

PROCEEDINGS

Of the Road Convention, held in Woodstock, Shenandoah county, Va., 11th and 12th Nov. 1833.

At a meeting of delegates, appointed by the counties of Frederick, Rockingham and Shenandoah, convened in Woodstock on Monday, Nov. 11th, 1833, to take into consideration the propriety of constructing a McAdamsized road from Winchester to Harrisonburg, — present, Richard W. Barton, James H. Carson, Giles Cook, Nathan Parkins, David W. Barton, John Heiskell and Samuel Brown, of Frederick, (the two latter gentlemen being added to the Frederick delegation by the convention); Robert Gray and George H. Chrisman, of Rockingham; P. Williams, jr., David Crawford, Dr. Joseph Irwin, Dr. Wm. W. Magruder, Samuel Ott, Joseph H. Smuels, Joel Ferrybacker, James S. Arthur and George Hottel, of Shenandoah.

The convention was organized by calling Col. JAMES M. H. BEALE to the chair, and appointing J. H. DARLINGTON secretary.

On motion of RICHARD W. BARTON, the following resolution was, after considerable discussion, unanimously adopted:

1. Resolved, That it is expedient to petition the general assembly of Virginia, to incorporate a joint stock company, with a capital of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, to construct a McAdamsized road from Winchester to Harrisonburg.

The following resolutions were then several y read and adopted:

2. Resolved, That a committee of gentlemen be appointed by the chair, whose duty it shall be to draft a memorial, in pursuance of the foregoing resolution. And Robert Gray, Geo. H. Chrisman, Richard W. Barton, David W. Barton, and P. Williams, jr., were appointed a committee accordingly.

3. Resolved, on the opinion of this meeting, That the contemplated road should be so located as to pass by Union Mills, and through Kern's town, Newtown, Middle-town, Strasburg, Woodstock, Mount Jackson and Newmarket, unless it shall be found upon survey to be extremely inconvenient and much more expensive so to locate it.

4. Resolved, on the opinion of this meeting, That the contemplated McAdamsized road should be constructed from Winchester to Harrisonburg; and that we will use our efforts to have sufficient stock taken for that purpose. But if the stock subscribed should not be sufficient to construct the road to Harrisonburg, but a sufficient sum to construct it to Woodstock can be obtained, then, in such event, the road ought forthwith to be constructed to Woodstock; and that end, the charter of the company ought to provide that there shall be two columns in the books opened for the purpose of obtaining stock—one, expressing the amount subscribed to construct the road from Winchester to Harrisonburg; the other, the amount subscribed to construct it from Winchester to Woodstock; and if the sum of 250,000 dollars should not be subscribed to extend the road to Harrisonburg, but a sufficient sum to construct it to Woodstock, the subscribers or requires the extension of the road higher up the valley than Woodstock shall be null and void, and the company shall have power to construct it to Woodstock; in such event, those only to be bound as subscribers who shall have subscribed to the road from Winchester to Woodstock.— Provided, however, That if, within two years from the completion of the road to Woodstock, a company shall be incorporated to continue the road from Woodstock to Harrisonburg, and stock sufficient shall be subscribed to construct it,—that the stockholders to such road from Woodstock to Harrisonburg shall, with the stockholders of the road from Winchester to Woodstock, constitute one company in the same manner as if the charter originally required the extension of the road from Winchester to Harrisonburg, and the stock had been so subscribed.

5. Resolved, That a committee be appointed to prepare an address to the citizens of Frederick, Shenandoah, and Rockingham, urging concert and union of action to construct the proposed McAdams-

ized road, and from time to time to lay before them such facts and information as they may think proper. Whereupon George H. Chrisman, Robert Gray, P. Williams, jr., Joel Ferrybacker, and David W. Barton were appointed by the chair to constitute said committee.

6. Resolved, That a committee be appointed to draft a preamble to accompany the resolution adopted by this meeting.— And the above named gentlemen were also appointed to perform that duty.

And the convention adjourned, to meet again to-morrow morning at 9 o'clock.

Tuesday, Nov. 12, 1833.

The convention met, legally to adjournment.

RICHARD W. BARTON, on the part of the committee appointed for that purpose, presented the memorial to be laid before the general assembly; which was read, and, on motion, ordered to be signed by the chairman and secretary, on behalf of the convention. And it was further

Resolved, That the delegates elect from the counties of Frederick, Shenandoah and Rockingham, be particularly charged with presenting and advocating the said petition before the next general assembly of Virginia.

DAVID W. BARTON, on the part of the committee appointed to draft a preamble to accompany the resolutions adopted by the convention, presented the following, which was read, and, after some discussion, unanimously adopted:

PREAMBLE.

The members of this meeting, in common with those whose interests they are deemed to represent, are thoroughly convinced of the importance of conducting through this valley some public improvement, by which its social and commercial intercourse may be promoted, and the products of its soil conveyed to some convenient market. The lapse of time, and the progress of improvement, have produced a new and highly interesting relation between the two extremes of this great valley.— Within a short period, a graded road has been finished, or is now in the progress of construction, between the town of Harrisonburg, in the county of Rockingham, and the mouth of Gandyotte, in the Ohio river. Reaching this great western avenue of commerce and of travelling at a point to which it is navigable at all seasons—travelling the rich valley of the Kenhawa—passing the numerous medicinal springs of Greenbrier and Bath, those crowded resorts of wealth and fashion—and surmounting the Alleghany with safe and easy inclinations, this road invites, and doubtless will, in the mean time, a railway from the south-west. In the mean time, a railway from the sea-board has invaded the northern extremity of the valley, and from Winchester is now extending to us a friendly hand, inviting us to good fellowship and friendly intercourse. A link of seventy miles is all that is wanting to complete this valuable and interesting chain of intercommunication. That this deficiency shall be in some way supplied,—this connecting link by some means inserted, has, we sincerely trust, been resolved by those at whose bidding we have assembled to consider and discuss the mode of effecting so desirable an object. In our deliberations, we have endeavored to meet this question in the candid and liberal spirit which it becomes those to cherish who are impelled by a common interest and who look to a common result. The subject has been fully and freely canvassed—much information has been communicated to the meeting—individual views and opinions compared and collated,—light elicited by discussion, and our honest efforts employed to form a sound and enlightened judgment.

The spirit of the age would seem to recommend a rail-way as the most speedy and efficient mode of inland communication; and if the resources of this community, or any means which we might reasonably hope

to command, were in any degree adequate to the accomplishment of so gigantic an enterprise, the construction of a rail road from Winchester to Harrisonburg would have found some advocates in this convention.— But it is the part of prudent men to pause at the threshold of an undertaking like this, and deliberately to count the cost. The comparative expense of a rail road and a McAdamsized road between the designated points, has been fairly represented to this meeting, and is, in their opinion, perfectly and irreversibly decisive of the question.— The cost of a rail-road, of the cheapest materials and most economical construction, is estimated low at \$15,000 per mile. The Winchester and Potomac rail-road, with a single track, upon which comparatively but little rocky excavation has been encountered, and whose location is, in all respects, obviously more favourable than any which could be traced over the undulating surface of the upper country—will cost, even if the most sanguine hopes of its friends are realized, not less than \$1000 per mile. That a similar road could not be extended up the valley, either along the bluffs of the North Shenandoah, or in the interior valley west of the range of villages, (and these are the only sites deemed practicable,) without an additional expenditure of \$5000 per mile, will not be questioned by any intelligent observer who will take the pains to examine the topography of the country referred to.

The distance from Winchester to Harrisonburg by the ordinary road is 70 miles. If a rail road were located between the same points, pursuing its devious course in search of a level along the meanders of the Shenandoah, or the more capricious and irregular valley of the interior, this distance would, in all human probability, be increased to 85 miles. Assuming that, as the necessary length of the rail-way, and applying to it the moderate estimate of \$15,000 per mile, it presents the alarming aggregate of one million two hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars for that species of improvement. On the other hand, it may be

safely assumed that a McAdamsized road between the same towns may be constructed, without any increase and with a probable saving of distance, at an average cost of \$3,500 per mile. The waving outline of the intermediate country, while it repels that fastidious improvement which can submit to nothing but an absolute horizontal, invites to its bosom that more accommodating structure, which, disregarding trivial obstacles, adapts itself to any ordinary irregularity of surface. While some few of the more abrupt hills must be partially reduced, and the deeper valleys partially filled up, the McAdamsized road can, in the main, be made to conform to the existing location of the great valley road. And here it may not be amiss to remark that, if these two kinds of improvement were equally within the compass of our means, it would be worthy of long and serious consideration, whether it would be wise to abandon the present line of travel and of trade, and sacrifice its villages and shops and taverns, and other established interests, to the spirit of a reckless and wanton innovation.

This meeting is fully impressed with the value of rail-road improvement, and must not be understood as suggesting one word of argument or objection against that admirable invention of modern enterprise and ingenuity. It is their candid opinion however, that the improvement has been often perverted from its legitimate and proper use, and applied to objects unimportant when compared with the immense expenditure incident to such works. And they are perfectly satisfied that the construction of a rail-way, at a cost of \$15,000 per mile through a country like the valley between Winchester and Harrisonburg, which the populous is not over-crowded, and though fertile has no inordinate redundancy of marketable products, would be a wasteful and injudicious expenditure of money.

But without enlarging further on these topics, it is deemed abundantly sufficient to decide the question, if question it be, between these several modes of improvement, that in relation to the one, our means are utterly and hopelessly insufficient, and in

relation to the other, it comes within the available resources of our people.

Impressed with the correctness and weight of these suggestions, this convention have resolved unanimously, That it is expedient to petition the general assembly of Virginia to incorporate a joint stock company, with a capital of 250,000 dollars, to construct a McAdamsized road from Winchester to Harrisonburg.

Resolved, That the editors of the respective papers printed in Winchester, Woodstock and Harrisonburg, be requested to publish the proceedings of this meeting.

Resolved, That the thanks of this convention be tendered to the chairman for the dignity and impartiality with which he has presided over its deliberations; and also to the secretary for his services on the occasion.

JAS. M. H. BEALE, Chm'n.
J. H. DARLINGTON, Sec'y.

TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA.

The memorial of a convention of delegates on behalf of the citizens of Frederick, Shenandoah and Rockingham counties,

Respectfully requests the general assembly of Virginia, at its next session, to pass a law, incorporating a company to construct a McAdamsized road from Winchester to Harrisonburg, conforming to the resolutions adopted by this convention, a copy of which is herewith transmitted; and that the state will take two fifths of the stock necessary to construct said road.

It may perhaps be proper that your petitioners should point out the necessity and advantage of such a road.

The valley between Winchester and Harrisonburg is fertile. Two of its principal staple articles are flour and iron. The distance from market is very great, and our only means of transportation are, the slow and expensive mode of waggons, and the precarious and unsafe navigation down the Shenandoah river, when the waters are swollen—and this imperfect navigation is only a downward one, as the boats cannot be brought back without great labor and expense.

The roads through the valley are proverbially bad, and frequently impassable by loaded waggons; in summer and fall the river ordinarily too shallow to boat, in winter frozen up; so that often, when produce commands a high price, we cannot get a barrel of flour to market and the value of our iron is materially lessened by the delay and expense of transportation.

The necessity of some improvement in the means of transportation is therefore manifest.

It believed that the stock will be profitable. The rail road from Winchester to Harpers-Ferry will undoubtedly be constructed; and if we have a good road which can be travelled at all seasons, our produce will be taken to Winchester, from thence taken on the rail road to Harpers-Ferry, whence we can send it to Baltimore by the rail road, or to the District by the canal, as may be most beneficial. The travelling itself will be an object of great importance. There will soon be completed a graded road from Gandyotte, the head of steam boat navigation at low water on the Ohio river, to Harrisonburg; a state road extending from Gandyotte to Callahan's near Covington; a turnpike from Callahan's to the foot of the Warm Spring Mountain, nearly completed; and another turnpike now being made, from the foot of the Warm Spring mountain to Harrisonburg; so that when the Winchester rail road, and the proposed road from Winchester to Harrisonburg shall be completed, there will be a continued chain of communication from Gandyotte to Harpers-Ferry.

Your petitioners make this request with the more confidence, as the state has not contributed any thing in internal improvements in the construction of any public work between Winchester and Harrisonburg. And your petitioners will ever pray, &c.

JAS. M. H. BEALE, Chm'n.
J. H. DARLINGTON, Sec'y.

Pr. Road Convention
at Woodstock

Dec. 4th 1833

ref'd to ~~Records~~
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