

7-7-1840

Documents relating to the construction of certain roads in the Territory of Iowa

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/indianserialset>



Part of the [Indian and Aboriginal Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

S. Doc. No. 598, 26th Cong., 1st Sess. (1840)

This Senate Document is brought to you for free and open access by University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in American Indian and Alaskan Native Documents in the Congressional Serial Set: 1817-1899 by an authorized administrator of University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. For more information, please contact darinfox@ou.edu.

DOCUMENTS

RELATING

To the construction of certain roads in the Territory of Iowa.

JULY 7, 1840.

Submitted by Mr. YOUNG, and ordered to be printed.

[To accompany Senate bill No. 225.]

WAR DEPARTMENT, *July 2, 1840.*

SIR: In compliance with your request of the 29th ultimo, I have the honor to transmit you a report of the agent for the construction of certain roads in the Territory of Iowa.

Very respectfully, your most obedient servant,

J. R. POINSETT.

HON. W. W. CHAPMAN,
House of Representatives.

BUREAU OF TOPOGRAPHICAL ENGINEERS,
Washington, July 1, 1840.

SIR: I have the honor of transmitting to you a copy of the report of R. C. [redacted] hman, Esq., agent and engineer for the construction of certain roads in the Territory of Iowa, called for by the letter of the honorable W. W. Chapman of the 29th ultimo.

Very respectfully, sir, your obedient servant,

J. J. ABERT,
Colonel Topographical Engineers.

HON. J. R. POINSETT,
Secretary of War.

Report on the survey, location, and construction of roads and canals in the Territory of Iowa.

BALTIMORE, *February 20, 1840.*

SIR: I have the honor to report that, in obedience to your instructions of the 16th of March ultimo, constituting me the agent and engineer on the part of the Topographical Bureau for the purpose of superintending certain works of internal improvement in the Territory of Iowa, embraced in a law of the session of Congress of 1838, dated the 7th of July, and one

of the last session, of the 31st March, I repaired to that Territory as soon thereafter as practicable, and commenced the necessary surveys for carrying said laws into effect, as follows :

1st. For the road "from Burlington, through the counties of Des Moines, Henry, and Van Buren, towards the seat of the Indian agency on the Des Moines," a party was organized in Burlington in June, and commenced the location of the road between said points. Leaving Burlington at a stake in the road opposite a blacksmith's shop, the line follows a ravine inclining to the north to the prairie; on reaching which, it approaches the township line, along which it runs until within a few miles of "Skunk river," when, the ground being very much broken, the line inclines to the north, and follows a ridge to the crossing of Cedar creek; thence, along a ridge, to the mouth of Alud creek, and thence along the valley of Skunk river to Smith's mill; crossing Skunk river at Smith's mill, the line follows a ridge to a ford of Prairie creek; thence, over a prairie, to Little Cedar, crossing Williamson's creek and a branch of Cedar. After crossing Little Cedar, the line follows the Fort Madison road to the town of Washington; thence, across a flat, wet prairie, to the head of Lick creek; and thence, along a river, to the Indian agency on the Des Moines: the whole line being seventy-six (76) miles in length.

On the completion of the survey, the road was put under construction between Burlington and Skunk river, a distance of about 20 miles. On this part the necessary bridges have been constructed, wet places in the prairie ditched, hills graded, and, where the line passes through woods, the clearing and grubbing completed. But little remains to be done on this section to make as good a road as can be required.

This road may justly be regarded as of great importance to the section of country through which it passes, connecting a rapidly increasing and flourishing population in the interior with one of the principal towns on the river, and passing through a region entirely destitute of roads. An estimate for its completion is transmitted herewith, which, it is hoped, may meet with favorable consideration.

2d. The road from Burlington to De Hagues, in Illinois, is perhaps, of all the roads leading to the Territory, of the first importance; being the principal mail route, and the one over which a main part of the emigrants to the Territory are obliged to pass. It is about three (3) miles in length, and extends from opposite Burlington, across a low swampy marsh, and requires considerable embankment and several bridges. At certain seasons of the year it is nearly impassable, very seriously obstructing the transportation of the mail, and subjecting the traveller to great and harassing difficulties. The appropriation made last year (a very inadequate one) is now being applied. I beg leave, from a conviction of the importance of this road, to urge that an appropriation may be made for its completion.

3d. The line of location of the road "from Dubuque to the northern boundary of Missouri," commences at Dubuque, and passes through a ravine at its southern extremity, called "Dirty hollow," to the prairie; and, after crossing two branches of Catfish creek, follows a dividing-ridge to the Cascade falls of the north fork of Maquoketah, (distant twenty-five miles from Dubuque,) having crossed Prairie creek and White-water; from the Cascade falls it follows a high dividing-ridge to the south fork of Maquoketah, and thence the main dividing-ridge to the Wapsipinicon, having crossed Warnley creek, Kitty's creek, and Fawn creek; the line crosses the Wap-

Wapsipinicon (forty-eight miles from Dubuque) at the mouth of the Buffalo fork, and follows a ridge to the summit at Russel's; thence over a rolling prairie to Cedar river, which it crosses about seventy miles from Dubuque; and thence to Iowa City (the seat of government) on the Iowa river, having crossed Indian creek, Rapid creek, and several inferior streams: crossing the Iowa river at the seat of government, the line passes over a prairie to Harris's creek, Old Man's creek, and thence to Davis's creek, along a ridge, having crossed English river; thence over a level prairie to Mount Pleasant, (the county seat of Washington county,) having crossed Goose creek, several branches of Long creek, Crooked creek, and some smaller streams; from Mount Pleasant the line follows a ridge to Skunk river, which it crosses at Hughes's ferry; thence to Little Cedar, and over a level prairie (passing through the town of Washington and the head of Bratting grove) to a ridge leading to Keosauqua, a flourishing town on the Des Moines river, and seat of justice of Van Buren county.

On completing the surveys, the road was put under construction between Dubuque and Iowa City, a distance of eighty-six miles. The timber on the line of the road was cut out for forty feet, twenty of which were grubbed. Over wet places in the prairie, a great number of which occurred, the road was ditched and bridged; hills graded; bridges were constructed nearly over all the streams, and over some (as Prairie creek, White-water, and the Wapsipinicon) with stone abutments, and of a more permanent character. With the exception of some additional bridges and grading, nothing is wanting to make a good road between those points. An estimate for these, and for the completion of the road, accompanies this.

In reference to this work, I beg leave to say that I regard it as the most important with which I was charged.

Leaving the town of Dubuque, on the Mississippi, (one of the most important and flourishing in the Territory,) it passes through the seat of government lately established on the Iowa river; and thence to the southern boundary, through several county towns, traversing a beautiful and fertile country, and greatly enhancing the value of the lands, which are settling with unprecedented rapidity. This region is destitute of roads, and the intercourse greatly embarrassed by the want of bridges over some of the streams.

4th. For the improvement of the mail route from the northern boundary of Missouri to some point on the Mississippi, between Dubuque and Prairie du Chien:

Upon an examination of this route, it was deemed advisable to defer all action until authority was obtained to make changes in the location which are deemed essential. The road, as now located, is very circuitous; running along the river, it crosses all the ravines and streams making into it, thereby passing over much worse ground, and greatly enhancing the distance.

Between Dubuque and Davenport, for example, a line can be obtained saving at least ten miles in distance, and passing through a country over which a road can be made for a much smaller amount, and, from the nature of the ground, be always in better condition. I would suggest the propriety of having a general mail-route laid out between the points indicated in the law, and have the smaller towns on the river accommodated with cross-mails. Such a road is already very much needed, and the necessity for it daily increasing.

5th. Survey for a canal between Bloomington and Moscow, on the Red Cedar river :

Leaving the town of Bloomington, on the Mississippi, the line follows the valley of Mad creek to its head, distant about six miles, attaining an elevation of 193 feet ; from this point to where the ground falls towards the Cedar, a distance of about four miles, it is of a uniform elevation of about 185 feet, (except one depression—a tributary of a stream emptying into Cedar below Moscow ;) it then falls towards the Cedar, which, at Moscow, is about 90 feet above the Mississippi at Bloomington.

A canal between the abovementioned points would have to be supplied from the Cedar river, and a survey was, therefore, made above Moscow, and a line of levels run to ascertain its fall, which was found to be about one foot and a half in a mile ; so that if a cut of 30 feet be made at the summit, (a cut of four miles in length,) it will be necessary to tap the Red Cedar river 40 miles above Moscow, and supply the canal by a feeder. There will then be between 150 and 160 feet to be overcome by locks on the side towards the Mississippi, and between 60 and 70 on the side towards the Red Cedar. The expense involved in these operations, compared with the object to be attained, settled the question, in my judgment, so far against its practicability, as to render more minute surveys unnecessary, especially as this region of country was at the time extremely unhealthy, and the party had already been detained for several weeks by sickness.

The Red Cedar river is one of the finest and largest streams in the Territory ; its depth varies considerably at different points, but, at the lowest stage of water, between 3 and 4 feet can be found in the channel. The principal, if not the only, obstacle to its navigation by boats of light draught, are sand-bars, which are continually shifting as in the Missouri ; and, of course, any attempt to improve the navigation by their removal would be useless. At the town of Westport, near the Indian boundary, there are rapids which will require some improvements to continue the navigation beyond them.

Which is respectfully submitted.

R. C. TILGHMAN,
United States Agent and Engineer.

Colonel J. J. ABERT,
Topographical Bureau, Washington, D. C.

Estimate for the completion of the road from Burlington towards the Indian agency, on the Des Moines.

1ST SECTION.

For clearing in woods near Burlington	-	-	-	\$500 00
For bridging	-	-	-	100 00
For grading on 1st section	-	-	-	300 00
				900 00
				900 00

2D SECTION—BETWEEN SKUNK RIVER AND WILLIAMSON'S CREEK.

For clearing and grubbing	-	-	-	\$800 00
For grading	-	-	-	300 00

For ditching -	-	-	-	\$150 00
For bridge over Prairie creek	-	-	-	100 00
For bridge over Williamson's creek	-	-	-	75 00
				<u>1,425 00</u>

3D SECTION—BETWEEN WILLIAMSON'S CREEK AND LITTLE CEDAR.

For small bridges	-	-	-	\$100 00
For grading	-	-	-	300 00
For ditching	-	-	-	300 00
For bridge over canal of Cedar	-	-	-	200 00
For bridge over Cedar	-	-	-	600 00
				<u>1,500 00</u>

4TH SECTION—BETWEEN CEDAR AND LICK CREEKS.

For ditching	-	-	-	\$1,000 00
For levelling and filling	-	-	-	200 00
For small bridges	-	-	-	100 00
				<u>1,300 00</u>

5TH SECTION—BETWEEN LICK CREEK AND INDIAN AGENCY.

For small bridges	-	-	-	\$200 00
For ditching	-	-	-	200 00
For grading	-	-	-	300 00
				<u>700 00</u>

RECAPITULATION.

For 1st section	-	-	-	\$900 00
For 2d section	-	-	-	1,425 00
For 3d section	-	-	-	1,500 00
For 4th section	-	-	-	1,300 00
For 5th section	-	-	-	700 00
				<u>5,825 00</u>
Contingencies, 10 per cent.	-	-	-	582 50
				<u>\$6,407 50</u>

Estimate for the completion of the road from Dubuque to the northern boundary of Missouri.

BETWEEN DUBUQUE AND IOWA CITY.

For two bridges over Catfish creek, and grading hill	-	\$1,200 00
For bridge over south fork of Naquoketan	-	2,500 00
		<u>3,700 00</u>

1ST SECTION—FROM IOWA CITY TO ENGLISH RIVER.

For clearing and grubbing	-	\$1,050 00
For ditching	-	200 00
For grading,	-	250 00
For bridge over hollow at trading-house	-	150 00
“ “ Harris's creek	-	200 00
“ “ Old Man's creek	-	350 00
“ “ Musquito creek	-	50 00
“ “ Overslaugh	-	100 00
For three small bridges	-	60 00
For bridge over English river	-	1,500 00
		<u>3,910 00</u>

2D SECTION—FROM ENGLISH RIVER TO WEST BRANCH OF LONG CREEK.

For ditching	-	\$700 00
For clearing and grubbing	-	500 00
For grading	-	200 00
For bridge over Davis's creek	-	150 00
“ “ Goose creek	-	200 00
“ “ Crane run	-	75 00
“ “ west branch of Long creek	-	75 00
For small bridges	-	320 00
		<u>2,220 00</u>

3D SECTION—FROM WEST BRANCH OF LONG CREEK TO CROOKED CREEK.

For ditching	-	\$450 00
For clearing and grubbing	-	1,400 00
For grading	-	100 00
For bridge over east branch of Long creek	-	75 00
For bridge over Crooked creek	-	100 00
For small bridges	-	160 00
		<u>2,285 00</u>

4TH SECTION—FROM CROOKED CREEK TO MOUNT PLEASANT.

For ditching	-	\$150 00
For clearing and grubbing	-	750 00

For bridge over creek	-	-	-	-	-	\$400 00
For bridges over two branches of Big creek	-	-	-	-	-	150 00
						<u>1,450 00</u>

5TH SECTION—FROM MOUNT PLEASANT TO WASHINGTON.

For clearing and grubbing	-	-	-	-	-	\$2,000 00
For grading	-	-	-	-	-	300 00
For bridges over branches of Big creek and other streams	-	-	-	-	-	425 00
For bridge over Cedar creek	-	-	-	-	-	1,200 00
For small bridges	-	-	-	-	-	250 00
						<u>4,175 00</u>

6TH SECTION—FROM WASHINGTON TO KEOSAUQUA.

For clearing and grubbing	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,200 00
For ditching	-	-	-	-	-	150 00
For small bridges	-	-	-	-	-	225 00
						<u>1,575 00</u>

RECAPITULATION.

Between Dubuque and Iowa City	-	-	-	-	-	\$3,700 00
1st section	-	-	-	-	-	3,910 00
2d section	-	-	-	-	-	2,220 00
3d section	-	-	-	-	-	2,285 00
4th section	-	-	-	-	-	1,450 00
5th section	-	-	-	-	-	4,175 00
6th section	-	-	-	-	-	1,575 00
						<u>19,315 00</u>
Add 10 per cent. for contingencies	-	-	-	-	-	1,931 50
						<u>21,246 50</u>

For the road from Burlington to De Hagues, in Illinois.

This road will require an embankment for nearly its whole extent, and several bridges. I have understood that several thousand dollars have been appropriated to it by the State of Illinois, which, with the appropriation of last year, and an additional one of ten thousand dollars, will, I am of opinion, be sufficient to make a good road between those points.

For locating a road from the northern boundary of Missouri to some point on the Mississippi between Dubuque and Prairie du Chien, and for clearing, grading, bridging, and ditching said road, in addition to the appropriation already made, the sum of ten thousand dollars.

<i>Roads in Iowa.</i>	Amount in Treasury.	Amount in agent's hands.
Road from Dubuque to the northern boundary of Missouri - - - - -	-	-
Road from Burlington towards the Indian agency on the Des Moines - - - - -	-	\$0 69
Road from Burlington to De Hagues - - - - -	-	*1,004 98
Road from the northern boundary of Missouri to some point on the Mississippi between Dubuque and Prairie du Chien - - - - -	-	16,817 98

J. J. ABERT,
Bureau Top. Engineers.

Hon. W. W. CHAPMAN.

* In the agent's hands on the expiration of the 1st quarter, namely, 31st March, 1840; since probably expended.

† In agent's hands, awaiting the decision of the Post Office in reference to parts of the route