

by the committee appointed to investigate the subject. In this report the need of improving the Mississippi is considered in detail and the importance of immediate action emphasized.¹

The burden of the complaint from the Southern organs of popular opinion during this period was, that the Mississippi must be improved or the importance of New Orleans and St. Louis as shipping ports for the raw produce of the West would suffer severely in the near future; and

¹ *Jour. of Proc. Southwestern Conv., begun at Memphis, Nov. 12, 1845* (Memphis, 1845), p. 63:—"The rapids in the Mississippi at the mouth of the Des Moines, and again, at the head of Rock Island, about seventy miles from each other, urgently require the attention of the general government. At these rapids, the river spreads out to a greater breadth than at other points above or below, making the water shallow; and the descent being great, the channel crooked, and the current rapid, boats, drawing more than two feet water, are liable to strike on the rocks, by which they are either totally wrecked or greatly injured. The Rapids are formed by chains of rocks running from shore to shore. Between these chains and above and below the Rapids the water is sufficiently deep. * * * The imports and exports to and from Iowa, and the Northern part of Illinois; the lead and other articles from Galena and Wisconsin; lumber from St. Croix and the head waters of the Mississippi; the supplies for the Indians and United States forts on the Mississippi, have to cross these rapids—are subject to the dangers they create, and the increased charges and freights imposed by them. Steamboats, when ascending or descending with freights, are compelled to discharge their cargoes into flat-boats, of light draught, in which they are conveyed over the rapids. In ascending, the flat-boat is towed up by horses or oxen, a distance of about twelve miles, at each rapid. In descending they are floated down by the current. * * * By a comparison of tables of freight and charges made when the water was too low, it has been ascertained that the increased charges are about one hundred and fifty per cent. When the extent of the lead trade of Galena, Wisconsin, and Iowa is considered (about seven hundred thousand pigs in 1845), the largest portion of which has to be exported when the waters are low, the amount of agricultural and other products, and the imports of necessary articles from other parts of the Union, and from foreign countries, amounting to several millions of dollars annually, all of which is subjected to this increase of freight and charges, * * * some idea may be formed of the amount of injury which the community sustains, over and above the loss from the detention and injury to boats and cargoes."