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Philadelphia. Councils. Joint Committee on Water  
Supply.

Report of the....

Philadelphia, Poulson, 1798. 12 pp.

AAS copy.

R E P O R T

OF THE

JOINT COMMITTEE

OF THE

Select and Common Councils,

ON THE

SUBJECT OF BRINGING

Water to the City.

*Philadelphia*



*Philadelphia:*

PRINTED BY ZACHARIAH POULSON, JUNIOR,

NUMBER EIGHTY, CHESNUT-STREET.

*The joint Committee of the Select and Common Councils,  
appointed on the second of November last, beg leave  
to submit the following Report—*

**T**HAT among the various methods which have been suggested, for introducing a sufficient quantity of wholesome water into the city, none have appeared to your committee so well calculated to ensure the attainment of this desirable object, as the completion of the canal projected to unite the rivers Delaware and Schuylkill. Impressed with this belief, and convinced that the prosecution of this object, would also contribute to aid the great and important undertaking of inland navigation, your committee solicited a conference with the Managers of that canal company, and after a free communication of sentiment, requested from them information as to the time when they expected to be able to supply the city with a sufficient quantity of water, and also as to the annual sum for which they would be willing to contract for the perpetual use of the same. This conference produced the representation from the President, Managers and Company, hereto annexed, under date of the nineteenth of December last. After mature consideration of the plan contained in this representation, your committee, on the twenty-eighth of December, submitted to them two queries, which were intended to obtain from the stockholders of the canal, in the first place, a particular mention of the security to be given by them in case a loan for fifty thousand pounds was made by the corporation, and in the second place, to produce a determinate conclusion upon a mode which had been suggested of purchasing from them a quantity of wholesome water adequate at all times to the purposes of watering and cleansing the streets, extinguishing

extinguishing of fires, and supplying pipes, conduits, &c. for the use of the citizens, as well as their right of distributing the water throughout the city, and the emoluments annexed thereto, as they arise out of the act incorporating the canal company. To these queries the stockholders replied by their resolutions of the fifth instant, stating the security for the loan to be a pledge of such part of the property of the company as might be deemed sufficient, and making a proposition of allowing the city corporation the privilege of taking shares in payment, at the original cost and interest at any time within three years. With respect to alienating their right of distributing the water throughout the city, together with the emoluments arising therefrom, they declined to accede to the terms offered. Another conference was had between your committee, and one on the part of the canal company, when it was agreed, that the Managers should propose, and endeavour to obtain, the consent of the stockholders to sell and deliver for fifty thousand pounds payable in eight quarterly instalments, one half of the water of the canal, *viz.* as much as will pass out of their proposed grand reservoir through a water way of twelve and an half feet in width, by three and an half feet in depth, to be constructed at the expense of the city corporation, for the purpose of watering the city, &c. according to the fourth section of the act incorporating the stockholders. In the second place it was agreed, that the Managers should also propose to the stockholders to convey three-fourths or the whole of the stock to the corporation, upon receiving payment of the money advanced upon it, with interest from the respective times of payment, from which all the forfeited shares amounting to about seven hundred were to be deducted. These two propositions were rejected at a meeting of the stockholders on the nineteenth instant, and in lieu of the last, a proposition is now made to sell one half of the unforfeited shares, say six hundred and fifty, and such further number as the Managers can procure at the original sum paid and interest upon such credit as may be mutually agreed on. In case of purchase, the stockholders offer to solicit the Legislature to pass a supplementary law authorizing the city corporation to appoint Managers in

proportion

proportion to the stock they may hold. Here the business rests at present, and your committee have thought it their duty to report a detail of it, in order that Council may take such decision upon this important subject as may be judged proper.

It will perhaps be expected, that your committee should express some opinion, upon the proposition now made by the stockholders of the Delaware and Schuylkill canal navigation, and that they should also recommend such measures as appear to them, best calculated to secure the attainment of the object in view. For this purpose the following observations are added.

*First,* That the supply of a sufficient quantity of wholesome water, as expressed in the petitions of a numerous and respectable body of our fellow citizens, is now in the public opinion, worthy the earliest attention of the corporation, and that there is no object to which the funds of the city could be more acceptably appropriated, inasmuch as such a supply of water is now thought essential to the health of the community. and one of the means most effectual to prevent or mitigate the return of the late contagious sickness.

*Secondly,* That after attentively considering various schemes of introducing such a supply of water into the city, no one has appeared so eligible as the completion of the Delaware and Schuylkill canal. Another inducement to promote this great and laudable undertaking forces itself on our recollection, *viz.* "That it forms a capital link in the great chain of inland navigation, between our metropolis and the Ohio and western lakes." From a variety of unforeseen causes, this work is now suspended, the stockholders appear to be discouraged, and without aid, it is thought, they cannot complete it. In addition therefore to contributing to the health of the community, we should encrease the prosperity of the city. by taking effectual measures for accomplishing this undertaking.

In what manner these objects can be best effected, and what are the means within the power of the city corporation to effect them, now require consideration. Here your committee think fit to remark, that in their opinion it can  
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be best accomplished by the city becoming the proprietors, if possible, of the whole of the stock of the canal company, and obtaining a transfer of all the privileges and emoluments contemplated in the act incorporating the stockholders. With respect to the proposition of a purchase of half the stock only, it appears to us inadmissible; many difficulties and objections present themselves. Your committee will only mention the following. A perfect harmony amongst Managers having different interests to watch over, could not be expected; jealousies would hereafter arise, and the object of watering the city might be defeated, or at least procrastinated, a number of years. Besides, the premium of ten per cent. which must according to their act of incorporation be annually paid upon the money expended in watering the city, exclusive of the general expenses of the canal, would not, in case of the city becoming proprietors to the amount of half the stock, be relinquished; and is it not the duty of the corporation to extinguish, when in their power, this premium which, in the opinion of some of the stockholders, will alone double the value of their stock, and in a few years, operate as a direct tax upon our fellow citizens equal, if not superior in amount, to what is now paid by them for all the purposes of the city?

The magnitude of the undertaking, in case the city should purchase the whole of the stock of the canal, may be thought beyond its resources, but there is sufficient ground to believe, that as the subject of watering the city, is now under the consideration of a committee of the Legislature of the state, and as a disposition to aid the city in an attempt to effect this object has been expressed by many members of the Legislature, that the duties upon sales at auction, which are exclusively raised upon the citizens, and now pass into the treasury of the state, would be transferred to the corporation for this purpose. If this grant could be obtained, your committee are induced to believe, that a sufficient loan may be raised upon it to complete the work. The duties which have produced of late about sixteen thousand dollars per annum, with the additional sum of ten thousand dollars per annum from the taxes, would form a sinking fund capable of repaying the loan in a short period. To this  
fund

fund the toll of the canal after its completion should likewise be added, and upon a calculation in which it is stated at the moderate sum of twenty thousand dollars per annum, the sinking fund would extinguish the debt in the short space of eighteen years, even supposing the loan necessary should amount to three hundred and fifty thousand dollars. At this period the city would, besides accomplishing one of the greatest and most important public works in which she can be employed, have the disposal of a revenue increasing with the population of the state and which might then come in diminution of the annual taxes, as well as be appropriated to many objects of utility and ornament.

Upon the whole, your committee are of opinion, that an application should be made to the Legislature for a grant of the duties upon sales at auction, and in case this is obtained, a purchase of the whole of the stock of the canal should be effected, and an immediate attempt made to carry on the work by small and judicious contracts, under the superintendance of an engineer of approved talents and integrity.

Your committee, therefore, submit the following resolutions, *viz.*

*First,* That a joint committee be appointed to draft a memorial to the Senate and House of Representatives of the state, praying them to grant to the Mayor, Aldermen and Citizens, the duties upon sales at auction, in order to enable the corporation to accomplish the great and important object of supplying the city with a sufficient quantity of wholesome water.

*Second,* That in case the grant is obtained, this corporation will endeavour to purchase on such terms as may be agreed upon, the whole of the stock of the Delaware and Schuylkill canal navigation, and undertake the completion of the same.

Philadelphia, }  
January 31<sup>st</sup>. 1798. }

SAM<sup>L</sup>. M. FOX.  
JAMES READ.  
JOHN BLEAKLEY.  
THO<sup>S</sup>. PARKER.



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*The President, Managers and Company of the Delaware and Schuylkill Canal Navigation,*

*To the Select and Common Councils of the City of Philadelphia.*

*Gentlemen,*

**T**HE canal, under our direction, as expressed in the act of incorporation, is intended to answer a double purpose, *viz.*

*First,* As forming a capital link in the great chain of inland navigation between our metropolis, and the Ohio and western lakes; and

*Secondly,* As furnishing the best and most practicable means of introducing an abundant supply of wholesome water into all parts of our city and its suburbs. This last object is now considered to be of such immense consequence to the health and convenience of our citizens in their families, as well as to the preventing and subduing the ravages of fire; that it becomes our duty, by every means in our power, to meet the wishes of our fellow citizens, and to co-operate with them, in the most effectual plans and measures for the more speedy accomplishment of this most important part of the work committed to our care.

A committee on our part, having been favoured with a conference by committees appointed on your part, they requested some written information and statements, as far as in our power, concerning

*First,* The time in which the *canal* could be so far completed as that the body of its waters might be brought into  
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the proposed grand *reservoir*, in Broad-street continued. a *mile* to the northward of Calowhill-street, to as to be ready for distribution throughout the streets and houses of the city.

*Secondly*, The aid that may, on the best calculation, be necessary in addition to the stock of the Company, *viz.* one hundred and fifty thousand pounds already subscribed, supposing the delinquent payments to be made good, in the mode proposed and authorized by law.

*Thirdly*, The terms on which the necessary aid may be derived. On these heads we have consulted the stockholders, and the following are the general results of the best judgment which the time allowed for deliberation.

*First*, As to the probable length of time, which may be requisite to bring the body of water into the grand reservoir (as mentioned above) we think it may be accomplished within two years from April 1793, if a sufficient command or supply of funds can be obtained, and the work carried on by small and well regulated *contracts*, (from a quarter to half a mile or more each) and as the work lies chiefly in the vicinity of the city, employment will thereby be found for numbers of poor labourers, who at some seasons of the year cannot subsist themselves, without the public aid, and a heavy operation of the poor laws, for their support.

The water thus brought into the grand reservoir, may, at no great expense by a canal cut from north to south, along Broad-street, the whole breadth of the city, and bridged over at the crossing of each street, be made to discharge about half a million of cubic feet into the different streets, in one hour—which taking only ten streets at a time, would send fifty thousand cubic feet into a single street or its gutters in that time—which, by an easy calculation (the descent or fall of the street being known) will appear not only far more than sufficient to fill the gutters, but to overflow and wash the streets, as well as to extinguish fires by night or by day; and thus the first great object of cleansing the streets and subduing the rage of fire might be accomplished, in a few months and with a very inconsiderable expense. The distribution of the water in pipes and conduits and fountains, &c. will follow of course, and at ten per cent. clear profit

on the work will amply promote the undertaking—For if fifty thousand pounds as calculated were to be expended this way according to the calculation, the clear income would be five thousand pounds, and if two thousand five hundred families or houses only on an average, were to be supplied at 5 $\frac{1}{2}$  dollars per house or family it would produce five thousand pounds, amount of the tax or toll—After this the progress in laying down the pipes, &c. need only keep pace with the demand for water, and the contracts which may be made for that purpose, while, in the mean time the other part of the design for watering and cleansing the streets, and the prevention or subjugation of fire, will be in full operation. These calculations and sketches are hastily drawn out, but may easily be examined and reduced to greater accuracy.

*Secondly,* The aid that may be necessary to complete the work, in addition to the stock of the company.

In a former estimate, made three years ago, the company were of opinion that one hundred and fifty thousand pounds the amount of their stock subscribed, if it could have been duly collected, would be sufficient for completing the work, so far as regarded the navigation part of the scheme, and that the probable toll, at the rate allowed by law, would produce upwards of *forty-three* per cent.—This, therefore, yields a sure presumption, that the twenty-five per cent. dividend allowed by law, may be raised on the works in general.

But there have been considerable delinquencies in payments, from many unforeseen causes, since that time, and the company rather than suffer the work to be abated, have been obliged to anticipate their funds at considerable disadvantage to the capital, as well as at a very advanced price in carrying on the work, whether by contract or by day's labour—Nevertheless, if the additional sum of fifty thousand pounds, which was then estimated as wanting to complete the watering of the city, on which a further dividend of ten per cent. is allowed by law, could be effectually provided, the delinquent stockholders would pay up their shares with alacrity, and the forfeited shares might be advantageously sold according to law.

*Thirdly,*

*Thirdly,* We are now to consider the mode of obtaining this additional sum of fifty thousand pounds, and from whom, and on what terms, it is to be obtained.

The most simple and practicable method appears to be, to raise the fifty thousand pounds, by an increase of new shares, or by selling the forfeited shares at par, the company availing themselves of the penalties as far as they will go, according to law, for raising the fifty thousand pounds and supplying the deficiency by an increase of shares.

In this manner the city corporation might, to the amount of fifty thousand pounds, become shareholders, and have the appointment of a number of managers, in the ratio of fifty thousand pounds to one hundred and fifty thousand pounds or of four appointed by the city and twelve by the other stockholders; and these sixteen Managers to choose their own President and other officers, by an additional clause to be obtained to their charter. Thus the city corporation, as stockholders would be on a footing of perfect equality, with the original subscribers, and have a share in all the dividends, as well of the twenty-five per cent. on the navigation (if it should ever amount to that) as of the ten per cent. on the capital to be laid out in watering the city.

And as the corporation have manifested an earnest and patriotic desire to aid and forward this great undertaking, for the health and ornament, as well as the great emolument of the metropolis, it cannot be doubted but that a public spirited Legislature, agreeably to the recommendations from the Chief Magistrate, now before them, will likewise cheerfully patronize, and aid the design by grants, loan or otherwise, especially as it must be apparent to both bodies, that independent of public spirit, were they capable to overlook it, the money advanced in this way might be made productive of at least fourfold the interest, that could be expected in the common way of other stock.

If this mode should be approved of, and if any thing farther should be necessary to recommend it, we are persuaded the good citizens of Philadelphia and its suburbs, will cordially join in petitions and addresses to both bodies, on a business so interesting to them and their posterity.

Another

Another mode has been suggested, on the part of the committees of the Select and Common Councils, *viz.* that the corporation of the city might be inclined to take upon themselves, the conducting of the water from the grand *reservoir*, and distributing it through the city at their own expense, for all the purposes aforesaid at such toll, not exceeding ten per cent. as they might think reasonable; and the question has been propounded, for what sum the canal company would supply them with a sufficient supply of water for that purpose, exclusive of what will supply the locks, the wet docks, and other purposes of navigation contemplated in the law.

On this subject the law itself, will enable the corporation to make their own calculations, it being therein *provided* “ That the company shall not be entitled to any greater price for water to supply the city and the neighbourhood thereof, than will create the annual profit of ten per cent. on the capital that may and shall be expended for that particular purpose, *exclusive of the general expense of the canal.*”

The stockholders have come to no determinate conclusion on this head; although it cannot be doubted but that it might be their interest according to the tenor of the law to alienate a proportion of the water at the cost of bringing it to the grand reservoir.

But certainly the interest of the city will lead the Select and Common Councils to consider the immense difference between this mode of purchasing the water, and the advance of only fifty thousand pounds, which will probably complete the work in all its parts, and entitle them to their share of twenty-five per cent. on the expense of the canal and its navigation, besides ten per cent. on the expense of distributing the water throughout the city, in common with the other stockholders, and in proportion to their capital.

All which is respectfully submitted by the canal company with all possible candor on their part, with a view to public good, and no partial attachment to their own interest. The present moment appears favorable, and it is requested that no time may be lost in bringing the business to some conclusion.

*Agreed upon at a meeting of the Stockholders, December 19th. 1797.*

WILLIAM SMITH, *Chairman.*