

## CANALIZATION OF YOUGH OLD IDEA.

Slackwater Plans Were Made for the Stream as Early as 1821.

A GOOD STATE APPROPRIATION Of Five Thousand Dollars Was Made To Go Ahead With the Work, But Little Good Was Derived From Expenditure of Money.

When Governor Stuart appoints the commission to examine into the canals of the State to ascertain their competition and see if they can be made available for use and to clear up the State records, the commission will find material to work upon when it goes over the ground of the Connellsville Navigation Company and the Connellsville & West Newton Navigation Company. History of Fayette county shows that as far back as 1821 there were men in this vicinity who possessed business shrewdness that would do credit to the financiers of the present day.

On March 20th of that year there was passed by the State Legislature an Act "for the improvement, of the State," a section of which appropriated \$5,000 for the improvement of the Youghiogheny River. Commissioners were appointed who expended this amount for the purpose indicated and its work was done as far up the river as Connellsville, but with little benefit to the navigation of the stream.

During the past half century for the improvement of the, river have been conceived, and some attempts made to put them in operation, was partial though temporary success as to the lower end of the river, but with no results of actual improvement within the county of Fayette.

The scheme for the improvement of the Youghiogheny River was started when people knew little about railroad communication. Even as early as 1816 the idea was entertained to make the Youghiogheny a navigable stream and the Youghiogheny Navigation Company was formed. It eventually appeared that the promoters of this company had no intention of making improvements on the river, but merely use the name to secure a charter, in which was skillfully incorporated a section giving them power and authority to carry on a banking business in Connellsville. The fact that the name of "Navigation Company" was used for the purpose shows the idea of river improvement was popular among the people even at that early date. The Act of March 26, 1821 followed.

In 1841 the Connellsville and West Newton Navigation Company was incorporated under the act of April 30 of that year which provided and declared that "the said company shall have power to make and complete a lock *navigation from the town of West Newton, in the county of Westmoreland, to the west end of Main or Spring: street, In the borough of*

Connellsville, in the county of Fayette, and on the Youghiogheny river." The capital stock was placed at 600 shares of fifty dollars each with power to increase to four thousand shares. The commissioners appointed to receive subscriptions to the stocks were Thomas D. Davidson, George J. Ashman, John McBurney, William R. Turner, John Smilie, Robert Bleakley, Daniel Kaine, Noble C. McCormick and James Francis of Fayette County; John C. Plummer, J. B. Oliver, Joseph Budd, Bela Smith, Elias Porter, Daniel Hoge, John Boyd, John Frank and \_\_\_\_\_ Sbellenger of Westmoreland, and William L. Miller of Allegheny County. The company was required to commence the work within two years and complete it within five years from the passage of the act. The Youghiogheny Navigation Company was incorporated in 1843 and the commissioners appointed under the act of The Legislature to receive stock subscriptions were James Sell, Alexander Plummer, Adam Coon, Moses Robins, Joseph Markie, John Klingensmith, Jr., Joseph Lippencott, Joseph Guffey, Henry Null, John D. Davis and James May. The capital stock of the company was \$30,000. in 600 shares of \$50 each; the power and authority granted being the construction of a lock navigation from the: mouth of the river to the borough of West Newton.

Nothing of importance or permanent value to the navigation of the Youghoigheny river was done by either of the companies mentioned, though the latter did complete its improvements from the mouth to West Newton, 18 miles. Two dams were built, under the supervision of their engineer, Jas. E. Day, and the slackwater navigation was formally opened to West Newton by a celebration on November 7, 1860. The result, however, showed that the engineer had either miscalculated the mighty power of the floods and ice in the river, or that the dams were too high or defectively constructed. They are now in ruin, and the charter of the company is extinct. The slack-watering of the Yongh has always been, and is now, considered feasible.