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Memorial of the Legislature of Wiskonsin, in relation to a military road from Fort Howard to Fort Snelling

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WISCONSIN.

MEMORIAL

OF

THE LEGISLATURE OF WISCONSIN,

IN RELATION

To a military road from Fort Howard to Fort Snelling.

MARCH 16, 1840.

Laid on the table.

To the honorable the Secretary of the War Department of the United States :

The memorial of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Wisconsin
RESPECTFULLY REPRESENTS :

That, in the opinion of your memorialists, the construction of a military road from Fort Howard to Fort Snelling is a subject worthy of the consideration of the General Government. The means of defence on the frontier against the predatory incursions of the Indians inhabiting the northern portion of our Territory would be greatly increased by making an easy communication, at all seasons of the year, between these distant military posts. By the route at present in use, detachments of troops from any of the eastern posts, after arriving at Green Bay, take the circuitous channel of the Fox, Wisconsin, and Mississippi rivers, and travel a distance of over 700 miles to their point of destination at St. Peter's. This can scarcely ever be accomplished in less than three weeks, and must be at a vast expense ; and, in military expeditions requiring great despatch, would be attended with numerous and serious objections. One of the chief means of successful warlike operations against Indians is the concentration, at an early period, of large bodies of troops at any post where their services may be required. Your memorialists believe that, if the contemplated road should be constructed, the distance would not exceed 280 miles, and troops might easily reach Fort Snelling from Fort Howard in at most ten days.

Your memorialists further represent that the country through which this road would pass, if the nearest practicable route should be followed, is highly favorable for such an improvement. From Green Bay to the rapids of the Wisconsin, a few miles below Ptoon Portage, the lands are generally covered with a sparse growth of timber, except on the streams which would

necessarily be crossed. The heights or dividing ridges between those streams are represented as affording, with little labor in clearing, an almost natural road, the soil being light and sandy, and never subject to remain long saturated with the heavy rains. From the Wisconsin river, by the rapids of the Upper Black river, to Brunet's Mills, on the Chippewa, the dividing heights are mostly prairie, and would require little more than surveying and marking along the route. From thence to the rapids of the St. Croix, at the head of the lake of that name, and the Mississippi opposite St. Peter's, the country is of a similar character, requiring a small amount of labor to open an excellent carriage track. The information your memorialists have received, induces them to believe that the greatest portion of the expense of the contemplated improvement would consist in the cost of the necessary bridges to cross the several streams, and none of these, they think, would be difficult of passage.

The lands north and west of the Wisconsin are now owned by the Government, and of a part of the lands east of it the Indian title has already been extinguished. The settlements would soon extend, it is believed, the whole distance, and open the vast and valuable resources with which the country abounds. The number of settlers on the Wisconsin river, a few miles below where the road would pass, are now computed at over two hundred souls. It is thought, therefore, that not only the military defence of the northern frontier would be greatly strengthened, but the Government lands would be much enhanced in value, by the early attention of the Government to this improvement.

We, therefore, suggest to your honor the propriety of an immediate survey of this route; and that, if found practicable, an appropriation be recommended to Congress for the construction of a military road thereon.

EDWARD V. WHITON,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

JAMES COLLINS,

President of the Council.

Approved December 20, 1839.

HENRY DODGE.