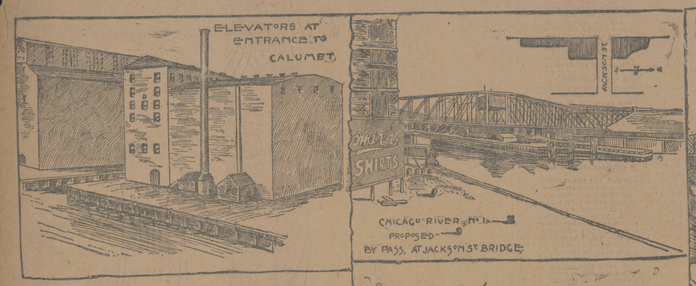
Plan to Connect the Chicago and the Calumet Rivers. ••• CHICAGO'S COMMERCE AND THE PRO



ALL Gaul was divided into three parts, and at the present time all Chicago is divided into an equal number of parts, not, however, in sentiment of the ancient nation, nor because of any particular advantage in the tripartite division, but because it is absolutely impossible for the citizens to find a fourth quibble as a pretext for division and dissension.

All Chicago is torn up into three camps, each of which is sure that it has the only practicable way of solving the drainage canal and river improvement question. Each party is busily traducing the other and the few who have recently entered the controversy appear to realize that all this quibbling and acrimonious dissension is likely to result in inextricable injury to the commerce of the city and so thoroughly to disgust the Congress of the United States as to defeat action by that body for half a generation.

Here we have at the present moment, on the eve of a visit by the subcommittee of the House of Representatives to inquire into the needs of the waterways of the city, three antagonistic parties of Chicagoans, each as bitterly opposed to the proposals of its opponents as though they were not all residents of the same great metropolis and all equally interested in the weal or woe of the city.

In spite of the fact that $25,000,000 has already been spent upon the Drainage Canal and the improvement of the Chicago River, and that the end is in sight and the enjoyment of the priceless boons of pure water and commercial supremacy are certain within a twelvemonth, certain persons interested in marsh lands and shipping facilities in the southern district of the city are willing to let all go for naught in order that their own pet theories may be tried and their personal interests furthered. They are shouting for deep water in the Calumet and a ship-canal to the Mississippi, jeering at the idea of widening, deepening, and straightening the Chicago River, and inviting Chicago to pull up her tent stakes and move southward into the region about Stony Island.

Then come the residents of the North Side and of the middle districts, who hoot at the Calumet and its possibilities and declare that that section deserves no recognition for twenty years at least. These individuals seem to be the entire monopoly because they interests are identical with those of the city at large.

And chiefly, across the inspired idiot who proposes to expend a hundred million dollars in doing something that would be of no use whatever if it could be done—the digging of a 300-foot canal through two miles of rock and earth along Sixteenth street.

The latter obstructionists are so ridiculous in their contentions, and their proposals are so manifestly impossible or rational consideration, that they might be dismissed with a smile were it not for the fact that they are on the right from sheer love of mischief, with the sole idea of defeating any sort of action that will aid the navigation of the waterways that the Almighty has placed here.

This division of opinion, aired in the columns of the newspapers and in public speech, will certainly create the impression that Chicago does not know what it wants, and, as a consequence, Congress, not unwilling to find an excuse for withholding the money that the work will entail, will throw up its hands and leave us to fight out among ourselves the quarrel that interests none save ourselves.

What the Situation Is.

Here is a plain statement of the situation. Chicago is the only city of the first class in the world that has at her doors an inexhaustible supply of pure water. It is the only city that requires no extensive reservoirs. This vast store of pure water is also a great source of the wondrous extent and prosperity of this city, for it is the broad road to commerce that brought the bulk of New York and surpasses that of all other cities on the continent.

That wondrous growth in time threatened the purity of the water supply, and necessitated the construction of engineering works by which the sewage of the city is carried, it might not flow into the lake and result in contamination.

The result was the almost completed Drainage Canal, which in more than a dozen of its features, as it opens the way to the penetration of the interior of the State by water, is a work of deep draft.

This work, authorized by the Legislature in 1887, has already cost, as before stated, in the neighborhood of $25,000,000. So long as the building of the canal for a shipway alone was only vaguely talked of, little opposition was met with; but as soon as the widening and deepening of the Chicago River, with a view to permitting vessels of twenty-foot draft to navigate the river, entered into the serious problem, opposition in the guise of counter demands for improvement of the Calumet and the construction of the chimerical and useless Sixteenth street canal found its birth.

It would seem the part of wisdom to get together and agree upon plans that will harmonize the interests of all, so far as they can be harmonized, and not waste time and labor in shoulder for the accomplishment of the work. Such, unfortunately, is not the disposition to reset disastrously.

When the fire scourge swept away the efforts and achievements of a quarter of a century it is not surprising that the men who owned property on the North Side insisted that the city rebuilt north of the river, so that the freeholders of the West Side considered that their side of the river was the best and should therefore be selected as the site for the business section of the new Chicago.

All men put their shoulders to the wheel and worked patriotically for the greatest good for the greatest number, and to-day Chicago of today dazzles the civilized world.

Now comes the fact that the congressional committee will soon investigate the claims of the city of Chicago that a improving the navigation of the waterways, it may be profitable to expend a ten million dollars or so for betterments and a few of seaboard proportions demanded. But then it is never possible to please every one in a community of a million and a half, with widely divergent interests and with complex wants, and the Chicago River will be taxed to its capacity to do, and, so far as the point at issue is concerned, not agree that as much as which is going on will have been done in the way of river operation on the South Branch shall be undertaken.

The great Drainage Canal is to be dug. The work that remains to do is the completion of the locks that are necessary to regulate the flow of water. Within a year, granting that the appropriations have been made for the completion of the commission, the canal may be in use.

But, in order that the inadequate condition of the navigation of the Chicago River may be removed, it is necessary that there shall be a deep-water connection between the river and the canal. In order that this may be achieved, it is figured by the engineers that the river must be straightened in eight places, and, of necessity, a certain amount of land removed. This will permit a considerably augmented flow from the lake. The engineering work connected therewith is neither difficult nor costly.

River Should Be Deepened.

All who have the interest of the river at heart and the welfare of the city in mind agree that the channel should be deepened until vessels of twenty-foot draft may enter the harbor and steam to the utmost limit within the main and South Branches. The deepening of the North Branch would then come naturally in good time.

Why not get together and admit the wisdom of such argument and then go a step further?

The people who have interests in South Chicago—and every citizen is indirectly interested in the prosperity of every section of the city—demand that the improvements that have been inaugurated in the Calumet be continued until a depth of twenty feet be provided for navigation to a point a dozen miles from the mouth of the river. They also demand that the Chicago River be permitted to go into disuse; also that a fourteen-foot canal be at once constructed to connect the Calumet with the drainage canal. In other words, those extremists, enthusiastic over their newly developed importance, demand that the superb metropolis of the inland lakes suffer itself to die of dry rot at the top so that the new roots that have shot out into the soft earth may secure all the sustenance.

Of course these shipping men of the far South Side realize, though they will not admit it, that the deepening of the Chicago River to a uniform depth of twenty feet will result in drawing from their wharves a very large percentage of the tonnage which now goes to them, for the shipper will insist that his goods be carried to the nearest point possible to the spot where they are to be used.

And there is another side to the question, and that is that the prosperity of South Chicago is entirely dependent upon the prosperity of the whole city. The commercial center of the business center of Chicago will sound the death knell of South Chicago.

Still South Chicago deserves consideration. And more, the Calumet has something that is needed in the general scheme of the Drainage commission—a good and never-failing volume of water that can be poured in augmenting the flow through the canal. The Calumet is in the principal drainage basin of the water supply, for the reason that the banks of the Chicago will accommodate but little more than already flows between them. It is useless to talk of cutting a channel through the Calumet to the North Branch, for the reason that the water thus obtained could not be made to flow through the channel of the South Branch.

Simply take a look at it to mean about cutting a canal at Sixteenth street, for, even if there were any sense in that proposition from a commercial and business standpoint, it falls before the stern natural law—water cannot flow where there is no room for it.

But the water that is to be used must be introduced beyond the entrance of the Chicago River into the artificial cut in the canal itself—where ample provision for carrying off the waters of two rivers of the size of the Chicago River has been made.

The people of the Calumet, when they were agitating the subject of a separate drainage district, last spring were disposed to charge that their section had been neglected by the city at large. But this is hardly fair, for while it is remembered that in 1895-97, when the drainage scheme took definite shape, South Chicago was not only outside the limits of the City of Chicago, but had practically no existence and backs fair to remain an insignificant factor for a generation or more to come.

How It Was in 1886.

The total population of the district at that time was but 1,500 souls. There were no manufactories on the river, for the reason that produced ship, and, as no sewers below Thirty-first street emptied into the river, above one at Ninety-second street, which emptied into the Calumet, there was supposed to be no need for carrying the waters of the river away from the lake by the cut that now empties them into the canal.

Again, at that time, by far the largest portion of the lands of the Calumet were low and marshy, and but few lots stood above the level of the lake and subject to annual overflow. Neither by a business, commercial, residential, nor sanitary sense did South Chicago require better drainage. So the scheme then being formulated for securing to the City of Chicago a navigable river, with equal advantages with old Chicago, even if it took the line of the Calumet, a stream in which it now is, for, as all lake cargoes level out at the Calumet and vessels must deepend the channel under the advice and direction of Major Marshall Snyder, and the navigation of the river should keep pace with the deepening of the lake, was not considered.

Now come these people who have so recently acquired importance by reason of improvement and, by reason of the natural laws of geographical position and say: "See, we are in the middle of the country and the city is at our back. Therefore we demand that it reset disastrously.

When the fire scourge swept away the efforts and achievements of a quarter of a century it is not surprising that the men who owned property on the North Side insisted that the city rebuilt north of the river, so that the freeholders of the West Side considered that their side of the river was the best and should therefore be selected as the site for the business section of the new Chicago.

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Mayor Harrison appointed reported a like scheme.

From all these considerations it seems as though the Calumet river sections are so intimately allied that there should be but one opinion, and that favoring the adoption of the very best possible channels in both the deepening and straightening of the Calumet canal within the shortest possible time.

There can be no question of the importance of the immediate undertaking of the Calumet canal. The district drained by the Calumet system covers a territory of 825 square miles, lying within the limits of the State of Indiana. This territory is rapidly developing, and the vast manufacturing and slaughter-houses at Hammond pollute the waters of the Calumet river to a dangerous degree. This pollution is constantly menacing the health of the citizens who use the water drawn from the southern intakes.

So there is no doubt of the immediate necessity of a canal to lead the waters of the Calumet westward.

While both sides ought to get what they desire, it would seem as though there were no room for argument. A little patience and a little forbearance and politeness would accomplish wonders here.

"Squatters" Are Recalcitrant.

The Chicago River has been abused since the days when the Chicago pioneer shouldered the property-owners along the river and that has aggregated many millions. In most instances the railroad companies have pushed docks far out into the river and then filled in the river within the piling with the material excavated from the river bed. Having accomplished the seizure they have made no effort to restore the river to its original lines, and propose, first, to prevent the straightening of the river by every legal obstacle, and failing in that to secure a price for the land and docks which they never bought and which they have filched from the river.

The Drainage Board has prepared plans for straightening the river at eight sharp points between the mouth of the river and Western avenue, and these plans have already met with the hearty approval of the governmental engineers, who have carefully complete doing the very least possible to correct the evil, and that feature of the work of the deepening of the river and all that feature of the ultimate improvement of the river, which will be a matter for government consideration.

It is estimated that the engineering cost of the improvement will be about $1,500,000 and the cost of condemnation considerable. The property-owners will be the ones who will receive incalculable benefit from the improvement, and the front foot of their premises are the most unreasonable and most grasping of all. Property which is required to dig out by-passes under the wharves on the west side of the river, and the value of the land of the river to those wharves upon piling. This will permit the river to receive the full benefit of the Drainage Canal, and a greater volume of water to pass through the river. It will also make it possible to have a large section of the wharves owned by the city, and to have the west side of the river street bridges. The fact remains that the navigation of the river will not be improved by this operation. But the commission has nothing to do with navigation save so far as it is presented as an incidental proposition, the navigation being under the control of the government. These strips of land will undoubtedly be filled in with the material from the surface of the river at these points, and many more acres will be reclaimed from the river at the present time. The commission will not suppose to be in the business of the removal of the material, but will turn it over to the contractors securing a greater volume of water.

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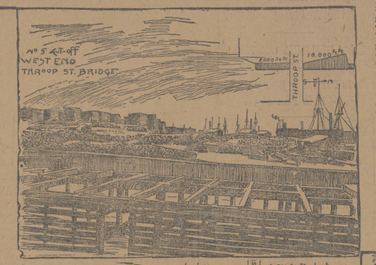
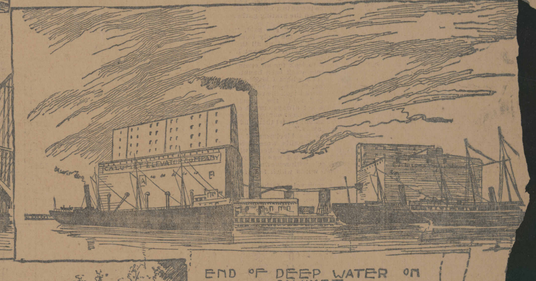
...S OF THE NEW DRAINAGE CANAL. ••• Compromise Suggested to the Advocates of Rival Ideas.





in these as well as in other conditions. The general government has dredged out shoal spots in the river to a depth of twenty feet of water in the tortuous channel between the mouth of the river and the Calumet. The number of vessels that cannot get into Chicago because of lack of water is a comparatively small one, to such an extent that renders it a controlling factor. The river must be in a position to compete with every other harbor. It must be maintained at a depth of twenty feet, and maintained or we will certainly lose in the race for it. It is a commercial necessity, a proposition. It is not that improvements in the future may be made, but that present condition is essential. Large steamers in the grain trade of the world are built to draw down-town elevators, and from lack of comfor the Chicago River is to a great extent debarred from its legitimate business.

Owners of small vessels that move around easily have the option of lightering cargoes, and grain shippers have always to pay for the lighterage. But large vessels, however, are now replacing those of smaller capacity, and it is a fact that the mouth of the river and trade will, as always, follow along the line of least resistance, and that is not wholly and forever.

The commerce now being pushed in the Detroit River must unquestionably increase the Chicago River and the ports of Lake Michigan are certain to give our Lake Superior friends a more convenient outlet, and thus deprive us of our trade. And so the unbusinesslike and unbusinesslike attitude of persons now facing an important question is a matter of astonishment to all.

The difficulties mentioned may easily become insurmountable obstacles to consummation."

Major W. L. Marshall, United States Engineer in charge of government work here, has but recently issued the following from the office of the Chief of Engineers, U. S. A., Calumet Harbors. Major Marshall has charge of both rivers and knows exactly what is needed in both. He says:

"The question of the large private interests involved and what should be done with them is a matter on which I do not assume myself, nor would I attempt to forecast any possible outcome of the deep channel. Aside from all this, I feel convinced that the future interests of Chicago will be manifold if the Chicago River is properly deepened. That, to my mind, is the problem satisfactorily."

Captain Brown on the Subject.

Captain J. H. Brown, President of the Chicago Ship Building company, says: "The large steamers readily enter the Chicago River and go to the docks of the elevators and warehouses along the river, but the vessels that are now being built will draw from twenty to twenty-five feet of water, and the enlargement of the harbor and river is absolutely necessary. Of course, I am interested in the matter, as my company has a large shipyard on the river, but I am in favor only of the improvement of the Chicago River. It is the most important question the people of the city can consider until it is settled, and the sooner it is settled the better. I think it will be none the less so for the question involves such conflicting interests that much discussion will ensue and very likely many plans will be proposed before the final step is taken. In the meantime the delay involves a serious loss to Chicago shipping and Chicago interests generally."

Roswell Miller's Ideas.

Roswell Miller, President of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul railroad, says: "I am in favor only of the improvement of the Chicago River. It is the most important question the people of the city can consider until it is settled, and the sooner it is settled the better. I think it will be none the less so for the question involves such conflicting interests that much discussion will ensue and very likely many plans will be proposed before the final step is taken. In the meantime the delay involves a serious loss to Chicago shipping and Chicago interests generally."

Leslie Carter Talks.

Leslie Carter, Commissioner of the Calumet Canal and Dock company, said: "I see no reason why Chicago should not have all the best ways for the future of the shipping interests of the city that can be provided. The Calumet is based solely on the remarkable, the almost phenomenal, development of the Chicago River, and I am strongly of the belief that the general public is not at all conversant with the needs of the river. We are under the impression that Calumet is the only river that needs deepening, and I am satisfied if they were to read in print of what the Chicago River needs in the way of depth to carry it on to the point where it will be of the most benefit to the city at large, they would be astonished. The Calumet is a river of great possibilities, and it will undoubtedly be improved, but the Chicago River is the one that is in immediate need of attention. It is the one that is the most important, and it is the one that is the most important, and it is the one that is the most important, and it