London Feb 5th 1797

In the last evening Mr King presented me with your letter again making one of the Receipt of my publication on Small Canals, which I hope you will soon have time to Peruse in a tranqlique Retirement from the Busy operations of a Public Life. Therefore looking forward to that period when the whole face of your mind will be set upon the Internal improvement of our Country by Promoting Agriculture and Manufactures. I have little doubt but easy Convenance, the Great agent to those improvements will have its due weight and meet your patronage.

For the mode of giving easy communication to every part of the American states, they leave to draw your particular attention to the last chapter on intricate Canals, and the expanded mind will trace down the time when they will penetrate into every District carrying with them the means of subsisting Man and Labour, and rendering it producible. But how to Raise a sum in the different States, has been my greatest difficulty. I first considered them as natural Works. But perhaps,
an incorporated company of subscribers, who should be bound to apply half or a part of their profits to extension, would be the best mode. As it would then be their interest to promote the work, and guard their investments.

That such a work would answer to subscribers appears from such information as I have collected, relative to the carriage from the neighborhood of Lancaster to Philadelphia. To me it appears that a canal on the small scale might have been made to Lancaster for 120,000 pounds, and that the carriage at 26 per ton would pay 14,000 per annum of which 7,500 to subscribers and 6,500 to others. By this means in about 10 years they would touch the Targus River, and the trade would then so much increase as to produce 34,000 per annum, of which 17,000 to subscribers, the remainder to extension. Continuing this till in about 20 years the canal would run into Lake Erie, yielding a produce of 80,000 per annum or 450,000 pounds to subscribers, which is 46 per cent. Hence the inducement to subscribe to such undertaking.

Proceeding in this manner I find that in about 26 or 28 years perseverance would have 1,860 miles.
of canal, equal to bringing water carriage within the easy reach of every house, nor would any house be more than 10 or 12 Miles from a canal. By this time the whole carriage of the country would come on Water even to Popencers — 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, the whole would also be pond canal, on which there is an equal facility of conveyance each way. Having made this calculation, I attempted to show that the Eoretical System would be productive of great emolument to subscribers. It is only further to be observed that if each State was to commence a like system, it would fill the whole country, and in lieu then be conveying being water carriage within the easy carriage of every one of the American States. Conveying the surplus labours of one hundred millions of men.

Hence seeing that by system this must be the result, I feel assured that the public mind may be convinced of their true interest. And instead of directing
Tunpike Roads towards the Interior Country, and extending large demesnes in River navigation. Which must ever be precarious and slow. I would 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 excuse my excuse for troubling you with so long a letter, and in expectation of being favored 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 service,

Rott Fulton

The Excellency

George Washington