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Geological survey of Oregon and Washington Territories, etc

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GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF OREGON AND WASHINGTON
TERRITORIES, ETC.

MAY 22, 1858.—Referred to the Committee on Printing and ordered to be printed.

MR. JOHN G. DAVIS, from the Committee on Public Lands, made the following

REPORT.

Mr. John G. Davis, from the Committee on Public Lands, made the following report on the geological survey of Oregon and Washington Territories, and geological explorations in connexion with the explorations for a railroad route to the Pacific, near the 47th parallel of latitude, under the War Department.

In 1851 it was determined by the Secretary of the Interior, under the act of September 27, 1850, pointing out the manner of making surveys in Oregon, to connect with the land surveys a geological reconnoissance and exploration. It was also deemed essential to the proper construction of maps that the latitude and longitude of the intersection of the base and meridian lines should be determined. To accomplish this object, a transfer of \$2,500 was made from a fund for similar service in the northwest, and Dr. John Evans was directed, on the 22d March, 1851, to proceed overland to ascertain the general geology of the country west of the Missouri river, towards the Rocky mountains; to reconnoitre for practicable wagon routes over the Rocky mountains to the Pacific ocean, and when in Oregon, to aid the surveyor general in obtaining the elevations along the base and meridian lines, and to determine the latitude and longitude of their intersection, by astronomical observations. He was further instructed "that the great object of his mission was to develop and make apprehensible whatever matters his professional skill should deem to be most useful to the infant settlements in the Territory whose people had sought to interest the government in the kind of scientific research required." These results were reported to the General Land Office.

In December, 1851, and in December, 1852, the legislature of Oregon petitioned Congress for further appropriations; and, on recommendation by the Department of the Interior, \$16,984 25 was appropriated for this service. This sum included a deficiency for service the previous year. At the same time the geologist was instructed "to cooperate with Governor I. I. Stevens, appointed by the War Department to explore for a railroad route to the Pacific, near the 47th parallel of north latitude," to draw up instructions for the

guidance of his sub-corps, (in geological matters,) and to place at his disposal all the topographical information collected in previous explorations, "in the same region of country, and to prepare the final geological report of his expedition."

In March, 1855, in answer to petitions from the legislatures of Oregon and Washington Territories, and petitions from citizens of California, for more detailed surveys to develop the value of the coal deposits in Oregon and Washington Territories, as highly important to the commerce and navigation of the Pacific, a further appropriation was made by Congress of \$23,560. This last appropriation included the sum of \$4,867 50, incurred in the co-operation with Governor Stevens, in the explorations for a northern railroad route to the Pacific ocean.

On the adjustment of Dr. Evans' accounts to the 4th March last, it appeared, that owing to the prevailing Indian wars in those Territories, more than doubling the cost of supplies and transportation, that the expenses of the last explorations ordered by Congress exceeded the estimates \$3,574 70.

The results of the survey develop the existence of rich deposits of semi-bituminous coal, cropping out at various points from the British line to near the boundary of California, which are almost inexhaustible in quantity, and accessible to sail and steam navigation.

Ores of iron, lead, platinum, and copper have been found; also gold in both Territories, which, on examination of the geology of the country when the deposits have been discovered, proves to be in true gold-bearing regions; marbles, other lime stones, and valuable rocks for building purposes abound. A careful analysis has been made of the coals, soils, and minerals; maps of the country explored have been constructed and other illustrations prepared. These results exhibit the general topographical features and agricultural resources of the country en route to the Pacific, and in the Territories referred to from the British possessions to the boundary of California.

The legislatures of Oregon and Washington Territories, at their present session, have petitioned Congress for the publication of the report, as containing information highly important to the welfare of the settlements on the Pacific, at whose instance the appropriations were made by Congress; also petitions are on file with the committee from the Academy of Sciences, Philadelphia, and the Academy of Sciences, St. Louis, Missouri, setting forth the value of the information obtained in a scientific as well as economic point of view.

The cost of publishing the report in quarto form, including the cost of preparation of all the maps and other illustrations, as estimated by the General Land Office, will be \$26,526. This sum, together with the balance due the geologist on settlement of his accounts to the 4th March last, amounts to \$30,000.

The letter from the War Department, setting forth the value of Dr. Evans' explorations in connexion with the northern explorations for a railroad route to the Pacific, is submitted as a part of this report.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, January 26, 1858.

SIR: In reply to your request for my views respecting the publication of the report of Dr. John Evans, I have to state that the examinations of Dr. Evans extended over lines 24,000 miles in length, embracing the regions traversed by the route explored for a Pacific railroad near the parallel of 47° north latitude; that collections have been made along all the lines passed over, of the prevailing rocks, minerals and soils which, in connexion with other information gathered, exhibit the character and capabilities of the regions explored, their fitness for occupation and settlement, the facilities they afford for the construction of rail and common roads—all of which I regard of very great value, not only in connexion with the project of constructing a railroad to the Pacific, but with the military operations of the country.

The itineraries and topographical sketches of Dr. Evans likewise give useful information. For these reasons I esteem the publication of this report to be important.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN B. FLOYD,
Secretary of War.

Hon. JOHN G. DAVIS,
House of Representatives.

Your committee, therefore, in view of the importance and value of the report, and the large amount of money expended in making said survey and geological reconnaissance and explorations, respectfully recommend that the usual number of the same be printed, and the passage of the accompanying bill authorizing the payment of the sum of \$3,574 74, balance due the said Dr. Evans on settlement of his accounts as aforesaid; and, further, that five hundred extra copies of the said report be printed for the use of this House. All of which is respectfully submitted.