69] Brooks and Joy were able to work out an arrangement whereby the railroad was to pay a one-half per cent tax on its capital stock until 1851 and thereafter would pay an annual tax of three-fourths per cent on all property. Finally, on March 28, 1846, a bill chartering the Michigan Central Railroad Company and authorizing sale of the Michigan Central for $2,000,000 was signed into law by Governor Alpheus Felch. The company was to make an initial payment of $500,000 by September 28, 1846, just in time to relieve the County Boards of Supervisors of the task of levying a tax for internal improvements.[70] Among those named as purchasers, in addition to the Thayers, Brooks, and Corning, the names of John M. and Robert B. Forbes and George Griswold should especially be noted.

Under terms of the charter the company could pay the state in bonds for which the state had received full payment, in bonds which the state had issued to pay the interest on the "full paid" bonds, in "part paid" bonds, bonds issued on behalf of the Palmyra and Jacksonburg Railroad, or in warrants or other evidence of state debt except warrants payable in land only. The company was given the power to fix tolls, with some limitations. Within three years the company was required to

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[69]John E. Thayer to John W. Brooks, March 12, 1846, JFJ Papers.

[70]Detroit Free Press, March 12, 19, 21, 30, 31, April 1 and 3, 1846.

complete the Central to Lake Michigan. The state reserved the right to purchase the railroad after 1867.[71]

On May 9, 1846, an act incorporating the Michigan Southern Railroad Company and authorizing sale of the Michigan Southern Railroad to the company for $500,000 passed the Legislature. The sale was made conditional in that it could not be completed until final arrangements for the sale of the Central were made. Conditions of the charter were the same as those for the Central. Concerning terms of the sale, $10,000 was to be paid within thirty days of the purchase date, $40,000 more was to be paid within three months, and the remaining $450,000 was to be paid within nine years. Later the purchasers, including Elisha C. Litchfield of Detroit and John Stryher of Rome, New York, paid an additional $9,000 for locomotives and cars which were added to the road before the purchase could be completed.[72]

Under the terms of the law, the Michigan Central Railroad Company had six months, or until September 28, 1846, to make the $500,000 down payment. Brooks considered requesting additional time to raise the money, but on the advice of Representative George E. Hand, he did not do so. Hand wrote that some members of the Legislature thought the six month period was already too long, since the state had to pay interest on the debt for that period and since by law the state could make no repairs on the road until the negotiations were completed in one way or another. He reminded Brooks that the September deadline would

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[71]The charter is in Michigan Laws, 1846, pp. 37-64.

[72]Keith, p. 36; James F. Joy, "Railroad History of Michigan," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, XXII (1894), 301.

allow the Boards of Supervisors time to levy a tax to meet the interest payment should the railroad not be sold. The state's eagerness to sell the Southern Railroad, which could not legally be sold until sale of the Central was completed, made an extension of the time, he said, impossible. In fact, he wrote, there was some discussion of forming a Board of Sale to sell the railroad if the company did not complete its purchase by September 28. Brooks had to raise the money by that date.[73]

The letter must have been disconcerting to Brooks. If no repairs could be made on the road, it was possible that the road would fall apart before the company could purchase it--and who could persuade anyone to invest money in a railroad that was rapidly deteriorating? Then too, if a Board of Sale were formed, bond prices would rise because bondholders would feel that higher prices might be obtained from another company.

Whether or not Brooks wrote to Joy to work to have the measures changed or defeated is unknown. A few weeks later, however, Brooks received word that the Board of Internal Improvements had been granted permission to make repairs and to purchase locomotives and cars[74] and that the move to establish a Board of Sale had been defeated.[75] As C. G. Hammond wrote, "It is your corporation or none."[76]

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[73]George E. Hand to John W. Brooks, April 26, 1846, JFJ Papers.

[74]W. A. Richmond to John W. Brooks, April 30, 1846, JFJ Papers.

[75]McConkey, p. 247.

[76]C. G. Hammond to John W. Brooks, May 21, 1846, JFJ Papers.

Meanwhile the Thayers were busy lining up financial support and were negotiating with New York men who held many of the Michigan bonds. For a time things seemed to be proceeding smoothly,[77] but negotiations soon hit several snags. Since by mid-July Detroit businessmen had heard nothing but rumors concerning the sale, they selected Henry N. Walker, the Attorney General, and George F. Porter, Joy's law partner, to go East and "stir up the purchase of the Central."[78] When they arrived, they found things had already been stirred by Congress when it passed the Walker Tariff Act of 1846, which lowered tariff rates.

George F. Porter wrote to Brooks from Boston,

> We found on arriving here that the bondholders had accepted the offer of Mr. Thayer and proposed to take half the am't. in stock. But the new tariff has lock-jawed all the capitalists. Thayer says he can't take more than 50,000 [worth of bonds], and Mills and Forbes nothing. ... If it is possible for you to come down, do so, for the enterprise is in great jeopardy. ... No time to be lost.[79]

E. C. Litchfield, a Detroit banker, was worried that the New York bondholders might purchase a controlling interest in the Central. After reporting to Brooks that the president of the Farmers Loan and Trust Company of New York had told him that his company would invest $600,000 in the stock of the Central, he asked, "Is it not worth while for you to look out and see that some other parties besides the Bostonians do not get more than one half of the $2,000,000 so as to get

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[77]John E. Thayer to John W. Brooks, May 2, 1846, JFJ Papers.

[78]H. N. Walker to John W. Brooks, July 23, 1846, JFJ Papers.

[79]George F. Porter to John W. Brooks, August 7, 1846, JFJ Papers.

control?"[80] Mark H. Sibley, of upper New York, withdrew his offer to purchase stock because he had heard that New York men rather than Boston men would be in control.[81] By August 19 Litchfield had learned from Thayer that "the Bostonians had given up the road."[82]

Brooks apparently hoped that the New York men would take up the slack,[83] but they were not willing to finance the purchase of the Michigan Central alone. Boston financiers, therefore, had to be convinced that their control over the Western trade would remain and that their investment would not fall into the hands of Wall Street.

By August 22 or 23 Brooks had the trump card he needed, for about that time a letter from George Griswold arrived from New York informing him that John C. Green would take "1000 shares, say one hundred thousand dollars stock" in the Michigan Central, "provided John M. Forbes, Esq., consents to be Pres. of the Co. or subscribes largely to the Stock and takes an active part in the management of the affairs of the Co. as a director."[84] Apparently Griswold had agreed earlier to purchase stock on the same conditions.

Brooks traveled to Boston and there persuaded John M. Forbes to help finance the purchase of the Michigan Central. To ensure Boston

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[80]E. C. Litchfield to John W. Brooks, August 3, 1846, JFJ Papers.

[81]Mark H. Sibley to John W. Brooks, August 22, 1846, JFJ Papers.

[82]E. C. Litchfield to John W. Brooks, August 19, 1846, JFJ Papers.

[83]E. C. Litchfield to John W. Brooks, August 18, 1846, JFJ Papers. Litchfield wrote, "I have seen [George E.] Hand who says you are in hopes the New Yorkers will take hold."

[84]George Griswold to John W. Brooks, August 20, 1846, JFJ Papers.

control of the railroad, it was arranged that Bostonians would predominate on the Board of Directors, and Forbes was offered the presidency. For whatever the reason--the lure of the title and position, the prospect of controlling a good investment, the chance to triumph over New York bondholders, the opportunity to set up his brother Robert Bennett as figurehead president--Forbes accepted the presidency and soon collected Michigan state bonds and forwarded them to the committee of Erastus Corning and D. D. Williamson, president of the Farmers Loan and Trust Company of New York, who had been assigned to take possession of the railroad in Detroit.[85]

It should be mentioned that Corning himself had delayed committing himself to the purchase of Michigan Central stock until Forbes urged him to do so. He agreed to extend credit on iron bonds in return for bonds of the railroad at seven per cent interest.[86] Corning apparently was interested in establishing a "feeder" for the New York railroads in which he already had an interest, in collecting payment for iron he had sold to Michigan but for which he had not been paid, and in selling iron to the new Michigan Central when it was rebuilt and extended.[87]

As rumors "thick as leaves in autumn" circulated in Detroit, orders were received by Detroit banks to sell stock in the Michigan Central Railroad Company. When John W. Brooks, D. D. Williamson, and

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[85]McConkey, pp. 250-51.

[86]Irene Neu, Erastus Corning: Merchant and Financier (Ithaca, 1960), pp. 76-78.

[87]Neu, pp. 73-74.

Erastus Corning arrived in Detroit, everything was ready for the formal sale of the railroad. Thus when these three men made the $500,000 down payment on September 24, 1846, the Board of Internal Improvements transferred full and legal possession of the Central to the Michigan Central Railroad Company.[88]

About a month later the Southern was sold, appropriately enough, to an Eastern group, and not to the Monroe citizens who had originally hoped to buy it. The sales of the two railroads restored the credit of the state; the remaining bonds rose to par. The venture into internal improvements had brought a growth in population, an increase in land values, an increase in agricultural production, and many problems. For Michigan, the sale of the two railroads meant an end to the problems, but an increase in the benefits.

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[88]Annual Report, Document No. 4, Joint Documents, 1846, pp. 4-5.

V. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

While there is a wealth of scattered material of all types available for the study of the period of Michigan history between the War of 1812 and the Civil War, many aspects of the period have largely been neglected by historians. The attempt by the state of Michigan to build several railroads across the peninsula is one topic which has not been studied and researched thoroughly.

General histories of Michigan which treat the period adequately, in view of their scope, abound, the two most recent being F. Clever Bald, Michigan in Four Centuries (New York, 1954) and Willis F. Dunbar, Michigan: A History of the Wolverine State (Grand Rapids, 1965). Brief, well-written accounts of the Lewis Cass expeditions and the Toledo strip boundary dispute are included in John Anthony Caruso, The Great Lakes Frontier (Indianapolis, 1961). An early work which includes studies of developments in Michigan between these two wars is Henry M. Utley and Byron M. Cutcheon, Michigan as a Province, Territory, and State (3 vols.; New York, 1906). A similar, more recent work is George N. Fuller, ed., Michigan: A Centennial History of the State and Its People (5 vols.; Chicago, 1939); this work has excellent chapters dealing with the five million dollar loan and internal improvements. Although helpful for small detail, Silas Farmer, History of Detroit and Michigan (Detroit, 1884) must be used with extreme care because much of

the material is not well-arranged chronologically, although the plan of the book is to treat topics chronologically.

After a reading of the general histories, a study of any aspect of Michigan history is best continued by consulting the many short studies and voluminous primary materials available in Michigan History Magazine (MHM) and the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection (MPHC). Materials in the latter tend to be laudatory in nature and therefore must be used carefully. A helpful aid in the use of many other available materials is Floyd Benjamin Streeter, Michigan Bibliography (Lansing, 1921), but this work should be brought up to date.

Concerning the period 1805-1837, the best study of the Michigan area is George N. Fuller, Economic and Social Beginnings of Michigan (Lansing, 1916). John T. Blois, Gazetteer of Michigan (Detroit, 1838) gives a comprehensive, contemporary view of Michigan when it became a state in 1837.

Information concerning transportation and travel in territorial Michigan is scattered. Two articles which are especially helpful for a study of Indian trails and the first roads in Michigan are Edmund A. Calkins, "Old Trails of Central Michigan," MHM, XII (April, 1928), 327-49 and Warren R. Atkins, "Early Routes of Travel in Michigan," an unpublished summary of a lecture delivered before the Kalamazoo Geneological Society, January 18, 1960, and available at the State Library, Lansing, Michigan.

The entrance of Michigan into the Union and her venture into railroad building must be viewed against the backdrop of developments on the national scene. In this respect, especially helpful is Glyndon

G. Van Deusen, The Jacksonian Era: 1828-1848 (New York, 1959). Michigan politics during the period is treated in Paul A. Randall, "Gubernatorial Platforms for the Political Parties of Michigan: 1834-1864" (unpublished Master's thesis, Wayne University, Detroit, 1937); Harold M. Dorr, ed., The Constitutional Conventions of 1835-1836 (Ann Arbor, 1940); and Floyd B. Streeter, Political Parties in Michigan, 1837-1860 (Lansing, 1918).

The history of transportation in the United States has received much attention. A comprehensive, though in places inaccurate, work for the pre-Civil War period is Caroline E. MacGill, History of Transportation in the United States Before 1860 (Washington, 1917). The best treatment of the subject, however, is George Rogers Taylor, The Transportation Revolution: 1815-1860 (New York, 1958).

Two books in the Chronicles of America Series are helpful in providing overviews of the development of railroad transportation prior to the Civil War. One of these, Archer B. Hulbert, The Paths of Inland Commerce (New Haven, 1921) concentrates on water transportation, and has some sections on various roads constructed in the East. While some attention is given to railroads, this area is left to the second work, John Moody, The Railroad Builders (New Haven, 1919). Since the latter work emphasizes post-Civil War railway developments and only alludes to earlier work, the two must be read together to obtain a survey of pre-Civil War railroad developments. Perhaps the best single volume history of American railroads is John F. Stover, American Railroads (Chicago, 1961).

A closely-written treatment of the economic aspects of early railroading is included in D. Philip Locklin, Economics of Transportation

(Homewood, Illinois, 1954). Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., "Patterns of American Railroad Finance, 1830-1850," Business History Review, XXVIII, No. 3 (September, 1954, pp. 248-63, points out that the financing of railroads shifted from Philadelphia in the 1830's to Boston in the 1840's to New York in the 1850's. The financing of Michigan's railroads fits well into this scheme. The question why states rather than the federal government undertook construction of internal improvements receives excellent attention in Carter Goodrich, "National Planning of Internal Improvements," Political Science Quarterly, LXIII (March, 1948), 16-44. In another article, "Local Government Planning of Internal Improvements," Political Science Quarterly, LXVI (September, 1951), 411-45, Goodrich points out that local governments made important contributions to the building of internal improvements. His earlier work has been incorporated into an excellent book on internal improvements, Government Promotion of American Canals and Railroads (New York, 1960).

Rivalry between cities, counties, and sections of states determined the extent and the route of many internal improvement projects. Two excellent treatments of sectionalism, which describe many patterns which are evident also in Michigan, are Stanley John Folmsbee, Sectionalism and Internal Improvements in Tennessee 1796-1845 (Knoxville, 1939) and Harry N. Scheiber, "Urban Rivalry and Internal Improvements in the Old Northwest, 1820-1860," Ohio History, LXXI (October, 1962), 227-39.

Material concerning Michigan internal improvements is scattered. Although the researcher must read a lot to find a little, the Michigan newspapers of the period 1835-1846 are valuable sources for internal improvement information because they carried the debates of the

Legislature on internal improvements, as well as the local news relating to transportation. Especially helpful are the Democratic organ, the Detroit Free Press in its many editions, and the Whig organ, the Detroit Advertiser. It would be a great service to historians if the Detroit Public Library would complete its indexing of the early editions of the Free Press. A helpful guide to Michigan newspapers is Elizabeth Read Brown, A Union List of Newspapers Published in Michigan Based on the Principal Newspaper Collections in the State with Notes Concerning Papers Not Located (Ann Arbor, Dept. of Library Science, University of Michigan, 1954).

Other sources of information on the Michigan internal improvement system are the biographies of Lewis Cass and two Michigan governors, Stevens T. Mason and William Woodbridge. An early work on Lewis Cass is Andrew C. McLaughlin, Lewis Cass (Boston, 1900), but a more recent work which was completed with the aid of newly-located Cass papers is Frank B. Woodford, Lewis Cass: The Last Jeffersonian (New Brunswick, 1950). An excellent, but quite eulogistic, portrait of S. T. Mason is Lawton T. Hemans, Life and Times of Stevens Thomson Mason (Lansing, 1920). A more recent work which is intended for popular reading is Kent Sagendorph, Stevens Thomson Mason: Misunderstood Patriot (New York, 1945). William Woodbridge, the second governor of Michigan, has received harsh treatment in Charles Lanman, The Life of William Woodbridge (Washington, 1867). The Mason-Woodbridge feud would be interesting subject matter for a study of personality politics. The other two governors during the period covered by this paper, John S. Barry and Alpheus Felch, have not been the subject of biographies. Some information on these and other men is available in S. D. Bingham, Michigan

Biographies (Lansing, 1888); their official writings are in George N. Fuller, ed., Messages of the Governors of Michigan (3 vols.; Lansing, 1925). Manuscript materials of Cass, Mason, Woodbridge, and Felch are available in the Burton Collection, the Detroit Public Library, Detroit, but these manuscripts are limited in their usefulness in respect to railroads in Michigan.

Indispensable in a study of the internal improvement projects undertaken by Michigan immediately after 1837--including the canals, river improvements, and railroads--are the annual reports submitted to the Michigan Legislature by the Board of Internal Improvements. These reports are available in volumes variously labeled House Documents, Senate Documents, or Joint Documents. Care must be exercised in the use of these reports since most of the volumes are labeled with the year issued, but the reports concern the preceding year. On many of these volumes, however, the year has been changed to correspond to the content of the reports.

The most helpful articles concerning the construction and financing of Michigan railroads include George C. Bates, "The Beginning of the Michigan Central Railroad," MPHC, XXII (Lansing, 1894), 344-54; Arthur S. Hill, "The Romance of a Railway," MHM, XXIII (Winter, 1939), 53-75; and James F. Joy, "Railroad History of Michigan," MPHC, XXII (Lansing, 1894), 292-304. Of little help is Clarence Frost, "The Early Railroads of Southern Michigan," MPHC, XXXVIII (1912), 498-501, but in the same volume is an excellent article by Lew Allen Chase, "Michigan's Share in the Establishment of Improved Transportation Between the East and the West," MPHC, XXXVIII (1912), 589-609. The most concise, comprehensive, and generally accurate work on the development of Michigan

internal improvements is Hannah Emily Keith, "An Historical Sketch of Internal Improvements in Michigan, 1836-1846," Michigan Political Science Association Publications, IV (Ann Arbor, 1900-1902), 1-48.

The financing of the internal improvement projects is treated in the general histories of Michigan and in some of the articles previously mentioned. Accounts of the $5,000,000 loan and its complications are found in Lawton T. Hemans, Life and Times of Stevens Thomson Mason and in Michigan Centennial History. The only in-depth study of the loan is William L. Jenks, "Michigan's Five Million Dollar Loan," MHM, XV (Autumn, 1931), 575-633. The annual reports of the Board of Internal Improvements, the Auditor General, and the State Treasurer in the previously mentioned House Documents, Senate Documents, and Joint Documents contain much information. Helpful for understanding another aspect of financing the internal improvements is Edward G. Bourne, The History of the Surplus Revenue of 1837 (New York, 1885); limited in its usefulness for this purpose is A. N. Bliss, "Federal Land Grants for Internal Improvements in the State of Michigan," MPHC, VII (1884), 52-68.

In the study of events leading to the sale of the Central Railroad especially helpful were the unpublished biography of James F. Joy, written by M. C. McConkey, and a portion of the James Frederick Joy Papers, both available at the Michigan Historical Collections, University of Michigan. The James Frederick Joy Papers, including some 60,000 pieces, are available at the Burton Collection in the Detroit Public Library, yet no biography of James F. Joy has been published. Few primary materials on the course of events leading to the sale of the Southern Railroad could be located.

In addition to James F. Joy, several other men should be the subject of biographical studies, including John Norvell, perhaps the leading Democrat of the time; John W. Brooks, the moving force in the purchase, rebuilding, and extension of the Central; and George F. Porter, Joy's law partner. A history of the Erie and Kalamazoo Railroad has yet to be written, as does a history of the Michigan canals. A careful study of elections and legislative votes on internal improvement bills might help establish the degree to which sectionalism influenced Michigan internal improvement legislation. The role of the Michigan governors in molding legislative and public opinion toward the internal improvement projects should be studied, as should the course of events leading to the final makeup of the Michigan Southern Railroad Company.