Business, Politics, and Internal Improvements

WORTHINGTON retired from active politics for three years at the end of his second term as governor. Having failed in the race for the United States Senate and having received no appointment from the Monroe administration, Worthington turned with energy and determination to advancing his business affairs. The times were bad, taxes were high, and labor was scarce; wheat sold slowly at twenty cents a bushel delivered, only a little corn could be disposed of at twelve and a half cents, and land transfers, except in bankruptcy cases, had stopped entirely.¹ Land sales at $1.25 an acre under the new Land Law of 1820 brought extremely few buyers, for even the formerly well-to-do citizens of the county and state could not raise the hundred dollars to buy the new minimum of eighty acres. More than half the citizens north of the Ohio were already deeply indebted for land purchased from the government, which in 1820 held paper against the people of the West in the sum of $22,000,000.² The Bank of Chillicothe was still solvent and paying dividends, but its stock was going begging at eighty dollars, and nobody who was lucky enough to have money in multiples of eighty was fool enough to put it in bank stock during the Panic.³ Everyone's patience was short; Worthington had to admonish David B. Macomb, his son-in-law and the manager of his cloth mill, for overworking his help, displaying an ungovernable temper, and running up a bill of $2,000 with Kentucky cotton growers. His advice today seems as wise and humane as when he expressed it:

You should act with firmness tempered with calmness and kindness toward those under your control. The man who has a good heart & genuine courage will never so far degrade himself as to wantonly insult and wound the feelings of his inferiors. Cowards only are capable of this. Let your conduct be kind, sincere and manly to all, and above all so govern & regulate your affairs by economy as to be able to spare some of your savings to the man who is needy.

¹ Colonel James S. Swearingen to Major Henry Bedinger, November 12, 1820, RCHS.
² Burnet, Notes, 451.
³ Colonel James S. Swearingen to Major Henry Bedinger, April 29, 1821, RCHS.
The pleasure such acts will give you is not to be compared with the little self
denial you may use to enable you to do it. I write you as I would my own son.
I can do no more.

During the summer of 1819, Worthington himself turned to the
breaking plow for the first time in his life. He could not obtain labor,
he liked plowing, and he wished to set an example for his sons. He
took up surveying again and resumed the buying of cattle and sheep.
On July 16, 1819, Mrs. Worthington presented him with a son, the
last of ten children, and he made this note in his diary:

This morning at 4 O’Clock my wife had a son being our 10th child born
perfect. May it please my God to lead him through life in the Way of right­
eousness. I would most humbly pray that he may be a sincere
able preacher
of the Gospel under our Lord & Master—and may it please him to bestow a
double portion of his spirit for that purpose.

The traveler Thomas Hulme visited Worthington in July, 1819, and
was amazed at his 800-acre estate and his mansion. He reported him
as chiefly interested in home manufactures, and added, “He is a true
lover of his country.” What seemed to impress Hulme more than
anything else was the profligacy with which barnyard manure was
wasted. Worthington had a pile growing out of and surrounding his
barn that was larger than the barn itself, and he was threatening to
move his barn to get away from it. Hulme estimated that not less
than 300 loads of prime horse manure were dumped into the Scioto
River annually by the one tavern at which he had stayed in Chilli­
cothe.

In October of the same year, the English farmer William Faux
visited Worthington and was also much impressed by his prosperous
estate, Adena, and by the thriving village of Chillicothe, the popula­
tion of which was 3,000. Faux was surprised, however, at the large
number of people who were pushing on westward and was moved to
remark concerning this un-English phenomenon: “The American has
always something better in his eye, further west; he therefore lives and
dies on hope, a mere gypsy in this particular.” Even more interesting
than this comment is an impression he recorded of that eminent
Chillicothe citizen, soldier, and congressman, Duncan McArthur, who
three years later was again to serve in Congress and in 1830 was to be
elevated by his fellow citizens to the governorship of the state. Faux
related that, while walking with his friend “the squire” (Worthington),

4 Worthington to Macomb, December 2, 1817, in WM.
5 Thomas Hulme, *Hulme’s Journal of a Tour in the Western Countries of America*
   ..., in Reuben G. Thwaites, ed., *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846*, X (Cleve­
   land, 1904), 70-71.
they met General McArthur (he calls him McCarty), a “dirty and butcherlike [man] and very unlike a soldier in appearance, seeming half savage, and dressed as a backwoodsman.” Worthington spoke to him, and after McArthur’s surly nod remarked to Faux, “Like General Jackson . . . he is fit only for hard knocks and Indian warfare.”

In the summer of 1819, Worthington was instrumental in organizing the Scioto Agricultural Society, which was a great stimulus to the raising of better crops and livestock. He was the first president, and held that office for several years. An address he made before the Society in 1821 gives us a glimpse of his interest in home manufactures, which were as important to the members of the Society as agricultural pursuits:

Nothing but industry, rightly directed, with economy, can relieve us from our present embarrassments. It should be remembered, that every article manufactured in the country is a saving of the price of that article to the country . . . . We must choose one of two alternatives, either to be in a state of dependence, clothed in foreign manufactures, or be independent, clothed in homespun, the products of our own labor. Indeed, necessity will compel us to choose the latter. . . . [Let us have] union of sentiment, and practice in the use of articles manufactured in this country, to enable us in a short time to lessen greatly, if not entirely remove the difficulties we are now feeling.

Worthington was a breeder of Merino sheep. His stock in general rated second only to that of the Renick family, and was often bought by new settlers. His orchards were among the best in the community. In 1817, while on a trip to New York, he had induced several German redemptioners to go to Chillicothe and work out their indentures on his farms. These skilled horticulturists from the Rhineland replanted Worthington’s vineyards and re landscaped his grounds; under their supervision Adena became a well-known beauty spot. Indentured for three years, the Palatines proved so industrious that Worthington shortened their terms and then employed them on his farms or in his mills.

In August, 1819, he took a trip East on business and for his health, in the course of which he visited President Monroe, Rufus King, and William H. Crawford. Although Monroe had failed to appoint Worthington Secretary of the Navy the previous year, there seems to have been no ill will between them on that score. In this connection it may be noted that John Quincy Adams writes in his Memoirs that

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6 W[illiam] Faux, Memorable Days in America, Being a Journal of a Tour to The United States . . . , ibid., XI (Cleveland, 1904), 179, 182.
7 Supporter and Scioto Gazette, August 22, 1821.
8 Worthington’s diary, June 14, August 27, 1817, and April 7, 1818.
in October, 1818, he suggested Worthington as an available candidate for Secretary of the Navy: "The President said he was not personally acquainted with him, but he had been mentioned to him as a man of indirect ways upon whose steadiness no reliance was to be placed. He preferred men of a straightforward character." This characterization is a fabrication, at least in part. President Monroe and his staff had dined and stayed overnight with Worthington at Adena in August just a year earlier, and the Governor had spent several days in his company. Apparently it was difficult for Adams to write anything good about a western Republican.

In May, 1820, Worthington, accompanied by Mrs. Worthington's nieces, Elizabeth Bedinger and Ann Shepherd, went with a load of produce to New Orleans. There he spent a fortnight buying and selling, and showing his young companions the sights in the river metropolis. He was personally pained to see the citizenry making the Sabbath "a day of amusement and gambling." On the fourteenth, he hurried from his hotel at ten o'clock in the night to view a great fire at the navy yard which, "from total want of caution," resulted in a loss, he calculated, of between $300,000 and $400,000.

On May 24, they sailed for Philadelphia, arriving there on June 11. Having placed the girls on the stage for Fredericktown, Worthington went on to Washington. There he attended to a number of business transactions and met his niece, Sally Bedinger, whose school had just closed. On the fifteenth, they went by stage to Shepherdstown, and after a day's visit there he pushed on to Ohio.

That fall, Worthington and John Waddle spent six weeks in the East on business. Worthington attended to some banking affairs in Washington, visited Rufus King in New York, and then took a steamer to Boston, where he inspected the Waltham Cotton Mills, "said to be the best in the World," having a capital and surplus of $600,000 and paying annual dividends of 15 to 20 per cent. On October 19, he attended a cattle show at Brighton and visited John Adams, whom he found "very feeble." He arrived home November 4, after stops at New York, Philadelphia, Washington, and Shepherdstown.

Shipping meat and flour down the Mississippi continued to be one of Worthington's chief enterprises. In this business he had no local monopoly; to mention only two competitors, Sam Finley and Drayton Curtis established a steam flour mill early in 1818 with three pairs of stones which turned out fifty barrels a day. Joseph Kerr was one of his strongest competitors in the export of meat. In 1820, there were seventy-three steamboats coursing the western rivers, and others were
being built. Innumerable arks and flatboats were used to float products to New Orleans, and 33,000 tons of goods were carried by steamboat up the river in 1820 alone. Worthington built boats for the river trade at his own sawmills and loaded them with his own flour, beef, pork, and whiskey, as well as products which he purchased locally. His flatboats were usually fifty or fifty-six feet in length and had a sixteen-foot beam. The cost of building these flimsy boats was only one dollar a linear foot; thus, not counting the lumber, a fifty-foot boat cost Worthington a mere fifty dollars.

Too often, these homemade craft were defective, and failed to navigate the falls at Louisville or sank in the river before they reached New Orleans. Once on March 12, 1823, during the freshet which was always awaited to make the Scioto navigable, one of Worthington's heavily loaded boats broke loose, ran on a stump, and sank within sight of its wharf. Drayage around the Louisville rapids in times of low water was expensive, and each shipment was both a physical and a financial gamble. The canal movement in the West envisaged a Kentucky and an Indiana waterway around this obstruction in the Ohio, and Worthington heartily supported every scheme for expediting navigation toward the Gulf. Like the Ohio canals, however, this improvement was not secured until after his death. Sometimes he shipped from Portsmouth, Cincinnati, or Louisville by steamer (the charge was $1.50 a barrel from Portsmouth), but usually he sent his goods all the way from Chillicothe in his own flatboats. From 1819 until his death, the flow of exports from the Scioto country grew in volume continually.

In addition to his independent enterprises, Worthington was also a member of the firm of Worthington, [John] Waddle, and [Amaziah] Davison of Chillicothe, Portsmouth, and Cincinnati, which during these years supplied provisions to the army posts of the Southwest and to military expeditions such as the one conducted by Colonel Henry Atkinson in 1819-20 to explore the upper reaches of the Missouri. Joseph Kerr was also an associate in this commercial venture. Worthington's diary for May, 1821, briefly itemizes the difficulties of supplying New Orleans, Fort Smith, and Natchitoches with provisions, and tells how storage, freight, and spoilage consumed expected profits. Low water in the rivers was a major obstruction to success. Sometimes Worthington's cargo was held up for weeks at the mouth of the Red River after its transfer to a steamer. Navigation up the Arkansas to Fort Smith was subject to the same hazards. Deliveries at ports on the

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9 Grant Foreman, "River Navigation," in the Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XV (1928-29), 99.
Gulf or the Atlantic coast (Worthington supplied the Washington and Norfolk navy yards) were much more predictable, although they necessitated a transfer of cargo to ocean-going vessels at New Orleans.

The brief diary account of the nine-week business trip Worthington made to New Orleans in the spring of 1823 illustrates the hazards and uncertainties of river traffic. With Mrs. Worthington and their four-year-old son Francis, he accompanied his two partially loaded flatboats from Chillicothe to Portsmouth, March 14-15. There the three attended church on Sunday, the sixteenth. From the seventeenth to the twentieth the boat loadings were completed, including the cargo of a third boat which had arrived from Chillicothe on Sunday. New crews having been secured for the flatboats, the Worthingtons proceeded to Cincinnati, where Worthington loaded the contents of one boat on the steamer "Magnet," a 120-foot vessel which could withstand the current of the Red River to Natchitoches. The consignment for this army post consisted of the following items:

- 240 barrels of pork
- 123 barrels of flour
- 47 barrels of whiskey
- 49 barrels of beans
- 52 boxes of soap
- 1 box of bacon
- 10 barrels of vinegar
- 3 boxes, 1 barrel, of apples
- 2 half-barrels of beer
- 1 pot of apple butter
- 11 boxes of candles

At Cincinnati, Worthington sold the emptied flatboat for $37.00, filled out his shipments by the purchase of forty-four barrels of beans at $3.00 a barrel, and, setting out again on the twenty-fifth, reached Louisville that evening. Aboard the "Magnet" next day, Mrs. Worthington was exceedingly ill, probably as a result of exposure to the continuous wet weather. That day they reached the Mississippi; both it and the Ohio were very high. On the twenty-eighth, they passed the mouth of the Arkansas, and on the twenty-ninth, they arrived at Natchez, where freight was discharged. On the thirtieth, the "Magnet" entered the mouth of the Red River, which, owing to the high water in the Mississippi, had a fifty-mile backwater that had inundated much of the country. Though heavily laden, the "Magnet" steamed well, passing Alexandria on the thirty-first and reaching the straggling settlement at Natchitoches on the third of April. On transferring his consignment to the military authorities, Worthington noted with some disgust that his pork was two barrels short.

On April 6, they were back on the Mississippi, the river "higher than I ever seen it." At 7 A.M., on the seventh of the month, they reached
New Orleans, where they were met by their son Albert, who for several months had been acting as a business agent there.

Having safely lodged Mrs. Worthington and Francis, Worthington and Albert prepared another steamer load of produce for Natchitoches from the flatboats and by purchase, which was dispatched on the "Hornet" under Albert's care on the twelfth. It consisted of the following merchandise:

342 barrels of flour  38 boxes of candles
34 barrels of whiskey  18 small and 21 large boxes
4 barrels of pork     of salt
12 barrels of vinegar

From the twelfth to the thirtieth of April, Worthington was busy selling the remainder of his produce and purchasing goods to take home—two bales of cotton, nine bags of coffee, twenty hogsheads of salt, one tun of rice, and one barrel of oil, among other items. He had hoped to show his wife and son the city and its historic places, but it rained almost continuously, and they were all ill with fever. They bade Albert farewell on April 30, had a wet and disagreeable return trip, ran aground once, and arrived home on May 23, where they all continued to be sick for the ensuing week.

Worthington and George Gibson, commissary general of subsistence, entered into a typical army contract November 18, 1819. It bound the firm of Worthington, Waddle, and Davison to deliver at Natchitoches, Louisiana, the following shipment, one quarter on June 1, 1820; one quarter on September 1, 1820; one quarter on December 1, 1820; and the final quarter on March 1, 1821:

208 barrels of pork, "one head to the barrel, the pieces not to exceed ten pounds in weight" @ $16.30
420 barrels "fine fresh" flour @ $8.00
2,304 gallons proof whiskey "in good white oak barrels" @ 62¢
2,920 pounds "good" soap @ 20¢
1,100 pounds "good" candles @ 21¢
46 bushels of salt @ $1.00
730 gallons "good" vinegar "in white oak barrels" @ 26¢
164 bushels peas or beans @ $2.50
93 barrels corn meal—"kiln dried" @ $6.25

What the Panic and the hard times of the twenties did to prices is shown by a comparison of this bill of lading with an order received by Worthington in a contract signed with Gibson on November 23, 1825,
for supplying the same post. It bound Worthington to deliver the following items at Natchitoches, one-half on June 1, 1826, and one-half on December 1, 1826:

- 180 barrels pork @ $11.25
- 375 barrels flour @ $5.50
- 2,400 gallons whiskey @ $28
- 165 bushels beans @ $1.50
- 1,240 pounds tallow candles @ 14¢
- 375 barrels flour @ $5.50 dies @ 14¢
- 165 bushels beans @ $1.50
- 675 gallons vingear @ 9¢
- 7,640 pounds soap @ 9¢
- 244

For several years after 1820, the effects of the Panic were still being felt, and credit was extremely difficult to arrange. In 1823, it was hard for Worthington to secure enough credit to buy pork at $6.50 per hundred which he had contracted to deliver to the army at New Orleans for $8.50. This meat had to be examined in New Orleans to see if it would stand the army's inspection on receipt. To wash and repack the meat and rehead the barrels was an expensive process. Moreover, government payment was exceedingly slow, and even if a small profit had been made on the shipment, too often it was eaten up by interest charges.

Worthington engaged in up-river trade also, purchasing goods in large quantities at New Orleans or at other points on the river. When not too busy, he accompanied his shipments down to the Louisiana metropolis and bought merchandise for himself, for his neighbors, and sometimes for the merchants of Chillicothe. The same was true when he went to the eastern seaboard. A typical bill of lading, dated April 4, 1822, of a Worthington shipment from New Orleans on the “Car of Commerce,” Joseph Pierce, master, was made up of the following items:

- 3 hogsheads sugar
- 4 kegs nails
- 1 barrel coffee
- 1 barrel loaf sugar and coffee
- 1 barrel loaf sugar and rice
- 1 barrel rice
- ¾ and ¾ chests tea
- 1 barrel brown sugar
- 1 bale verdigris
- 1 basket s[perm?] oil
- 1 keg verdigris
- 3 kegs salt petre
- 1 cask empty bottles
- ½ barrel lamp oil
- 1 chest earthenware
- 1 barrel white Havana sugar
- 1 box spermaceti candles
- 2 boxes raisins
- 1 box books
- 2 bags corks
- 2 half-barrels sugar and coffee
- 44 bags “turkistand” salt

10 Consignment lists and bills of lading, in WM.
11 In WM.
Shipping to New York, Baltimore, or abroad by way of New Orleans was at best a circuitous and wasteful route, and agitation grew for more direct connections with the East. Measures for the completion of the Erie Canal were watched with great interest in Ohio. Worthington had always had a great interest in canal-building projects. While he was governor, he had been requested by Governor Clinton and other prominent New Yorkers to use his influence in getting the Ohio legislature to assist in the construction of the Erie Canal because Ohio would benefit so greatly by it. Worthington had brought the matter, together with the correspondence concerning it, before the legislature in his message of December 11, 1816, and the idea had been enthusiastically received, but no actual financial aid was made available. Nevertheless, from that time on, the project of canals for Ohio took shape, and was the subject of lively debate each year in the assembly.

Worthington reentered politics in 1821 by running for the state legislature. He was elected from Ross County, together with Archibald McLean and William Vance, from a field of ten candidates. Bills for free education, poor relief, a canal system, and other projects which he had recommended while governor or in which he was interested were pending, and his influence was needed to get them adopted. His return was not an occasion for great rejoicing among his colleagues, however. They resented his reassumption of leadership and tried to keep him in the background. He was suspected of desiring the speakership, with which the house might well have honored him, but he was denied it. The death that same month of United States Senator William A. Trimble gave him a chance to try his strength against the younger men in control. Governor Brown was the only candidate who was considered strong enough to defeat him in the senatorial contest, although General Harrison, Robert Lucas, and John McLean received some votes on the first few ballots. It took nine ballots to elect, on five of which Worthington led. He eventually lost to Brown by one vote, 50 to 51.

Thus Governor Brown succeeded Senator Trimble, and Speaker Allen Trimble, William's brother, succeeded Governor Brown for the remainder of his term. Worthington, greatly chagrined at his defeat, wrote his friend William H. Crawford, then Secretary of the Treasury, of

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the circumstances concerning it. Crawford tried to cheer him up by praising his past achievements but had to break the further bad news to him that there seemed no likelihood that the postmaster generalship, for which Worthington had been angling, would be vacated soon by Meigs. Rufus King declared that Meigs would never resign so long as he could contrive to hang on to the job. Actually, when Meigs retired in 1823, Crawford and King recommended to Monroe that Worthington be appointed. Instead, his fellow statesman, John McLean of Cincinnati, who had succeeded Meigs in the general land office, secured the position.

During this session of the legislature, Worthington was successful in having the tax on land raised so that the deficit would be covered, in getting an extra session of the legislature called to redistrict the state, in having a resolution denouncing the Osborn bank decision rejected, and in getting an improved pauper bill passed. He failed in his attempt to have a constitutional convention called to reform the judiciary.

In 1822, Jeremiah Morrow was elected governor over Allen Trimble, and Worthington was reelected to the house. The session of 1822-23 was noteworthy for little except canal legislation. Worthington's advocacy of a constitutional convention again failed, and so did his efforts, as chairman of the committee on finance, to get the land tax raised again.

In 1824, Worthington ran for the legislature again and polled the highest vote in the sixth district from a field of nine candidates. He was beaten for speaker by Micajah Williams on the third ballot. Morrow was reelected governor, defeating Allen Trimble in a very close race. Worthington opposed Trimble "bitterly," but Ross County supported him nevertheless.

In Ohio, the Presidential campaign of 1824 was an exciting one. The number of eminent Presidential candidates gave every voter a wide latitude in his choice. Clinton was boomed in 1822, and, had New York come out in support of him, Ohio would probably have followed suit. A Columbus caucus for Clay, December 10, 1822, was stalemated by Clinton's supporters, who insisted on a postponement until New York acted. Clay was second choice, but the longer the campaign went

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13 Crawford to Worthington, November 3, 1821, and January 17 and June 14, 1822, in WMOSL.
14 Rufus King to his son Edward, November 3 and December 25, 1822, in the King Manuscripts.
on, the stronger his support grew. His equivocal attitude toward slavery hurt him a good deal at first and gave Clinton the advantage, but, when the latter failed to get the backing of New York, his friends turned to Clay and the "American system."\textsuperscript{15}

Worthington and Morrow were both mentioned as possible Vice-Presidential candidates on a Crawford or Clinton ticket, but the Clay forces suspected that this was a stratagem on the part of the Adams party and refused to be alienated from Clay. Worthington was personally in favor of Crawford for President, although his son-in-law Edward King rightly believed that most Ohioans favored Clay.\textsuperscript{16} Worthington helped Senator Benjamin Ruggles engineer a caucus for Crawford and Gallatin at Washington in February, 1824. Ruggles made the following report: "I have followed your opinions on the subject of a caucus. We held one last evening under a general notice . . . about 70 attended, Mr. Crawford received 64 . . . Mr. Gallatin 57 votes for Vice president."\textsuperscript{17}

Thus two of Worthington's best friends were put in nomination. So far as their views on internal improvements were concerned, there was little to choose between Clinton, Clay, and Crawford. New York eliminated the first, Crawford's sickness put him out of the running, and Ohio supported Clay, with Jackson in second place. There is little doubt that Worthington was prejudiced in favor of the Crawford-Gallatin ticket because both men on it were his close friends and because Crawford had attempted to get the postmaster generalship for him when Meigs resigned. In Ohio 19,255 votes were cast for Clay, 18,459 for Jackson, and 12,280 for Adams, a poor third. It is interesting to note that after the elimination of Clay, the vote of Ohio's delegates in the House of Representatives was 10 for Adams, 2 for Jackson, and 2 for Crawford.\textsuperscript{18}

By 1824, Worthington's influence was not as strong as it had been. He had lost touch with the growing population of the state, and the legislators were looking to younger men for leadership. His advocacy

\textsuperscript{15} Eugene H. Roseboom, "Ohio in the Presidential Election of 1824," \textit{Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly}, XXVI (1917), 161 et seq.

\textsuperscript{16} Edward King to his father, Rufus, November 24, 1822, and January 28, 1823, in King, \textit{Rufus King}, VI, 487, 497.

\textsuperscript{17} Ruggles to Worthington, February 15, 1824, in WMOSL. See the excellent letter from G. A. Worth to Worthington, February 14, 1824, for an account of the situation in New York. In the Ethan Allen Brown Manuscripts, OSL.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Supporter and Scioto Gazette}, November 11, 1824.
of the canal system was largely responsible for his election to the legislature, but his popularity was not sufficient to elect him to the United States Senate to succeed Ethan Allen Brown. In the legislative jockeying to secure this position, William Henry Harrison electioneered for ten days before and after the legislature met. His chances were injured, however, by the report that he had seduced the daughter of a prominent doctor. Brown was thought to have done little in Congress for his constituents, and he suffered from Harrison's rivalry in the southwestern part of the state. Worthington did not offer himself as a candidate for the position until rather late, when he saw that he had a chance to win because of the scandal about Harrison and the prospect of a divided vote. He had been elected, however, to work for canals, not to go to the Senate. Wylls Silliman also offered to run for the office, and each candidate had his party of supporters in the legislature. Harrison was the popular figure as events proved; a general "sympathy" in his "favor seemed to prevail," and he was easily elected on the fourth ballot, Silliman being his nearest rival, Worthington in third place, and Brown fourth.

This appears to have been the last election in which consideration was given to Worthington as a representative of the state in Washington. He was widely popular, and his talents were respected, but his services were regarded as more valuable in local projects than in national politics. Moreover, the vigor of Jacksonian populism had little charm for him, and he viewed the growth of the General's popularity with a jaundiced eye. St. Clair, had he been alive, would have enjoyed his rival's discomfiture as the same turgid stream of American democracy which had overwhelmed him—now more turgid—changed its course and left Worthington in the shallows of Jeffersonian conservatism.

The legislative session of 1824-25 was a very important one. The tax system was reformed, an elementary school law was adopted, and canal construction was authorized. In this session Worthington helped bring to fruition some of his fondest hopes.

19 A. Kelley, in a letter to Brown, January 28, 1825, reported that Harrison's chances were less bright as a result of the story that "has lately come out of his having seduced the daughter of Doct. Brower, though it is contradicted by his friends," in the Brown Manuscripts. See also William Doherty to Brown, January 29, in the Brown Manuscripts; Cincinnati Advertiser, February 9; and Trimble to McArthur, December 22, 1824, and January 24, 1825, in the McArthur Papers. 20 House Journal, 23d General Assembly, 345.
Every governor after Worthington had advanced his arguments for the establishment of a public school system. Critics had argued the poverty of the state, but gradually that objection failed to be convincing as papers and public-spirited citizens pleaded for schools unceasingly. In 1819, Ephraim Cutler had introduced a public-school bill which failed in the senate. In 1822, a commission headed by Caleb Atwater had been appointed to study the situation, but its report to the legislature of 1823-24 met with no serious response. Governor Morrow's message in December, 1824, urged action, and by this time public opinion was strong enough to compel a more positive attitude. Under the chairmanship of Nathan Guilford of Cincinnati, a bill was introduced and adopted. Thus, the first important step was taken toward the realization of one of Worthington's greatest desires. He had sent his own children to the finest private schools, but education for all was his ideal.

While Guilford and Cutler exerted their efforts in behalf of the education bill, Worthington, as chairman of the finance committee, pushed for tax reform. Under his capable leadership a bill was introduced and passed which reallocated the three-class evaluation on land and inaugurated the extension of taxes to practically all forms of property. The law, mild as it was, met with much opposition; but it was maintained, and it blazed the way for our modern system of taxation. On the whole, the large property owners, including most of the legislators, were slow to advocate progressive measures when they meant increased taxes, but a few aggressive leaders made good headway in the session of 1824-25. On February 3, the following letter from Worthington was printed in the Supporter and Scioto Gazette:

I have much pleasure in stating to you, for the information of my constituents, that the Canal bill was this day passed into a law, with only thirteen dissenting votes in the House of Representatives, and two in the Senate.

The bill changing the Revenue System has likewise passed; and a bill for the encouragement of Schools, is before the House, and will most likely pass. These are, indeed, three most important subjects to the state of Ohio. With a well regulated system of Common Schools, which shall diffuse information to the rising generation throughout the state, and consequently produce the best effects on their morals, and the most lasting advantages; a good and well regulated system of internal improvements, executed with energy and integrity—and both based on a just and equitable system of taxation—Ohio, under these blessings, if duly appreciated, cannot fail to be prosperous and happy. Having spent the prime and strength of my younger days, with others, in endeavoring to promote the best interests of the state, every step having this tendency is most grateful to me. I am now getting to a time of life which reminds me that I must soon pass away; therefore feel the higher gratification, when I consider that I have given my aid at the present session, to effect objects which will benefit millions when I am no more. That there
should be a difference of opinion, on subjects so important in their nature and tendency, was to be expected; but that there should be so much harmony, is truly pleasing.

Worthington's activities in getting the Ohio canal system started may be regarded as his last achievement in behalf of the state for which he did so much. Although Ohio's canals were not fully completed until 1845, Worthington was instrumental in getting the state to authorize their construction, in selecting the routes they were to follow, and in stimulating popular approval of them.

The construction of the Erie Canal was watched with great interest, and the newspapers kept agitating for a similar project for Ohio. Governor Brown made it the chief object of his messages to the legislature. The first canal bill, introduced in 1819, provided for private construction, but it met with great opposition. It was generally thought that the state, not a private company, should finance and reap the benefits of such an enterprise. Uncertainty as to just how the project should be approached was removed in February, 1820, by the passage of a bill authorizing the appointment of three commissioners, who were to hire an engineer, survey projected routes, and petition Congress for a grant of land.

Not until Worthington came to the house in the session of 1821-22, did the canal movement really gain much momentum. He was a member of the canal committee of five headed by Micajah Williams of Hamilton County. The committee's report of January 3, 1822, was so clear and convincing that the bill for the necessary surveys was enthusiastically passed. Benjamin Tappan, Alfred Kelley, Thomas Worthington, Ethan A. Brown, Jeremiah Morrow, Isaac Minor, and Ebenezer Buckingham were appointed commissioners to manage the details. They were instructed to supervise the survey of the possible routes and make a report at the next session.

The canal committee represented all parts of the state. Its composition was meant to placate each political group, for then, as now, it was necessary to play politics. The routes over which the canals were to run were of no small importance to landowners. By September, 1824, when the surveys were not yet complete, "lands within a reasonable distance" from the canal routes had risen in price 50 to 125 per cent.²¹ When Morrow refused to serve on the committee, Worthington successfully blocked an attempt to replace him with his old enemy Allen

²¹ Supporter and Scioto Gazette, October 7, 1824.
Trimble; but Micajah Williams, a close friend of Trimble, was appointed. The Brown-Trimble-Williams political faction had little use for Worthington. It was difficult, they claimed, "to keep him within the traces." Even Alfred Kelley wrote Senator Brown that Worthington was "a bad selection but necessary." He was a bad selection because he was a political rival of long standing and too rugged an individualist to cooperate readily with men at least some of whom he regarded as his inferiors. He had been defeated for speaker by the coalition, and Brown had defeated him for the Senate. The committee members knew he would dominate the committee if they gave him a chance. As already noted, three years later, in the 1824-25 session of the legislature, Williams himself was to defeat Worthington for speaker and was again to help humiliate him in the senatorial election when Harrison was chosen. Worthington was more popular with the rest of the board, however, and succeeded before the summer was over in getting them to elect him their chairman. Williams accused him of unduly influencing the engineer in favor of the Scioto route, but the canals were, after all, a local as well as a state project, and Worthington's preference for that route, other things being equal, was only natural. In fact, one of the interesting features of the intrigue was this recrudescence of the old rivalry between Cincinnati and Chillicothe: for the capital in 1802, for the bank in 1817, and now for the canals. As in 1817, the answer was to be a compromise, for both cities had secured banks and both were to get canals. Since Worthington's dogged perseverance had been tested before, it is not surprising to find that his opponents, especially those from Cincinnati, had little use for him. They hoped to run the first canal from the Maumee to Cincinnati, but other parts of the state had other designs. Worthington had ample support in braving his opponents.

During the summer of 1822, numerous surveys were made and routes charted to determine the best and cheapest locations for the proposed waterways. Judge James Geddes of New York was employed as consulting engineer, and the canal committeemen chose Alfred Kelley to work with him as their representative. Since his own son James was one of the surveyors employed by Geddes, Worthington had a reliable reporter on the scene of action who kept him fully informed of the progress being made. The four routes under consideration were the

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February 3, 1822, in the Brown Manuscripts.
Maumee-Miami, the Sandusky-Scioto, the Cuyahoga-Muskingum, and the Grand-Mahoning. The preliminary surveys proved that the first of these routes would probably be feasible. Because of the topography, the Sandusky-Scioto route had to be modified by eliminating the Sandusky River and connecting the Scioto River at Lockbourne (near Columbus) with the Cuyahoga-Muskingum route by a cross canal from the headwaters of the Licking. The results of the surveys (900 miles by the end of the year) and the recommendations of the committee were laid before the legislature by Chairman Worthington on January 3 and 23, 1823. The committee recommended that the survey work be continued and that steps be taken to secure finances for actual construction.

On January 27, the legislature authorized further surveys of the Hockhocking and Licking rivers and of the cross connection with the Scioto. The legislature instructed the committee to choose two of its members to serve as acting commissioners and authorized the two thus selected to open negotiations for loans, secure concessions for right of way, and employ competent engineers. The acting commissioners were granted a per diem by the legislature; the others received only their expenses. Alfred Kelley and Micajah Williams were selected as the acting commissioners.

While on a trip east in May, 1823, Worthington called on Governor Clinton, inspected the Erie Canal, then nearing completion, secured as much information as possible about construction methods and costs, and opened negotiations for the employment of Judge David S. Bates of Rochester as supervisory engineer. At the same time, Alfred Kelley canvassed New York for financial backing.

During the summer, the Maumee-Miami route was declared impracticable because of the summit height between the two rivers. The Sandusky-Scioto route was also found to be definitely undesirable because of the summit grade and the lack of feeders—a most "unexpected and unwelcome intelligence," said the Ohio Monitor (Columbus)—but the Scioto half was carefully surveyed with the object of using it in case a connection was made with the Muskingum. The most crucial decision necessary before progress could be made concerned the choice of the river to connect with Lake Erie. The engineers, therefore, concentrated on the Grand, the Black, and the Cuyahoga—the Maumee and Sandusky having been rejected temporarily.  

In March, 1824, the surveyors definitely laid out the canal line down the Scioto. The northern connection had not yet been selected, but the

23 Williams to Worthington, September 8, 1823, in WMOSL.
Sandusky route seemed to be the best choice. Nevertheless, the plans now included a cross canal to the Muskingum from near Columbus and a Dayton-Cincinnati canal along the Great Miami which, it was promised, would be ultimately extended to the Maumee.

The same month, Worthington accompanied a boatload of produce to New Orleans and then went by sea to New York; his health was bad and he needed a vacation. On May 22, he reached New York and found on inquiry that Ohio could float canal loans there easily. The following notes appear in his diary on May 22 and May 31:

Dined with George Clinton. ... Considers Mr Wright best engineer in the state, Mr Geddes the best for exploring the canal route and Mr (Judge) Bates as of the secondary class N. York of engineers. ...

Monday Tuesday ... engaged in endeavoring to make arrangements to obtain funds for the making the Ohio canal and find if the legislature will do their duty there will be no difficulty. ... Treated with much politeness indeed kindness by Mr Clinton and others. ...

Find the canal [Erie] too narrow in places for the passage of 2 boats which are 15 feet wide. ... their boats are drawn by 3 horses & go 3 to 3½ miles per hour. Freight or transportation boats by 2 sometimes one horse who hauls with a boat over 5200 lbs at the rate of 2 miles per hour or 25 miles per day. The passage of a boat through a lock when it is to be filled takes 8 to 10 minutes. When ready filled 5 or 6 miles when an ascending & descending boat meet the 2 are passed the lock in about 10 minutes.

Worthington’s exertions in behalf of the canal doubtless accounted in part for his easy election to the legislature after a year’s absence. The education and tax bills, important as they were, did not create nearly so much interest as the canal project. Judge Bates made his report, January 8, 1825, and Worthington reported for the commission two days later. Bates recommended the route by way of the Cuyahoga, Muskingum, Licking, and Scioto rivers, connecting Cleveland and Portsmouth. Worthington’s committee report approved the same route and urged immediate construction at state expense.24 A bill incorporating the committee’s recommendations was passed in the senate, January 21, and in the house, January 28. It provided for seven commissioners—three of them acting commissioners who were to supervise construction of the canal—and three canal-fund commissioners who were to raise and disburse the necessary monies.25 Cincinnati was mollified by


25 Chase, Statutes, II, 1472-76. The new commission was made up of Kelley, Williams, Worthington, Tappan, John Johnston, Isaac Minor, and Nathaniel Beasley (House Journal, 23d General Assembly, 555). E. A. Brown, Allen Trimble, and Ebenezer Buckingham were the fund commissioners.
the authorization of a canal to Dayton which would eventually extend to Lake Erie. Although the citizens between the towns of Worthington and Sandusky were incensed at not getting a canal, they received no satisfaction.

Worthington was elected by the construction committee as one of the three acting commissioners and was assigned to supervise the Scioto route. Since he owned land on both sides of the Scioto, it made little difference to him on which side of the river the canal ran, but the merchants of Circleville and of Chillicothe wanted it to run through their towns. In as much as the terrain east of the Scioto required that a crossing be made either at Chillicothe or farther north, Worthington was instrumental in having the canal overpass the river at Circleville so that it went through both the towns.

Commissioner Williams let the first contracts and arranged the inaugural ground-breaking ceremonies for July 4, 1825, at the Licking Summit near Newark. Governor Clinton turned the first spadeful of dirt. Several thousand people, including “half the town” of Chillicothe, assembled for the gala event. A reception committee and a detachment of dragoons met Clinton’s entourage six miles from Newark on the Granville road. On July 7, an ebullient reporter for the Columbus Gazette wrote an account of the great occasion:

Immediately upon meeting, GOV. CLINTON alighted from his carriage, and was introduced by Governor WORTHINGTON to the suite of the Governor of Ohio—Canal Commissioners, with whom he was unacquainted, and accepted of an invitation to a seat in the carriage of Mr. BUCKINGHAM with Gov. WORTHINGTON and Mr. BUCKINGHAM, and was escorted to Newark, where he was received by Capt. STAUNTON of the Artillery, with twenty-four ample rounds.

A little later the approach of Governor Morrow was announced and he was similarly met and given the salute of twenty-four rounds.

At II o’clock the cavalry were paraded, and escorted Gov. Clinton, Gov. Morrow, Ex. Governors Worthington and Brown, the Canal Commissioners, Commissioners of the Canal Fund, and a number of distinguished strangers, and citizens to the Licking Summit, where the Throne of Grace was addressed by the Rev. Mr. Jenks, and an oration delivered by Thos. Ewing, Esq. . . .

After the exercises were closed at the rostrum, a procession was formed to the ground where the first manual operation of the great work was to be performed. Upon arrival at the spot, Messrs. Kelly and Williams acting Canal Commissioners, each presented a spade to Judge Minor, President of the Board, with the request that he would present them to the two distinguished guests of the Canal Commissioners, with the proper request for them to commence the work. The two Executives, each at the same time proceeded to break the ground and place the earth in the barrows . . . and were immediately succeeded in the same operation by Governors Worthington and Brown, followed by the Canal Commissioners, Messrs. Lord and Rathbone, contractors for the loan, and Gen. Vanrenmsleer . . . The barrows . . . were wheeled out by Colonels Bacon
and King, amidst the reiterated shouts of some thousand souls, the roar of cannon and discharge of musquetry. Upon the whole it was a scene only to be felt—it defies description.

The extraordinary optimism of the times is reflected in another reporter’s conclusion about the significance of the event: “They removed the first sod upon a work which will be admired when the pyramids of Egypt are effaced. At this interesting moment the voices of thousands rent the skies.” A similar celebration was held at Middletown, July 21, when ground was broken for the sixty-seven-mile canal between Dayton and Cincinnati.

Clinton and his entourage were feted from town to town during the month. He arrived in Chillicothe on the twenty-fourth and spent the night at Worthington’s “hospitable mansion.” The next day he was escorted from Adena by the Chillicothe Blues, Colonel Edward King commanding, to his quarters at the Madeira House, where he was greeted by artillery and introduced to leading citizens. In the afternoon he was banqueted in Chillicothe’s “best style” at Madeira’s, where Worthington, assisted by William Creighton and John Woodbridge, acted as toastmaster. At 6:00 P.M. he addressed the Masons of Scioto Lodge, and after a cold collation accompanied by several toasts was escorted back to the Madeira House by the lodge brothers in procession. He left town the following day.

Canal construction in Ohio during the next two years moved slowly because competent engineers were scarce, and money, despite early advice to the contrary, was difficult to borrow. The legislature was very conservative in its appropriations, even refusing by a two-to-one vote to pay the expenses of the acting commissioners. Moreover, winter freezes and spring floods were so disastrous to the wood and dirt construction of the canals that expenses, as usual, greatly exceeded estimates. Worthington kept in close touch with the progress being made, and interested capitalists like John Jacob Astor in the Ohio project. By this time, however, he was finding it necessary to devote most of his energy to his own business and to his health. His illness necessitated trips to Saratoga Springs in 1825, 1826, and 1827, and his business affairs took him away from home often. Although his mills ground steadily, his meat-packing went on apace, and his distillery proved profitable, he was not able to give these and other personal

enterprises the supervision they needed, with the result that some of them lost money. For instance, because of miserable management and the high price of hemp, his ropewalk became unprofitable. His son James was forced to assume more and more responsibility for his father's duties in connection with canal affairs and even for his business interests as the failure of Worthington's physical forces gradually incapacitated him and brought his career to a close.