

**DOWN THE HISTORIC
SUSQUEHANNA: A
SUMMER'S JAUNT FROM
OTSEGO TO THE CHESAPEAKE**

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Down the Historic Susquehanna: A Summer's Jaunt from Otsego to the Chesapeake by Charles Weathers Bump

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CHARLES WEATHERS BUMP

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A TRIP OF MUCH PROMISE.

COOPERSTOWN, OTSEGO COUNTY, N. Y.,
Aug. 15.—The other day when I told a friend I proposed to spend a summer vacation in a trip making the entire length of the Susquehanna river from Lake Otsego to the Chesapeake, he said to me, sort of apologetically:

"I have always considered the Susquehanna such a useless river. It seems so big and lumbering, and it has not the charm of the Hudson for scenery or historic interest."

Before we parted, an hour later, I had so oppositely convinced my friend that I am sure he is now envying me the trip. As for myself I redoubled my enthusiasm over the summer scheme. So here I am at the head of the big river, looking forward with eagerness to a jaunt of many miles down stream and forearmed, as it would seem, from "reading up" on what I am to see in the way of fine scenery, of sites invested with historic interest, and mountains and vales replete with romantic legends and Indian tales.

A great many other persons are undoubtedly in the same boat with my friend. Perhaps I myself might have been as ignorant had I not had a grandfather who was familiar with every mile of the Susquehanna and who repeated many of its most interesting incidents as we traveled together along portions of its banks.

Casting about for a reason, it seems to me that the fame of the Susquehanna has two distinct setbacks which have led to its comparative neglect by travelers in search of the picturesque or fond of tracing the footsteps of American history.

One of these setbacks arose from the circumstance that the river was peopled by three different Commonwealths—Maryland,

Pennsylvania and New York. The New Yorkers look eastward to New York city and Albany. Similarly the Pennsylvanians mostly find a commingling of interest with Philadelphia. And out of all this grows much ignorance on the part of one section in the doings of another. In Maryland, for instance, little is known of the prosperity and attractiveness of the river valley within the limits of New York. While contrariwise I have at times found much apathy in Central New York about the history and development of the river in Maryland and Lower Pennsylvania.

Perhaps much of this isolation might have been overcome had the Susquehanna been regularly navigable by steamboats or had the railroads formed a single line from Cooperstown to Havre de Grace. Then a steady down-to-Maryland business would have ensued in big proportions and the charm of travel up and down the river would have been strong. But the steamboats could not come and the railroads mainly turned eastward and westward in their building, and so the Susquehanna has been passed by travelers.

The importance of this consideration is seen by comparing the Susquehanna with the Hudson, beyond doubt the most admired of American rivers. Railroads on both banks and steamboats day and night carry tourists from New York to Albany through the entire region of beauty, legend and history. It is again made obvious by recalling the Potomac, the scenic portion of which is traversed by every passenger to or from the West over the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. The Susquehanna river has not one, but half a dozen railroads. They follow every mile of its banks from Otsego to the Chesapeake, yet no less than eight changes of cars are required for a through journey.

And yet, in spite of such drawbacks, there is much of genuine interest to be found in a journey all the way along the Susquehanna. In its long and winding course from limpid Lake Otsego, its scenery is certainly as varied as that of any river. Sometimes through fertile valleys teeming with busy farmers; then

again in narrow, rocky gorges, with mountains close by framing in views that are hard to excel, and contributing rushing cascades to swell the big stream; again past cities alive with industries and important as railroad centres. In all its windings it never has the fault of being monotonous, and often justly earns the application of those much-abused adjectives, "romantic," "noble" or "grand." No more pleasing lake scenery can be found than on and around Otsego; no more beautiful vale entered than that of Wyoming; no bolder views laid bare than above Harrisburg, where the river forces its way with abruptness through a gap in the Kittatinny Mountains; no finer rocky gorges than from Columbia to Port Deposit.

The painters have not neglected the Susquehanna, especially the men who led American art in the generation just passing away. Those who are familiar with the public and private galleries of our leading American cities can easily recall canvases reproducing charming bits of river and mountain scenery from along the Susquehanna and the Juniata and other tributaries. In many instances these paintings are doubly valuable because they picture landscapes that have been greatly altered.

Statistics are dull sometimes, but then again they give much in short compass. It interests us to be told, for example, that in the country drained by the Susquehanna there are two millions and a quarter of inhabitants. When we ask what is included in this drainage area we are told by Government investigators that the Susquehanna drains 26,000 square miles, of which 6,000 are in New York, nearly 20,000 in Pennsylvania and a small fraction in Maryland. In other words, it comprises about one-seventh of New York State, in the southern and central portions, and slightly less than one-half of Pennsylvania, sweeping from beyond Scranton on the northeast almost to Johnstown on the southwest, and from beyond Lancaster on the southeast to the old region of the northwest. Of course, the Susquehanna does not do this unaided. It has many, many active branches,

the chief among which are the Chenango and the Chemung, in New York State, and the Juniata and the West Branch, in Pennsylvania.

Incidentally let me remind you of one other fact concerning the Susquehanna which is of importance. It is, without exception, the longest river on the Atlantic seaboard, and is overtopped in size only by a few of the great broad Western rivers. Its length is counted as 420 miles. That of the West Branch is more than 200 miles.

The hundreds of towns found every few miles along the main river and its tributaries show how the two millions and a quarter of inhabitants are made up. It is true that there are no cities of the largest size, but there are many of the next size, the most conspicuous being Binghamton, N. Y., at the junction of the Chenango river, which has 50,000; Elmira, on the Chemung, 35,000; Scranton, Pa., on the Lackawanna, 75,000; Wilkesbarre, on the main stream, 45,000; Williamsport, on the West Branch, 35,000; Harrisburg, on the main stream, 80,000; York, on Codorus creek, 30,000; Lancaster, on Conestoga creek, 40,000, and Altoona, 30,000.

We are told also by the Government experts already quoted that there is a goodly amount of water power in the rapids and descents of the Susquehanna and its many feeders. For instance, Lake Otsego is 1,198 feet above tidewater, so that the river has to descend that considerable amount in getting to Havre de Grace. Much of this power is utilized, but much of it is not, and we are assured that there are valuable opportunities to get power for manufactures along a portion of the West Branch not yet developed by railroads.

That one gap on the West Branch is the only part of the entire river which has not a railroad on the one bank or the other, sometimes on both. Close students of American development long ago observed how the rivers helped make the railroads great by yielding their banks to furnish available routes. This is especially noticeable in the case of the Susquehanna. Four of the great through lines to the West make use of portions of the river