

University of Oklahoma College of Law

University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons

American Indian and Alaskan Native Documents in the Congressional Serial Set: 1817-1899

1-7-1869

Letter of the Secretary of the Interior, communicating an estimate of appropriations for the Sisseton and Wahpeton Sioux Indians at Lake Traverse and Devil's Lake, Dakota Territory

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



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

Recommended Citation

S. Exec. Doc. No. 28, 40th Cong., 3rd Sess. (1869)

This Senate Executive 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 Law-LibraryDigitalCommons@ou.edu.

L E T T E R
OF
THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,
COMMUNICATING

An estimate of appropriations for the Sisseton and Wahpeton Sioux Indians at Lake Traverse and Devil's lake, Dakota Territory.

JANUARY 7, 1869.—Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs and ordered to be printed.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, D. C., January 21, 1869.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith a communication dated the 20th instant, from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and accompanying estimate of the funds that will be required to enable the Indian Department to relieve the immediate and pressing wants of the Sisseton and Wahpeton Sioux Indians, on the reservations at Lake Traverse and Devil's lake, Dakota Territory, "and, also, the amount necessary for the next fiscal year to properly care for them, and to enable them to commence farming operations at the earliest day practicable."

The estimate submitted amounts to \$141,905, to which, and to the accompanying copy of a letter from Bishop Whipple of Minnesota, to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, in relation to the Indians referred to, the attention of Congress is respectfully invited.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

O. H. BROWNING, *Secretary.*

Hon. B. F. WADE,

President pro tempore United States Senate.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, OFFICE INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, D. C., January 20, 1869.

SIR: By the 6th article, Senate amendment, treaty of February 19, 1867, (Pamphlet copy of laws, 1st session, 40th Congress, p. 5, of treaties,) with the Sisseton and Wahpeton bands of Sioux, it is provided, "that Congress will, at its own discretion, from time to time, make such appropriations as may be deemed requisite to enable said Indians to return to an agricultural life under the system in operation on the Sioux reservation in 1862," &c. As no stipulated sum for that purpose is designated in the treaty, the amount being left entirely to the discretion of Congress, no appropriation has been asked for these Indians, in the regular estimate for this office, now before Congress.

By the act of July 27, 1868, "making appropriations for the current and contingent expenses of the Indian department," &c., for the present fiscal year, the following items were appropriated for said Indians, to be expended under the direction of the Rev. H. B. Whipple, viz: For furnishing the Sisseton and Wahpeton Sioux, at Devil's Lake, Dakota Territory, with agricultural and mechanical implements, &c., \$15,000, and for those members of the same bands at Lake Traverse, for same purpose, \$30,000.

The enclosed extracts from a letter received at this office, from Bishop Whipple, dated the 10th ultimo, will show the suffering condition of these Indians, and the impossibility of supplying them with the actual necessaries of life, from the small amounts appropriated for them for the present fiscal year, without taking into consideration the agricultural and mechanical implements required to enable them to return to an agricultural life.

It is hoped, for the sake of humanity, and to save these miserable creatures from starvation, that Congress will at once appropriate a sufficient amount for their immediate relief, and also the amount necessary for the next fiscal year, to properly care for them, and to enable them to commence farming operations at the earliest day practicable.

I enclose herewith a copy of an estimate, submitted by Agent Thompson, for the amounts required the next fiscal year for various objects, to enable said Indians to commence and carry on their agricultural pursuits, and for subsistence until they can raise crops, &c. The amount of the agent's estimate for the reservation at Lake Traverse is \$119,960, and that for the reservation at Devil's Lake, \$21,945. There may be some of the items in this estimate that can be dispensed with; but, in the opinion of this office, nearly if not the full amount asked for will be absolutely necessary for the purpose.

In connection with this matter I would say that the seventh article of said treaty provides that whenever there shall be 500 persons of said bands permanently located upon the reservation at Devil's Lake, an agent or other competent person shall be appointed to superintend the agricultural, mechanical, and educational interests of the Indians at that place. It is believed the interests of the Indians, as well as of the government, require the presence of an agent at that reservation as soon as one can possibly be provided. I would, therefore, respectfully recommend that an appropriation of, not to exceed, \$2,000 be made for the salary of an agent at Devil's Lake.

I respectfully request that these matters be submitted to Congress, with such remarks thereon as may be deemed advisable, for the consideration and action of that body.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

N. G. TAYLOR,
Commissioner.

Hon. O. H. BROWNING,
Secretary of the Interior.

[Extract.]

FAIRBAULT, December 10, 1868.

MY DEAR COLONEL TAYLOR: I came home a week ago from one of the worst journeys I have ever taken, to Fort Wadsworth, D. T. The route is by St. Cloud and Sauk Centre, and from there I took a pair of horses and a guide. Much of the way was over pathless prairies, and with snow from six to fifteen inches deep, the stopping places very

poor and diet hard; but, amid all discomfort, I was protected. I came home quite ill from a cold caught one night when I slept in a damp hole dug out of the bank. I am overpaid by the thought that I was able to save some of these Indians from death by starvation. I went to fulfil a trust imposed upon me by Congress, and it proved one of the most arduous of my life. I knew these Indians well in 1860 to 1862, and thought they were the finest specimens of the Indian race I had ever seen. You remember that the outbreak began among the lower Sioux. There were many of the upper Sioux who joined heart and soul in the massacre, but many more who had begun civilization, and others, who were Christians, were innocent as you were of all connection with the outbreak; some performed heroic deeds of bravery in saving the whites; others were timid and fled to the coteaus beyond, but at the earliest moment all of these came in and showed us their friendship by most efficient service; and it is to the wisdom of General Sibley and his knowledge of Indian character, and the fidelity of these friendly Indians, that our border has escaped the horrors of Indian war for four years. When Congress placed in my hands the trust for these friendly Sioux I promptly declined it, because I felt I had all the work on my hands I could do. I am now deeply grateful to God that I complied with the request of the Secretary of the Interior and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and accepted the trust, although it has given me more anxiety than all my other cares, and has already cost me over \$400 out of my pocket. It has no salary, as you are aware, and I did not wish one, and would not receive it, for doing an act of mercy.

The provision of the appropriation and also of the treaty were both peculiar, and by no means carefully guarded. The appropriation was for "implements of husbandry, &c.," in accordance with articles 6 and 7 of treaty of 1867. These Indians had been left without any appropriation for six years—as shameless a neglect of men who had perilled their lives for us as the nation ever committed. Even good faith to the hostile Sioux demanded that we should fulfil every pledge we had made to them, and when we failed to do so it was regarded by them as a wanton violation of our good faith and a cause of war. These friendly Indians were in a starving condition; a few of them had done all they could for themselves, even digging up the ground with sticks and cutting hay with common butcher-knives; but the seed was given out too late, and much of it corn, which will not ripen in so short a season. * *

* * * * * The next question was what could be done under the appropriation. For me to bring threshing machines, &c., for men who were naked and starving to death, would be shameless mockery; for me to depart from the strict letter of the appropriation would involve me in difficulty. I laid the matter before the Secretary of the Interior, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, the Second Auditor of the Treasury, and such members of the peace commission as I could reach, and all, without exception, advised me to expend the appropriation largely for food and clothing. * * * * *

After receiving the trust, I wrote to Dr. I. W. Daniels, whom I have known intimately for ten years, and who for two years was my family physician, and asked him to assist me. It would give me a good physician, which these Indians sadly needed. He was also one of the purest and best men I ever knew; he had known these Indians 13 years, and for several years was their physician and spoke their language. He had often talked with me of their sad condition, and, I knew, pitied them as I did. He gave up his practice and went to visit them. He said when he came to the first village, old and young, blind and halt, men, women, and chil-

dren, came out to see him, and when he told them why he came, and of all that I hoped to do, men whom he had never given credit for any emotion, burst into tears. He visited every wigwam and house, saw their poverty, took account of their work, and made an accurate list of every man, woman, and child on the reservation; when I came this work was completed. My own reception was such as I had never received from Indians. I found that there was a practical difficulty in the fact that over 400 Indians from Devil's Lake, and a few from James river, were living on the reservation. The James river Indians are a small band of friendly Sioux, who have no treaty with the government. They number about 70 souls and 11 families. The chief, Ex-per-pe-yach, is a very intelligent man, and he particularly requested that I would lay his case before you. He asked that his Great Father would send his people a few blankets, and a little seed, &c., and assured me that he would always be, as he had been, the white man's friend.

I called all the chiefs and headmen of the Lac Traverse people together, and asked them to strike off from the census every Indian from the James and Devil's Lake. They did so. The chiefs then said:

We do not think that these Indians ought to be fed and clothed out of our goods. You see how poor they are. The Great Spirit has been kind to us, and we wish to be kind to our people. We will take all the blind and crippled and aged and widows on our list and care for them.

The appropriation bill provided that all goods should be turned over in bulk to the chiefs, and the order from the War Department detailing Major Hampsen to witness it repeated the provision. I compared the invoices, counted yards, &c., and took a receipt for the same, requesting the chiefs to allow me to make a second issue, charging each specific article to each individual. * * * * * It would have blinded your eyes with tears if you could have witnessed all I did. I could not have believed that six years could have brought such wretchedness and misery to this people. I think over 100 of them are blind or helpless. It was a touching sight to see poor, blind, and old come in, almost naked, and hear their expressions of gratitude, mingled with tears, as they received the clothing which was to shelter them from the cold. Never did I realize before how blessed is the promise, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these, ye have done it unto Me." In the public council I heard many speeches which would have brought tears from a hard heart.

Yours, faithfully,

H. B. WHIPPLE.

Hon. N. G. TAYLOR, *Commissioner of Indian Affairs.*

Estimate to accompany report to the Hon. N. G. Taylor, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for 1868, and should be expended for the Sisseton and Wahpeton Sioux on the Lake Traverse reservation in Dakota Territory, for the year 1869.

For agency buildings, house, office, and stable—all of stone ..	\$8,500
For 20-horse power steam saw-mill, with shingle machine, and constructed with a view to running two sets of millstones .	8,000
For 4 school-houses for teachers, with school-rooms in each...	4,500
For residence for physician and office.....	1,500
For residence for interpreter.....	1,000
For wheelwright shop	500

For 30 houses for Indians to live in, at \$700 each.....	\$21,000
For 50 cooking stoves with pipes, utensils, at \$30 each.....	1,500
For salary of agent.....	1,500
For salary of physician.....	1,000
For pay of engineer.....	800
For pay of assistant or clerk.....	900
For pay of blacksmith.....	800
For pay of wheelwright and carpenter.....	3,000
For pay of teachers.....	2,000
For pay of one teamster and one laborer, at \$480 each.....	960
For pay of one interpreter.....	600
For advanced scholars to prepare for teachers to manual labor school.....	1,000
For 1 pair good horses and harness.....	500
For 50 pair good working oxen, at \$150 each.....	7,500
For 50 substantial lumber wagons, at \$110 each.....	5,500
For 50 good milch cows, at \$50 each.....	2,500
For 50 ox-yokes with bows, staples, and rings, at \$5 each....	250
For 50 cable-link road chains, with hooks, at \$5 each.....	250
For 30 A No. 1 Molin 12-inch ploughs, with extra shares and circular coulters, at \$30 each.....	900
For 15 dozen three-tined hay forks, at \$10 per dozen.....	150
For 10 dozen steel spades, at \$25 per dozen.....	250
For 5 dozen Irish shovels, at \$25 per dozen.....	125
For 300 substantial corn hoes, with riveted eyes, at \$2 each..	600
For 4 Wood's mowers, at \$175 each.....	700
For 4 horse hay-rakes, at \$75 each.....	300
For 400 bushels seed potatoes, at \$2 50 per bushel.....	1,000
For 100 bushels seed corn, at \$3 per bushel.....	300
For assorted garden seeds.....	100
For breaking 40 pieces of land of five acres each, at \$8 per acre.....	1,600
For purchasing clothing for men, women, and children.....	15,000
For needles, thread, buttons, hooks, lines, &c.....	200
For iron and steel for blacksmith shop.....	1,000
For saws, axes, hammers, nails, and other varieties of hardware.....	1,500
For groceries, tobacco, and ammunition.....	3,000
For 1,000 sacks of 100 pounds each superfine flour, at seven cents per pound.....	7,000
For 125 barrels of mess pork, at \$35 per barrel.....	4,375
For 300 pounds hard soap, at 12 cents per pound.....	360
For 20 barrels of salt, at \$12 per barrel.....	240
For 600 bushels of oats, at \$1 50 per bushel.....	900
For 200 bushels of corn, at \$2 50 per bushel.....	500
For medicine \$200; stationery \$100.....	300
For transportation.....	4,000
Whole amount.....	<u>119,960</u>

For the Indians on the reservation at Devil's Lake:

For house, \$700; warehouse, \$500; stable, \$300—all log.....	\$1,500
For 1 pair good horses and harness, \$500; 1 good heavy-covered wagon, \$200.....	700
For 10 pairs good working oxen, at \$150 each.....	1,500

For 10 ox-yokes, with bows, staples, and rings, at \$5 each.....	\$50
For 10 cable-linked road-chains, with hooks, at \$5 each.....	50
For 6 A No. 1 Molin 12-inch ploughs, circular coulter and extra share, at \$30 each	180
For 3 dozen three-tined hay-forks, at \$10 per dozen	30
For 2 dozen steel spades, at \$25 per dozen.....	50
For 1 dozen Irish shovels	25
For 100 substantial corn hoes, with riveted eyes, at \$2 each..	200
For 1 wood mower	200
For 1 horse hay-rake.....	90
For 75 bushels seed potatoes, at \$4 per bushel	300
For 40 bushels seed corn, at \$4 per bushel.....	160
For pay for breaking 100 acres into five-acre lots, at \$8 per acre	800
For tools, nails, and hardware of different description	400
For purchase of clothing for men, women, and children.....	5,000
For needles, thread, hooks, lines, &c.....	100
For groceries, tobacco, and ammunition.....	1,000
For 400 sacks of superfine flour, at \$10 per sack	4,000
For 50 barrels of pork, at \$40 per barrel.....	2,000
For 500 pounds of hard soap, at \$12 per 100 pounds	60
For 200 bushels of oats, at \$2 per bushel	400
For medicines and stationery.....	150
For pay of a good man	900
For pay of transportation	1,000
For 10 lumber wagons, at \$110 each.....	1,100
Whole amount	<u>21,945</u>

Recapitulation.

For reservation at Lake Traverse	\$119,960
For reservation at Devil's lake.....	21,945
Whole amount	<u>141,905</u>

Respectfully submitted:

Your obedient servant,

BENJ. THOMPSON,
U. S. Indian Agent.

LAKE TRAVERSE, October 21, 1868.