

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CANAL
COMMISSIONERS OF THE STATE
OF NEW YORK; TRANSMITTED TO
THE LEGISLATURE JANUARY 30,
1871**

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Annual Report of the Canal Commissioners of the State of New York; Transmitted to the
Legislature January 30, 1871 by Canal Commissioners of the State of New York

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Bill 37

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

CANAL COMMISSIONERS

OF THE

STATE OF NEW YORK

Transmitted to the Legislature January 30, 1871.



ALBANY:
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1871.

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ANNUAL REPORT.

STATE OF NEW YORK,

CANAL COMMISSIONERS' OFFICE,
ALBANY, January 20, 1871. }

To the Honorable the Legislature of the State of New York:

In pursuance of the provisions of the Revised Statutes, and of chapter 350, Laws of 1847, the Canal Commissioners, in charge of the canals of this State, respectfully submit their

ANNUAL REPORT.

✓ for the fiscal year ending September 30th, 1870.

The Board of Canal Commissioners, on the 1st day of January, 1870, consisted of John D. Fay, William W. Wright, and George W. Chapman.

It was organized by the election of John D. Fay, President, and George W. Chapman, Secretary.

To George W. Chapman was assigned, in special charge, the Eastern Division of the canals, which is made up as follows:

	Miles.
Erie canal, from Albany to east bank of the Oneida Lake canal.	136
Champlain canal.....	66
Glen's Falls feeder.....	12
Pond above Troy dam.....	3
Black River canal and Black River improvement.....	98
Total	315

To William W. Wright was assigned, in special charge, the Middle Division of the canals, which embraces the following:

	Miles.
Erie canal, from the east bank of the Oneida Lake canal to the county line between Seneca and Wayne counties, including the several feeders and reservoirs.....	76
Chenango Canal, feeders and reservoirs.....	97

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	Miles.
Chenango Canal extension, now under contract for construction	30
Oswego canal	38
Oneida Lake canal	7
Oneida river improvement	20
Seneca river towing path	5½
Cayuga and Seneca canal	23
Cayuga inlet	2
Crooked Lake canal	8
Chemung canal	23
Chemung Canal feeder	16
Seneca river improvement	12½
Total	<u>358</u>

To John D. Fay was assigned, in special charge, the Western Division of canals.

The canals embraced in this division are as follows:

	Miles.
Erie canal, from the east line of Wayne county to Buffalo, including works connected therewith	149
Genesee Valley canal, from Rochester to Olean	107
Extension of said canal from Olean to Millgrove	6
Dansville branch, from Shakers to Dansville	11
Total	<u>273</u>

EASTERN DIVISION.

REPORT OF GEORGE W. CHAPMAN, CANAL COMMISSIONER.

The Commissioner in charge of the Eastern Division of the New York State canals has the honor herewith to submit his first annual report for the fiscal year, ending September 30, 1870.

The Eastern Division comprises that portion of the Erie canal extending from the south end of the Albany basin to the east bank of the Oneida Lake canal at Higginville, nine miles west of Rome, including also the Champlain canal, extending from Troy to Whitehall and the Black River canal and improvement, extending from Rome to Carthage, together with all feeders, dams, side cuts and reservoirs connected therewith, its aggregate length being three hundred and fifteen miles. It is divided into eleven superintendent or repair sections; the Erie canal into five, and the Champlain and Black River canals each into three.

This division, during the season of 1869, was under charge of the late Hon. Oliver Bascom, up to the 7th of November, when the office became vacant by his death.

The undersigned was appointed by the Governor, on the 11th of November, 1869, to fill the vacancy thus occurring, until the 1st day of January, 1871.

This report will, therefore, in its statements of work done and expenditures made for the fiscal year, beginning October 1, 1869, and ending September 30, 1870, include that portion of the same which occurred up to November 7, 1869, under the charge of the late commissioner.

At that date the entire division was under contracts for ordinary repairs, classified as follows:

REPAIR CONTRACTS.

Commencement of contracts.	Canal and section.	Duration of contract.	Annual compensation.	Names of contractors.
Jan. 1, 1867.....	Erie No. 1.....	5 years.....	\$20,000	Wm. C. Stephens.
March 1, 1868.....	do 2.....	4 10-12 years.....	25,975	S. Donaldson.
March 1, 1868.....	do 3.....	4 10-12 years.....	37,000	D. & A. Z. Neff.
May 1, 1869.....	do 4.....	4 8-12 years.....	34,800	C. F. Braanan.
Sept. 15, 1869.....	do 5.....	4 years 3 mo. 15 days..	18,900	P. H. Horsch.
Sept. 15, 1869.....	Champlain No. 1..	4 years 3 mo. 15 days..	23,470	J. A. Wilson.
March 1, 1868.....	do 2.....	4 10-12 years.....	34,800	H. S. Pratt.
Jan. 1, 1867.....	do 3.....	5 years.....	17,750	Ryal G. Briggs.
April 1, 1868.....	Black Riv. No. 1..	3½ years.....	16,440	Wm. McArthur.
April 1, 1868.....	do 2.....	3½ years.....	7,860	Archibald McArthur.
March 1, 1869.....	do 3.....	4 years 10 months.....	7,900	L. J. Wood.

The season of 1869 was a particularly disastrous one to the canals of this division, by reason of the several unprecedented freshets which occurred in that year; that of April 21st, on Black river, involving the loss of the North Branch reservoir, and inflicting great damage to the banks and structures of that canal, occasioned very large expenditures, nearly all of which have been audited and paid during the past fiscal year.

On the 4th of October, 1869, there occurred one of the most extraordinary floods ever known in eastern New York. This was followed, on the 11th, by another, which widened and deepened the breaks made by the former, and greatly increased the damage and the cost of repairs.

The records kept at South Hartford, Washington county, show that $\frac{2}{3}$ ths of an inch of rain fell at that place on the 3d of October, and that the fall of rain on October 4th and 5th was $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and for the whole month $13\frac{2}{3}$ inches. At Hudson, 14.40.

The rain which fell in the region of the Champlain canal during the month of October, 1869, was nearly one-third of the average annual fall of rain throughout the country.

The five sections of Erie and the whole of Champlain canals sustained immense damage from a large number of breaks, causing a total suspension of navigation for several weeks. And when, by the energy and efficient management of the late Commissioner in charge, it was at length restored, but a small proportion of the labor had been performed necessary to restore the division to its former condition. In fact, from his laudable anxiety to relieve the business interests, which had suffered so much from this long detention, the levels were filled at the earliest possible moment, although many bars had not been thoroughly cleaned out, and many weak and dangerous points were

temporarily repaired to meet the pressing demands from all parts of the State for an immediate resumption of navigation.

Upon some levels, where large crowds of boats had accumulated, assistance to navigation, by men and teams, was furnished by the late Commissioner, a portion of which force was continued up to the close of the season, and was of great advantage to those using the canals.

On the 21st of April, 1870, another sudden flood from Schoharie creek, which raised the water of the Mohawk below higher than ever known before, caused great damage to the canal at Schoharie creek and at the upper Mohawk aqueduct. The numerous breaks made and walls destroyed were repaired before the opening of navigation, but the work necessarily increased the cost of spring repairs upon these two sections over forty thousand dollars. None of the work done upon these sections during the previous winter was damaged by this freshet.

The break at Whitesboro in May, 1870, was the only break of importance which occurred during the season of navigation in 1870.

From this series of floods the cost of ordinary repairs upon this division has been greatly enhanced. It may be fairly estimated that the floods of 1869, and early in 1870, damaged the canals upon this division to the amount of five hundred thousand dollars, a large proportion of which damage has been repaired, and the cost of the same paid for during the past fiscal year.

On assuming the duties of this office in November, the undersigned, accompanied by the division and resident engineers of this division, and by the present Commissioner in charge of the Middle Division, made a thorough examination and inspection of the canals under his charge, and gave such directions as were deemed necessary to the repair contractor and the superintendents in charge of the sections, for maintaining good navigation and for guarding against further accidents and delays for that season. No important detentions or casualties were experienced up to the 5th of December, when the canals were closed by ice.

After the close of the season the superintendents were called on for a full and detailed report of the condition of their sections, and of the amount of work necessary to be done before the opening of navigation; which reports were duly furnished, showing a large amount of work necessary to be done. After an examination of these reports, and further personal inspection of the most important