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### Documents showing the annual amount of the trade and commerce on the Upper Mississippi River

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DOCUMENTS

SHOWING

*The annual amount of the trade and commerce on the upper Mississippi river.*

MARCH 29, 1844.

Referred to the Committee on Commerce, and ordered to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT, *March 22, 1844.*

Sir: In answer to your letter of the 20th instant, requesting an estimate of the amount and value of public property transported annually on the waters of the upper Mississippi, I respectfully transmit, herewith, reports of the officers of this department, who are charged with such transportation.

The aggregate annual amount of such supplies is estimated at \$273,213 90, as will be seen by the details of these reports.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

WILLIAM WILKINS,  
*Secretary of War.*

Hon. S. BREESE, *U. S. Senate.*

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL'S OFFICE,

*Washington, March 21, 1844.*

SIR: In reply to the inquiry of the Hon. Mr. Breese, of the Senate, contained in his letter referred to this office yesterday, I have the honor to state, that the clothing and quartermaster's stores furnished through the Quartermaster's department for the troops on the Mississippi and its tributaries, above the mouth of the Missouri, amount altogether, as will be seen by the following statement, to about twenty-five thousand dollars annually, viz:

Clothing and equipage for	3 companies at Fort Snelling	- \$4,041 93
Do	do 4 companies at Fort Crawford	- 5,389 24
Do	do 2 companies at Fort Des Moines	- 3,579 78
Do	do 2 companies at Fort Atkinson	- 3,579 78
Do	do 1 company at Fort Winnebago	- 1,347 31
		<hr/>
		17,938 04
Quartermaster's stores for the same posts, about	-	- 7,061 96
		<hr/>
		25,000 00
		<hr/> <hr/>

I have the honor to be, sir, most respectfully, your obedient servant,  
THOMAS S. JESUP,  
*Quartermaster General.*

Hon. WILLIAM WILKINS, *Secretary of War.*

ORDNANCE OFFICE,  
Washington, March 20, 1844.

SIR: In answer to the letter addressed to you, 20th instant, by the Hon. Mr. Breese, of the Senate, as to the probable amount and value of Government supplies sent to Fort Snelling, Des Moines, Prairie du Chien, and other points on the upper Mississippi, I have the honor to reply, that, as relates to ordnance supplies, the yearly value sent to that region of country is small. During the past year small arms, ammunition, and paints for gun carriages, were ordered to be sent for the companies stationed at Fort Atkinson, Fort Des Moines, and Prairie du Chein, to the amount of \$5,910, and is probably beyond the annual average value of stores required from this department for that region of country. All these, as well as other stores for the troops, are transported to the places required by the Quartermaster's department.

Mr. Breese's letter is herewith returned.

I am, sir, respectfully, your obedient servant,

G. TALCOTT,  
Lieut. Colonel Ordnance.

HON. WILLIAM WILKINS,  
Secretary of War.

OFFICE OF COMMISSARY GENERAL OF SUBSISTENCE,  
Washington, March 20, 1844.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of a letter from the Hon. Sidney Breese, dated Senate Chamber, March 20, 1844, referred by you to this office for a report. I transmit, herewith, a schedule exhibiting the quantity and value of the subsistence at the posts on the upper Mississippi and above the rapids. As the rapids render it necessary to forward a whole year's supply every spring, the table shows the quantity on hand immediately after an annual delivery.

Most respectfully, your obedient servant,

GEORGE GIBSON,  
Commissary General of Subsistence.

HON. WILLIAM WILKINS,  
Secretary of War.

*[Faint, illegible text and bleed-through from the reverse side of the page, including a list of items and a signature.]*

*Statement of the quantity and value of subsistence at the military posts on the upper Mississippi and its tributaries.*

Posts.	Bulk, in barrels.	Value.	Remarks.
Fort Snelling -	822	\$5,992 30	One year's supply for the garrison—three companies.
Fort Crawford -	1,073	7,481 40	One year's supply for the garrison—four companies.
Fort Atkinson -	530	3,757 40	One year's supply for the garrison—two companies.
Fort Des Moines	530	3,791 20	One year's supply for the garrison—two companies.
Fort Winnebago	270	2,371 60	One year's supply for the garrison—one company.
	3,225	23,393 90	

GEORGE GIBSON,  
*Commissary General of Subsistence.*

OFFICE OF COMMISSARY GENERAL OF SUBSISTENCE,  
*Washington, March 20, 1844.*

WAR DEPARTMENT,  
*Office Indian Affairs, March 20, 1844.*

SIR: In answer to the inquiry of the Hon. Mr. Breese, contained in his letter of this date, I have to state that the probable amount and value of Government supplies for the Indians of the upper Mississippi—embracing the following tribes, viz: Winnebagoes, Sacs and Foxes, and Sioux—is, for the first, \$92,860; for the second, \$85,540; and for the third, \$40,510—making an aggregate of \$218,910 annually.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

T. HARTLEY CRAWFORD.

Hon. WILLIAM WILKINS, *Secretary of War.*

GALENA, *February 27, 1844.*

SIR: I have endeavored to avail myself of every means within my reach to procure such information, in addition to the experience derived from a residence here of seven years, as would enable me to respond, in a satisfactory manner, to the inquiries made in your communication to the Galena chamber of commerce, with as little delay as possible, after the date of my letter of the 21st instant.

The result is embodied in certain statements, and an approximate summary of the general trade of this place and the country above, dependent on the Mississippi, Wisconsin, and Turkey rivers, and in a letter addressed to me

by Mr. William Hempstead, in whose views I fully concur; all of which is herewith enclosed, and is respectfully submitted.

I am not sufficiently acquainted with the details of the trade and business relations between Fever river and the rapids, nor can I procure such information as would warrant me to make any statement in relation to it. This much, however, I may say: it is already very considerable, and progressively increasing, both *in bulk* and *amount*; that the proposed improvements are not less interesting to the inhabitants of the sections of country within reach of the Mississippi and its tributaries, between Savannah and the rapids, on both sides of the river, than to us of the north.

The surplus produce *north* of Savannah and Bellevue naturally seeks a market in *this mining region*; whereas that south of those places must find a market *below the rapids*, and on to St. Louis; and, consequently, they can only compete with the producers who are located below the rapids, when the *water is high*, and *freights* of course *low*.

Unquestionably "the price of freights is greatly enhanced by the obstructions at the rapids, and would be greatly reduced by the removal of them;" and the evidence will be apparent, by referring to the "average prices of freight" for a series of years, herewith, and comparing those of the years 1840 and 1841, but especially those of 1839 with those of 1843.

The better to elucidate the fact, let us suppose that the stage of water in 1843 had been like that of 1839, and that instead of paying, as then, 50 cents per 100 pounds for the freight of it, it could have been done at 40 cents. In that case, the transportation of the 39 millions of pounds of lead to St. Louis would have cost - - - - - \$156,000

Whereas, by reason of the favorable stage of water through the whole season, (equal, probably, to what it would be made by means of a channel three feet deep, and proper width, through the shoals on the rapids,) the transportation of this lead actually cost but - - - - - 58,000

Difference on one item, between high and low water - - - - - 98,000  
or, in other words, between "obstructions" and "the removal of them," in one year, on the freight of lead—and of course the whole *up* and *down* trade is affected in a like ratio; for it is not only *the price of freight* that is enhanced by these obstructions—ALL our business concerns are affected by them. For instance, when the passage over the rapids is free, as in 1843, the premium of insurance hence to St. Louis, and vice versa, will be about  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. As the water *declines* the premium *advances* to  $\frac{3}{8}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{2}{3}$ , and 1 per cent. So, likewise, with the *price* of lead; the price of it *declines* with the *depth of water* on the rapids, and *rises* with its *increase*. The average price of this article, during the year 1843, may be quoted at \$2 37 $\frac{1}{2}$  per 100 pounds. And what, let me ask, would probably have been the price of it, with a low stage of water, as in 1839? Certainly not exceeding *two dollars*, and probably 5 to 10 cents less!

The loss of time also, by reason of these obstructions, is very great. When the passage over the rapids is unimpeded, goods shipped at Galena for St. Louis are generally delivered in four days; but when otherwise, and transhipments must be made to keel and flat boats, to pass over and reload on another boat below, from ten to fifteen days are required.

You expressed a particular desire for information as to the lumber trade. I regret that it has not been possible for me to procure reliable data, as to

the produce of the mills on the St. Croix and Chippewa rivers, but for the year 1843. This trade was but comparatively trifling until 1839. I should here remark, that the produce of the Wisconsin mills (24) would have been probably two millions more, but for the heavy loss of logs experienced by the spring freshets.

About one-half of all the sawed lumber made above finds a market this side of St. Louis, the other half reaches that port. The Galena market has taken this year about four millions of sawed lumber; the quantity now on hand is very small. The average price of sawed lumber *here* may be stated at about \$9 per thousand, and at St. Louis \$12. The expense of rafting to St. Louis, in ordinary seasons, is about \$2 per thousand.

When we take into consideration the vast region of country that must depend on *this source alone* for its supply of pine lumber, it is obvious that the trade must become, in a few years, vastly important. This leads me to remark, that inasmuch as these pine lands are generally valueless, except for the timber they bear, it seems to me it would be the part of wisdom, on the part of the Government, to bring them into market as soon as practicable; for there is a most outrageous waste being committed on them, and on the most valuable points—those being selected for chopping which are most accessible to water. As the demand for lumber increases, (and increase it must and will,) so the dilapidation will also increase.

In conclusion, I beg leave to suggest, that a report from the Secretary of War, conformable to the memorandum appended to the approximate estimate of imports, would be very interesting to us here, besides being useful in the discussion on the subject of the improvement of the Mississippi river.

I have the honor to be, sir, very respectfully, your most obedient servant,  
THOMAS MELVILL.

HON. SIDNEY BREESE, *Washington.*

MEMORANDUM.—The total product of the *upper Mississippi* lead mines, was—

	Pounds.
For 1825	664,530
1826	958,842
1827	5,182,180

(See American State Papers, Public Lands, vol. 5, page 5.—Report Superintendent United States Lead Mines.)

*Abstract of lead shipped from Galena and ports above, from the year 1835 to 1843, inclusive.*

	Pounds.
In the year 1835	11,000,000
“ 1836	13,000,000
“ 1837	15,000,000
“ 1838	14,000,000
“ 1839	15,000,000
“ 1840	20,000,000
“ 1841	32,000,000
“ 1842	33,000,000
“ 1843	39,000,000

Should the stage of water be favorable during the approaching season, it may reasonably be expected the shipments of 1844 will reach about 42,000,000.

*Abstract of pine lumber sent forward from the mills on the St. Croix and Chippewa rivers for 1843, and from those on the Wisconsin for 1840, 1841, 1842, and 1843.*

From whence.	Number of feet of boards, plank, and joists, (board measure.)	Square feet of hewn timber.	Shingles.	Laths.
St. Croix mills -	8,000,000	50,000	-	1,000,000
Chippewa mills -	5,500,000	-	1,200,000	1,000,000
Wisconsin mills -	7,500,000	-	2,200,000	2,000,000
Total -	21,000,000	50,000	3,400,000	4,000,000
The Wisconsin mills (24) sent forward, viz :				
In 1840 -	6,200,000	40,000	1,500,000	1,000,000
In 1841 -	7,800,000	-	1,800,000	1,500,000
In 1842 -	8,500,000	-	2,000,000	1,200,000

*Average prices of freight to and from St. Louis, from 1836 to 1843.*

Years.	Prices from Galena to St. Louis, per cwt.	Prices from St. Louis to Galena, per cwt.	Remarks.
1836 - - -	\$0 37½	\$0 80	Inflated prices.
1837 - - -	33½	75	Inflated prices.
1838 - - -	30	62½	
1839 - - -	50	1 00	Very low water.
1840 - - -	37½	75	Low water.
1841 - - -	33½	50	Low water.
1842 - - -	22	40	
1843 - - -	15	22	High water.

MEMORANDUM.—It is well to remark here, that in 1839 it cost \$75,000 to transport 15,000,000 pounds of lead to St. Louis, whereas in 1843 it cost but \$58,000 to transport 39,000,000 pounds to that port. By comparing the average prices of freight from Galena and ports above to St. Louis in 1839 with those of 1843, some idea may be formed of the importance of removing the obstructions on the rapids.

If the stage of water had been during the season in 1843 as in 1839, it is reasonable to presume the average price of freight would have been at least 40 cents per cwt. down stream. Therefore, the cost of freight on

39,000,000 pounds of lead forwarded to St. Louis would have been \$156,000, instead of \$58,000.

Here, then, is a difference of \$98,000 on the transportation of *lead alone*, in *one year*, caused by the obstructions at the rapids—a reasonable allowance being made for a fall in prices since 1839.

*Abstract of arrivals at Galena of steamboats and keelboats (in tow) from St. Louis, in the years 1841, 1842, and 1843, and of the amounts of freights and passage money earned by them in those years.*

Years.	Number of arrivals.		Amount of freights.	Amount of passage money.	Average price of freights:	
	Steamboats.	Keelboats.			Galena to St. Louis, per cwt.	St. Louis to Galena, per cwt.
1841 -	143	11	\$124,000	\$73,000	\$0 33½	\$0 50
1842 -	195	92	137,000	73,000	22	40
1843 -	243	50	121,000	82,500	15	22

*Approximate estimate of the trade of Galena and ports above for the year 1843.*

EXPORTS.

Articles.	Quantity.	Value.
Lead - - -	39,461,171 pounds	\$937,202
Copper - - -	95,000 pounds	11,400
Pine boards, plank, and joists -	21,000,000 feet, board measure	\$204,000
Shingles - - -	3,400,000	9,350
Laths - - -	4,000,000	9,000
Hewn timber - - -	50,000 sq. ft.	3,000
		225,350
Hides - - -	14,000	28,000
Agricultural products and various other articles -	-	48,048
Total exports -	-	1,250,000

IMPORTS,

Consisting principally of groceries, iron, steel, salt; powder, crockery, glass and hardware, sheet iron, tin, stoves, iron castings, wines, spirits, leather, nails, glass, clothing, boots, shoes, hats, saddlery, drugs, paints, fruit, &c., estimated at \$1,150,000

THOMAS MELVILL.

GALENA, February 26, 1844.



Statement of amounts of probable receipts of regular boats in the Galena trade, for freight and passage, for 1841, 1842, and 1843.

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Names of boats.	Tons.	1841.				1842.				1843.			
		Trips.	Keels.	Freights.	Passage.	Trips.	Keels.	Freights.	Passage.	Trips.	Keels.	Freights.	Passage.
Otter - - -	95	15	9	\$15,000	\$7,000	11	6	\$10,000	\$3,000	19	-	\$6,000	\$4,000
Agnes - - -	92	10	8	6,000	4,000	11	3	5,000	3,800				
Indian Queen - -	115	7	6	5,000	2,000	4	-	2,000	1,200				
Chippewa - - -	102	11	11	10,000	6,500	6	9	4,000	2,000	13	4	8,000	4,000
Rapids - - -	115	15	10	10,000	8,000	14	5	7,000	5,000	14	-	4,500	3,000
Illinois - - -	120	10	7	8,000	4,000	3	2	2,000	1,000				
Ione - - -	140	6	9	7,000	5,000	7	4	7,000	3,500				
Mermaid - - -	160	4	4	4,000	2,000	-	-	-	-	3	-	2,000	1,000
New Brazil - - -	200	4	2	5,000	3,000	18	14	15,000	8,000	15	2	11,000	8,000
Iowa - - -	112	19	17	18,000	13,000	20	11	15,000	7,000	23	10	10,000	8,000
Matta - - -	130	4	5	4,000	4,000								
Amaranth - - -	200	3	6	4,500	3,000	7	3	8,000	6,000	16	7	13,000	8,000
Ohio - - -	130	2	3	2,000	2,000	20	7	15,000	5,000	22	9	12,000	8,000
Galena - - -	115	2	2	1,500	900	15	10	9,000	6,000	16	4	7,000	5,000
Osprey - - -	105	-	-	-	-	8	-	5,000	3,000	12	-	6,000	6,000
St. Louis Oak - -	115	-	-	-	-	9	3	5,000	4,000	18	1	7,000	5,000
General Brock - -	120	-	-	-	-	5	2	6,000	4,000	15	17	18,000	7,000
Potosi - - -	115	-	-	-	-	8	8	5,000	3,000	18	5	7,000	5,000
Jasper - - -	98	-	-	-	-	4	3	3,000	1,000	6	-	2,500	1,500
Osage - - -	140	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	-	6,000	4,000
Sarah Ann - - -	135	4	1	4,000	2,000	5	2	4,000	2,000	2	-	2,000	
Nauvoo - - -	125	7	4	5,000	2,000								
11 transient boats -	1,300	20	7	15,000	5,000	20	-	10,000	5,000	19	-	7,000	5,000
		143	111	124,000	73,400	195	92	137,000	73,500	243	50	121,000	82,500

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Statement of rates of freight (per cwt.) for four years, on the 1st, 15th, and 30th of each month.

Months.	1840.			1841.			1842.			1843.		
	1st	15th	30th	1st	15th	30th	1st	15th	30th	1st	15th	30th
	Cts.	Cts.	Cts.	Cts.	Cts.	Cts.	Cts.	Cts.	Cts.	Cts.	Cts.	Cts.
March	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	20	18 $\frac{3}{4}$	-	18	15
April	-	-	-	25	25	20	30	25	25	16	15	15
May	-	-	-	20	20	20	25	20	20	15	15	20
June	-	-	-	20	20	20	22	22	20	20	20	10
July	-	-	-	20	25	50	20	18	20	20	18	15
August	-	-	-	50	50	50	25	31 $\frac{1}{4}$	37 $\frac{1}{2}$	18	37 $\frac{1}{2}$	20
September	-	-	-	50	50	50	40	40	37 $\frac{1}{2}$	20	15	12 $\frac{1}{2}$
October	-	-	-	50	40	37 $\frac{1}{2}$	37 $\frac{1}{2}$	45	50	10 $\frac{1}{2}$	10 $\frac{1}{2}$	30
November	-	-	-	31 $\frac{1}{2}$	-	-	50	65	55	37 $\frac{1}{2}$	37 $\frac{1}{2}$	-
Average price, say	37 $\frac{1}{2}$ cents.			33 cents.			22 cents.			15 cents.		

GALENA, February 24, 1844.

DEAR SIR: I hand you, as per your request, to be forwarded to Hon. S. Breese, of the United States Senate, a statement of the probable earnings of the steamboats engaged in the trade passing over the Mississippi rapids, dividing, as near as may be, the proportions of freight and passage money received by them. From it, it will be seen that, in 1841, there were made 143 trips, and 111 keelboats towed up and down; and the earnings were—

For freights	-	-	-	-	-	\$124,000	
For passage	-	-	-	-	-	73,400	
							\$197,400
In 1842, 195 trips, 92 keelboats—							
For freights	-	-	-	-	-	137,000	
For passage	-	-	-	-	-	73,500	
							210,500
In 1843, 243 trips, 50 keelboats—							
For freights	-	-	-	-	-	121,000	
For passage	-	-	-	-	-	82,500	
							203,500

Making an average of about \$200,000 per annum paid out for freight and passage. It may be well to observe that, in 1841, the difficulty at the rapids by low water was great, and the price of freight ranged so high that the prices paid on 143 trips reached almost the amount paid in 1842 for 195 trips; and also in 1843, when we had an unusual good stage of water, the prices ranged so low that the boats, making 243 trips, (say 48 more than in 1842,) brought to and carried away one-third more merchandise and lead, but did not earn as much as in 1842. This difference in the receipts of the boats went to benefit the consumer of goods and the shipper of lead, and was, in fact, a benefit to all.

For 1840 I have no account of the number of boats, or of their trips; but you will perceive, from a statement of prices of freights down stream that year, that the river was very low; and in 1839 it was still lower, as

I paid as high as \$1 per 100 pounds freight on lead from Potosi, Wisconsin Territory, and 75 cents from here—and freights up were \$1 50 to \$2 per 100 pounds; and my opinion is, that the year 1843 presents a fair range of the prices that we might expect if a channel of three feet water could be made over the shoal places of both rapids.

I have also prepared a statement of the prices of freights to St. Louis on lead, on the 1st, 15th and 30th of each month of navigation, for the years 1840, 1841, 1842, and 1843, and which will, I think, average about as follows: for 1840, say 37½ cents per 100 pounds; for 1841, 33 cents; for 1842, 22 cents; and for 1843, 15 cents per 100 pounds. Now, supposing the rates of freights in 1841 and 1842 to have been the same as in 1843, when there was not much obstruction at the rapids, the saving to the country would have been on lead shipped in 1841 (say 463,000 pigs, at 70 pounds per pig, 32,410,000 pounds, at difference of 18 cents) \$58,338; in 1842 (say 473,000 pigs, at 70 pounds per pig, 33,110,000 pounds, at difference of 7 cents) \$22,177; showing a gain to the country in 1841 of \$58,338, and in 1842 of \$22,177, together with a corresponding gain upon up freights and passages, had there been no obstructions at the rapids, and which might be estimated for freights and passages, both up and down, as being not less than \$130,000 for 1841 and \$75,000 for 1842, as the prices of freights and of passages, both up and down, have advanced and fallen off with the freights down, and as the river has been high or low.

These estimates are made up from the actual knowledge of the receipts of several boats, and from some knowledge of the amount of business done by others.

I have always deemed the Government (from the large quantity of public domain still unsold above the rapids) more deeply interested and affected by the obstruction at the rapids than any class of citizens, as it has retarded the settlement and sale of much country that emigrants, by cheap travelling, would visit and settle upon, and ultimately buy; and the amount already received from sales of public lands in Iowa, and that part of Illinois and Wisconsin bordering on the Mississippi river, should induce them to hope that Congress would not withhold an appropriation which must, in a great degree, benefit the United States, in the sale of the lands yet to be brought into market.

I am, respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. HEMPSTEAD.

Major T. MELVILL, *Galena.*