

IMPROVEMENT OF MISSOURI AND YELLOWSTONE RIVERS.

MEMORIAL

OF

THE LEGISLATURE OF MONTANA,

IN RELATION TO

The improvement of the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers.

FEBRUARY 14, 1876.—Referred to the Committee on Commerce and ordered to be printed.

To the honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled :

Your memorialists, the council and house of representatives composing the legislative assembly of the Territory of Montana, most respectfully represent that the improvement of the channels of the navigable rivers of Montana has not heretofore received that attention from Congress that the importance of the subject and the necessities of the people of the Territory demanded. We beg leave to bring to the notice of your honorable bodies the fact that, during the past year, it has been practically demonstrated by Lieutenant-General Sheridan that the Yellowstone River is navigable for Missouri River steamers from its confluence with the Missouri River to a point above the mouth of the Big Horn River, a distance of four hundred and eighty miles; that it is the opinion of your memorialists, based upon an actual and thorough examination of the upper part of said Yellowstone River, that the distance of navigation thereon can, with a small appropriation, be extended to within less than one hundred miles of the city of Bozeman, in the county of Gallatin, thus opening a line of transportation by water from the States to the middle and southern parts of the Territory, thereby materially lessening the time of freights in transit, and very considerably reducing the cost of carriage, all of which is a matter of vital importance to the people of Montana.

Your memorialists would further represent that the interests of the middle and northern portions of Montana require the improvement of the channel of the Missouri River between Fort Peck and Fort Benton, and from Fort Benton, up said river, to a point as near the junction of the Jefferson and Gallatin Rivers as navigation may be found practicable; that on that part of the river between Fort Peck and Fort Benton, except during a short period of high water during each season, navigation is very seriously obstructed at several points with rocks,

bowlders, shoals, and rapids; that a small appropriation, made for the purpose, would effectually clear out the channel and render the river between said points navigable during the whole of the boating season; that in relation to said river, above Fort Benton, your memorialists do most respectfully represent, and believe practicable, the improvement of the channel from Fort Benton to the falls of said river, and from the falls to the presumed head of navigation, thus rendering the Missouri river navigable for freight and passenger steamers through the heart of Montana to a point at or near the confluence of the Jefferson and Gallatin Rivers, making an increased distance of two hundred and five miles of steamboat navigation on said river; that the distance from Fort Benton to the falls is twenty-eight miles. The distance of portage or land-carriage around the falls is fourteen miles. The distance by river, from the falls to the junction of the Jefferson and Gallatin Rivers, is one hundred and sixty-three miles. That the river, from Fort Benton to the last point mentioned, passes through the best and most fertile portion of the Territory, also through the richest mineral region on the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains, and within fifteen miles of the city of Helena; that the portage around said falls of all goods and merchandise, and reshipping same, can be accomplished for a sum not exceeding two dollars and fifty cents per ton; that the channel of the river above the falls, the greater portion of the distance to the mouth of the Jefferson River, is deep and the water sluggish, and is navigable for upper river steamers in its usual condition and stage of water.

Your memorialists further represent that much work has been done in the locality of said river upon mining-claims; that a large number of mineral-lodes have been prospected, which are known to be valuable for the gold, silver, lead, and copper they contain, but that they remain at present unworked and undeveloped, because the present facilities of the country for exporting the ores that might be produced to a suitable market for reduction are entirely too expensive and inadequate; that ores, minerals, and other productions, which constitute the main and principal resources of the Territory, the transportation of which, upon wagons, for several hundred miles, to make connection with either water or railroad routes to the southern, eastern, or western markets, consumes such a length of time, and the tariff-rates of such freighting being so expensive, the most of such products will not now bear shipping, but would under more favorable circumstances, and would contribute largely to the actual resources of the Territory.

That your honorable body may have a reasonable conception of the amount of freight shipped up and down the Missouri River during the boating-season, we beg to submit the following table of statistics for the year 1875:

	Tons.
Amount of freight shipped to Fort Benton, present head of navigation on the Missouri River	3,026
Amount of freight shipped from Fort Benton	900
Amount of freight shipped to Carroll, a point about four hundred miles below Benton, on the Missouri River	1,200
Amount of freight shipped from Carroll	500

Your memorialists would further represent that in view of the contemplated erection of two forts, one on the Big Horn and one on Powder River, and the fact that the Crow agency is upon the Yellowstone, the saving derived from the transportation of Indian and military supplies will in one season repay the Government for any appropriations necessary to open up that river to successful navigation; that mines of gold silver and coal abound in that vast and fertile country, and that

immigration is seeking it in large numbers. The world-wide wonders of the National Park are situated upon the headwaters of the Yellowstone, and removing the obstructions of the river will open up a cheap and direct route for tourists and naturalists. Reminding your honorable bodies of the isolated position of this Territory, and the many disadvantages its people labor under, of the privations they endure, and their unfavorable situation relative to markets for the sale of their products and the procuring of supplies, we earnestly petition your favorable consideration of our necessities, and urge upon you the propriety of making an appropriation to clear out the channels of the parts of the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers your memorialists have herein referred to. Your memorialists further beg leave to represent that an expenditure by the Government of a small amount of means in improving the navigation of said waters will not only be of great benefit to the people of Montana, placing them in part on an equal footing with other Territories of the West, but will also be of great advantage and utility to the Government. The main rivers of the United States being national thoroughfares, we deem it but just and reasonable to ask your honorable bodies to appropriate a sufficient amount of money to remove the obstructions and make navigable said rivers. Therefore, your memorialists do humbly ask for the appropriation of ——— dollars, to be used for such purpose in such manner as your honorable bodies may deem advisable. And your memorialists will ever pray.

S. W. LANGHORNE,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

ASA BROWN,

President of Council.

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