

Transcribed Excerpts from Letter from Robert Fulton to George Washington about Canal Building, February 5, 1797

LONDON, February 5th, 1797.

SIR, - Last evening Mr. King presented me with your Letter acquainting me of the Receipt of my publication on Small Canals ...

For the mode of giving easy Communication to every part of the American States, I beg leave to draw your Particular attention to the Last Chapter on Creative Canals; and the expanded mind will trace down the time when they will penetrate into every district Carrying with them the means of facilitating Manual Labour and rendering it productive ...

I find that In about 60 or 70 years Pensilvania would have 9360 miles of Canal equal to Bringing Water Carriage within the easy Reach of every house, nor would any house be more than 10 or 14 miles from a Canal. By this time the whole Carriage of the country would Come on Water even to Passengers -and following the present Rate of Carriage on the Lancaster Road, it appears that the tolls would amount to 4,000,000 per year. Yet no one would pay more than 21 shillings and 8d per ton whatever might be the distance Conveyed ... it is only further to be observed that if each State was to Commence a Creative System It would fill the whole Country, and in Less than a Century bring Water Carriage within the easy Cartage of every Acre of the American States, — conveying the Surplus Labours of one hundred Millions of Men ...

Instead of directing Turnpike Roads towards the Interior Country or expending Large Sums in River Navigations - Which must ever be precarious and lead, — I could wish to See the Labour, and funds applied to Such a System As would penetrate the Interior Country And bind the Whole In the bonds of Social Intercourse.

The Importance of this Subject I hope will plead my excuse for troubling you with So long a Letter, And in expectation of being Favoured with your thoughts on the System and mode of Carrying it into effect, I remain with the utmost

Esteem and Sincere Respect,

Your most obedient Servant

ROBT. FULTON