

Montreal Feb 12<sup>th</sup> 1845  
of Wednesday the 5<sup>th</sup> ins  
At 1/2 past 12 o'clock a.m. I left the  
U.S. Hotel. The wind which had been increasing  
the whole day previous blew a perfect gale  
from the N.E. and the snow ~~was falling~~ <sup>had commenced falling</sup> with  
great rapidity for about an hour previous  
Before setting <sup>off</sup> alone I thought it prudent to  
try the storm, & I drove across Green Street  
bridge. The new fallen snow lay only in  
drifts & the larger portion of the way was  
glare ice, over which the wind slewed the  
sleigh in every direction. The snow was  
nearly if not quite a coarse hail & striking  
the face with such violence as to prevent  
not only yourself but the horse from seeing  
his way. as our ~~path~~ way led us to take the  
whole fury of the storm in the teeth.  
Finding it unsafe to proceed alone in  
the midst of such a tempest ~~on my~~ <sup>on my</sup>  
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MMN # 9576

Date: Feb. 12, 1845

Description: Memorandum by John Alfred Poor about his daring trip to Montreal from  
Portland in a fierce blizzard to promote the building of the Atlantic and St. Lawrence  
Railroad.

be found to accompany me, as the driver  
who brought me the horse positively re-  
fused to stir an inch with me. Mr  
Cheney came to my aid & volunteered his ser-  
vices for as soon as he could procure a  
fur coat which he soon obtained. Thus  
furnished we started & such a night & such  
a storm I never before encountered. The drifts  
were already several feet deep & the residue of  
road was full of objects to fright our horse  
who shrank at every step. To face the storm  
with our eyes open was impossible & the only  
protection to them was the covering of ice  
which hung in masses from our eyebrows.  
Our horse regarded neither highways or byways  
but climbed stone walls & wood piles or any  
thing in the way. To keep the road was im-  
possible & 5 times we called up the  
people <sup>on</sup> of the way to get our way which  
as many times we lost & finally at the end of three hours  
we reached Leach's Tavern 7 miles out  
where we <sup>had</sup> an opportunity to thaw ourselves out  
Mr Cheney who was less clad than myself

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was actually suffering<sup>3</sup> from the cold. At the  
first dawn we started afresh & ploughed a  
path through the drifts to Gray Corner.  
Jack Frost took a nip at my nose &  
a twist upon one ear. All our arrange-  
ments were disarranged but and my worthy  
friend Barrell remonstrated against our  
attempt to go further. I soon found  
Berry who has been a veteran stage dri-  
ver & he soon put forward armed with  
a shovel &c to open the drifts & with won-  
derful energy & dispatch he landed me  
safe in Paris Hill at 3 o'clock after  
shovelling & breaking thro stupendous  
drifts nearly hard enough to bear the  
horse. To reach Rumford that night  
Waterhouse pronounced impossible & so I  
was compelled to lie on till morning &  
as soon as my dinner was dispatched  
I went to bed from which I did not stir  
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The drifts higher than <sup>4</sup> the horses' backs. He sent out "videttes" to break the path & before one o'clock we had reached Woodwell, dinner was quickly done & with his cousin Jere Woodwell we put forward for a drive down the region of snow drifts & northeasters. All along the way we turned out the "videttes" <sup>2, 3, & 4 at a time</sup> who hitched to & dragged us through the drifts to Andover Corner. Mr Purinton was soon ready for the huplas & two young men volunteered to break the path on horse back. Without this, progress would have been impossible in the dark. At the huplas 6 miles from Andover we got a change of horses & ~~for the purpose~~ <sup>Wallace</sup> Mr Abbot of Andover continued to pilot us through the land. Capt Brown who had been in reading the day before was soon on the ground at B. I despatched Mr Green across <sup>1/2 mile</sup> to ~~across~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~across~~ <sup>to</sup> him and as he was 3 miles off from Braggs. From B to Errol 9 miles we could make no faster progress than on a walk about 2 1/2 miles an

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hour. The snow unbroken lay soon 18 inches  
deep. The cold was most cruel & intense  
~~At Errol Capt was~~ We dispatched a man  
a head of us from B Mr Morse by whom  
Capt Bragg was aroused & we found a  
cheerful fire & hearty welcome William  
Bragg soon was ready to <sup>carry</sup> ~~pass~~ me through  
"The Notch" to Colebrook. Two young men  
volunteered to go ahead & broke the path. & as they  
approached the notch they started with other horses  
& riders so that we had 4 horses & 5 men to  
pass. This stupendous curiosity of which no ade-  
quate description has ever been given  
seemed more sublime than ever. The perpen-  
dicular Walls rising on either side for some  
1000 feet hang in frightful masses over head &  
the narrow path <sup>was</sup> not more than 30 or 40 feet  
wide was filled with the drifted snow. Where  
our path lay it was a sloping drift at an  
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& carried our baggage sleigh through by hand. The Wind howled fearfully through the chasm & the drifting snow darkened the air which at the depth of the gorge always looks seems somber and blackened. In less than two hours we made our way through the notch tho one drift as we approached the western Entrance seemed to completely bar all approach. We cut it a path way into it & by treading the snow dragged our horses through tho they passed out of sight as you looked across the track. The daring & intrepidity of the young men of our party was most remarkable. The cold was intense, the air filled with snow & the wind blew with such violence you could scarcely stand keep on your feet. With the greatest composure & apparently enjoying the sport, these hardy fellows penetrated the Drifts with an apparent relish for its excitement & would accept no compensation for their aid. Such a storm as this has not been known here for many years

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Had I left one day sooner I should have found a splendid road & could have easily reached Montreal in 30 hours.

From the notch to Colebrook & Canaan we found the snow less & a path broken for us all the way. I was enabled to reach Compton before 9 o'clock in the evening though the road from Canaan was much of the way drifted full & without any track.

Here I met Mr Pinney a most efficient Rail Road man & an accomplished gentleman who volunteered to carry <sup>me</sup> on to Sherbrooke in the morning. When I remained the next day & had an opportunity of conversing with our friends.

At 5 o'clock on Sunday Osgood started with me for Granby 46 miles when we arrived at 5 o'clock p.m. dragging through an untrodden road with 18 inches of snow. From this place I found a better track & at 1/2 past 5 p.m. of Monday I was at the Exchange. The cold was intense some 18 below zero & in crossing the St. Lawrence in 2 miles the mist of frost entirely prevented our seeing three rods ahead.

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After 3 <sup>8<sup>th</sup></sup> hours of sleep I went to meet the Board of Trade who had the <sup>of the Rail Road</sup> matter before them. Here I found Galt & Mr Lyford of New Hampshire.

I presented my maps & documents to the Board of Trade & entered into a variety of calculations & statements showing the advantages of a Rail Road to Montreal & the peculiar claims of the Maine Route.

I was happily met with an attentive reception & the idea seemed to take full possession of several members of the Board that any other Route than that of Portland would fail to secure to Montreal the great advantages of the trade of the St Lawrence Valley.

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