AMERICAN

Copper-Mines.

(Philadelphia, 1800)

Samuel A. Otis, Esq.
To the Chairman of the Committee of Commerce and
Manufactures, to whom has been referred the
petition of N. I. Roosevelt and his associates, praying
for an act of incorporation of a Mine and
Metal Company.

SIR,

BEING appointed by the petitioners for an act of incorporation of a Mine and Metal Company, their agent in
Philadelphia, and having been permitted to give to your committee, by oral evidence, all the information upon the
Schuyler’s copper mine which I possess, I take the liberty
to submit the same to you again in the present sheet, in order that the great variety of facts, relating to the subject,
may be before you in a more concise and intelligible form,
than it could be put into, when I had the honor of attend-
ing the committee.

I have anxiously avoided to put down any thing re-
specting the history of the mine, for which satisfactory evidence from the books of the proprietors was not produced to me on the spot. The state of the works, and of the
mine I have myself carefully inspected, and have often en-
quired, and conversed with the workmen on the quality and quantity of the ore likely to be expected in future, from
their experience of what they have formerly procured.

When I made the enquiries upon which my evidence is
founded, it was neither with a view, nor with the most
distant expectation of being called upon for the purpose of
giving information on the subject to so honorable a body: otherwise I should have gone more fully into the detail of examination. My object, as engineer to the city of Phila-
delphia, was to obtain an accurate knowledge of the value
of the works which were offered as security to the Cor-
portion, for the performance of a contract by N. I. Roodewelt to construct two steam engines for the supply of the city with water, on account of which a very large advance was to be made. I had therefore every reason to be particular in my enquiries, as far as they necessarily went; and I carried them, from an habitual love of natural history, further than was necessary, so as to enable myself to be positive on all I have asserted on the subject; and I should feel myself very ill deterring of your confidence, and forfeit my own respect, were I to suffer the zeal of an agent, to carry me, either in respect of facts or their coloring, beyond what I believe to be true.

I am, with true respect,

Your faithful, &c.

B. HENRY LATROBE.
advantage and profit. In 1765, a workman, who had been dismissed, set fire to the engine-house,—it was again destroyed, and the works were discontinued by the company. Several gentlemen in England however, whose connection with the company had taught them the superior quality of the ore of Schuyler's mine, applied successfully to the crown for permission to establish works in America for smelting and refining copper; and an offer was made to Mr. Schuyler to purchase the whole estate containing the mine, for the sum of one hundred thousand pounds sterling. This offer he refused, but agreed to join them in rebuilding the engine and working the mine. The disputes, which about that time arose between England and America, and the consequent revolutionary war, put an end to the projected works, and the deranged state of the country, previous to the adoption of the Federal constitution in 1788, and other subsequent circumstances, occasioned the total neglect of this in every respect important mine, till the year 1793, when a company was formed who undertook the work with new vigor. They collected, at a very considerable expense, miners and smelters from England and Germany, purchased a freehold estate convenient for the erection of furnaces and manufactories, with an excellent stream of water, re-erected the engine, and they began and partly completed the works enumerated hereafter. At the instance of an active member of this company,* who to great metallurgic knowledge and experience, and to much personal address, joined a spirit perhaps much too unbounded in its projects, and far outstripping the means and wants of our present population,—an application was made to Congress in 1796 for an exclusive right to search for, and work all mines within the North-west and South-west territories belonging to the United States, for thirty years. This monopoly was to descend from mines of gold and diamonds, down to clay pits and slate quarries. The application was not, and perhaps ought not to have been successful.—Soon afterwards, one of the proprietors of the mine, who was a principal shareholder in the company died, and the whole interest of the Company has since been purchased by N. I. Roosevelt.

—This is the concise history of this mine to the present time. No other has as yet been wrought to effect in North America.

* Mr. Langworthy.
OF the prospect of success and profit in the prosecution
of this mine, little ought to be said on speculation. Yets
only, which may easily be examined and verified, should
be brought forward. It may perhaps be proper to state a
few of these.

I. The ore of the Schuyler's mine yields, in each hun-
dred pound of copper, from four to seven ounces of silver,
and like most copper ores, a small portion of gold. At the
time when pure copper was sold in England at seventy-five
pounds sterling per ton, the ore of Schuyler's mine was
shipped for England at New York at seventy pound sterling
per ton. This proves the uncommon richness of the ore,
and the small expense of converting it into metal. An
offer has lately been made by Messrs. Bolton and Watt to
purchase all the ore which can be raised, and to enter into
contract for that purpose.

II. The company established in 1793 have raised no ore
from new ground. Their works have only been prepara-
tory. They cleared old levels, sunk new shafts, and pro-
vided for the complete drainage of the mine for twenty
years to come, should more than one hundred hands be
employed in it during that term. In removing the deads,
or rubbish, which choked the drifts and levels, they have
however selected, without scrupulous examination, a quan-
tity of inferior ore, which yields an average of fifteen
pound of copper at least, in one hundred pound of ore.
This ore, part of the stock on hand, at so low a calcula-
tion, will yield fifty tons of copper, worth now when
manufactured 1,000 dollars per ton, at least, or 50,000.
It is asserted, from good authority, that all the deads will
yield more copper per cent, than many mines now profitably
wrought in Germany.

III. The Engine, before the very important improve-
ments which it has lately received in its construction, and
consequently in its powers, drained dry when set to work
in 1793, in four days, all the works, from the water which
had accumulated since the last working, many years be-
fore. This proves the sufficiency of the Engine, and that
the objection that the mine cannot easily be drained is quite
unfounded. As to the expense of keeping the engine, it
will be not more than 4,500 dollars per annum.
IV. It has been said often, and confidently, that the
first adventurers in Schuyler's mine made their fortunes,
because the ore was then richer and more easily procured
than at present. The fact is however otherwise. The ore
never was more rich than lately, yielding at an average 75
per cent, and it will be more easily and cheaply procured
in future,—in consequence of the preparatory works here­
after to be enumerated and the better method of working
to be adopted,—than ever since the year 1756, when the
ore retired to considerable depth and distance from the side
of the hill: And yet since that time 444,000 dollars
(100,000 pounds sterling) have been offered for the mine
by intelligent Englishmen, when it was in its worst state of
working,—without an engine, and without a draining shaft
lower than the levels.

It is true that the last company, far from deriving ben­
efit, have expended large fortunes in their works at the
mine. But they expected no profit from what they have
hitherto done, they have not even smelted any considera­
ble quantity of the ore selected from the deads.—The death
of one of this small company, the return of the most busy
to England, and principally the very low price of copper
in the European and consequently in the American market,
deranged and delayed their operations.—At that time,
the Anglesea mine depreciated, by its most extraordinary
fertility, every other European mine; its proprietors were
emboldened to attempt the annihilation of rivalry, by
under selling every competitor; to purchase the for­
saken works; and thus to monopolize the copper trade of the
civilized world. But the treasure disappeared almost as
suddenly as it had been discovered, and the government of
Great Britain has not only been driven to prohibit the ex­
portation of copper, but application has been made to con­
tract for all the ore which the Schuyler's mine can pro­
duce. The reward of the labors and sacrifices of the pre­
sent proprietors is therefore still to come, and, should an
act of incorporation be obtained, will be divided, in pro­
portion to their aid, among those who shall constitute
the company.

Nicholas I. Roosevelt is the present proprietor of the
lease of Schuyler's Copper-mine, for 38 years to come,
and of all the works, shafts, engines, buildings and utensils belonging to it,—and also of the fee simple of a certain tract of land, with the furnaces, melting, smelting, and boring works, coal houses, and hammers, erected by the late company or by himself for the purpose of preparing, refining and manufacturing the copper. This tract is called Soho, and is situate on second river, near Newark in the state of New-Jersey, at a convenient distance from the copper mine. He, and the late company have expended very large sums of money in sinking a shaft calculated to drain all the present shafts and levels, and such as may in future be sunk upon the tract containing the mine, and to win all the ore which may be found below the utmost depth of the present shafts and levels, to a depth of 40 feet lower. A level is also driven 100 feet below the surface at the engine house, which will drain the works into Hackinack marsh and render the lift of the engine 100 feet less, thereby encreasing its power in proportion.—He has also repaired and improved the steam engines erected at the shaft, so as to render it fully adequate to the draining of the mine, and the raising of all the ore.—He has put the works at Soho into a state of perfection, unrivalled in the United States, and capable of melting and refining the ore to the greatest possible advantage and profit.—It is evident from inspection of the shafts, works, and levels, which from the earliest times have been worked at the mine—that in no instance there is reason to believe that the veins which have hitherto proved so rich and fertile are likely to fail either in the quality or quantity of their ore, and that but a very small part in proportion of the mine has been explored, as chance, and the imperfect method of working the time hitherto, have directed.—The expense laid out by the late company and the present proprietor in the said shafts, levels and works has not been calculated or intended for the raising of ore in the first instance,—but only to render the mine capable of yielding, whenever the vein shall again be put into work, without the necessity of any collateral expense for drainage, the greatest possible quantity of ore; so that the mine is at present in the most advantageous state in which the working can possibly be recommenced.

B. H. LATROBE.

Latrobe, Latrobe, (Benjamin Henry,) an architect, born in England in 1763. He emigrated to America in 1793; and was employed as engineer by the State of Virginia. He was architect of the United States Bank in Philadelphia, and of the first Hall of Representatives at Washington. Died in 1820.