

L E T T E R

FROM THE

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

TRANSMITTING,

*In response to Senate resolution of February 5, 1883, a report concerning  
depredations on the public timber in the Territory of Montana.*

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FEBRUARY 13, 1883.—Referred to the Committee on Public Lands and ordered to be printed.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
*Washington, D. C., February 12, 1883.*

SIR: In answer to Senate resolution of the 5th instant, calling for information concerning depredations on public timber in the Territory of Montana, I have the honor to transmit herewith report on the subject by the Commissioner of the General Land Office of the 10th instant.

Very respectfully,

H. M. TELLER,  
*Secretary.*

The Hon. PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE *pro tempore.*

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
GENERAL LAND OFFICE,  
*Washington, D. C., February 10, 1883.*

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt, by reference from the department, of Senate resolution of the 5th instant, viz:

*Resolved, That the Secretary of the Interior be directed to inform the Senate whether any complaints have been made, examinations had, and reports filed in his office as to trespass upon, cutting, and carrying away pine timber from unsurveyed lands at the head of Tongue River or other points in Montana.*

In reply, I will state that no formal report or letter of complaint has ever been received at this office in reference to any depredations upon the public timber lands in the section of country designated by the resolution of the Senate.

There is, however, on file in this office a report received from the register of the land office at Miles City, Mont., under date of November 5, 1881, charging Mathias Ilgen and others with the unlawful cutting and removing of timber from public lands in township 8 north, range 47 east of the principal meridian; which would locate the said trespass about the mouth of Tongue River.

This trespass was investigated, and proposition of settlement accepted by the honorable Secretary, under date of April 5, 1882.

One other report of timber depredations upon the public timber lands on Tongue River has been received; it conveys no information other than the statement that a large amount of timber has been cut for railroad ties in sections 31 and 36 of township 1 north, ranges 44 and 45 east. Said information was contained in the field notes of Deputy-Surveyors James M. and Rodney W. Page, dated September 17 and 19, 1881. As it was not made the subject of a separate communication, the facts as reported did not reach the division in charge of this branch of the service until August, 1882.

The locality of the last-mentioned alleged trespass would be about 35 miles from the mouth of said river, and a considerable distance from the headwaters of same. No immediate attempt was made to investigate said trespass, for the reason that this office had no timber agent in Montana, though such appointment was then under consideration. September 18, 1882, an agent was appointed for said Territory, to whom the information in relation to the last-mentioned trespass was forwarded, with directions to investigate the matter and report thereon, which he has not up to the present time been able to do, owing to the early setting in of the winter and the continued severity of the season.

In relation to depredations upon the public timber lands in other sections of Montana, I will state that from 1877 there have been received at this office from time to time, as shown by its files, complaints by settlers and others in relation to acts of trespass. But they were of so vague and indefinite a character that this office did not feel warranted, with the limited means at its disposal, to assign an agent to Montana when there was apparently so much greater need for his services elsewhere. The evident increase, however, of timber depredations within the last two years determined this office to appoint a special timber agent for the Territory named at as early a date as possible, which it was enabled to do, as already stated, by the appointment made under date of September 18, last.

The localities from which the more recent complaints have been received are along the line of the Northern Pacific Railroad, also in the Beaver Head River, Missoula and Yellowstone Valleys, and in and about the neighborhood of Butte City, and upon the Crow Reservation. Copies of the various complaints have been forwarded to the agent, with instructions to investigate and report thereon at as early a date as practicable.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

N. C. MCFARLAND,  
*Commissioner.*

Hon. H. M. TELLER,  
*Secretary of the Interior.*