ANNUAL MESSAGE

OF

WILLIAM A. BARSTOW,

GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF WISCONSIN,

ADDRESS TO THE

SENATE AND ASSEMBLY.

JANUARY 12, 1855.

MADISON:
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1855.
Fellow Citizens of the Senate and Assembly:

You, having assembled to discharge the high and responsible trust confided by the Constitution to the representatives of the people, it becomes my duty to lay before you such information, concerning the condition of the State, as I may possess; and to recommend for your consideration and action, such matters as, in my judgment, the wants and interests of the people demand at your hands. But, before proceeding to the performance of that duty, I regard it as not only proper, but even obligatory upon me to advert to the results of the year which has just closed; and to indulge in congratulations to an extent never before warrantable in the History of Wisconsin. With the exception of the epidemic, which has prevailed so generally throughout our country, it may be truly said, that the past year has been one of more than ordinary good health, even in this State—so remarkable for its salubrity. Prosperity has crowned enterprise and industry, in whatever honorable channel exerted, until the admission is compelled from all, both at home and abroad, who are acquainted with its resources, that no State presents greater inducements to the various industrial classes than our own. It has been ascertained that the amount of our exports, during the past year (including Lumber and Mineral) has exceeded the sum of thirteen millions of dollars.

While a great Commercial revulsion seems to be visiting many sections of the Union, crippling their resources and impairing
their prosperity, no State shares less in its effects, or is better prepared for its consequences. We have but to pursue that onward, though cautious policy, which has characterized our course thus far, in order to ensure the occupancy of that desirable position among the confederated States, which an energetic and intelligent population—favored by our advantages of soil and climate, joined to a fortunate commercial position—are so well calculated to command. Let us faithfully endeavor to perpetuate our prosperity and happiness—relying with confidence upon the Supreme Ruler for strength and wisdom.

While the wants and varied interests of a young and growing State like ours, necessarily call for much legislation, there is not at this time apparent an amount of legislative labor necessary to be performed, sufficient to justify a protracted session. Excessive legislation is too frequently indulged in—resulting in onerous taxes and the enactment of conflicting and unwholesome laws.—Still, while I believe it to be my duty to urge upon you the propriety of a brief session, and a rigid observance of economy in the expenditure of the public monies; I am far from meaning to be understood, as wishing to curtail either, to the prejudice of any interest which it may be your duty to provide for or protect.

Among the important matters to which I wish particularly to invite your attention, and on which, in order to secure a proper and timely result, it will become your duty to act at an early day, is that of a careful examination of the Official Reports, and the real condition of the several departments of the State Government. These reports will immediately be laid before you, and they will be found to be full and explicit. Your constituents have a right to claim at your hands, such information as you may be able to obtain; and it is your duty to investigate closely into the doings of those intrusted with their interests. The conduct of all public servants, under our form of Government and Laws, is, and should be, subject to inspection; and, upon a thorough and careful examination, it is but simple justice to all parties concerned that the people should know and understand the result. This
duty of the Legislature, though frequently demanded of them by the officers themselves, has, I regret to say, been too long neglected and shamefully avoided.

The Reports of the Secretary of State, and State Treasurer, will exhibit to you in detail, a full statement of the receipts and disbursements of the Treasury Department, during the fiscal year, closing on the 31st day of December—from which I am enabled to lay before you, such information concerning the same, as I deem important for the purposes of this communication. It appears that the entire amount paid into the Treasury, during the year 1854, on account of the various funds, was, $401,738.42

Viz: Account of General Fund, $191,299.46
   do Principal of School Fund, 85,583.27
   do do University do 9,945.59
   do Income of School do 106,235.03
   do do University do 8,775.07

Add balance in the Treasury January 1st, 1854, on account of all Funds, $57,436.48

Total $459,274.90

During the same period the disbursements appear to have been as follows, viz:

Account of General Fund, $222,154.12
   do Principal of School Fund including loans, 84,996.06
   do do University do do do 21,898.93
   do Income of School do 97,188.88
   do do University do 10,640.44
   do Fox & Wis. Improvement Fund, 129.00

$437,007.43

Showing a balance in the Treasury, on the first day of January, 1855, on account of the various funds of $23,267.47

The Secretary of State, in his report, estimates the amount probably necessary to be drawn from the Treasury, on account of the General Fund, during the present year, to meet present and accruing liabilities, at $253,059.52
In this estimate, it is proper to state, that the sum of $141,638.72
is included, as necessary to meet arrearages, arising from the erec-
tion of Penitentiary buildings and support of convicts during the
past and present year, also the sum necessary to be applied
toward the erection of a Lunatic Asylum, and the completion of a
portion of the buildings designed, and the support of, the Institu-
tions established, for the education of the Blind, and Deaf and
Dumb.

To meet the foregoing liabilities, the resources are stated as fol-

State Tax as levied and equalized under the act of 1854, $225,000.00
Bank Tax, (estimated) 30,000.00
Rail and Plank Road Tax, ( do ) 9,000.00
Miscellaneous Resources, ( do ) 24,829.91

Total, $283,829.91

Among the matters of interest presented by this Report, is a brief review of the public expenditures, since the admission of Wisconsin into the Union—showing the yearly appropriations therefor, from 1848 to 1854, inclusive—amounting in the aggregate, to the sum of $830,244.30; of which $94,071.31 was in the years of 1848—9; $71,675.38 in 1850; $112,420.80 in 1851; $123,474.06 in 1852; $163,910.58 in 1853, and $264,692.07 in 1854. Of the last named sum, appearing under the head of expenses for 1854, $63,696.03 was for the expenses of other years; so that the actual expenses, for the objects of 1854, were $200,996.04, inclusive of such as are provided for by permanent provisions—thus only exhibiting that annual increase in public expenses, consequent upon the organization and progress of a new state, and growing in a great measure out of the necessary expenditures in providing Penitentiary and other public buildings, and the establishment of charitable institutions. While, from the foregoing, it would appear that the expenses for the year 1854, were between thirty and forty thousand dollars more than for any previous year, yet the aggregate, for general purposes, for that year, was evidently some.
forty thousand dollars less than for 1853. This is accounted for by the fact that upwards of $80,000 more than in any previous year for such purposes, was appropriated for the erection of a State Prison, Lunatic, Deaf and Dumb, and Blind Asylums—including the moderate appropriations made for the benefit of the State Agricultural and Historical Societies; all of which did then, as they do now, appear to be just and worthy objects of Legislative favor; and some of which, at least, must continue to be objects of that character and destined to create no small proportion of the public expenses, unless other provisions than at present exist, are made for their defrayal.

With the suggestions of the Secretary, in relation to existing laws, on the subjects of the registration of marriages, births and deaths—foreign insurance agencies—the judiciary fund—the fixing of a penalty in the event of a failure of Town Assessors to make return, and the publication of the election laws, I most fully concur. His exhibit, however, of the expense heretofore incurred by the Legislature, for newspapers and postage, is worthy of more than a passing notice at this time; and can but impress you with the importance of a reform, in respect to these matters. It appears that the expense for those two items alone, has for several years, averaged nearly ten thousand dollars annually—a very large proportion of which, I have ever regarded as unnecessary and unwarrantable in its character, and should be reduced and confined to such sum, as the legitimate objects of legislation may properly demand.

The report of the Board of Commissioners of School and University Lands, has been elaborately prepared, and comprises much of interest, connected with the responsible trust committed to their charge.

It appears that the aggregate principal of the School fund, amounted on the first day of January, to the sum of $1,670,258 77—being an increase, during the past year, of $528,454 49; derived chiefly from the sale of lands. The gross amount of interest, received since the last apportionment made to common
schools, including the sum payable prior to the tenth day of March next, (that being the time fixed by law for the annual distribution) is $142,484.29; which, according to the estimate of the State Superintendent of Schools, is equal to 93 cents for each scholar—an increase of 21 cents over the previous year.

The claim of the State to the quantity unselected of the 500,000 acre grant, amounting to about 125,000 acres, belonging to the School fund, and heretofore denied by the General Government, upon the ground that there was an arrearage due the Government from the State, arising from the connection of the Territory with the Rock River Canal, has, during the past year, been amicably adjusted, upon terms entirely favorable to the State; and the lands thereby accruing, have been chiefly selected. It seems highly probable that a like favorable adjustment will be had, of our claim to the five per centum of the nett proceeds, arising from the sales of Government lands, to which the State is entitled—amounting at this time, it is supposed, to about $60,000; and withheld by the Government, for the same cause; as will more fully appear from a statement of the facts of the case, and the argument of the matter, which will be laid before you. Considerable additions have been made to this fund, during the past year, arising from fines collected by agents appointed for that purpose, under an act authorizing the same—a large proportion of which, it is believed, never would have reached the Treasury, except through the operation of some similar enactment. A defect in the law, however, it is said, has in some instances, been made an excuse for not paying; to the connection of which, your attention is invited. The rapid increase of this fund, exceeding so greatly the early anticipations formed in regard to it, affords cheering evidence of its ultimate sufficiency for the purpose intended. To know that the means of obtaining a common school education, are within the reach of all, is a source of just pride and congratulation, and should prompt us to protect them by the erection of such safeguards, as the interests and well being of posterity demand. Under an act of the Legislature of 1854, requiring the commissioners and Governor to revise the
mode of keeping the School and University accounts and records, important improvements have been made, and the work contemplated by said act, is rapidly progressing. In order, however, to ensure the continuance of this, a more permanent provision for the expenses, than at present exists, should be made therefor, at the present session; and I can conceive of no just cause why such expenses should not be paid from the fund, for which they are incurred.

As the law now is, in cases where the interest due upon School and University Lands purchased has not been promptly paid on the day it became due, there have been a number of instances where the lands thus forfeited have been entered by others; and upon their making the payments required, the original purchasers have been deprived of all of their rights in the property. This, in many instances, is calculated to work extreme hardship to those who, through ignorance or accident, fail to pay the interest due upon the day fixed; and some provision should be made, either for extending the time after advertisement, or giving the parties concerned such reasonable equity of redemption as will enable them to retain their lands, if they wish so to do. In this connection, and with a view of subserveing the best interests of the State, without prejudice to the fund, I submit to you the propriety of providing a reasonable limit to the quantity of School and University land which any one individual may hereafter purchase; and, as far as practicable, insure the occupation of the same to actual settlers. This I deem to be the best policy to be pursued on the part of the State, and by the encouragement thus rendered to a class of citizens whose principal resources consist in their energy and industry, the fund may be advantaged to as great a degree as under the present system; and the State at large will be benefitted to an extent, which the practice of monopolizing large tracts, by a few individuals, has a tendency to prevent. The only class whose interests such action will have a detrimental effect upon, is one composed of speculators merely, and who are not the tillers of the soil. An instance of such
attempted monopoly occurred during the year 1853, when a few parties combined, and bought in connection, upwards of 130,000 acres; and also during the last year, a single individual purchaser appears upon the books of the department as the proprietor of nearly 60,000 acres; and in sundry other instances, similar operations, on a smaller scale, have occurred. If, without detracting from the proper fund, and the income arising therefrom, this growing evil can be prevented, I deem it to be your duty to provide the same by such enactments as are best calculated to ensure the desired result.

I recommend to your especial notice, the very full and clear report of the State Superintendent, as exhibiting ample evidence that our common school system was well devised, and is now thoroughly organized; having, by its practical operations, demonstrated that the hopes early formed in regard to it, were not extravagant. The cause of education in this State, has manifested a degree of prosperity that furnishes us with good reason for rejoicing; and the degree of interest, not only exhibited, but felt by all in its advancement and permanent establishment, affords strong testimony of its continuance and value. The various institutions of learning, established in different parts of the State, and not assisted from any fund over which it has the charge, are all as flourishing and prosperous as we could, at this early day, have any reason to hope they might be. We have cause to be proud of the fact that so many of them, conducted as they are by able and learned men, have already been reared in our cities and villages, and are spreading widely their beneficial influence. The second dormitory building of the State University is now nearly completed, and will be ready for the reception of students by the first day of June. It affords me pleasure to state that this valuable institution continues to increase its influence and usefulness, and is steadily progressing in all of its departments. The report of the Board of Regents, which has not yet been received, but which will in a short time be laid before you, will exhibit particularly all matters of interest connected with the University, and will
doubtless merit your attention. The gross amount of the University fund, on the first day of January, amounted to $161,146 61. The amount of income applicable to the support of this institution for the present year, including the accruing interest for 1855, is $12,405 45.

The report of the Bank Comptroller enables me to lay before you reliable information, concerning the operations of the various banks, under the General Banking law of the State. It appears that the whole number of Banks established, and transacting business, under the law is twenty-four, with an aggregate capital of $1,450,000 00. The amount of securities, consisting entirely of State Stocks, deposited with the Comptroller, is $1,033,000 00; upon which the issue of circulating notes, amounted on the first day of the present year, to $937,592 00—yielding a revenue to the State, by tax, for the year 1854, of $18,165 63.

It is a gratifying fact, and one upon which we may congratulate ourselves, that thus far the practical working of our banking system, gives evidence of its superiority over many, if not over all, those adopted by other States. Notwithstanding the numerous failures of banking institutions in other States, and the money panic, which of late has so generally prevailed, but one of the institutions, organized under the general law of this State, is reported to have failed, to redeem promptly its notes. As an evidence of great determination, on the part of bankers, to merit confidence, in nearly every instance, upon the request of the Comptroller, additional securities have been deposited, to an amount corresponding with the recent decline in the market value of stocks; or by the return to the Comptroller, of an amount of circulating notes, equal to such depreciation. The promptness evinced by the banks, in thus responding, and the sound discretion exercised in the management of a department so important, to the credit and business interests of the State, cannot but command your approbation.

Our banking law, although generally regarded as being as well adapted to secure the interests of the bill holder, as any which
could well be framed, yet it is not void of defects, which are pointed out in the report of the Comptroller, and will, I trust, receive your attentive consideration, and in that connection it may be well to consider whether there is not a class of securities within our own State, of the nature of bonds issued by some of the principal cities, that may under proper restrictions be received as the basis of banking.

The present unsettled condition of monetary affairs, which is pervading the country so generally, and more recently brought nearer home to us, with increased deleterious effects, in consequence of numerous Bank failures in neighboring States, induces me to invite you to the examination of the subject, and urge upon you the necessity of such enactments as will, as far as practicable, provide a remedy, and protect the people against the imposition and fraud, so frequently practiced, by the introduction and circulation of doubtful currency, brought to our State and forced into very general use—not unfrequently through the aid of our local bankers, who neither hold themselves responsible for its redemption, nor make it a source of revenue to the State, by the payment of a tax upon the capital, if any there is, thus employed. The effects of this practice upon the legitimate business of banking, under the law of this State, is to discourage, and frequently cripple those institutions which were established in good faith under it. For while the banker, under our law, is required to amply secure every dollar issued—redeem those issues, on demand, in coin, and pay a State tax upon his whole capital, he is frequently compelled, in self defence, to place foreign insecure issues, to a certain extent, upon an equality with his own—thereby giving countenance and credit to a currency, having its origin in parts too far removed to insure safety, and liable, sooner or later, to become worthless to the holder.

Viewing this matter in the light I do, I can arrive at no other conclusion, than that justice to the State, as well as the banking institutions established under its laws, and the safety of the bill holder, demand of you, either to provide for prohibiting the
circulation of all foreign bank notes, not secured in a manner equal
to our own; or, at least, require as far as practicable, such bankers
as may issue foreign notes, to treat them in all respects as their
own currency, issued in conformity to our banking law, and ren-
der it, subject to the same requirements, in every important par-
ticular.

A report, in detail, of the condition and wants of the State Pris-
on, is submitted by the Commissioner thereof, to which I invite
your early and careful attention. During the year 1853, Henry
Brown, then Commissioner, contracted with Andrew Proudfit, to
erect the stone work of the south wing of the permanent Prison
building. Subsequently, the present Commissioner made other
contracts, for the remaining portions of the work, and material ne-
necessary for the completion of the same. The whole structure is now
very nearly finished, and it is intended to place the convicts with-
in it, during the present month. This building is of the most per-
manent and substantial character, being fire proof, 200 by 50 feet,
four stories high, and containing two hundred and eighty-eight
cells, and it is to be hoped, will be sufficient for the purposes in-
tended, for many years to come. As a matter of just convenience
to the officers in charge, and for the purpose of ensuring against
escapes, the main building ought to be erected, as soon as the
means for that purpose, without embarrassing the Treasury, can be
appropriated. While convict labor has contributed much toward
the erection of the building, still there is yet, over and above all
former appropriations, made for that object, a large sum due to
contractors—beside considerable balances, for the maintenance and
management of the prison, which it will be your duty to examine
into, and provide for. Provision was made, at the last session of
the Legislature, for rewarding convicts for overwork. While this
principle may be just and worthy in its tendencies, I regard the
practice of paying to the convicts themselves, any portion of such
earnings, until after their discharge, as liable to work great evils,
by being improperly used, as they not unfrequently are, and in a
manner affecting the prison discipline, and the security of prison-
ers. If such earnings can be confined to the support of the families of the convicts, where they may have them, during their imprisonment, and in cases where they have no families, the money be retained until the discharge of the convict, the main objections to the practice of rewarding them for their labor is, in my mind, overcome. The question whether convict labor can be profitably employed, without working a serious injury to such of our citizens as are engaged in the mechanical or manufacturing pursuits, has often been seriously discussed, and it is still doubtful what may be the duty of the State in the premises. Now that comparatively little labor will, for some years to come, be required of the convicts, in the erection of prison buildings, and entertaining grave doubts, both as to the policy and propriety of the states engaging in manufacturing articles for sale, by convict labor, I submit to your consideration, the propriety of authorizing the letting, to the highest bidder, for a term of years, such of said labor, to be used within the prison enclosure, as cannot be profitably employed by the State, in the erection of buildings,—requiring the contractor, to furnish his own tools and shops for such labor; Thus throwing the whole matter open to competition, and relieving the State of great responsibility and perplexity connected with the same.

In my first message to the Legislature, I urged upon their attention, the propriety of adopting the preliminary measures to secure the erection of an Institution for the benefit of the insane.—An act was passed at that session, authorising the Governor to appoint three commissioners and a Superintendent, who were clothed by law with power to purchase suitable grounds and to erect the necessary buildings. In April last the appointments contemplated by that act were made, since which time, appropriate grounds for that purpose near the village of Madison have been purchased and conveyed to the State, and contracts entered into for the erection of buildings, upon the most modern and approved plans. The main building and two wings are, by the terms of the contract, to be in readiness for the reception of patients, by the first day of January, 1856. The appropriation for this object be-
ing small compared with the magnitude of the work, was evidently intended simply to secure the commencement of the undertaking. As to the propriety of prosecuting with energy, such an undertaking so praiseworthy and just in its character, I need not here urge upon you, further than to say, that more aid is indispensable, and will, I trust, be found at your hands. For information in detail, concerning the transactions of the Commissioners and Superintendent, and the condition and wants of the Institution, I refer you to the reports of the officers in charge.

The prosperous condition of the Institutions established for the education of the Blind and Deaf and Dumb, as is more fully shown by the reports of the respective boards of Trustees, is well worthy of notice. Indications of correct and judicious management by those in charge of them are apparent. The provision heretofore made by the Legislature for the establishment of these charitable institutions, must be regarded as having been bestowed upon objects worthy and humane in their character, and as meeting only the demands of simple justice to the unfortunate of those classes. And while I hold it to be our duty, to make ample provision for those objects, and in no event to fail to provide annually for their free support, I cannot in view of the liberal provision before made for them, and the insufficient provision made for other institutions similar in their character, consistently urge at this time your making appropriations for the purpose of materially enlarging their buildings during the present year, to any more than the completion of such portions, as are already commenced. In support of this, I refer to the reports which exhibit the number of pupils in each; as being much less than equal to the accommodations provided, and from the best information I am enabled to obtain, will be found ample for the present year. The propriety of providing by law, however, at the present session for the ultimate extension and completion of the buildings, according to the plans adopted, in my judgment, is unquestionable; and to that end, such provision at the present session as will accomplish that object, within the necessary space of time, I am cheerfully dis-
posed to favor. Means for the erection of shops, necessary for the use of the Deaf and Dumb, and the support of each of these Institutions during the present year, are clearly objects claiming immediate provision, to the extent of which I refer to the respective reports.

The Geological survey of the State has been prosecuted during the past year with great energy, and most encouraging results. The able report of Professor Percival, our State Geologist, will doubtless elicit attention, both at home and abroad; and I trust will receive at your hands an early examination; as its importance will justify the publication of a larger edition than is usual of this report, so immediately connected with the great mining interest of the State. The surveys thus far made have been chiefly confined to the lead districts, and that having now been nearly completed, it is intended, during the coming season, to direct the examination of the country north of the Wisconsin River, to our copper mines, bordering on Lake Superior. There may, in my judgment, be prosecuted in connection with the Geological survey, a Zoological examination, for a comparatively trifling expense, resulting in such discoveries and collections, connected with the natural history of the State, as in future will be viewed as valuable and interesting, and to secure the full benefit of which, early action is necessary.

The military spirit exhibited by a portion of our fellow-citizens is both commendable and worthy of further encouragement than is now provided by law. In order to render the Militia of practical utility, the proper steps should be taken by the Legislature to encourage the formation of uniformed companies, which seems to be the best, if not the only practicable means, at present, of bringing into use the quota of arms which our State is entitled to draw annually from the United States government. Imperfect as is the system for obtaining an enumeration of the militia of the State, yet the partial reports of the assessors of the several towns, show an increase which entitles the State, for the present year, to receive equal to about 400 stand of arms, valued at nearly
$5,000 00. It is recommended by numerous military officers that a law, similar in its character to the one now existing in the State of New York, be enacted. An examination of that law has induced me to recommend it to your consideration, as worthy of imitation, and calculated to inspire a proper military spirit. The report of the Adjutant General, to which I invite your attention, contains explicit information, and many valuable suggestions, concerning the present condition of the militia.

The Attorney General, although not required by law to submit an annual report, has seen proper, in view of some matters of importance to the State connected with his department, and of which it is proper for the Legislature to be informed, to transmit, through me, a brief report, which I recommend you to consider.

Emigration to our State is annually on the increase, furnishing further evidence of the adaptation of our soil and climate to the habits and wants of the emigrant, and of the high estimate abroad placed upon our resources. The Commissioner of Emigration, in his annual report, calculates the number of emigrants from foreign countries who have found their homes in Wisconsin, to be much greater during the past than any former year. A large portion of this, I am induced to believe, resulted from the continuance of an agency in New York, and through the sub-agency, established at Quebec, under it. My former expressed views, in regard to the propriety of such agencies, I have had, as yet, no reason to change.

The Secretary of State and Governor were, by an act of the last Legislature, constituted commissioners, to procure to be published in two volumes, so much of the Documentary History, as at that time had been prepared for publication. Under this authority, a contract was made for five thousand copies of each volume, which are now nearly ready for delivery. The work has been prosecuted under the supervision of the author William R. Smith, Esq., whose report of his doings in the premises, is herewith submitted. This valuable and interesting publication, being the property of the State, it is proper that provision be made for an early distri-
butition of a portion thereof. I would therefore suggest the propriety of donating one copy to each of our common school libraries, to the libraries of each institution of learning throughout the State, and also to each of the several State Libraries of Union, and the various departments of the General Government—reserving a large number of copies for future demand, and the purpose of exchange for other valuable works, to be deposited in just proportions, in the Libraries of the State, and the State Historical Society. The annual report required of the Executive Committee of the State Historical Society, is herewith transmitted and gives evidence of strict fidelity on their part, to the trust committed to them. Through the perseverance of its managers, this society has grown into an importance which reflects much credit upon them and meriting, in my judgment, greater encouragement at your hands than has heretofore been bestowed by the Legislature. The increasing labors devolving upon the corresponding Secretary to perform, have reached that magnitude that I regard it proper in view of the interest the State should manifest, in the promotion of the objects of this society, that a reasonable salary should be provided, and paid by the State to that officer.

It affords me great pleasure to announce the fact, that the Fox and Wisconsin Improvement Company have pressed the work undertaken by them, with a degree of energy, which must prove most satisfactory to all interested in its completion. The Company have been fortunate in the selection of their officers, and in obtaining abundant means to forward the enterprise; on a scale of far greater magnitude, than was at first contemplated; being intended to pass boats of a draft of at least four feet and a half of water.

The expenditures of the Company, as reported by its President, Otto Tank, Esq., since the transfer by the State, and up to the 20th of December last, are as follows, viz:

- Grand Kaukalin: $42,630.94
- Little Chute: 80,403.57
- Cedar Rapids: 86,665.80
- Grand Chute: 47,652.86
The sum estimated as necessary to complete the work, is the comparatively small one of $32,388 84. The Company have paid of the Improvement liabilities, the amount of $123,480 81—there by giving an earnest of their design to remove all the pending indebtedness, within the time required by the act of Incorporation. The difficulties which have been overcome, in the progress of this work, were exceedingly formidable, but the benefits to be derived from it, when finished, by a large portion of the State, are on a scale of far greater magnitude. As one of the few great connecting lines of communication, between the Lakes and the Mississippi it assumes almost a National importance; and running as it does through the entire breadth of our State, it becomes of a value to those along its line, that no other means of transportation now used could replace. Rapid settlements, and a great increase of wealth, must necessarily follow its completion, and a large portion of our State now but thinly inhabited, or a wilderness, will receive an impulse which, at no remote period, will render it a rival in al of the elements of material prosperity, to those sections already of importance, from their resources and population. A glance at the map will show the favorable Geographical position of the work, which, together with the internal improvements now in progress in Canada, confer an importance upon it which the originators of the project, in all probability, never foresaw. From the terminus of the Improvement at Green Bay, to Toronto on Lake Ontario, via. the Rail Road, terminating at Georgian Bay, and which is bu 70 miles in length, it is no greater distance, than from that point in our State, to Detroit; and lessens the number of miles, usually travelled to reach the Eastern ports, by several hundreds. This is a matter of no small consequence, to the Northern and North Western portions of our State, and demonstrates the fact, that this, when established, must be the line over which a large proportion of the vast carrying trade of those sections, and much of the
country lying west of the Mississippi, will be most conveniently and cheaply done. The portion of country, contiguous to the Lake shore, must also share in the advantages thus conferred, by the opening of a nearer and cheaper avenue of communication with the commercial centers at the East.

The State at large is not without a deep interest in the completion of this important improvement within it. The number of great water powers which it will create along its extent, the manufacturing villages which it will cause to spring up in consequence, and the increase of taxable property and commercial activity, are considerations important to the welfare of our whole people. We can now plainly discover, unaided by speculative statesmen, the benefits and disadvantages of the policy of granting public lands, in the states where they may lie, to be appropriated to the construction of works of this character; and our experience will go far towards convincing others, that the benefits have largely the preponderance. Undertakings, of a magnitude which would repel private enterprise unless thus aided, are encouraged and assisted to completion, and where, without such aid, if attempted, they would languish and die, the whole country, including the General Government, by the more rapid sales of its lands, are benefitted to an extent not easily calculated.

Large additions to the State Library, through means provided by the last Legislature, have been made during the past year. A detailed report, concerning the same, will be laid before you at an early day. The expenditures of a moderate sum only will be required annually, in the purchase of late publications, to render it both an ornament to our State, and sufficient for the objects which induced its establishment.

The U. S. standard weights and measures, to which this State was entitled, on her admittance into the Union, have recently been received and put in order for use, in a suitable fire proof building, erected for that purpose, upon the public grounds, in pursuance of plans furnished by the U. S. Government.

In order that these costly standards may be rendered as useful,
as it was designed by Congress they should be, I deem it impor-
tant that the law relating to procuring county standards, should be
so amended as to require the State Treasurer, who, by law has the
charge of the Government standards, to procure the manufacture
from suitable material, for the use of each county, of complete and
uniform standards, to be by him sealed and delivered to the
proper county officer—the cost of which, to be added to the
amount of State tax that each county shall respectively be lia-
tible to pay, for the year the same shall be delivered. This I regard
as the best means of insuring the proper uniformity in county
standards, which it is so necessary to secure.

In my former message to the Legislature, I urged the propriety
of making provision for the sale of the swamp and overflowed
lands, granted to this State by act of Congress, approved Septem-
ber 28, 1850. The Legislature at that session failing in the at-
tempt to provide for such sale, I now renew the subject, and re-
commend definite action.

There are numerous considerations which should weigh, in
urging an early disposition and reclamation of these lands. To
dispose of them, would tend greatly to improve the health of local-
ities contiguous to them—would hasten the settlement of the
country, and make productive taxable property of much of that,
which in many instances, is at present useless, and no law for their
protection, or against taking the timber from them, it is believed,
could be rendered sufficiently efficacious to prevent their being
thus despoiled, of what, in many instances, constitutes their chief
value. Besides, even admitting the possibility of enforcing such a
law, it could not be done without great perplexity and expense to
the State.

Since the adjournment of the last Legislature, I have endeav-
ered to adopt measures for the purpose, not only of ascertaining the
facts, relative to the quantity and value of these lands, but also to
secure the fee simple title thereto to the State.

Perfected and approved lists of such of said lands as remain
unsold, within the surveyed portion of the State, and formerly
subject to sale at the several U. S. Land offices, have been procured from the Commissioner of the General Land Office, and are as follows, viz.:

In the Milwaukee Land District 53,636 93-100 acres.
“ Mineral Point “ 13,515 40-100 “
“ La Crosse “ 217,295 18-100 “
“ Willow River “ 118,015 45-100 “
“ Menasha “ 717,528 62-100 “
“ Steven’s Point “ 521,670 52-100 “

Making a total of one million six hundred fifty-one thousand sixty-two 10-100 acres.

Official statements from the General Land Office, of the sales made by the government of such granted lands, since the passage of the act appropriating the same, and for which the State is clearly entitled to receive either money or other lands, it is promised, and confidently believed, will be forth coming; which, it is thought, will increase the total quantity within the surveyed portion of the State, to nearly two millions of acres; so that, upon a moderate estimate, for that portion of the overflowed lands, in the surveyed districts, (not included in either of the lists referred to,) and the swamp and overflowed lands yet to be surveyed in the northern portion of the State, it is reasonable to suppose that the total quantity which will ultimately ensue to the State, from this grant, will equal three millions of acres. For the lands embraced in the perfected lists referred to, such assurances have been received, from the Commissioner, as to render it morally certain that patents for the same will be executed to the State at an early day.

Many of these lands are valuable, and should there be a judicious provision made for their sale, a large sum of money may be speedily realized by the State, after complying with the terms of the grant.

Admitting the propriety of thus disposing of these lands, I can see no constitutional objection to appropriating the surplus pro-
ceeds, after their application to the extent required by the act granting them, to such purposes as the Legislature may deem proper; and, as a large sum has yet to be expended, in the erection of public buildings—such as the completion of the Penitentiary, the construction of the buildings for the various charitable institutions, and, at no distant day, of a new Capitol edifice, or the enlargement of the present—which, even now, owing to the insufficiency of room for offices, seems to be demanded.

From the examination I have given this subject, I am clear in the opinion that, from the sales of these lands, we may reimburse the treasury for all past outlays, on account of public buildings, of every character; and further, erect all such buildings as the State will require for many years to come. The constitutional limit for State indebtedness being small, and that limit having been reached during the years 1852 and 1853, I am strongly impressed with the belief, that in the sale of these lands is presented the only means at present within our command, by which to provide for the objects named without resorting to direct taxation, the burthens of which, for the ordinary expenses of our State, while yet in its infancy, will be found fully equal to the ability to meet.

I therefore recommend that in the event of provision being made for the sale of the lands, that the proceeds accruing to the State be set apart for the aforesaid objects.

Section three, article four, of the constitution requires the Legislature to provide by law for an enumeration of the inhabitants of the State in the year 1855. You will undoubtedly comply with this provision of that instrument at the present session. In addition to the enumeration required, I recommend that provision be made for collecting, at the same time, as full and complete information concerning the manufactures, products, and property of the State as may appear practicable. The information thus derived will unquestionably be found interesting, valuable, and creditable to our State.

It affords matter for congratulation, that the different Railroad
enterprizes of our State, have, to a certain extent, recovered from the temporary depression, brought about by well known causes. It is now a conceded fact, that these important agents in the rapid settlement of our country, and in the development of its resources, afford in this State, secure means for the profitable investment of capital; and such is now our condition, that it is no longer indispensable for us to rely entirely upon furnished from older and more wealthy communities, for their construction. It has, until a comparatively recent date, been absolutely necessary to induce the aid of foreign capital, in order to take the first steps in these enterprizes; and no better evidence could be given, of the rapid and healthy growthy of the State, than that of our greatly increased ability to forward such means of communication, and the certainty of their yielding a profitable return, for the investments which may be made in them. Aside from the generous reward obtained by every branch of industry and enterprize, and from the increase produced by superabundant harvests, greatly beyond the demand for home consumption, though added to by the wants of an unparalleled emigration—much of that emigration has, of itself, been of a character calculated to augment materially, the available capital of the State. Those laws of trade, which gradually and steadily regulate the supply in accordance with the demand, have insensibly, but with certainty, furnished our citizens with a great proportion of such means, as their necessities required, and their situation enabled them to secure and render profitable. Those legitimate works of internal improvement, the construction of which the onward march of our State made necessary, have felt the effect of the general impulse. Such as are already in progress, are being urged forward, with all of the means of the companies having them in charge; and it is now confidently believed, that their completion, within a reasonable time, is placed beyond the possibility of a doubt. It should be the care of the Legislature to foster, by liberal enactments, these important interests, and protect them by all such laws, as are calculated to secure their rapid construction, and the permanency of all those investments, which may
be devoted to their advancement or continuance. As one of the means necessary to effect this end, I would strongly recommend the passage of such laws, as would tend to prevent the commission of any fraud, by the over issue of stock or otherwise by the officers of incorporated companies, and which could affect the interests of those entrusting them with the management of their affairs, or that of the community at large. The occurrences which during the past few months have been brought to light, in several of the States, demonstrate the existing necessity of such enactments; and until there has been some action of this kind taken, the construction of our Roads must necessarily be retarded, by considerations which the Legislature can do much toward removing, by the imposition of severe penalties for offences of the character referred to, and such other checks, as they, in their wisdom, may see fit to establish. Such a course will have the tendency to increase greatly, the value of our securities abroad, by giving capitalists confidence in their permanent value. This subject I consider to be one of the highest importance, and I trust your earnest attention may be directed to the establishment of some law, which will have the effect desired. The opinions expressed by me, in my former message, relative to the importance of a speedy completion of our Railroads, and the means which seemed to me proper to be used for their construction, I still adhere to, and would reiterate, did not a simple reference to that document obviate the necessity of so doing. In this connection, I deem it proper to recommend, that the Legislature pass such a law, as will enable Rail and Plank Road Companies to secure the right of way over all lands owned by the State, or held in trust for any fund.

In my former message, I took occasion to urge upon the Legislature the propriety of memorializing Congress upon the subject of the Improvement of our Rivers and Harbors through the assistance of the General Government. Since that time Congress has acted upon the matter and passed an act making more liberal appropriations than had previously been set apart for these objects. From this bill, the President saw fit to withhold his sanction, and
it is to be regretted that he deemed it his duty to take such a
course, in view of the deep concernment we have in the making of
adequate appropriations by Congress, for these objects. Such have
been demanded by the West for many years as a right to which
they were entitled, as fully as that portion of our common country
situated upon or near the sea board; and no satisfactory reason
has yet been adduced why we should not have the full benefit of a
system which has proved so highly advantageous to others. Thus
far, we can with propriety say that all the benefits reaped through
the assistance of the General Government, have scarcely been
worth the labor it has cost to obtain them. Considering, as I do, that
the right so long claimed by us is one to which we are entitled
by the clearest principles of justice and national expediency, I feel
it to be proper to reiterate all of the opinions I have formerly ex-
pressed upon the subject, and to urge upon the Legislature the
memorializing of Congress, to either make these improvements by
appropriations from the Federal Treasury, or remove the obstacles
in the way of our making them ourselves.

The subject of the Revision of our Laws, is one of consequence
sufficient, in my judgment, to authorize the Legislature, at the
present session, to take those preliminary steps, necessary to the
attainment of this object. So great is the mass of our laws now,
and so crude, conflicting, and uncertain in their character, that it
is very difficult for those even, whose profession gives them the
best opportunities of knowing what the existing laws are, to dis-
tinguish the binding enactment from the repealed or altered law;
and this evil, in connection with the manner of publishing our
Statutes, leaves the people of our State nearly as much in the
dark, as to the action of their Legislatures, as if they resided in
some other. The certainty of a law is one of the chief benefits
to be derived from it, and it is not clear but that it would be better
for community to suffer the existence of bad laws, than to live
under a system, which is subjected to continual alterations. Our
excessive Legislation has a tendency to produce an entirely differ-
ent result from the one intended, and is, perhaps, as much calcu-
lated to create evils, as to prevent or redress them. I trust that your attention will be devoted to this matter, and will result in the establishment of a system of laws which can be understood, and a reform in the manner of their publication.

The proposition submitted by the Legislature to the people, at the last general election, to so amend the Constitution as to provide for biennial sessions of the Legislature, was negatived by a very decided vote. That this instrument is, in some particulars, imperfect, and might, by alteration, be better adapted to our condition, I am thoroughly convinced; but the policy of adopting any amendment of it, until a thorough revision is had by a convention, may well be questioned. Propositions to amend either the constitution or laws, should be thoroughly considered, and the consequences attendant, canvassed with great care and mature deliberation.

The law fixing the time for the annual meeting of the Legislature on the second Wednesday of January, should, in my judgment, be so amended as to allow the various officers who are required to report annually through the Governor to the Legislature, more time after the close of the fiscal year to prepare their reports. The fiscal year, as is wisely provided, closes on the 31st day of December. For those departments connected with the financial affairs of the State, an insufficient space of time is now allowed after the closing of their accounts, on the last day of the year, to prepare in due form the reports required of them by law. In order, therefore, to provide a remedy for the evil stated, and to afford the Governor a reasonable time for obtaining such information from the reports as is proper for him to communicate to the Legislature at the opening of the session, as well as for numerous other reasons which might, with propriety, be urged, I recommend that provision be made for the annual sessions hereafter to commence as late as the third or fourth Wednesday in January, instead of the second, as is now provided.

We, in common with our sister states, have in general, great cause for rejoicing, at the results of the year which has just closed-
Although the pestilence has left in its train, many sorrowing hearts and desolated homes, yet aside from this, the nation has reason to be thankful. Throughout our borders, all the arts of peace have been crowned by those just rewards, the hope of which has called them into existence. Plenty has richly repaid industry, and while the Old World is pouring out its blood and treasure upon fields of battle, we have been permitted to enjoy the fruits of our labors in peace. Civil and Religious liberty are ours by inheritance, and we have, to the fullest extent, realized the blessings attendant upon them—supported, as they have been, by no force beyond that of an enlightened public opinion. Like the return of the seasons, and the operation of all natural laws, our political system has continued its working, until we have come to regard this wonderful result of the wisdom of our forefathers, as a matter of course, and receive its benefits as we do the daily gifts of Providence.

The perpetuity of this system can only be maintained, however, by a strict obedience to the laws, for the faithful execution of which I shall be found ever ready, should the emergency arise.

So far as your labors may be confined to the legitimate objects for which you are convened, and are calculated to promote the best interests of the whole people—if not in violation of that instrument which we alike are sworn to support—you may rely with confidence upon my ready co-operation.

WM. A. BARSTOW,

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT,

MADISON, January 12th. 1855.