
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”

The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension

File No. 9

1911 March 10

Springfield, MA

March 10, 1911

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FDR Speech File

2-0009

F.D.R. Longhand

1911-1912

Draft for speech re the Barge Canal,
in N.Y. State. Typewritten, with
pencilled notes by F.D.R.

On barge canal



1-a

Albany

1911-12

In the State of New York about a hundred years ago, a certain far-seeing man began to rise in public life. He appreciated the fact even then - western New York and Ohio were at that time almost a wilderness - that some day the great West would become a thickly populated region. It was before the days of railroads and the only means of transportation with economy was water. He realized that in the future the great bulk of trade would be from the prairies of the West to the Atlantic sea-board and he realized that along the whole Atlantic seaboard there was but one place where the mountains did not separate the west from the east; that the line of the Mohawk river through New York State presented a splendid route - the most available route - for this commerce which was to come.

This man was DeWitt Clinton, and it was he who was the father of the Erie Canal. The canal was started and rushed through to completion and the result has been that more than seventy-five years and with comparatively few changes and enlargements it proved the means of bringing through New York State a very large share of the commerce of the West. Not until perhaps twenty-five years ago did it become apparent that the greatly improved facilities of the railroads could prove a factor in the situation of transportation that would seriously hurt the efficiency of the canal. The reason for this was that the canal had a depth of only ^{six} ~~eight~~ feet; the boats were consequently small and the methods of towing antiquated. ^{About ten} ~~About ten~~

Tons

1837

600,000

1880

4,600,000

Now

2,000,000



8 years ago the question was submitted to the people of the State as to whether they wished to make that canal once more a power in the nation. By an over-whelming vote it was decided at a referendum to authorize the expenditure of one hundred and one million dollars for this purpose. Work was commenced and has been progressing with high efficiency ever since and today the new canal is within two or three years of completion. Ninety per cent. of the contracts have been let and the new canal is in some sections almost ready for use.

The new waterway, for it is more than a canal, will now have a depth of twelve feet throughout its length. It is called the Barge Canal, for the old type of towboat is gone. The new barges ~~are~~ ^{are well} *are well* capable of holding ^{nearly 2,000} tons or an amount equal to the carrying capacity of freight cars. The motive power will be electricity and it is hoped that vessels will be able to load their cargoes of ore and grain at the furthestmost ends of the Great Lakes and without re-shipment transport them to tide-water.

The canal itself will have more than ever an important influence on the commercial life of the New England states. The canal terminal commission appointed to investigate the matter of terminals along the route of the canal has selected Troy, Albany and New York City as sites for great terminals where freight can be trans-shipped. The Boston & Maine, the Boston and Albany and the New York, New Haven and Hartford will be in a position to receive their carloads at points



3-a *Albany* _____ 19 _____

almost within the boundaries of the New England states.