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"ASA WHITNEY AND HIS PACIFIC
RAILWAY PROJECT"

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.

Vera Wrigglesworth

1928

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"Asa Whitney and His Pacific Railway Project".

Vera Wrigglesworth.

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts in Michigan State College of Agriculture
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*Approved by E.B. Lyon,
Department of History and
Political Science, under whose
direction this work has been done.*

THESIS

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I

The period of United States history from 1845 to 1850 was one of rapid expansion. The Mississippi River had been crossed and the frontier was moving farther and farther into the west. In the North, aided by a liberal immigration flow, the territories of Iowa and Wisconsin were permitted to come into the Union as states in 1846 and 1848 respectively. The year of 1846 likewise marked the end of the joint occupation of the Oregon country by the United States and Great Britain, and the Treaty of 1846 gave us sole occupation and possession of the area west of the Rocky Mountains between the 42^o and 49^o north latitude. To the south additional territory had been gained by the acquisition of the Republic of Texas in 1845, and by the land cession following the Mexican War in 1848 which added California and the New Mexico Territory. The Mexican War and the subsequently proposed Wilmot Proviso renewed the question of the extension of slavery which had been temporarily settled by the North and South in the Compromise of 1820. This issue was to hold the interest of the nation for the next fifteen years.

The discovery of gold in California was another significant event of the period which caused the rush of the "Forty Niners" in such numbers that California was admitted as a state in 1850. With this rapid westward movement the old question of internal improvements was constantly before the public and

Congress, and the need of railway building loomed to the front as a vital issue. One of the most essential and interesting of all the projects of the time was the one for a transcontinental railroad to the Pacific Coast.

The acquisition of the California and Oregon territories, remotely located on the coast and constituting isolated frontier settlements, brought about the realization of the political significance of railroads. In order to bind these newer communities to the Union, there was the need of some efficient means of communication. Then too, better transportation facilities were essential for trade and for carrying the settlers and troops, when necessary, to and from these coastal regions. To keep these recently acquired territories free from any outside encroachment was simply the further application of the Monroe Doctrine, a principle advocated in an earlier period of our history.

Our country had considerable interests in this far western region. The most important was the prosperous commerce with the Orient which had been developing since the American Revolutionary war when European markets were closed to us and outlets for our goods had to be found in other parts of the globe.¹ In spite of the long hazardous journey around the South American Continent by the way of the Cape of Good Hope several hundred ships made the voyage annually.² A second economic reason for the need of a western railroad was to

1. Faulkner, H. A., "American Economic History" Chap. XI
cf: Marvin, W. L., "American Merchant Marine" Chap. III
2. This trade was opened by the "Empress of China" in 1784. Elias Desby, the first American Millionaire, made his fortune in this trade. See Marvin's "History of Merchant Marine" pp. 33 - 197

protect and encourage fishing and whaling interests of the Pacific waters. This industry had yielded as much as eight and one half millions of dollars in a year.³ Thirdly, miners were prospecting in the Cordillera Ranges and it seemed pertinent that adequate means should be developed in getting supplies into those regions, in order to stimulate the development of further mineral resources where they existed.⁴

More idealistic people were desirous that every step possible should be taken to open up the West because of the social, moral and religious benefits which would come from it.⁵ The increasing immigrant population in the eastern cities was causing poverty, corruption and crime. The whole nation would benefit if these new comers were attracted into the farm regions of the West. These were those who looked upon the Indians as subjects for missionary effort. A railroad would take civilization to them and make it easier for educational and religious organizations to reach them.⁶ More zealous souls even saw beyond the limits of our own nation and dreamed of the day when the heathen Orient would be Christianized, because it would be more accessible to the American missionary, as a consequence of a railroad.⁷

3. Committee Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session, no. 140, p. 31

4. Paxson, F., "History of the Western Frontier" pp. 448 ad passim

5. Committee Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session
No. 140, Appendix 1, p. 25

6. Ibid: Appendix 2, p. 34

7. Haney, L. H., "Congressional History of Railways to 1850"
P. 406
cf: Committee Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session No. 140
Appendix 2, p. 34.

This brief summary indicates how many factors made the idea of a railroad acceptable at this time. Further consideration will be given these later in studying the motives of Asa Whitney who not only accepted the idea, but attempted to provide means for its accomplishment.

II

As Whitney, among others, claimed the honor of having been the first to realize the real significance of railway communication to the Pacific Coast.⁸ There are some people who would deprive him of this recognition.⁹ Such an idea and the means of its achievement were not likely to drop from a clear sky, but rather it is more probable that notion simply evolved over a period of time as L. H. Haney has suggested, "The Pacific railroad is to be regarded as an evolution not of a nation of engineers, but of a generation of men who dwelt in an expanding country where horizons were broad."¹⁰ Whitney was at least among those who saw beyond the horizon. Perhaps this idea of western communication and transportation was not original with Whitney. President Jefferson sponsoring the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1804 foresaw the need of a well developed route to the West.¹¹ Thomas Benton in 1819 wrote an essay suggesting

8. Haney, L. H., "Congressional History of Railways to 1850". pp. 402-404 cf.: Smalley, E. V., "History of the Northern Pacific" Chap. 5 & 6

9. Ibid: Haney, p. 402; Smalley 51 to 56.

10. Ibid: Haney, p. 402

11. Smalley, E. V., "History of the Northern Pacific" pp. 20-32 cf.: Wilkes, George, Proposal for a National Railroad to the Pacific Ocean".

a project, but did nothing with the suggestion till thirty years later after someone else had pointed the way.¹² Both Rever and Samuel Parker, a missionary, and Doctor Hartwell Carver, who presented a Memorial to Congress in 1849, advanced claims for originating the idea.¹³ No one could really prove his right, and it must be conceded with Haney and others, that unquestionably "Whitney's was the first project to be worked out in detail, and presented to Congress as a working scheme for the immediate construction of a railway."¹⁴

Great men are seldom known as men, but are rather remembered for their ideas, projects or achievements. Asa Whitney lived before Who's Who sought out one's pedigree and before scientists in sociology and psychology saw the necessity of accounting for a great man and his work by a thorough study of his heredity and environment. We can, therefore, learn very little about him, because scarcely any contemporary literature has been written about him. He was born in 1797 and grew up to be a New York Merchant of considerable wealth, trading principally with the Orient.¹⁵ In 1830, he made a trip to England. In taking a thirty-four mile ride on the Liverpool and Manchester railway within the period of forty-two minutes, an idea¹⁶ germinated in his mind which was to lead to his later plan.

12. Haney, L. H, "Congressional History of Railways to 1850" p 402

13. Ibid: p 402 cf: Smalley E. V., "History of Northern Pacific" pp 41 - 45; pp 67 - 68

14. Haney, E. V., "Congressional History of Railways to 1850" p. 404. cf: Million, J. W., State aid to Railways in Missouri p. 55.

15. Appleton's Cyclopedia of American Biography, Vol. 6

16. Committee Reports, 1st Session 31st Congress No. 140 Appendix No. 2 -- p. 27

He was impressed with the importance as well as the possibilities of railway transportation and communication, and conceived of their extensive use on the North American continent.

For twelve years, he did not develop the idea, but in 1842 while on a trip to China he read a paper which reported our first commercial treaty with that nation, and as a Merchant he quickly perceived the changes that would thereafter be made in Commerce.¹⁷ He may have gone to China with the purpose of collecting information on the trade and resources of the Orient in order to satisfy himself and persuade his countrymen of the advantage in seeking to open further intercourse with the Far-Eastern nations.¹⁸ Whether that was the incentive for his visit or not it was the result, and he returned convinced that a railroad to the Pacific would assure us of the opportunities for the best development of this trade. The oriental commerce had developed through individual effort but the Government, as expressed in the treaty, now indicated that its true value was appreciated.¹⁹ In the summer of 1845, Whitney made a trip due west from Lake Michigan for some eight hundred miles to assure himself that the route which he had conceived would be practical.²⁰ So convinced was Whitney by his own observations and the earlier reports of Lewis and Clark, Colonel Fremont and others, that he shortly presented a Memorial to Congress in second session of the Twenty-Eight Congress, 1845, asking for a land grant for a transcontinental railroad to the Pacific

17. Ibid: p. 27. Foster, J. W., "Century of American Diplomacy" p. 290. This was the Treaty of 1844 made by Caleb Cushing.

18. Executive Documents 28th Congress, 2nd Session Vol. 25 No. 72. p. 1. cf: Committee Reports. 31st, 1st, Session No. 140, Appendix 1 -- p. 24.

19. Foster, J. W., "Century of American Diplomacy", p. 290.

Coast.²¹ From this time he gave himself solely to the idea and sought to arouse Congress, the states and the general public both personally and through his writings. Memorials were presented again in the first session of the Twenty-Ninth Congress, 1846, and in the first session of the thirtieth Congress, 1848, during which time he traveled through some twenty states speaking before the legislatures and public meetings.²²

His plan failed, but he did live to see communication opened to the west with the completion of the Union Pacific in 1869.²³ At this time he was keeping a dairy in Washington D. C. and selling milk to mitigate the poverty of his declining years. He had given his fortune for his cause, and many of the best years of his life which ended in August 1872.²⁴ Even then he was forgotten, for the Washington D. C. papers did not even honor him with mention at the time of his death. He was the author of two books: "A Project for a Railway to the Pacific published in New York in 1849, and a second volume published in London in 1851 entitled "A Plan for Direct Communication Between the Great Centers of Population of Europe and Asia".²⁵

20. Smalley, E. V., "History of the Northern Pacific" p 58.

21. Committee Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session No. 140 Appendix 1 p. 23.; cf: Congressional Globe, 28th Congress 2nd Session, Vol XIV p. 218; Vol V, p. 414.; cf; Executive Documents 28th Congress, 2nd Session Vol. 2 -- No 72, pl.

22. Resolutions were given by states from all sections, New York, R. I. Michigan, Conn., Tenn., Ga., Ill., N. J., Ohio, Mass., etc. See Senate. Miscellaneous 30th Congress, 1st Session pp. 1, 4, 28, 29, 58, 76, 77, 124, and 125. Meetings thru all sections were favorable. Benton, Miss, Jefferson, Ind., Cincinnati, Ohio, Lo. Ky. Philadelphia, etc.

23. Appleton's Cyclopedia of American Biography Vol VI

24. Ibid: Vol. 6.

25. Ibid.

III

Asa Whitney proposed to build a road that might be described very generally as running from Lake Michigan to the Pacific by the way of the South Pass.²⁶ Starting at some point on Lake Michigan he chose to cross the present state of Wisconsin to prairie du Chien on the Mississippi River, which was bridgeable at this point.²⁷ This part of the route was through excellent agricultural land with plenty of timber available both for the road building and use of later settlers. The streams to be traversed could be easily bridged. From Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, the road was to have proceeded in a slightly southwestern direction across the present state of Iowa to the Missouri River. This region consisted of some three hundred miles of good soil which could develop into farm areas. There were a few, but no bad streams, to be crossed, and there was plenty of stone for such bridges as it might be necessary to build. This region was for the most part, not a timbered area although there was some wood at hand or in close proximity to the proposed route. From the Missouri River the road was to cut straight across the present states of Nebraska and Wyoming, at about the forty-second parallel. This was a prairie section with no timber and poor soil. There was a gradual incline of about six feet to the mile as the mountains were approached. Although it had few encouraging features, at the same time, it presented no obstacles to railroad building. At the suggestion

26. Appendix, No. I

27. This point and the following description of the route can

be found: Senate Documents 28th Congress 2nd Session-No 174 Committee Reports; 31st Congress 1st Session No 140. app. 2

of Colonel Fremont the South Pass was to be used in constructing the road through the mountains. The Pass was twenty miles wide and seven thousand and five hundred feet above the gulf level. It rose so gradually that in the words of Fremont, "We had to watch closely to find the place at which we had reached the culminating point".²⁸ There were already several good roads through the Pass. The railroad was then to follow the valley of the Columbia River in a Northwestern direction across the present states of Idaho and Washington to Puget Sound.

The total length of the prospective road was 2,630 miles estimated as follows:²⁹

Straight from Lake to Ocean, 1,780 miles.

Straight from Lake to Pass, 1,098 miles.

Lake to pass plus detours, 1,148 miles

Straight from Pass to Puget Sound, 682 miles

Pass to Puget sound plus detours, 882 miles

A railroad had to follow, somewhat, the contour of the land, which explains the estimated detours.

Whitney considered several factors in determining the route for his proposed railroad. In the first place why did he choose the region about Lake Michigan for a starting point? The financing of the project, as we shall see, depended on the sale of the public lands. Here there were undeveloped areas--lands yet in the hands of the government, and of such a nature

28. Senate Documents, 28th Congress, Second Session, Report No. 174. p. 60; cf: Senate Documents 29th Congress, 1st Session Vol. IX, Report No. 466, pp.1-7.

29 Committee Reports. 31st Congress, 1st Session, Report No. 1405 Appendix 3, p. 38.

as as to be inviting to the prospective farmers.³⁰ On the land, were timber and stone which were necessary materials in road construction. Besides, they were found in such quantities that they could easily be taken west to the regions less favorably supplied. The raw and undeveloped resources would not build a road alone, however, but again the location was favorable as the lakes and canals afforded cheap and easy communication with the East. Iron, which would be used in large quantities would thus come from the Pittsburg mines. Machinery and equipment, laborers and settlers could come by the same route. The old Northwest area had developed into a great food producing section, and contact with this section would be helpful until the new farms could be made sufficiently productive to feed the growing western communities. The industrial cities of America were at this time largely in the East. Therefore this route was nearer and more accessible to them, than one built further to the South would have been. In reference to the west, it was centrally located and on the same parallel with the Pass in the mountains. Railroads were fast pushing into the settled areas of the middle west, so that these recently built roads would make ready connections with the proposed road to the Western Coast.³¹

Remembering that Whitney's interest was originally aroused in the project because of the stimulus for the development of the Oriental trade, the route as outlined would furnish quick

30. Committee Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session, Report No. 140, Appendix 2, pp. 27--31.

31. Whitney discusses these points in his Second Memorial. Committee Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session. Report No. 140, Appendix 2, p. 30.

and direct communication with the Orient. To prove this point Whitney outlined the comparative distances in his third memorial to Congress. He figured that the distance from England to Singapore by way of the Isthmus of Panama, where a road or canal had been suggested, was 16,668 miles; by way of the Cape of Good Hope was 14,350 miles; and by using his projected road across the continent would be 13,533 miles. Thus nothing would be gained by an Isthmean route which would increase the distance 2,318 miles as compared with the course then followed around the Cape; while 3,115 miles would be gained by using the railroad across the American continent.³² In as far as England had developed an extensive commerce in the Orient, Whitney chose to show her the advantages rather than any other country of Europe.³³ To the United States it would mean placing itself in the center of the commercial world, whereby it would get the volume of commerce from the Orient to the Occident which would naturally seek the shortest, quickest and safest route. It is easy to understand why Whitney said "Nature and circumstances combined have forced me to select the only route where I can see any hope for success or possibility of accomplishing the great objects we aim at".³⁴

As against a road farther South, which was desired by some, it was argued that the Whitney route was more secure against the impediments of winter, since the weather became less severe as one went west, and there were lighter snows than in

32. Committee Reports 31st Congress, 1st Session Report No. 140 Appendix 3, p. 42.

33. Appendix 2.

34. Asa Whitney, "A Project for a Railway to the Pacific", p32

the mountains to the south.³⁵ Mr. Thornton, Colonel Emery, and Mr. Fitzpatrick had come to this conclusion after some study of the question, and R. Campbell after spending three winters in the west was willing to vouch for the argument.³⁶ A second consideration was in regard to the products for transportation, which would be for the most part animal and vegetable. If the proposed road were to go farther South in its course, that is either in our own nation or in Panama, there would be greater risk in carrying perishable articles.³⁷ The great day of refrigeration cars had not yet come.

How did Whitney propose to construct and finance this railroad? He asked for a grant of land sixty miles wide extending from Lake Michigan to the Pacific Coast. He then proposed to survey and locate two hundred to three hundred miles of the road and to let out contracts for the grading of this amount of the road. Next he desired to secure the machinery and equipment for construction and then build ten miles of the road at his own expense.³⁸ When this was finished he intended to sell one-half of the lands along the completed road, or a tract of land five by sixty miles, in order to provide capital for the next ten miles.³⁹ This process was to be repeated until the road was finished to the coast.

35. Committee Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session, No. 140, pp. 7 and 8; Appendix 3, p. 43

36. Ibid: pp. 7 and 8.

37. Committee Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session; Report 140 Appendix 3, p. 43.; pp. 7-8. cf: Congressional Globe, 39th Congress, 1st Session, Vol. 27, p. 1244

38. Ibid: Appendix 4, p. 44.

39. Committee Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session Report 140 Appendix 3, p. 38

Whitney estimated the cost in his first and second Memorials at a total of \$65,000,000. -- \$50,000,000 for construction and \$15,000,000 for expenses until the road was on a paying basis.⁴⁰ In this third Memorial having already observed how he figured the distance at 2,030 miles he now estimated the cost at \$20,000 a mile, which reduced the total cost to \$60,600,000. He figured that \$40,600,000 would cover the actual cost by miles, while \$20,000,000 would be required for operation, as the road would earn no income except on the Eastern end until it was complete.⁴¹

The success of the project therefore depended on the sale of the lands granted to him. It was the only means by which he planned to raise the capital to go on after the first ten miles. From a study of the proposed route it is easy to see how Whitney was tying his hopes to the first eight hundred miles of the section which was composed of good saleable land.⁴² He planned to attract settlers and to raise a sufficient amount from the sales to tide him over the twelve hundred and thirty (1230) miles which would not sustain settlement.⁴³ The 800 miles of good land comprised 30,720,000 acres, which he figured would yield him \$32,832,000 when sold at the government price of one dollar and a quarter per acre, after having deducted the waste lands and the expense of sale. From

40. Ibid: Appendix 1, p. 25, Appendix 2, p. 31.

41. Ibid: Appendix 3, pp. 38-39.

42. Committee Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session No. 140
Appendix 3, pp. 37 -38.

43. Ibid: pp. 37-38.

the Missouri River and beyond, he estimated that the poor lands might sell at half the government price after the advantage of a railroad had increased their value. In this way he hoped to realize \$27,044,000 from their sale. Whitney would receive a total of \$59,879,000, an amount less than the cost of the road as estimated by him, but he was willing to take a gambler's chance.⁴⁴ The 38,400 acres of the good lands, a section one mile long and sixty miles wide, sold at the government price would build only two miles of railroad. Since the rest of the route was less promising, he considered his only hope for success in thus having a double land grant along the first section of the road.⁴⁵ Whitney at first asked for the land grant, but by 1848 he changed his plan in that he now asked for the right of purchasing the sixty mile strip.⁴⁶ He suggested the price of sixteen cents an acre, which seemed reasonable in that it was more than Congress could ever get until transportation facilities would have increased the land values. This sale, however, was not to be absolute. In fact, when first asking for the grant his proposal read, "To grant to him, his heirs, and assigns such tracts of lands, the proceeds of which to be strictly and faithfully applied to the building and completing of the said road, always with such checks and guarantees to your honorable body as shall procure a faithful performance of all the obligations and duties of your memorialist".⁴⁷ In his second memorial his plan was more

44. Ibid: p. 39.

47. Ibid: Appendix 7, p. 26. cf: Congressional Globe, 28th Congress, 2nd Session, Vol. 14, p. 218. cf; Executive Documents, 28th Congress, 2nd Session Vol. 2 No. 72, p. 7

44. Ibid: p. 39 45. Ibid: p. 38 & 39.

mature and the suggestion was that commissioners should be appointed by the President and Senate who with Whitney would give the titles to the lands when they were sold.⁴⁸ He asked for the right to contract land for labor or money, but in either case he would receive no money or give no titles alone. Neither was the commission alone to grant titles but they were to act as checks on each other.⁴⁹ The commission, however, was to hold all the money till the work was satisfactorily completed, and it was to pay it to Whitney only for construction purposes.⁵⁰ This meant that the road would be constructed as an individual enterprise under the control of a congressional commission. Whitney estimated fifteen years as the time necessary for completing the work.⁵¹

What did Whitney expect to gain from his road? It is most unusual for an individual to have devoted his life and his fortune to a cause in which there seems to have been no chance of profit. To some the chance seemed more than amply provided for. According to the second memorial Whitney and his assigns were to contract to keep the road in repair for a given period of years; to transport free all government troops, mails, etc.; to transport goods for twenty years at half a cent per ton (2000 lbs.) for distances over two-hundred miles.⁵² This meant that rates would be less than half of what they were on the other roads. The products, which he expected would be important in the Chinese trade, were especially mentioned. Corn was to

48. Committee Reports - 31st Congress, 1st Session No. 140
Appendix 2, p. 32.

49. Ibid: p. 32.

50. Ibid: p. 32.

51. Ibid: p. 32.

be transported at twenty cents a bushel, and flour at one dollar and a quarter a barrel. Passengers were to be carried⁵⁴ for half the charges on other roads. Tolls were forever to be controlled by Congress.⁵⁵ This would seem to have reduced the proposed road to a system which would yield little profit and put the tolls beyond his control, so that he could not exact exorbitant rates after the road was completed. However, there was still some chance of gain. This can be drawn from his own words. His first idea was "That after the faithful completion of this great work should any lands remain unsold, or any monies due for lands, or any balance of monies received for lands sold, which have not been required for the building of said road, then all and everyone of them shall belong to your Memorialist, his heirs, and assigns forever"⁵⁶ This raised a storm of protest and the effect produced can be observed in his Second Memorial which stated that for twenty years Congress was to have absolute control of the road, to hold any surplus monies or lands in trust; to see that all the requirements were⁵⁷ met. Only then would Whitney receive any gain, still leaving in the hands of the government the right to regulate the tolls⁵⁸ according to the needs of the road.

52. Ibid: p. 33.

53. Ibid: p. 33.

54. Ibid: p. 33.

55. Ibid: p.33.

56. Committee Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session, Appendix 7 p. 26.

57. Ibid: Appendix 2, p. 33.

58. Ibid: Apendix 2, p. 33.

Whitney emphasized again and again the idea expressed in his last Memorial, "Your Memorialist does not ask your honorable body for the appropriation of one dollar in money" ⁵⁹ He hoped to realize enough from the sale of the good lands to build the road, and to pay the government sixteen cents an acre for the entire grant. If any money or lands then remained they would ⁶⁰ go to him. Had Congress adopted either plan suggested of holding all lands and monies till the road was self-supporting or for a twenty year period there still would have been little chance for Whitney himself to benefit from the project. At this time he was past fifty years of age and was working much too hard to live long enough to enjoy any possible profits from the realization of his dream. It must be conceded that Whitney had a higher aim than the acquisition of wealth. He voices this idea himself in closing his second appeal to Congress, "Your Memorialist has not prayed for any pecuniary provision for himself till the road shall have been completed and in operation for twenty years before which time he will in all human probability be past the wants of this life. His object in bringing this project before your honorable body and the people is not for gain of wealth or power, or influence but because he has seen, and as he thinks, clearly seen, its vast and incalculable importance to us as a nation and to mankind" ⁶¹. Is his sincerity to be doubted?

How did Asa Whitney and others figure that this road would have such incalculable importance to our nation? The advantages have already been suggested in the introduction of this essay

59. Ibid: Appendix 3, p. 37.

60. Ibid: Appendix 3, p. 39.

but it well be necessary to consider them more in detail.

From the economic standpoint there are three important considerations. First, it would mean better and quicker transportation and therefore more commerce between our nation and the Orient; secondly, it would draw European commerce, particularly that of Great Britain through our nation; and thirdly it would mean improved internal communication and transportation.

About 1850, our annual commerce with the Orient was estimated at about \$250,000,000 and was carried on in some 2,000 ships, with 50,000 seamen.⁶² Whitney considered that some 1,300,000 tons would change to the railroad route because the new route would be a savings in time and in distance.⁶³ The distance from New York to the Pacific coast was estimated at 3,000 miles; from New York to China was 9,200 miles; from New York to Japan was 8,600 miles. With the railroad these distances would be covered in about 30 days as compared with 100 to 150 days it then took to go some 17,000 miles by water.⁶⁴ Whitney appealed to Congress, "Your honorable body will readily see the revolution to be wrought by this in the entire commerce of the world, and that this must inevitably be its channel".⁶⁵

Whitney and committees in Congress, which studied the Oriental trade, have given various statistics to show its importance. The following estimates were made in a study of the

61. Ibid: Appendix 2, p. 36.

62. Asa Whitney, "A Project for a Railway to the Pacific" p.38

63. Ibid; p. 38.

64. Committee Reports 31st Congress, 1st Congress, No. 140
Appendix 7 - p. 23.

65. Ibid: p. 24.

United States' commerce in 1845.

Trade of United States	in Value	Ships	Tons	Men
To China	\$8,000,000	50	21,204	913
Dutch East Indies	\$538,000	10	3,944	150
Spanish Islands	\$633,000	9	4,023	150
British East Indies	\$1,276,000	26	9,500	418
In the Pacific		192	70,600	4,685
Total-----	\$10,447,000	285	109,273	6,326

An increase of some 67,500 tons was expected to be gained in the trade to and from the Far East. The possibility of obtaining European products and taking them to Asia more cheaply than European nations could do over their old routes was attractively pictured. Every ship in our merchant marine could make three or four trips where it now made but one. Furthermore, there would be the English mail and passengers who could reach India for a fare of three hundred and fifty dollars, where as the cost at the time was one thousand overland. Baggage would be carried at fifteen dollars per hundred pounds. The foregoing statements bring out the amount of commerce and traffic that the projected railroad sought to direct across our country. By making this project a reality it was hoped to get a favorable balance of trade.

Indirectly Whitney's plan aimed to strike a blow at England's naval power. Her strength was in her merchant marine and if the United States could change it or reduce it one third, "What a blow! What a reduction to England's power".

66. Ibid: Appendix 2, p. 35.

67. Ibid: pp. 35-36.

68. Ibid: p. 36.

69. Ibid: p. 36.

The American Merchant Marine would naturally be increased. In the west there was plenty of material available for ships and they could be built easily and cheaply. The United States could soon have a fleet in the Pacific to take care of the expected increase in the volume of trade. Other nations would stand ready to employ our means of conveyance. Thus a fleet⁷¹ in the Pacific Ocean would mean a fleet in the Atlantic Ocean.

Another important factor previously mentioned was the boom it would give to the whaling interests which were quite extensive on the Pacific coast. In 1845 they were valued at eight and a quarter millions of dollars. The products of the industry consisted of 157,900 barrels of sperm oil worth about \$,374,144.; 272,809 barrels of whale oil estimated at \$2,864,493;⁷² and 3,195,054 pounds of whale bone worth \$1,065,018.⁷³ All of the ships in the industry had been forced to take their products East to market them and therefore much time was wasted on this voyage which could have been spent in the fishing grounds.

A fourth economic consideration was suggested by Senator⁷⁴ Breese. Perhaps his motives were more political than commercial. He contended that a railroad would mean an increase in business in that it would attract crowds to see the western country. It would be a safe means of travel and many merchants, travelers, and curious minded would take advantage of this opportunity to go through our nation. They would note its improvements, the increase of its population, the activity,

70. Asa Whitney, "A Project for a Railway to the Pacific" p. 40

71. Committee Report, 31st Congress, 1st Session, No. 140
Appendix 1, p. 24

72. Ibid: Appendix 2, p. 31.

73. Sen. Documents, 29th Congress, 1st Session, Vol. IX No. 466
p. 12.

genious and happiness of its people. He then concluded his argument by hoping they would see the wisdom and advantage of free institutions.

There were, however, other political situations which were more significant to us as a nation. First, there was the problem of Oregon. When the road was first agitated it was a foregone conclusion that Oregon would be settled. Whitney and many others feared that it might become an independent nation⁷⁵ or that some European power might gain control in that region. In either case it would draw our trade away from the Far East and we would have a trade rival on the Pacific coast and in the fisheries. When this danger was eliminated by the organization of Oregon territory in 1848, the need for a railroad did not perish for Congress is obligated to protect its territories. Besides a road "would bind and cement on the largest and most comprehensive scale and in a most enduring form the commercial, social, and political relations of our Eastern and Western domain".⁷⁶ The United States already had a naval base on the Pacific coast which "with a comparatively small navy could command the Pacific, the South Atlantic, the Indian Ocean, and the China Sea".⁷⁷ Many of these arguments may seem absurd in our day and generation, but theories, plans and even arguments must always be considered in the light of the period in which they arise, are espoused and are discussed.

74. Ibid: No. 466 p. 10.

75. Committee Reports 31st Congress, 1st Session No. 140
Appendix 1, p. 26.

76. Ibid: p. 2-3.

77. Ibid: Appendix 7. p. 24

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Closely allied with Oregon was the California question. The discovery of gold was helpful in furthering a railroad project westward. Transportation was needed for the thousands who were moving west to prospect, and the nation wished to keep such mineral wealth within its boundaries. Anything which would reach across the great unsettled areas and bind her to us would be an asset.⁷⁸

Then there was the great problem of immigrants coming to our shores. In 1845, there were 114,000; in 1847, there were 235,000; while in 1849, they had increased to 297,000.⁷⁹ It meant great difficulty and hardships for them to get to the west. This condition a railroad would largely eliminate. Besides it would speed up the opening of vast areas of agricultural land in the region through which the road would pass. It was pointed out that "the United States would become the center of the vast globe with the grand highway or thoroughfare of nations through it. It will be a new found world; the over-population of Europe must and will flock to it".⁸⁰ The population in 1846 was then about 20,000,000 and at the rate of increase⁸¹ Whitney estimated it would double in twenty-two years.

Since it was so difficult to reach the west, there were many immigrants who remained in the Eastern cities. There in time problems of crime, misery and overpopulation were bound to result. A railroad seemed to provide a remedy for these social evils in that it might attract these people to the

78. Democratic Review - Vol. 25, p. 245.

79. Haney, L. H, "Congressional History of Railways to 1850" p. 402.

80. Committee Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session No. 140, Appendix 2, p. 32.

81. Ibid: p. 32.

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country where they could be content and prosperous. Living on the frontier the newly arrived immigrants would have to work hard for a livelihood, but the returns on these rich lands through which the road passed would be an incentive to work harder and by work "we shall be enabled to educate them to our system, to industry, prosperity and virtue".⁸³

Naturally the question was soon raised as to what effect the proposed railroad would have on the Indians who were living largely west of the Mississippi River. The Sioux were the most powerful tribe and since all Indians were dependent on the wilderness for food, it was thought that they would go North as the road brought on settlement. Small tribes that remained would be willing or forced to sell their lands and they would be quickly separated and civilized.⁸⁴ There were others who with more missionary zeal aimed not only to reach the Indian, the savage the barbarian and heathen would be brought in",⁸⁵ which included Indians, islanders in the Pacific and even the Chinese who might be converted to Christian faith and our ways of living. A most striking view was presented by Lieutenant M. F. Moury in a letter to Mr. T. Butler King in 1848, "It is difficult to overestimate the value and importance to the Republic of a safe and ready means of communication through the West with these people-----. The islander will cease to go naked, the Chinaman will give up his chop sticks and the Asiatic Russian his train oil, the moment that they find they can exchange

82. Reports of Committees, 30th Congress, 1st Session, Vol. 3 No. 733, p. 1 cf: Committee Reports - 31st Congress, 1st Session, No. 140, Appendix 1, p. 24

83. Ibid: p. 25.

84. Ibid: Appendix 2, p. 33.

85. Ibid: p. 34.

the productions of their climate and labor for that which is⁸⁶ more pleasing to the taste or fancy". "To us this seems extremely naive but it was taken with much seriousness in those⁸⁷ days."

For these reasons Whitney felt it important to urge his measure on Congress. Again there were two situations which made it imperative that it be adopted as quickly as possible. First, the success of his plan, as discussed, was dependent on the sale of public lands, therefore, it would be necessary to build before these lands were taken up. In fact the rapidity of settlement in Wisconsin led him to locate its eastern terminal at Prairie du Chien in his last appeal to Congress rather⁸⁸ than on Lake Michigan as he had originally planned. In the second place it was considered that there was a very grave danger from Great Britain. Mr. Breese in 1849, quoted the London times as follows: "Whitney's conception is the most magnificent scheme of the age and if carried out will make⁸⁹ America the axle of the world". It was feared that if the United States were to reject the plan that the British might take advantage of it and say, "This is the man for us; the prize is resigned to our hands and that in less than twelve months after we shall have trampled it under our feet, its flag will have been carried across the continent in the hands of British⁹⁰ surveyors, and British engineers on British soil". Vancouver would get the gain.

86. Haney, L. H., "Congressional History of Railways to 1850" p. 406.

87. Ibid: p. 407.

88. Committee Reports; 31st Congress, 1st Session No. 140 Appendix 3, p. 37.

The plan which Whitney advanced and his reasons for urging it have been presented and analyzed. It was first presented to Congress by Senator Pratt in the Second Session of the Twenty-Eight Congress in 1845. It was referred to the Committee on Roads and canals and reported out by the committee toward the close of the session by Senator Owen.⁹¹ The session closed before any action was taken on the report. Nevertheless, Whitney was not discouraged but worked steadily at his project. Soon after the First Session of the Twenty-Ninth Congress, Senator Breese presented a second Memorial for the proposed railroad.⁹² It was referred to the Senate Committee on Public Lands and they made a long report to the Senate in its favor.⁹³ There the matter was dropped. As a result of this failure a third Memorial was presented in January of 1848 at the First Session of the Thirtieth Congress.⁹⁴ A select committee in the Senate composed of Mr. Niles of Conn., Mr. Lewis of Alabama, Mr. Bell of Tennessee, Mr. Fitch of Michigan, Mr. Corwin of Ohio, which was fairly representative of all sections, submitted a long report urging the consideration of the bill.⁹⁵ A survey was moved as the first step, but Mr. Thomas Benton of Missouri objected and following a heated debate between him and Mr. Niles of Connecticut, the measure was laid on the table by a 27 to 21 vote.⁹⁶ In the House it was also referred to a select committee.⁹⁷

89. Congressional Globe, 28th Congress, 2nd Session, Vol. 14 p. 218 cf: Senate Documents, 29th Congress, 1st Session Vol. IX, No. 466, p. 18.

90. Ibid: p. 18.

91. Reports of Committees, 28th Congress, 2nd Session, No 199.

92. Congressional Globe, 29th Congress, 1st Session Vol. 15, p. 414

93. Senate Documents, 29th Congress, 1st Session, Vol. 9 No 466 Committee of Messrs, Breese, Woodbridge, Morehead, & Ashley

Mr. McClelland reported the bill favorably with Mr. Pollack's report, and it was referred to the Committee of the Whole on the State of the Union and then laid on the table. In the Second Session of the Thirtieth Congress, however, the bill was brought up for further consideration.

Whitney during this time had been traveling through the states asking state legislatures and public meetings to send resolutions to Congress approving his plan. Mr. Niles of Conn. in the Senate was the chief supporter of the bill, while its arch opponent was Mr. Borland of Arkansas of the Committee on Public Lands, who did not want a bill considered, but was willing that surveys should be authorized in order to map out the best and shortest route to the Pacific coast. Mr Pollack of the House of Representatives wanted the Bill considered, but the California question consumed most of the time of the session and nothing was accomplished in reference to the railroad bill.

When Congress convened for the First Session of the Thirty-

94. Senate Miscellaneans, 30th Congress 1st Session-No. 28
95. Senat Reports, 30th Congress, 1st Session-No. 191
cf: Senate Journal 30th Congress, 1st Session p. 419
96. Haney, L. H., "Congressional History of Railroads to 1850"
p. 414.
97. Reports of Committees, 30th Congress, 1st Session, Vol. 3, No. 733. The committee was Messrs. Pollack, Pa; Hilliard, Ala.; Toombs, Ga.; Woodward, S. C.; Venable, N. C.; Taylor, Ohio; McClelland, Mich.; Morley, N. Y.; Dixon of Conn.
98. Committee Reports, 30th Congress, 1st Session, Vol. 3, No. 733
99. Congressional Globe, 30th Congress, 2nd Session Vol. 20, p. 381-388-410.
100. Senate Reports, 30th Congress, 1st Session, No. 191
101. Haney, L. H., "Congressional History of the Railways to 1850"
p. 414

First Congress in 1849, Mr. Bright of the Senate gave a long report recommending Whitney's plan, and urging it because some twenty states and many public meetings had voiced their approval.¹⁰² Mr. Robinson of the House also gave his report, "Whitney's Railroad to the Pacific".¹⁰³ Mr. Bowhn of the Senate gave an excellent speech at this time which perhaps better than any one document¹⁰⁴ sums up the arguments against the plan. The supporters of the bill now suggested that five thousand copies of the report be printed but it was defeated by a 83 to 51 vote and the whole subject of Whitney's plan was dismissed.¹⁰⁵ The question of the railroad, however, was not dead and Whitney was not¹⁰⁶ quieted. In fact so many plans had been suggested that Congress in desperation made an appropriation for a survey of the possible routes in 1853.¹⁰⁷ In all later considerations involving a great western road frequent references were made to Whitney's plan or to his route. The Civil War came before any road was chartered in spite of Davis', Benton's and Douglas's proposals.

102. Congressional Globe, 31st Congress, 1st Session Vol.22 p. 1809.

103. Congressional Globe, 31st Congress, 1st Session, Vol.23 pp. 329

104. Ibid; p. 336.

105. Haney, L. H., "Congressional History of Railways to 1850" p. 417.

106. Ibid 117. cf: Smalley - "History of Northern Pacific" p. 78

107. Ibid; p. 78.

Before considering just what arguments were advanced for and against Whitney's plan in its progress through Congress, it will be necessary to examine the bill which actually precipitated the question. The bill provided:

Sections I and II, That the government should sell to Whitney land for a railroad from Lake Michigan to the Pacific coast, at ten cents an acre (a reduction over the sixteen cents which he had suggested) some thirty miles on each side of the road. Such lands were to be held till needed.

Section III, That two hundred feet which would not be saleable, were to be reserved through the entire route for the railroad.

Section IV, That the grant be made subject to the condition that Whitney should get the machinery and build ten miles of the road, which was not to be less than six foot gauge and with rails not less than sixty-four pounds to the yard. If this ten mile section was accepted by the government committee, Whitney was then authorized to sell a five mile strip and obtain the title to the land from the government. If the sale averaged seventy-two cents for the 192,000 acres, then any excess should be held to build the road through the bad territory. The road and the machinery were to be held as security. The reserved lands were to be sold as soon as the cost of construction was more than the ten by sixty mile strip would bring.

Section V, That the reserved lands should be sold only for the building of the road through the poor section, or when demanded for actual settlement. The lands were to be sold at auction in lots of 40 to 160 acres, when two months notice had been given in two Washington, D. C. newspapers. The conditions

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of sale were, that twenty percent should be paid on the day of the purchase, and the remainder within thirty days, otherwise the buyer would forfeit both the payment and the claim. All monies from the land sales were to be held in the Treasury. Whitney was to be permitted to draw on them as funds were needed for his work.

Section VI, state that any lands which remained unsold after a ten year period were to go to Whitney.

Section VII, that until such a time as patents were issued by the government, no titles from or contracts of Whitney should be binding.

Section VIII, that if any lands sold were sold within the sixty mile area at the government price of one dollar and a quarter per acre before the work was commenced, the proceeds of such sales were to go to the road. (This was necessary considering the rapidity with which settlement was advancing in Wisconsin and the whole Northwest.

Section IX, that Whitney should keep the road in repair; would not ask higher tolls than other roads, and would carry mails free.

Section X, provided that after a ten year period, which was later changed to twenty, all lands in excess of those necessary for the upkeep of the road would go to Whitney. If the tolls became sufficient to support it the land would revert to him at such a time.

Section XI, that on completion of the road, Congress was still to have the power of regulating tolls etc. It also stated

that if Whitney should fail in the upkeep of the railroad, Congress could punish him for such neglect and appoint a successor to take his place as manager of the road.

Section XII, that Whitney should have the right to enter into contracts with states or corporations that would aid him.

Section XIII, stated that all the route not within a state, and therefore in a territory, was to be exempt from taxation forever.

Section XIV, that the President of the United States with the approval of the Senate could appoint a commission to supervise the work for the government. Said commission would give notice of the land sales, and report the progress and conditions of the road to each session of Congress.

Section XV, that the land sales would be carried on through the same agents as those in charge of the regular public land sales.

Section XVI, that the money derived from these sales should be kept as a distinct fund and the Treasurer of the United States would reimburse Whitney when the payment was authorized by the government committee.

Section XVII, that any timber, stone, fuel, etc. which would be found convenient on the unsold government lands could be used for the construction of the road.

Section XVIII, stated that if the road were not begun within two years after the passage of the bill, Congress reserved the right of repeating it. If the construction was stopped for a year Whitney should forfeit the road, but should receive public lands for recompense according to the amount of the road then

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completed. One third of the road was to be completed and the survey of the entire route was to be made in nine years. A second third of the road was to be completed six years later, and the final section finished within a twenty-five year period. Whitney had estimated the time necessary for the full construction of the road at fifteen years. If these conditions were not met the road as completed should be forfeited. At all times Congress reserved the right to amend the act.

Section XIV, provided that the government was to extinguish¹⁰⁸ all Indian titles and have all lands surveyed for sale.

The bill was changed in a few minor ways and a few suggestions for other changes were made in Congress, but the substance of the bill remained in accordance with the preceeding analysis.

Mr. Breese in his report to Congress ably summed up the chief considerations of the bill, upon which the debates and arguments¹⁰⁹ in Congress were based.

One of the chief points in question was whether such a grant if authorized in accordance to the measure would be constitutional. There were two chief arguments against the constitutionality of it. It was claimed that public funds should not be used for such internal improvement, and that to authorize the road to be built in a state would encroach upon a states' sovereign rights. There was also the constitutional question regarding the authority of Congress to exempt land grants to

108. Committee Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session, Report 140 Appendix 4. p. 44.

109. Senate Documents, 29th Congress, 1st Session. Vol. IX, Report No. 466.

railroads in territories from taxation in light of the fact, that the territories would later become states and would be no longer under the control of Congress.¹¹⁰ Those who viewed the question as within the rights of Congress, at least outweighed the others in the number of their arguments. To some individuals the whole question was a settled matter since the constitution reads, "that Congress shall have the power to dispose of and make all needful rules and regulations respecting the territory or other property belonging to the United States".¹¹¹ Furthermore, the Cumberland road had been authorized through states already in existence in 1806, and there had been no violent objections at the time of its construction.¹¹² In 1802, Ohio had been admitted to the Union on condition that she lay out and make public roads.¹¹³ Therefore such conditions had been exacted before. There was no reason why the principle thus established should not be repeated. Others interpreted the bill to mean that there should be no objection to a states government controlling the road if it traversed its territory.¹¹⁴ A magazine of the day dismissed the question with, "No man will pretend to contest the constitutionality of a measure that is clearly necessary for the general welfare of the nation".¹¹⁵

The second issue was that of the means to be used in building the road. Whitney considered and many agreed with him, that

110. Phamplet--"National Plan of an Atlantic and Pacific Railroad and Remarks of Albert Pike at Memphis in 1849."
cf: Haney, L. H. "Congressional History of Railroads to 1850 p. 418.

111. United States Constitution, Art. IV, Section III

112. Senate Documents 29th Congress. 1st Session, No 466, p. 2

113. Ibid; p. 2.

114. Reports of Committees, 30th Congress, 1st Ses., No 733, p. 2

an individual, private scheme was the only feasible one.

"To rely upon individual enterprise for the accomplishment of works of internal improvement may be regarded as almost among the first principles of the creed of republicanism, nor will the spirit of our government permit it to engage in works which can as well or better be accomplished, by individuals or com-
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 panies". Whitney dismissed the possibility of a government enterprise, but at the same time territory through which the road would go was practically a wilderness or at least unsettled, so that there seemed but a slight possibility that people of the
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 district could build it. Then too, it was even less probable that an individual would invest capital in a venture which could
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 not promise a return for many years. The most radical objection to the means devised came from Mr. Freeman of Mississippi, in a quotation taken from a Boston pamphlet. This pamphlet presented the whole scheme in a ridiculous light. "Could it not be reasonably assumed that it would take one year to build ten miles of railroad, another year to sell the lands, and three more to collect the payments. At this rate it would take 850
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 years to build 1700 miles". To be sure this presented an extreme view but others felt that the plan might fail chiefly for the reason that Haney has pointed ou, namely; that the whole

115. American Whig Review, Vol. 10, p. 71.

116. Ibid: Vol. 10, p. 67.

117. Committee Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session, No. 140, p.27

118. Ibid: p. 27.

119. Senate Miscellaneans, 31st Congress, 1st Session. No. 28, Appendix F. cf: Haney, I. H., "Congressional History of Railroads to 1850", p. 419

thing depended on the settlers flocking into the new territories and this they were not likely to do. Mr. Breese on the other hand considered the way and means of constructing the road, quite adequate. There were abundant materials at the start, and cheap communication with the atlantic cities would assure trade with them as well as the transportation of settlers, laborers and materials.

From the standpoint of land values the first 700 miles or 26,800,000 acres at the government price would mean a value of \$33,500,000. On to the Pass 38,400,000 acres would yield the sum of \$48,000,000. These last lands if not valuable for agriculture would be of some value because of their available water power. The total amount realized would be 81,500,000 and if compared with the lowest estimate for construction at \$52,600,000, would leave \$28,900,000 for repairs and upkeep. If this were to be compared with the highest estimate of \$65,000,000 it still left \$12,400,000 for the same purposes. The chief weakness of this argument is revealed in the fact that it could be given little value until it could be definitely ascertained that the lands would sell throughout the entire region. Mr. Pollack also presented figures to back the same argument by taking the cost at \$60,600,000 and the acreage at 77,952,000, he estimated that the land would sell for \$59,879,000. This

120. Haney, L. H., "Congressional History of Railroads to 1850" p. 414.

121. Senate Documents, 29th Congress, 1st Session, No. 406, pp 6-7

122. Ibid: pp. 6-7

123. Reports of Committees, 30th Congress, 1st Session, Vol. 3 No. 733.

sum would be sufficient to assure success, if not covering the entire estimate as originally made. Another who supported the practicability from the purely financial side was Mr. Bright.¹²⁴ He accepted Whitney's estimate of \$60,000,000 and compared it with the probable cost suggested by Colonel Albert of \$127,500,000¹²⁵ if it were to be built as a government enterprise. Cheaper construction seemed to be guaranteed by Whitney's plan. If the plan did not work it would be Whitney's loss. He would have to depend on the land sales of the first eight-hundred miles. Bright said, "The public certainly risks nothing, and are sure to be immense gainers if he succeeds".¹²⁶ In fact his committee saw no reason why settlement would not follow the road, and make the plan a safe proposition. Another angle of the practicability of the scheme was pointed out by Mr. Breese at another time. Since the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804, the proposed route had been accepted as the easiest way to the Pacific. It really was not a new idea, and the plan was upheld¹²⁷ by many men of practical experience.

Another consideration to be borne in mind was as to how the project would affect the public lands. In the condition in which they then existed they were considered practically unsaleable. At the sale price of ten cents an acre more money would flow into the United States Treasury than they would otherwise yield.¹²⁸ Secondly, the railroad would raise the land values

124Senate Reports - 31st Congress, 1st Session, No. 194. p. 1.

125. Ibid: p. 1.

126. Ibid: p. 1.

127. Senate Documents, 29th Congress, 1st Session, Vol. 9, No 466 p. 5.

128. Ibid: p. 25.

in the sections it crossed. Increased production in the East stimulated by settlement and an enlarged market would add to the wealth of the nation. According to the plan the settler after having erected his cabin would work on the road, while his first crops were maturing. When his produce was ready for market, the finished road would carry it on to other laborers working under the same conditions.¹²⁹

The influence of the projected road upon the great agricultural interests of our nation was a further argument in the plans form, since it was concluded that it would stimulate production and mean an actual increase in farm profits, through the advantage of low rates. Production would be increased by settlement, and by the stimulus to the Oriental trade.¹³⁰ Lower traffic rates would mean cheaper products in the Orient, and the demand would increase. Mr. Pratt stated in a letter in Hunt's Magazine that, "It is the poor man's road, his hope and promise. It is the farmer and mechanic who will receive the greatest benefit; their small means and cabin on the railroad will purchase the land, from forty to one hundred and sixty acres; their labor and crops will be immediately wanted by the road; and if there is a surplus it will have practically free transit to market."¹³¹

The new agricultural communities and the increased Oriental demands would in turn mean greater output from our manufacturing districts. Distribution within our nation would be improved.¹³²

129. Ibid: p. 25. cf: Committee Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session, No. 140. p. 1.

130. Ibid: p. 9.

131. Hunt's Magazine - Vol. 17. p. 478.

132. Senate Documents, 29th Congress, 1st Ses., no 466, Vol 9 p 9

Whitney's road would be favorable to the development of the mineral industry. Iron rails and machinery would be required for the railroad, cars and vessels. The coal mines would be forced to increase their output to them running. The finer metals would be required as manufacturing was stimulated.¹³³

A most lively debate on the whole question was the one between Mr. Bowlin of Missouri and Mr. Robinson of Indiana.¹³⁴ Mr. Bowlin was indeed the most critical of any member of Congress who was working against the bill.

First, Bowlin asked why land grants should be given to individuals when they had been refused the states, and particularly when they asked for so much. It was a considerable gift on the part of the government to give an individual lands worth \$97,500,000, in order to build a railroad at a cost of \$50,000,000, and then to assure the individual of the ownership of the road upon its completion.¹³⁵ Robinson answered Bowlin by stating that Bowlin was misrepresenting the facts of the bill, and was speaking in the assumption that all public lands were worth one dollar and a quarter an acre, which was not true.¹³⁶ Secondly, a very unfair attack was made when Bowlin declared that Whitney sought no gain but fame. The whole scheme was "an electioneering tale to deceive and mislead the people".¹³⁷ "It (the bill) not only took everything--road, land, money, implements to the grantee, but he intended to show before he was done that it

133. Ibid: p. 10.

134. Congressional Globe, 31st Congress, 1st Session
Vol. 23, pp. 329-333.

135. Ibid: p. 330.

136. Ibid: p. 335.

137. Ibid: p. 330.

took them in such a form as to render Congress powerless the moment the grant was made. The draughtsman of this bill understood his business and new how to manufacture vested rights¹³⁸ and corporate powers while seeming to eschew everything. It had been phrased to annul what sounded like limitations. The retort was, "As to the bill it was drawn by Mr. Whitney himself who had never read a law book in his life, or submitted it to or had it examined by a lawyer."¹³⁹ It had been revised somewhat by the committees, but Whitney in no way could be blamed for those changes.

Bowlin then continued to attack the measure by anticipating the trouble which would be brought about in not definitely routing the road from Lake Michigan to the Pacific. "You would see states, free, sovereign, independent states rivaling each other in sycophancy to your congressionally created idol".¹⁴⁰ A greater evil was the provision permitting contracts with the states.¹⁴¹ The backbone was taken from this objection when Mr. Whitney had Mr. Bowlin informed that he would be willing to do without this "right of contract with the states".¹⁴²

Neither did Bowlin consider that the government had sufficient control over the road, since Whitney, "his heirs and assigns were to hold the road in perpetuity and collect the tolls".¹⁴³ He had little proof for his argument and seemed to forget that the road was to be built under the vigilance of a

138. Ibid: p. 330

139. Ibid: p. 334.

140. Ibid: p. 330.

141. Ibid: p. 331.

142. Ibid: p. 334.

143. Ibid: p. 331.

government commission and that the tolls were to be always under the government's control.

Bowlin branded the whole idea, "just a stock-jobbing concern", for who were assigns if not those who took interest in the assignment of stock? ¹⁴⁴ Once that the bill was passed he prophesied indiscriminate issues of stock. "The man who supposes Whitney is to await the slow process of this road to realize his dreams of a fortune judges but poorly of human motives for human behavior". ¹⁴⁵ Wilkes in a pamphlet suggested the same danger by stating that Whitney would probably advertise the opening with much noise, and that there would probably be a great deal of speculation in the roads stock, and that as a consequence he would retire. ¹⁴⁶ Both Bowlin and Wilkes foresaw a still graver danger in that the stock would go where money was available and that would be to Europe. It was feared that speculators in any nation might "gratify their own schemes of speculation at the expense of the people". ¹⁴⁷

The retort to this argument was that the very nature of the bill would not permit stock jobbing, since there could be no stock. The whole fallacy, it was pointed out to Bowlin, rested on the fact that he argued as if Whitney was to get all the land, while in reality he was only to get the use of the money from it ¹⁴⁸ through the United States Treasurer.

144. Ibid: p. 331.

145. Ibid: p. 331.

146. Wilkes, George, "A Proposal for a National Railroad to the Pacific Ocean".

147. Congressional Globe; 31st Congress, 1st Session Vol. 23, p 332

148. Ibid: p. 335.

The next attack was derived from the clause providing a tax exemption through the territory or any states which might later be created out of them. As to this Bowlin sarcastically commented, "This is a new article in the Constitution to be legislated in for the benefit of this grand and magnificent scheme".¹⁴⁹ Robinson in turn pointed out that the provision was made simply to secure a greater advantage to the old Eastern states since such taxes would raise the traffic rates of the railroad. He also stated that it applied only to the actually constructed road and not to the grant as a whole, because the lands once sold were beyond the control of the government.¹⁵⁰

Senator Bowlin then again referred to the relation of Congress to the proposed road. He considered that Congress limited itself in making possible the repeal of the act only in a few specified cases of neglect, or refusal to go on with the construction.¹⁵¹ Knowing that his opponent would cite the power to amend the bill at any time, Bowlin hastened to interpret this power to mean such as did not impair the rights and privileges of Whitney and his assigns.¹⁵²

The extinguishing of the Indian claims again drew Bowlin's criticism, even though it had been put in by the committee. "The original draughtsman had not the boldness to ask Congress to bind itself to that which might cost the blood of the treasure and of the nation to execute for the sale and exclusive benefit of Mr. Whitney and his assigns. Bowlin overlooked the fact that

149. Ibid: p. 331.

150. Ibid: p. 334.

151. Ibid: p. 331.

152. Ibid: p. 331.

153. Ibid: p. 331.

the road promised to do more for the nation as a whole, than it did for the builder. And further stated that if any difficulty did arise it would be in the interest of the country at large. Mr. Robinson remembering that Bowlin came from Missouri, asked him just how would the Missouri plan get around the fact that the road would be through sections which Congress had¹⁵⁴ officially reserved to the Indians? Bowlin doubted that there would be any Indian question. He saw no guarantee that the road would go beyond the good lands. In fact he thought man was very gullible in believing that Whitney would go beyond the profitable¹⁵⁵ point of construction. Was it not true, that if he stopped at the end of the good lands or at any other place along the proposed course, he was to be compensated in accordance to the amount of the road completed?

Bowlin also claimed that the provisions had quasi-corporation tendencies. He believed that the courts would declare the grant to be a private corporation because Congress had¹⁵⁶ practically given up all its control. He could have well reserved this objection, for Whitney was perfectly willing to have the provision in the bill read that the courts should never¹⁵⁷ declare the railroad a corporation in the legal sense.

The objections of Mr. Bowlin were against the bill as it was presented to Congress. There was a second deluge of opposition to the idea of such a land grant. It was on this principle that the whole scheme depended. The first objection used

154. Ibid: p. 335.

155. Ibid: p. 331.

156. Ibid: p. 331.

157. Ibid: p. 331-332.

158
 was in reference to the large amount of land required. Advocates of the plan answered this criticism in asserting that in view of the one billion acres of public lands the plan called for less than one tenth of that land, and that the very nature of the plan would later enhance the value of the other nine-
 159
 tenths, as well as encourage settlement. Others took the opposite view that the improvement in the areas, through which the road would go, would detract from the public domain. From time to time proposals had been made for the free disposal of
 163
 public lands. Others wanted the government to build a road. Either policy of the government would deprive the treasury of money in the possibility of its accumulation. Whitney's plan
 164
 would be instrumental in adding revenue to our national coffers.

Then too, there were some who feared, that the grant might
 165
 lead to a monopoly of land control and retard settlement. It might result in concentrating too much wealth in one individual. The opportunity for making a great fortune did not look very promising as Mr. Robinson pointed out. The cost estimated for ten miles would have been \$200,000 and to have sold the five by sixty mile section, as Whitney suggested at the possible price of eighty-one cents an acre from the sale of the other
 160
portions of the public domain. However, the chances were that

158. Senate Documents, 29th Congress, 1st Session, Vol. 9
 No. 466, p. 24.

159. Ibid: p. 24.

160. Committee Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session, No. 140, p. 12

161. Ibid: p. 12.

162. Congressional Globe 32nd Congress, 1st Session Vol. 7 p. 1274

163. Committee Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session, No. 140 p. 12

164. Ibid: p. 12.

the land sales would increase in all areas, because immigrants starting west by such inducements would scatter and settle
 161
 throughout the unoccupied lands. Others laughed at the whole idea of increasing land values. Senator Freeman raised the question that "If 500 of the 800 miles were without timber so it would always be difficult to secure fuel and 1400 miles were openly avowed to be too poor to sustain settlement, how could the lands be given value? It would not open the public domain
 162
 to immigration or cultivation".

But whether the land sales were extensive or not, to have sold any land would have yielded the government more revenue than holding the areas. The acreage sold would have netted only \$153,600,000. He would have had to make up \$47,400, by the increased land values which would have left little chance for
 166
 an immense profit. This was Whitney's only chance of gain, since the tools were to have been in government control and only sufficient to cover the actual expenses of the road.

In case the road was not completed the government would would have lost much valuable time considering and providing for it, which could have been given to a project where success was more likely to be assured. Secondly, that it would be an actual financial loss to the government to the extent to which
 167
 expenditures had been made for the surveys and other preparation. This criticism was hardly justified since Mr. Whitney was to make all the surveys himself. Mr. Robinson said that the chances

165. Committee Reports, 28th Congress, 2nd Session, No.199 p.2

166. Committee Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session, No 140, p. 14

167. Committee Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session, No. 140 p.13

were that it would be done with "greater fidelity with vastly greater rapidity, energy and completeness than by government agents who will have no other interests than good pay, and in protracting the work as long as they could".¹⁶⁸ If Asa Whitney had allowed the government to have made the surveys that alone might have meant the defeat of his plan. Had the survey been dragged over a period of time the good lands would have been taken and the basis for the whole plan vanished.

The objections to the plan may be summarized in four classes: first, constitutional difficulties; second, objections against a grant; thirdly, criticisms against the conditions of the grant; and fourthly, objections to the proposed route.

Even though there was very much criticism of the place, it had a decided advantage over any other which had been suggested. These advantages were gained by (1) asking the government to undertake a road as a government project, (2) loaning the credit of the government to a company, (3) by reserving a portion¹⁶⁹ of the revenue from the land sales for the purpose.

Since money cost of any project is always of primary interest to any people, the first great advantage came in that the road required no money from the United States Treasury, either as a gift or a loan. It created its own capital or means of construction through the increased land values. In the words of Mr. Bright, "It was all the more satisfactory as it will not cost
 168. Ibid: p. 13.

169. Senate Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session, No 194. p.2

the government and the people of the United States a single
¹⁷⁰cent". A second advantage was the low tolls to be exacted, which
 were made possible by covering only current expenses and not the
¹⁷¹interest in a big capital outlay is a profit for dividends.
 There were to be special rates on corn and flour while the gen-
 eral merchandise rates were to have been about ten dollars a
¹⁷²ton. This would mean an actual gain to the producer. Passen-
¹⁷³gers might travel the 2030 miles for the fare of twenty dollars.

While the plan of financing the road would not have called
 for a national outlay of money, it would have been on the other
 hand an actual and positive gain in national revenue. Some
 78,000,000 acres of land at ten cents an acre would have
 amounted to \$7,800,000 in the United States Treasury. Not more
 than one third of the public domain was considered as saleable
¹⁷⁴lands.

As a private enterprise the projected road offered the fol-
 lowing advantages: First, it would be cheaper than government
 construction. The difference in estimates between the \$68,000,000
 made by Whitney, has been noted as well as the estimate made
 by Colonel Abert for the government construction at \$127,500,000.
¹⁷⁵As a private interest it would also seek economy and would not
 be subjected to the waste and corruption characteristic of
¹⁷⁶government projects.

170. Ibid: p. 2.

171. American Whig Review Vol. 10, p. 68 cf: Committee Reports
 31st Congress, 1st Session, Vol. I No. 140, p. 78

172. Senate Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session, No. 194, p. 2

173. Ibid: p. 2.

174. Ibid: p. 2.

175. Ibid: p. 3.

Secondly as a private scheme it would be kept out of the hands of politicians. There would be no reward to the party in power for its construction and there could be no patronage. This was a point worth striving for, since the work would otherwise be handicapped by changing administrations and would face the danger of never reaching completion as had been the fate of the Cumberland Road as originally projected.¹⁷⁷

"We can easily imagine the violent jealousies that it must have awakened among the representatives of the several sections, the painful animosities to which it must give rise and the pernicious plans of log rolling as well as of individual corruption that will grow out of it inevitably in any protracted course of legislation"¹⁷⁸

Thirdly, greater funds would probably be raised from the lands for defraying the expenses of the road under this plan than the government could raise were it to take the same section and to give all monies realized from its sale to the road. The government could not speculate on land sales. The rates of sale of public lands were determined by legislation and not by market value. They could not be raised every time that popular demand agitated it.¹⁷⁹

Fourthly a private scheme would be more likely to remove further danger of sectional rivalry because Whitney could have decided for himself just where the lands would have sold best.¹⁸⁰

176. Putnam's Magazine, Vol. 2, p. 501

177. Ibid: p. 4. cf: Committee Reports, 31st Congress 1st Session, No. 140 p. 7-8.

178. Putnam's Magazine, Vol. 2. p. 502

179. Senate Reports 31st Congress, 1st Session, No. 194, p. 6

180. Ibid: p. 7.

This danger was clearly in evidence in such plans as those of Wilkes, Benton and others, who wanted a Southern route.

Fifthly, the government had the power to dispose of the public lands, while such a vast undertaking by it might have conflicted with the Constitution. It therefore would have¹⁸¹ practically eliminated any question of constitutionality.

Another decided point in the form of the scheme was to be found in the fact that it could not well be a monopoly in spite of the fact that this had been one of the strongest arguments¹⁸² advanced against it. According to the plan the lands were to be sold at public auction and secondly, Whitney was not to hold any¹⁸³ lands ten years after the road was completed. Furthermore it would not necessarily mean a monopoly of trade, since Whitney¹⁸⁴ did not ask for restrictions on the building of rival roads.

The grant of land to Whitney was not to be absolute, but he merely asked that this area of land be set aside as the basis for a fund for the proposed road construction. Considering the amount of public lands available at the time this was not an exorbitant demand. One half the lands were to be held to guarantee the work. Some eight hundred miles of completed road were¹⁸⁵ to be the security for the rest of the road. No titles to the land even to be given by Whitney but by the government, and not

181. Committee Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session, No. 140, p 7-

182. American Whig Review, Vol. 10, p.6-8

183. Ibid: p. 68

184. Ibid: p. 68

185. Senate Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session Report No. 194
pg. 4.

until the road was built and paid for. All construction and sale of lands were to be under the supervision of the government agents. If Whitney failed the government was to take everything; if he died, the conditions of the plan were to be imposed on his heirs: if he failed to operate it as the government desired, Congress could give it to someone else.

Speculation seemed out of the question till the road would be completed, at least, as only then would Whitney receive any lands, and there seemed to be little danger that much would remain as surplus. There were to be no stocks or bonds.¹⁸⁷

Even after these long debates in Congress and after favorable reports by practically every committee had been made, the plan was doomed to fail. This was not because it was argued down but rather it was the usual fate of measures advanced before their time. Whitney himself was a prophet, but the nation at large was not ready for the idea which he had visioned. Twenty long years had to elapse before this idea of Whitney's was mature in the charter to the Union Pacific Railroad in 1862.

As most of the objections to Whitney's plan came from Senators Bowlin and Benton of Missouri, the opposition took on something of a sectional nature both in and out of Congress. "Extension on free soil, and settlement would be prejudiced to the South by increasing a population hostile to her institut-

186. Ibid: No. 194. p. 4.

187. Committee Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session No. 140 Appendix 2, p. 32.

188. Debow's Review, Vol. 9. p. 601.

ions. This statement must be qualified because it was not true in the first years of the Western railroad agitation. When Whitney was traveling through the states speaking in behalf of his project and seeking the endorsement of the public the towns and cities in the South as well as the North, and the legislatures of Southern as well as Northern states passed resolutions favorable to his plan and sent them to Congress. "The South has generally favored Mr. Whitney's scheme and several state legislatures have adopted resolutions in its favor recommending its adoption, but since the agitation in California and the increased agitation of the slavery question, she has felt a strong desire to have the road located as far South as possible".¹⁸⁹

Whitney had traveled in fact from Mississippi to New England and had received support throughout this whole section.¹⁹⁰ The only place in fact where he was unsuccessful was in New York City.¹⁹¹

In most places the city officials and influential men became enthusiastic over his project and worked with him in presenting it to the people.¹⁹² We might conclude that the people in general favored it. The Memphis Appeal for October 30, 1849 said "since Mr. Whitney has been heard we believe it to be the general opinion that it is the only plan that can be carried out". This was concluded in the light of the petitions and memorials, voices of eminent men, action of some twenty states and the favorable reports in Congress and in public meetings. Their (meaning the

188. Debow's Review, Vol. 9, p.601

189. Ibid: p. 602.

190. Committee Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session No. 140, Appendix 5.

191. Senate Miscellaneans, 30th Congress, 1st Session Nos. 124, 1, 4, 5, 18, 29, and 58.

192. Smalley, e., History of the Northern Pacific" p 59

11-11-11

people) endorsement is more properly interpreted as an expression of the deep and absorbing interest felt and taken by the whole American people in having railroad communication opened across their territories to the shores of the Pacific, than as a positive approval of any one specific plan for building such a road".¹⁹³ They favored Whitney's plan because the idea appealed to them, was brought to them personally, and presented clearly.

Besides the sectional opposition agitation against the route was prompted from various sources and for several motives. The Pacific Mail Company did not want it, because it would by its free carriage of mail be a rival at least, and in all probability drive it out of business.¹⁹⁴ Speculators opposed it, because they didn't want to see the possibility of public land pass out of their clutches. This opposition was particularly well developed a little later, when speculators in soldiers warrants expressed their wish that the amounts of available land should not be reduced.¹⁹⁵

193. Democratic Review, Vol. 30, p. 332.

194. Haney. L. H., "Congressional History of Railways to 1850" p. 419

195. Ibid: p. 419.

196. Wilkes, George, "Proposal for a National Railroad to the Pacific Ocean (New York - 184) cf: Smalley, E. V. "History of the Northern Pacific" - p. 67.

IV

Other plans that have been incidentally referred to were being sponsored while Whitney's plan was before Congress.

Most important of these other projects was that of George Wilkes of New York whose "Plan for a National Railroad to the Pacific" was based on the idea of setting apart a portion of the income from the land sales to build the road. His original contribution was a proposal to have a commission elected by the legislatures and people of the several states to manage and build it. It was to be a government enterprise. He was not so interested in a route, as he was in the means of financing the road.¹⁹⁶
¹⁹⁷

The idea of loaning the credit of the government to a company to finance a road was embodied in the plan of Hartwell Carver, also of New York.¹⁹⁸ His proposal was brought forth rather late in 1849. Although he advanced a claim for originating the whole idea, it must be largely discounted. He wanted an exclusive and perpetual charter granted him together with 8,000,000 acres of land on credit. The land would be paid for in road stock when it was completed. He was to forfeit 5,000,000 acres if he failed, which would still assure him of a 3,000,000 acre profit.¹⁹⁹ The scheme never received serious consideration. His

196. Wilkes, George, "Proposal for a National Railroad to the Pacific Ocean (New York - 184) cf: Smalley, E. V.} "History of the Northern Pacific" p. 67.

197. Smalley, E. V. "History of Northern Pacific" p.66.

198. Ibid: p. 67-68 cf: Proceedings of the Friends of a Railroad to the Pacific at Boston April 19, 1849"

199. Pamphlet - "Proceedings of the Friends of a Railroad to the Pacific at Boston, 1849"

route was to have been from Lake Michigan by the way of South
 200
 Pass to San Francisco.

P. P. F. Degrand had a plan for another private scheme. He
 claimed its merits were to be found in that it required a single
 land grant and that all the materials would be of domestic or-
 201
 igin. He asked for a charter giving him the right to build the
 road on a Southern route.

Thomas Benton's plan drew considerable attention for he was
 an active member of Congress. It was no more successful than
 the others. His project called for government ownership and
 government work on a road which would have gone from St. Louis
 to San Francisco with a branch leading to Oregon.

In addition to the fact that none of the means proposed to
 build these southern routes were acceptable, there were other
 objections which would apply equally well to all of them. First,
 the climate over the proposed routes was too warm for the best
 transportation. Materials were less available for construction
 when the road had to start in settled territory, and there was
 202
 little timber as the road reached westward. The lands already
 sold in Missouri would yield no income and beyond that state a
 road would strike into Indian territory, where the lands could
 203
 not be sold. Further west were the mountains which were higher

200. Ibid: Pamphlet of: Smalley E. V., "History of Northern
 Pacific", p. 67.

201. Ibid: Pamphlet: Wilkes, George, "Proposal for a National
 Railroad to the Pacific Ocean" - 1847

202. Debow's Review, Vol. 3, p. 475

203. Congressional Globe, 31st Session 1st Congress, Vol. 23
 p. 335.

1

and more difficult to cross, and would call for greater construction costs. Of minor importance, there were more streams to be bridged. It was further claimed that the Puget Sound Ports were better and more congenial to the Mississippi Valley products.²⁰⁴ The greatest opposition to these proposed southern routes was the sectional service and benefits they would render.

On the other hand it was claimed that the proposed southern routes met more connecting roads from the region east of the Mississippi River; that a southern route would be some 900 miles shorter; that it would be pleasanter all the year round for travel; that greater settled territory would be an advantage in the construction and progress of the road, and that it would penetrate into the mining regions and open up sources of minerals so that it would pay for itself quickly.²⁰⁵

Besides these plans proposed for a railroad in the United States, were the proposals for either a road or a canal across Panama or Tehuantepec--the so-called Isthmian routes. How did these compare with Whitney's route? First, by a study of comparative distances there was absolutely no saving in distance by such routes.²⁰⁶ In fact these routes would have increased the distance from China to Europe and would have required a longer time for passage. The climate in the Isthmus would have been

204. American Whig Review, Vol. 10, p. 73

205. Debows Review, Vol. 3, p. 475.

206. Appendix No. 3

207
 a handicap. Altogether the risk and expense would have been increased. Secondly, the climate would have made it impossible for Northern workmen to have carried on the construction work, and there would have been no labor available there. Not only was there a sparse population but there was a lawless population which would have required a strong military force in the region
 208
 all of the time. A further handicap the region presented was the absolute lack of materials necessary for the road construction.
 209

The route would have been outside of our country and difficult to have kept under our control; the nation would have received no special benefit from the trade through this region and roads might later have been built on the continent which
 210
 would have been rivals.

V

All plans were likely to fail at this time. First, the idea was in advance of its time; secondly, California in 1850, and oregon (1859) were in the Union and some of the grave dangers which had prompted the railroad project had been removed. But more significant was the fact that the extension of slavery had become a big issue before the nation. Other problems faded away before its onslaught, both in Congress and in the

207. Reports of Committees, 31st Congress, 1st Session, No.140
 New York Herald, Tues. June 12, 1849.

208. Hunt's Magazine, Vol. 17, p. 390.

209. Ibid: p. 390

210. Ibid: p. 390

minds of the people. A railway was a thing of the future, while slavery was a pulsating reality requiring immediate consideration. Before the Civil War was over the importance of communication and transportation had been forced upon the nation largely as the outcome of the Homestead Act of 1862, and the Union Pacific Company was chartered by Congress in that year.

Asa Whitney, however, in spite of his failure to realize his dream, deserves a place among the men who have rendered a great service to our nation. He spent eleven years in collect-²¹¹ing information both in Asia and the United States. This information was very valuable to the government. Whether he originated the idea of the Pacific railway or not is a matter of small consequence, but he was the first to have called the public's²¹² attention to its significance and to have worked out a plan. It has well been said that "Not only to him is due the honor of first suggesting the project but he is also entitled to the merit of being the chief agency for calling public attention to it, and of collecting and laying before the country a vast amount²¹³ of information relating to it. In Congress the same appreciation of his work was expressed." We are indebted to him for the origination of the project, for the maturing of the first plan, for the large amount of practical information he has brought to bear upon the subject, and for the awakening of public attention²¹⁴ to its importance."

211. Reports of Committees, 31st Congress, 1st Session No. 140
p. 1

212. Million, J. W., "State Aid to Railways in Missouri" p. 55

213. Hunt's Magazine Vol. 21 - p. 76

214. Committee Reports 31st Congress - 1st Session No. 140 p.1

There were many who have felt that Asa Whitney was simply a mighty speculator, who hoped to reap an immense fortune at the expense of the nation. He realized this criticism himself. "Now because I am an individual and not in the pay of the people and propose to do all this it is feared there may be something wrong, as it can hardly be imagined that any individual would without present compensation devote his whole life to a work requiring his whole life for its successful accomplishment, solely with a view to benefit his country and his fellow man. I am willing to have my acts scanned and judged by my countrymen, but as I am willing and do propose to place myself under the entire control of the people and of Congress, I do feel that while all is in the power of Congress to restrict me to what I propose -- that I ought not to be doubted, when I say that what I have done, and what I propose to do, is not for the gain of wealth or power or influence but for the good which I am persuaded it must produce to our whole country."

"All who are acquainted with the history of mankind know full well that all great enterprises which have resulted in the greatest good to man have been brought about by perseverance, toll and I may say, suffering of individual man without mercenary aim or end, and I expect none other. It is an individual man who has labored, suffered and died for his fellow man".

He certainly shamed himself to be a most unselfish man in giving his entire fortune and the best years of his life for the advancement of a scheme from which he expected no gain. He worked for the welfare of the public when his fortune could have been used after the fashion of most rich men of his day, either

for idle luxury or the amassing of greater personal fortune. Time and again he emphasized his utter indifference to the profit which might have been his. In one of his books he defied all such accusations, "And if it is feared that the remuneration may be disproportioned to the extent and importance of the work then I am ready to relinquish any claim I may have for a compensation and let the people give me anything or nothing as they please. If they will allow me to be their instrument to accomplish this great work it is enough. I ask no more".²¹⁷ And he was not the only one to vouch for his sincerity and nobleness of purpose. "It is too low and groveling a thought to suppose that pecuniary profit should be the only motive of the projector of such an enterprise. It is due to the man who could conceive and mature such a plan, and it is no more than generous to give him some credit for the loftier and purer aspiration of being a public benefactor, and of realizing the enduring fame of having achieved so great a work. Certainly a man must live by his calling, but the highest merit of existence here is to have lived for others, and the best reward for that merit, to be remembered for the good one has done".²¹⁸

A present day authority on railroad transportation further has defended his honesty of purpose. The very safeguards he set for his own interests show that he was no cracked-brained enthusiast, even if he may have been too optimistic; he won many converts which is a tribute to his sincerity and earnest-

216. Ibid: p. 41

217. Ibid: p. 34.

218. Committee Reports 31st Congress 1st Session Report 140 p 13

ness; Mr. Carver his rival respected him and commended his zeal, and his strong nationalism as he rose above sectional prejudice. In concluding, he states, "That he sought the glory of the enterprise there is no doubt; that is fitting for a great man", so we conclude with him that "when it comes to a critical estimate of Whitney's motives, our conclusion
219
must be a favorable one".

219. Haney, L. H., "Congressional History of Railroads to 1850", p. 419.



THE PACIFIC ROUTE PROPOSED BY ASA WHITNEY

AFTER A MAP IN THE COMMITTEE REPORTS—31ST CONGRESS—1ST SESSION—REPORT NO. 140.

Appendix No. 2.

Imports and exports into and from Europe and America from all Asia.

Committee Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session, No. 140,
Appendix 2, p. 31

Great Britain	: \$85,527,120:	\$59,187,185:
France	: 16,300,295:	8,238,850:
Antwerp-No statistics, but 7 ships :	:	:
must have averaged	: 700,000:	500,000:
Hamburg, Average more than for 5 :	:	:
ships.	: 500,000:	400,000:
Bremen, Average more than for 6 :	:	:
ships.	: 600,000:	400,000:
The Netherlands	: 23,527,390:	4,702,130:
United States	: 11,438,403:	5,443,828:
United States from Whale Fisheries :	:	:
157,700 barrels of Sperm oil @	:	:
88 = 4,374,144	: :	:
272,809 barrels of whale oil @	:	:
33½ = 2,864,493	: :	:
3,195,054 lbs of whale bone @	:	:
33½ = 1,065,018	: 8,225,717	:
	: 146,818,925:	78,871,993:
Add Russian Trade Overland	: 12,048,055:	7,581,295:
Total trade-----	: 158,866,980:	86,453,288:

Appendix No. 3.

Comparative distances from Europe to the Orient as given by Whitney.

(Committee Reports, 31st Congress, 1st Session, No. 190, Appendix)

<u>To Valparaiso</u>	<u>Dist. in miles</u>
From Plymouth to Ralyo, via canal	<u>5,578</u>
Thence to Valparaiso	<u>3,400</u>
	8,978
To Valparaiso around Cape Horn	<u>9,400</u>
Difference in favor of canal	<u>422</u>
From Sydney to England, via proposed Canal	14,848
From Sydney to Eng., via of Cape Horn	<u>13,843</u>
Against a Canal	1,000
From Canton to England via Canal	<u>15,558</u>
From Canton to England via Cape of Good	<u>14,940</u>
Hope.	
Against a canal	2,228

Appendix No. 4

Resolution of the City of Philadelphia:

"Whereas the completion of a railroad from Lake Michigan to the Pacific would secure the carrying of the greater portion of the commerce of the world to American enterprise, and open it open to it the markets of Japan and the vast empire of China,, of all India and of all the islands of the Pacific and Indian Oceans together with those of the Western Coast of Mexico and South America;

"And whereas, we have in our public lands a fund sufficient for and appropriate to the construction of so great and beneficent a work; and the proposition of Asa Whitney, Esq., of New York, to construct a railroad from Lake Michigan to the Pacific for the grant of a strip of land sixty miles wide, offers a feasible and cheap, if not the only, plan for the early completion of an avenue from ocean to ocean; therefore,

"Resolved, That we cordially approve of the project of Asa Whitney, esq., for the construction of a railroad to the Pacific, and respectfully petition Congress to grant or set apart, before the close of the present session, the lands
prayed for by Mr. Whitney for this purpose."¹

1. As quoted by Smalley, E. V., "History of the Northern Pacific", p. 62.

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