

2009

Form 504

U. S. COAST AND GEODETIC SURVEY

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

DESCRIPTIVE REPORT

Type of Survey *Topographic*
Field No. Office No. *2009*

LOCALITY

State *Conn.*
General locality *Connecticut*
Locality *River*

1890

~~194~~

CHIEF OF PARTY

W.C. Hodgkins

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DATE



~~2009~~
2009

U. S. COAST AND GEODETIC SURVEY.

T. C. Mendenhall Superintendent.

State: *Conn.*

DESCRIPTIVE REPORT.

Topographic Sheet No. *2009*.

LOCALITY:

Connecticut River.

1890.

CHIEF OF PARTY:

W. C. Hodgkins.

2009

MAY 28. 1891. 011182 *Archives*

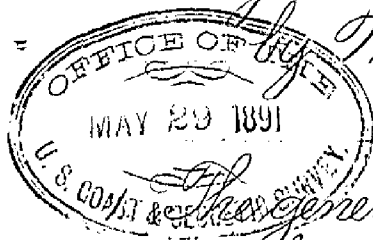
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Descriptive Report

to accompany Original Topographic Sheet
2009. No 4 of Connecticut River, Conn.
Surveyed in August, September & October, 1890;
by H. C. Hodgkins, Assistant.



The general character both of the topography and the geology is very different in the upper and lower parts of the sheet.

In the lower part, we have the continuation of the steep granitic ridges, already noticed in the report on Sheet No 3.

These here confine the river within even narrower limits and in the region called "the Straits" the stream flows, between almost precipitous hills, with a width of less than one-fourth and in the narrowest part of less than one-eighth of a mile.

During this part of its course, the Connecticut flows from west to east for about five miles, making a bend of about 90 degrees at each end of this stretch.

Emerging from the "Straits" on the way up the river, the country is entirely different in aspect. Smoothly molded hills of drift take the place of the abrupt granitic ridges and the narrow valley broadens out into the charming expanse of undulating slopes which surround Middletown. On the left bank of the river opposite Middletown occurs a remarkable deposit of brown sandstone, widely known as Portland brownstone.

The deposit, which is of great thickness, appears to run nearly north and south passing diagonally under the river and cropping out again in the town of Cromwell about two miles above Middletown.

There is quite a striking topographical feature of recent origin shown in the case of Willow Island, which occupies the middle of the Connecticut west of the Portland Quarry wharves and which is almost three-fourths of a mile long.

I was informed that this island is entirely the result of the deposit, within quite recent

years, of detritus from the river and that this deposit was caused by a stone dike which was built in the river by the quarry owners for the purpose of deflecting a greater proportion of the water to their water front, giving increased scour and a gain in depth of water at the wharves. These results seem to have been attained, but in the eddy below the dike this very considerable island has grown up and seems by no means to have reached its limit of growth. The island consists of two nearly separate parts, which are joined by a small section of marshy ground, which is covered with water except at a low stage of the river. Each portion of the island, again, has a ridge along each margin with lower ground between; and both are overflowed in freshets.

The eastern portion is considerably higher than the western and both are covered with trees, chiefly poplars and willows.

8. The soil around Middletown and Portland seems of a kinder nature than that further down the river and crops seem to do well. Corn, potatoes and tobacco seem to be among the principal crops.

In the lower part of the sheet, the rough hills are covered with forest of recent growth, all of it having been cut off several times, and of varied character.

Chestnut and oak are most common.

Hemlock, spruce, cedar, hickory, birch, maple, beech, dogwood, etc. occur frequently.

There is much undergrowth. The trees generally range from twenty to forty feet in height.

In the upper part of the sheet there is comparatively little woodland but where it does occur, the trees are as a rule somewhat larger. In this part of the sheet there are many shade and fruit trees, the leading shade trees being the American Elm and maples of various varieties. Fruit trees embrace the apple, peach, cherry, pear, and plum.

9. Probably there are about equal portions of cleared and wooded land upon the sheet. Of the cleared land, I think rather more than one half is generally in grass.

The upper portion of the sheet covers a quite thickly settled region, including parts of the city of Middletown and of the towns of Portland and Cromwell.

The settlements in this region were among the earliest in New England.

Originally the farming element predominated, as it still does in the smaller towns, but there is now a great variety of occupations in these places.

The extensive brownstone quarries already mentioned furnish employment to many persons and the manufacturing interests, especially in Middle town, are varied and extensive. Some of the principal lines are pumps, presses, rubber goods, textile fabrics of various kinds, etc.

Communication is maintained both by water and land. Steamers run daily between Hartford and New York, stopping both at Middletown and Portland. During the summer, a steamer also runs to New London and Sag Harbor. Many sailing vessels are employed in transporting stone, wood, coal, iron, etc. The roads are generally good and the grades moderate. Road bridges over small streams are mostly substantial and in good order.

There are no foot-bridges over the Connecticut. A steam ferry between Middletown and Portland and another between Cromwell and Gilderleeve's Landing afford means of communication, when the river is not blocked by ice.

The Air Line Division of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad, running from New Haven to Millimantic crosses the river on an open-truss iron bridge, supported on stone piers, of which five are in the river.

The central span is a swinging draw, which is always kept open, except on the approach and passage of trains.

This railroad like all the others on the sheet is a single-track road. Middletown is well supplied with railroads, being connected with New Haven and New York by the Air Line Division, with Berlin by the Middletown branch, with Hartford and Springfield by the Valley Division, with Millmantic and Boston by the Air Line Division and with Saybrook and New London by the Valley Division. The Connecticut river is navigable throughout the extent of this sheet, although Middletown is sometimes called the head of navigation.

Navigation between there and Hartford is attended with considerable difficulty, owing to bars in the river.

The two small tributaries entering the river above and below Middletown are not navigable, but afford considerable water power which is fully utilized in the various manufactures spoken of above. The Connecticut is subject to frequent floods in the spring and after.

heavy rains and has a vertical range of something like fifteen feet at Middletown, though that rise is unusual.

Ice gorges are not common, but sometimes occur and cause unusually heavy floods. The horizontal range of floods varies with the shapes of the hills bordering the low lands. It is greatest on the meadows around Little River, just above Middletown and around Pequasset Pond in the southern part of Portland.

Fences are most commonly of wood though stone is also used.

10. There are no places on the sheet known as health or pleasure resorts.

There are a good many visitors in summer and the Connecticut State Hospital for the Insane located in Middletown just southeast of the city might be classed as a "health resort."

This is a very extensive establishment and has about 1500 inmates some of whom are pay-patients from

New York and other places
outside of the state.

11. Middletown seems to have a
healthy growth in wealth and pop-
ulation, due to its manufacturing
interests and the quarries at Portland
and Cromwell add to the importance
of those towns.

W. C. Hodgkins

Assistant



U. S. COAST AND GEODETIC SURVEY.

T.C.Mendenhall, Superintendent.

State: CONNECTICUT

DESCRIPTIVE REPORT.

Topographical Sheet No. 2009

LOCALITY:

CONNECTICUT RIVER,

FROM

WHITMORES' DOCK TO PORTLAND.

1893.

CHIEF OF PARTY:

Charles H. Boyd, Assistant

Write me at: _____

Telegraph me at: _____

My Express Office is: _____

U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey,

Portland, Me.

January 10th, 1894.

2-347

Dr. Thomas C. Mendenhall
Superintendent U. S. C. & G. Survey

Sir:

I have the honor to offer the following Descriptive Report, to accompany topographical sheet No. 2009. The Connecticut River from Whitman's Dock to Portland. Covering the work of my party during the season of 1893.

The shore-line was delineated when the sheet was sent to me, having been surveyed by Assistant W. C. Hodgkins in 1890.

Within these limits the rise of land from the shore-line is, generally, quite abrupt and the prominent feature irregular & complex. About mid way of the sheet the River is much narrowed in by granitic formations on both sides, known as "The Straits", with a width of 200 m.

(2)
This granite extends, thence, along the river bank to the lower limits of the sheet, where the outcrop is considerably withdrawn from immediate shore-line. In two places the ledges are now noted; at the Whitman Quarry, near the Columbia Granite Quarry, some two miles above. These last named are quite extensive, having about 2 miles of railroad and cable devices to facilitate the handling of the stone. Curbing in Daring stone is all we saw of the product, which appeared of inferior quality for building purposes. At several places, in the wooded hills of this range, we noticed small pits where mica deposits had been noted.

Up the River from the granite, on the east side, occurs the Brown Sand Stone formation where the famous Portland Quays are located. These are said to be the largest in the U.S. and are now extensively worked, with the aid of steam drills, churning machines, railroads, trawling devices and other modern appliances. Stones of 15 tons weight are handled. Four hundred men have been employed. The excavations extend back from the immediate river bank, to the 20 foot contour line, on a frontage of more than half a mile and into

3)
the hill about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile ² to the 100 foot curve.

Within the excavations stone has been rammed to a depth of -115 feet - i.e. below mean high water, in one pit; ² in others the abrupt wall is ± 160 feet.

The country is well wooded with a second growth, mostly of Chestnut, Hickory, Oak, Pine & Cedar. In height, from the mere bush of road "cuts" to trees of ± 75 feet. This is grown for timber & fuel. The streets ² grounds of the towns are thickly planted with ornamental trees ² orchards of Apple ² Peach. The whole presenting the appearance of a thickly wooded country.

There are four towns upon the shore. The settlements were made by Colonists from Mass. as early as 1636, ² Middletown was a city 110 years ago. Portland, on the E. bank, opposite Middletown is the site of the Quaker Inauguration before mentioned, ² the making of them is the principal industry of the place. There are good wharves at the Inauguration where the stone is shipped. The Inauguration railroad also has connection with the Boston ² New York Air Line R.R. The quarry waste is transported by these two systems of railroad.

to large "dumps" both above & below them, where the low spaces are fast filling up & changing the face of nature, in a marked degree as shown since the Chm. line survey of 1890.

The works of the Eastern Tin Brass Co. &c. Some smaller manufacturing are located in the Eastern portion of this town.

The small villages of Bobad & Middle Hadham join Portland on the Ead. They are largely devoted to farming, but there are several small water powers e.g. as on Fayles Brook where there are 6 dams, affording power to a variety of small factories. The lower power on Fayles Brook is used in making calcium for the navy. The highest hill surveyed is "Hog Hill" in Middle Hadham = 540 ft. & upon this Emersons is located. Both of these towns have landings & also a railroad station on the Air Line R.R.

The village of Smith Farms, on the N. bank, a suburb of Middletown, from which it is separated by Pamooka Brook, is also devoted to farming & manufacturing. There are silk & iron mills. Here, also, is located the Connecticut State Hospital for the Insane & the City Poor Farm.

2
The Connecticut Valley Railroad is near the right bank of the River. There are good landing wharves belonging to the Susan Hospital. The Columbia Granite Co. formerly called Dunham's Dock? is at the Whitman Dock near the lower end of the Shute is locally known as "Moranas".

The only Bridge over the Connecticut, falling upon this Shute is the Iron Railroad Bridge between Middletown & Portland belonging to the New Haven Hartford & N.Y. System. The rails are about 32 ft. above m. H. W. There is a Steam Ferry connecting these two places, about 1/8 mile above the Bridge.

I did not hear the river freshets nor the cause of much damage & presume the range of the floods to be well under 32 ft. above m. H. W. as evidenced by the N.Y. Bridge. The ice must gauge at the upper end of the Straits.

To the East of the Straits Hill there is a tract of country, nearly N. & S. on the Shute & some 3/4 of a mile in width, which is quite evidence of a former river bed. John Pond & numerous other "Dunham ponds" occur here.

Of the extensive meadow or interval, tracts.

so marked a feature upon the other shots, but one,
that of Peacocks, is found upon this. It could be
easily ascertained for farming purposes & the
water shed from hills behind pumped over this Lake,
as in Louisiana, if necessary. A crane has been
raised upon it.

Very respectfully submitted.

C. W. Boyd,

Assistant