

"Navigation of Mississippi River" Petition, January 18, 1836

To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled.

The memorial of the citizens of Hancock County and its environs in the State of Illinois respectfully represent that the navigation of the Mississippi river at the Des Moines Rapids is greatly obstructed by rocks, which render it not only difficult but very dangerous. ...of steam indispensable to overcome the impetuosity of the current in Ascending—and the quick motion of the boat to preserve her stearage [sic] in descending renders a collision against those cragged rocks extremely perilous. Steamboats are often stove on the rocks, their Boilers have burst, several lives have been lost and many others jeopardized. To pass these chains in low water with loaded boats is impracticable, the freight is all necessarily conveyed over in Keels, and the Boats even after having discharged their freight are often several days in getting through. Above these Rapids, bordering On the Mississippi and its tributaries lies an extensive & fertile country capable of supporting a dense population, much of it is yet owned by the general government, the value of which would be greatly enhanced by a free navigation. Add to this, the Lead mine country, which for richness of soil and abundance of Mineral is not surpassed by any trait of country yet known. Immense quantities of lead annually pass over these rapids, with price levied upon it commensurable with the delays, difficulties and dangers which have to be surmounted. The Obstructions in the lower chain as delineated in the diagram below are estimated by the best pilots to be 300 yards. Those at the second chain are 20 yards, making an aggregate of 320 yards or irregular shaped masses of calcareous rock. These being removed would open a free and uninterrupted Steamboat navigation to the upper Country. We therefore pray your honors to grant a Sum of money to be applied in removing the Obstruction in the Steamboat Channel on the lower or Des Moines rapids and your memorialists as in duty bound will be impressed with a deep sense of gratitude.