

MILITARY ROADS IN WASHINGTON TERRITORY.

[To accompany Bill H. R. No. 58.]

MAY 10, 1858.

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

REPORT.

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred House Bill No. 58, "For the completion of military roads in the Territory of Washington," have, according to order, had the same under consideration, and report the same with amendments.

They submit, as part of their report, the following correspondence:

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, May 5, 1858.

SIR: Referring to my letter to you of the 17th February last, I have now the honor to transmit a communication from the officer in charge of the Topographical Bureau, enclosing a copy of Lieutenant G. H. Mendell's report relative to the construction of certain military roads in the Territories of Oregon and Washington.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN B. FLOYD,
Secretary of War.

Hon. C. J. FAULKNER,
*Of Committee on Military Affairs,
House of Representatives.*

BUREAU OF TOPOGRAPHICAL ENGINEERS,
Washington, May 4, 1858.

SIR: In addition to the information furnished by this bureau on the 13th February last, in answer to a letter from the Hon. Mr. Faulkner, of the Military Committee of the House of Representatives, in relation to the construction of certain military roads in Oregon and Washington Territories, I have the honor of transmitting herewith a copy of a report from Lieutenant G. H. Mendell, corps topographical

engineers, the officer in the immediate charge of the construction of roads in these Territories, giving his views in regard to those referred to in the letter of Mr. Faulkner.

Respectfully, sir, your obedient servant,

J. C. WOODRUFF,
Capt. Top. Eng., Ass't in Charge.

Hon. JOHN B. FLOYD,
Secretary of War.

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA,
April 2, 1858.

MAJOR: In accordance with your instructions, I submit the following report on Bills Nos. 56, 58, and 178.

1st. Bill No. 56, in relation to the Astoria and Salem military road.

In reference to this subject I, have nothing to add to my recommendation in my last annual report, which, on account of the unevenness of the country, as also of the dense timber with which it is covered, recommends an additional appropriation of \$30,000.

2d. Bill No. 58, military road from Fort Steilacoom to Fort Walla-Walla, Washington Territory.

From what I have been able to learn by inquiry from the most reliable sources within my reach, I am quite of the opinion that the sum contemplated would not be sufficient at the present time to give the road that permanence which is desirable. It is my belief that no wagon has ever passed over this route from the west, and that fifty miles of the road east of Porter's prairie (which is at the lower crossing of White river) will require a large expenditure in grading, cutting, and bridging, to make it practicable. Five hundred dollars per mile I should regard as a low estimate—in all, \$25,000.

In a military point of view, all roads crossing the Cascade mountains are of paramount importance. The largest and most formidable tribes of Indians on our borders, yet unsubdued, occupy the valleys of the Yakima and other adjacent streams. The ties connecting these Indians with those on the Sound are of a close nature, owing to marriages and other causes, and the feeling of the tribes on the Sound may be generally inferred from the attitude of those living east of the mountains. The time will soon come when the subjection of the tribes living on the waters of the Columbia will be essentially necessary, and it is probable that this will be attended by an Indian war on the Sound. In this contingency, it will readily appear that the means of communication by way of the mountains cannot be too good.

3d. Bill No. 58, military road from Fort Vancouver to Fort Steilacoom, Washington Territory.

In my last annual report an estimate of \$15,000 was submitted to continue the road from the Cowlitz plains to Monticello, near the mouth of Cowlitz river. To continue the road up the Columbia from

the Cowlitz to Vancouver, a distance of 50 miles, the minimum estimate submitted is \$500 per mile—in all, \$25,000

4th. Bill No. 58, military road from Fort Vancouver to Fort Dalles, Oregon Territory.

The amount estimated for by my predecessor for the improvement of the trail between the points named would doubtless be sufficient for the purpose; and as the quartermaster's department annually send many animals from one post to the other, generally by steamboats, at the rate of \$8 or \$10 per head, a large expense might be saved by this improvement, as then they could be sent by the trail.

5th. Bill No. 178, road from the mouth of the Columbia river, by Shoalwater bay and Gray's harbor, to Olympia.

I have no reliable information of sufficient extent to enable me to speak with entire confidence on this road. The condition of the road touching Gray's harbor will much increase its length or necessitate its location through a section of country quite unknown, viz: between Gray's harbor and Olympia. A road from the mouth of the Columbia river, by way of Shoalwater bay, would be about 70 miles in length, intersecting the Vancouver and Steilacoom military road, at Davis', six miles south of Skookum Chuck. To take in Gray's harbor, the road would be from 120 to 140 miles in length. The routes are approximately located on the accompanying map. A minimum estimate of the cost of construction would be \$500 per mile. The country is heavily timbered, and is also quite mountainous.

I quite concur in the views of the bureau, as expressed in the report of February 13, 1858, as to the importance of these roads.

6th. Bill No. 178, military road from Olympia to Port Townsend.

Little is known of the country to be traversed by this route. It is mountainous, and doubtless, like most other sections of the Territory, is heavily timbered. The distance is from 100 to 120 miles; \$500 per mile will be necessary for its construction.

7th. Bill No. 178, military road from Seattle to Fort Colville, \$50,000.

The route to be followed by this road would doubtless be by the Snoqualmoo Pass, which has been proved to be the best through the Cascade mountains, being practicable when none others are.

The country, for perhaps 100 miles east of Seattle, is heavily timbered and mountainous. The amount proposed will doubtless be sufficient to make a passable wagon road over the line.

This route I would suggest as one of the most important of those proposed. It is certain that very considerable settlements will be made at and near Fort Colville, and, as is observed by the bureau, Seattle is a natural outlet of the country. A better road, at a less expense, could be made on this route than on any other over the Cascade mountains, and would be, in my opinion, most essential in case of Indian hostilities, which hostilities may always be expected. A map, sufficiently accurate to show the position of some of the proposed routes, is transmitted.

With more time and opportunity to collect facts, much more could be said in favor of these roads, and it is to be regretted that it is impossible now to do justice to the subjects.

One can scarcely be wide of the mark in building roads in Washington Territory, where the surface of the country presents so many difficulties, and where the population is too sparse to overcome them; and it may be said that expensive wars may be anticipated with the Indian tribes there for many years to come.

During the last war upon the Sound, much difficulty was experienced, owing to the ignorance of all as to the topography of the country, and to the want of communication. Much delay and expense were entailed upon the government from these causes, and I would regard the construction of these roads as measures of economy, in view of an almost certain recurrence of this state of affairs.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant.

G. H. MENDELL,

1st Lieutenant Topographical Engineers.

Major HARTMAN BACHE,

*Top. Engineers, Superintendent of Military Roads,
San Francisco, California.*

BUREAU OF TOPOGRAPHICAL ENGINEERS,
Washington, February 13, 1858.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge your direction to report upon the Bills Nos. 56, 58, and 178, referred to in the letter of the Hon. Mr. Faulkner, of the Military Committee of the House of Representatives, of the 2d instant.

1st. Bill No. 56, in relation to the military road from Astoria to Salem, Oregon Territory.

I beg leave to refer to the annual report of this bureau, and the report of the engineer officer in charge, appended thereto, in which will be found the estimate for an additional appropriation of \$30,000 for the purpose of rendering the road practicable for wagons.

2d. Bill No. 58, military road from Fort Steilacoom to Fort Walla-Walla, Washington Territory.

This road was opened under the direction of the War Department. The officer in charge recommended an additional appropriation of \$10,000, which, "in connexion with what has already been expended, will give to the work a permanence and stability that it justly demands, even at the present time, as the only military and commercial thoroughfare into this portion of the Territory." He also recommends that the amount expended by the citizens of the Territory in opening the road from Steilacoom to the mountains, the greater part of which was adopted as the military road, be refunded. It is believed that this amount will not exceed \$10,000. It is therefore recommended that this amount, or so much thereof as may be necessary, be appropriated for this purpose.

The amount, therefore, required for the Fort Steilacoom and Fort Walla-Walla military road is \$20,000.

3d. Bill No. 58, military road from Fort Vancouver to Fort Steilacoom.

In the annual report of this bureau will be found the estimate of the engineer officer in charge, amounting to \$15,000.

The engineer reports that a good ordinary wagon road from the Cowlitz plains to Fort Steilacoom will be completed by the 1st of November, 1857.

"The next step to be taken on this route is to continue the road to the Columbia river."

"In a military point of view, it is of great importance that there should be a good road over this route."

"It is respectfully recommended that an additional appropriation be asked for, which, in addition to the balance on hand, will be sufficient to construct a good road from the Cowlitz plains to Monticello, a distance of 30 miles. The estimate is \$15,000."

No bridges appear to be included in this estimate.

4th. Bill No. 58, military road from Fort Vancouver to the Dalles.

The construction of the road, as shown by the survey and reports, can only be effected at an enormous cost, say \$1,000 per mile. The engineer officer in charge reports, "good steamboat navigation from Vancouver to the Cascades, a good road across the 'Portage,' and a continuation of steamboat navigation thence to the Dalles, certainly fulfil all the conditions of a military road from the Dalles to Columbia barracks, and is the only practicable route."

He recommends a plank road across the Portage, and estimates the cost thereof at..... \$13,799

He also estimates for "improving the trail from Columbia barracks to the Dalles of the Columbia, for a dragoon road and for pack animals"..... 8,000

Total..... 21,799

The engineer officer now in charge reports, (see annual report of this year,) "there is an excellent summer road."

"The quartermaster's department have made use of the road ever since its construction."

The estimate should doubtless be increased to \$17,000, in order to cover all expenses of repairs of the road to prepare it for planking. In a military point of view, the dragoon trail is of great importance. The total amount of the estimate will then be \$25,000.

5th. Bill No. 178, military road from some eligible point at or near the mouth of the Columbia river, *via* Shoalwater bay and Gregg's harbor, to Olympia, \$60,000.

There is no information in the bureau in reference to the cost of this road.

In a military point of view, the road is essential; the troops at the forts, either Steilacoom or Vancouver, could thus be readily thrown upon the coast to control the Indian bands in that quarter.

6th. Bill No. 178, military road from Olympia to the military post near Fort Townsend, \$50,000.

There is no information in the bureau in reference to the cost of this

road. In a military point of view, its importance cannot be questioned.

The construction of this and the roads above referred to would tend to facilitate settlement, the result of which would be such a force of settlers along the roads as would render military protection unnecessary.

7th. Bill No. 178, military road from Seattle to Fort Colville, \$50,000.

There is no information in this bureau that will enable the estimate of cost of construction to be arrived at. As a portion of the defence of the Territory, the construction of this road is deemed very essential.

Seattle is the natural port and outlet of the Yakima country east of the Cascades, and the mining region about Fort Colville. The Indian tribes are reputed to be numerous and warlike.

It cannot be questioned that all the roads are needed for the movement of troops, and are recommended for favorable consideration.

Accompanying the bills above referred to is a petition from citizens of Nebraska Territory, asking an appropriation for the construction of a road from Nebraska City to Fort Kearney, in said Territory.

Nothing is known in this office in regard to the route contemplated by the petitioners for a road between the points named; but if, as represented by them, a saving of forty miles in the transportation of military stores to Utah would be effected by the construction of such a road, it would seem to be a matter deserving consideration.

Respectfully, sir, your obedient servant,

J. J. ABERT,
Colonel Corps Engineers.

Hon. JOHN B. FLOYD,
Secretary of War.