

MILITARY ROADS—KANSAS.

[To accompany bill H. R. No. 690.]

JANUARY 29, 1855.

Mr. FAULKNER, from the Committee on Military Affairs, made the following

REPORT.

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the bill of the House No. 606, to provide for the construction of roads and bridges, and for the improvement of rivers, in the Territory of Kansas, and to provide for a geological survey of said Territory, have, according to order, had the same under consideration, and respectfully report:

That upon so much of said bill as refers to the construction of bridges, improvements of rivers, and the making of a geological survey of said Territory, they deem it inexpedient to take any action; but, viewing the roads provided for in said bill as highly important in a military view, they respectfully submit, as a part of this their report, several communications from the War Department relative thereto, and report a bill in lieu of the one referred to them.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, January 27, 1855.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 29th ultimo, enclosing House bill No. 606, to provide for the construction of roads and bridges, &c., in the Territory of Kansas, and asking to what extent the roads indicated are actually necessary for military purposes.

In reply, I transmit your reports from Deputy Quartermaster General Charles Thomas, Major E. A. Ogden, assistant quartermaster, and First Lieutenant E. B. Beckwith, 3d artillery, on the subject, and have to say that I fully concur in the opinions expressed by these officers as to the importance of the roads for military purposes.

The bill is herewith returned.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JEFF'N DAVIS,
Secretary of War.

Hon. C. J. FAULKNER,
Chairman Com. Military Affairs, House of Reps.

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Washington, January 3, 1855.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the letter of the Hon. Charles Faulkner, chairman of the committee of the House of Representatives, enclosing a bill for the construction of certain military roads in the Territory of Kansas, referred to this office for a report; and I have to state that the roads mentioned in the bill, if properly located and constructed, would, without doubt, be of much importance in a military point of view, as they would not only facilitate the movements of troops destined for New Mexico, Utah, and California, but would decrease the cost of transportation of the military supplies which we are now compelled to have transported to those sections of our country—both of which are objects much to be desired. They will also lead to the settlement of the country through which they may be constructed; as, at all such points as may be found susceptible of cultivation, settlements will be made, which will not only add to the facilities of military operations and decrease the cost of them, but actually aid in controlling the Indians of the plains.

I would, therefore, respectfully recommend them as of military importance to the Territories of New Mexico and Utah, as well as of Kansas.

The papers are herewith returned.

I remain, sir, most respectfully, your obedient servant,

By order: CHS. THOMAS,
Deputy Quartermaster General.

Hon. JEFFERSON DAVIS,
Secretary of War, Washington, D. C.

WASHINGTON, D. C., *January 8, 1855.*

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 4th instant, enclosing that of the honorable chairman of the military committee of the House of Representatives, accompanied by a bill for appropriations for certain roads and bridges in the Territory of Kansas, and to state in answer thereto, that, in my opinion, the roads and bridges contemplated by the bill for military purposes are of the first importance in connection with the march of troops and transportation of supplies to New Mexico, Utah and Oregon, not less than in the control of the various tribes of the plains. I am, however, doubtful of the expediency of fixing Fort Riley as the point for their eastern terminus, for it is certain that, if practicable at all for light-draught steamers, *the Kansas river can only be so for a few weeks in each year*, and therefore, upon any unanticipated emergency, supplies can only be received at that terminus by land transportation from the Missouri river.

The best route from Fort Riley will doubtless be found to cross the Republican fork of the Kansas at the fort, and follow the north side of the Smoky Hill fork until crossing Sycamore, Mosquito, Nepeholla, and Saline forks of that stream, with several smaller branches, the banks of which are miry and often as difficult to cross as the larger

streams, all of which require bridges for the transportation of supplies. Bridges will also be required for crossing Smoky Hill fork itself, the Little Arkansas, Cow, and Walnut creeks. The Pawnee fork may then be ascended, continuing the road by a direct line and passing over the open prairie to the vicinity of the Cimarron crossing of the Arkansas river, whence supplies can be forwarded by the usually followed routes to New Mexico, or by the Sangre de Cristo Pass to the valley of San Luis. For energetic and vigorous operations nine respectable bridges are required upon this line, (within the Territory of Kansas,) which is the shortest line that can be found, and is as abundantly supplied with grass and water as any other.

In operations upon the plains, the road proposed from Fort Riley to Bridger's pass is indispensable, and in reaching fort Bridger and Great Salt lake, will diminish the land transportation, compared with the line now followed, about one hundred miles. I am not able to indicate the exact route which should be followed, or to give the number and names of the various small streams to be crossed, of which there are, however, several which should be bridged. It is not only desirable that this road should be made to "Bridger's pass in the Rocky mountains, and to the *eastern slope* of said mountains," but it should be extended to the summit of said pass, or to the western boundary of the Territory of Kansas upon this line.

I have the honor to return herewith the papers received with your letter.

I am, sir, with much respect, your obedient servant,

E. G. BECKWITH,
First Lieutenant 3d Artillery.

Hon. JEFFERSON DAVIS,
Secretary of War.

WASHINGTON CITY, *January 12, 1855.*

SIR: I concur fully in Lieutenant Beckwith's opinion of the importance of the military roads in Kansas Territory, for which provision is made by the enclosed bill, and, indeed, long since urged their construction, in my reports from Fort Leavenworth.

Fort *Leavenworth* (on the Missouri,) is, as you know, the principal depôt, from which all the military stations in New Mexico, and on the routes to Utah, Oregon, and California, are supplied; and the contracts for the transportation of these supplies amount to three or four hundred thousand dollars annually.

Fort *Riley*, now in course of construction at the forks of the Kansas river, is one hundred and thirty miles west of Fort Leavenworth, and is a very important post, not only for the protection of the settlements of Kansas, but as a subordinate depôt and advanced rendezvous for troops. It is connected with Fort Leavenworth, by steam navigation, three months in the year, and by a good road on the north side of the Kansas. The road from Fort Riley to the Arkansas, provided for by the accompanying bill, is an extension of that from Fort Leavenworth, necessary to put the two posts in connexion with New Mexico

It has been surveyed by Captain Gunnison, Lieutenant Heth, and Major Cady; is very level, and in point of directness almost an air-line—supplying also the requisites for trains or caravans, in an abundance of wood, water, and grass.

The other road, from Fort Riley to *Bridger's Pass*, in the Rocky mountains, would give a new and very direct route from the Missouri to Utah and California. It would follow the "divide" between Solomon's fork and the Republican, (see Stansbury's map,) to the source of the latter; thence by intervening lakes to the south fork of the Platte; thence by an affluent in a direct course to Bridger's or Stansbury's Pass, where it would join the road to the Salt lake, surveyed by Captain Stansbury, and now much used by emigrants from Texas and Arkansas. This route is equally easy with that through the South Pass, and more direct—saving a distance between Fort Leavenworth and the Salt lake of one hundred miles. Connecting this with the new route surveyed by Lieutenant Beckwith, from the Salt lake to the Sacramento, the distance from the Missouri to California will be shortened *two hundred and fifty* miles, and the whole would, in my opinion, be decidedly the best wagon route that could be selected between the western frontier and California.

In order, however, that the utmost benefit should be derived from this line of direct communication with California, settlements should be encouraged, by gifts of land to actual settlers, along the road *west of Fort Riley*. And from my impression of the character of the soil, and supply of timber, water, and grass, on the route, I am satisfied that the settlements, encouraged in the way I have suggested, would soon be so nearly continuous, as to afford every desired facility for the march and supply of troops, or the immense overland transit travel between the Atlantic and Pacific.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

E. A. OGDEN,

Brevet Major and Assistant Quartermaster.

HON. JEFFERSON DAVIS,
Secretary of War.