

12-15-1874

Letter from the Secretary of War, relative to the bill (H.R. 2854) for the location and construction of a military wagonroad from Green River City, Wyo., to the Yellowstone National Park, and to Fort Ellis, Mont.

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MILITARY WAGON-ROAD IN WYOMING AND MONTANA
TERRITORIES.

L E T T E R

FROM

T H E S E C R E T A R Y O F W A R ,

RELATIVE TO

The bill (H. R. 2854) for the location and construction of a military wagon-road from Green River City, Wyo., to the Yellowstone National Park, and to Fort Ellis, Mont.

DECEMBER 15, 1874.—Referred to the Committee on Military Affairs and ordered to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT, December 10, 1874.

The Secretary of War has the honor to return to the House of Representatives House bill 2854, "For the location and construction of a military wagon-road from Green River City, Wyoming Territory, to the Yellowstone National Park, and to Fort Ellis, Montana Territory," and to transmit, for the information of the Committee on Military Affairs, as requested by the chairman of said committee, under date of June 9, 1874, letter of the Chief of Engineers of the Army, dated June 16, 1874, and copy of report of Capt. W. A. Jones, Corps of Engineers, which fully sets forth the advantages to be derived from the construction of said road.

Under date of November 28, Lieutenant-General Sheridan states: "In forwarding the report of Capt. William A. Jones, Engineer Corps, of his reconnaissance of the route referred to by the within papers from Green River City, Wyoming Territory, or its vicinity, to Fort Ellis, Montana Territory, via the Yellowstone Park, under date of May 10, 1874, I did not express myself as in favor of the projected road. Since that date I have had opportunity to make a personal examination of the road through to Camp Brown, Wyoming Territory, which causes me to reconsider my former action; and I now return these papers with my approval, and recommend that the road, as proposed by the within House bill, introduced by the Hon. W. R. Steele, of Wyoming Territory, be favorably considered by the honorable Secretary of War."

WM. W. BELKNAP,
Secretary of War.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS,
Washington, D. C., June 16, 1874.

SIR: In compliance with reference to this office of bill No. 2854, introduced into the House of Representatives on the 6th instant by the Hon. Mr. Steele, for the location and construction of a military wagon-road from Green River City, Wyo., to the Yellowstone National Park and Fort Ellis, Mont., I have the honor to transmit herewith a copy of a letter from Captain W. A. Jones, of the Corps of Engineers, in which the advantages which are expected to accrue from the construction of said road are fully set forth; and also beg leave to refer to my letter of the 13th instant, forwarding to you a copy of a report by Captain Jones of a reconnaissance of Northwestern Wyoming made in 1873.

The letter from the Committee on Military Affairs inclosing the bill is returned herewith.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

A. A. HUMPHREYS,
Brig. Gen. and Chief of Engineers.

Hon. WM. W. BELKNAP,
Secretary of War.

WASHINGTON, D. C., *June 12, 1874.*

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of this date upon the subject of a proposed military wagon-road in Wyoming.

The road proposed by this bill is over the line discovered by me last year while making the reconnaissance of Northwestern Wyoming. I consider it a perfectly practicable project, which can be attained at a reasonable expense.

The road will leave the Union Pacific Railroad near Green River City, Wyo., at such a point (probably Point of Rocks) as will give the shortest distance from the railroad to the mouth of Wind River Valley. This valley is followed up to its head, where there is a pass over which the grades are perfectly easy and practicable. It is probable that this pass will be practicable for winter travel, as it lies in such position that the prevalent winds are intercepted by neighboring mountain-ranges, and cannot reach it with sufficient force to drive the snow into drifts that will be serious obstructions. It is the testimony of miners, freighters, and others in the territories, that winter roads can easily be maintained in the mountains, provided the snow does not drift badly. Whether this should prove true or not, the proposed road would remain open as long as the present route via Corinne, and longer than the Missouri River route.

From this pass the road will proceed northerly to Yellowstone Lake, following down its eastern shore, and thence down the Yellowstone River, passing the Great Falls and along the crest of the Grand Cañon, and by the Mammoth Hot Springs on Gardiner's River to Fort Ellis, Bozeman City, and the Crow Indian agency. From here there are good roads to the principal cities and mining towns of Montana. The route traverses the Wind River Valley, (avoiding the present mountain-road between Camp Stambaugh and Camp Brown,) where the soil is quite well adapted to agriculture and grazing, as has been proved by experience, and the climate is exceptionally mild; the Teton Basin, a thoroughly well-watered and well-timbered area of country, where the

soil is quite rich, and rain falls with sufficient equability to render irrigation unnecessary probably; the Yellowstone National Park, passing all of its wonderful phenomena except the geyser basins, which can be reached by a short side road, and a stretch of country in Yellowstone Valley, north of the park, which is now cultivated with success.

Gold, (in veins and diggings,) coal, coal-oil, iron, and gypsum occur in the Wind River country, fine coal in the Teton Basin, and gold, (in veins and diggings,) lead, and silver in the Yellowstone region.

It will thus be seen that this road will open up and develop a country of considerable and varied resources.

It will also furnish the shortest and a most agreeable route to the Yellowstone National Park.

The present approaches to Montana from the East are only two: viz: (1.) The Missouri River route, which involves wagon transportation from Fort Benton, or from Carroll, over a desolate country. This latter affords about the same wagon-road distance to Fort Ellis as the one from Fort Benton, and, should it prove available, will supersede it. (2.) The land-route via the Union and Central Pacific Railroads to Corinne, Utah, and thence to Montana by wagons.

The road proposed by the bill is an improvement upon this, as will be seen from the following tables, and will thus bring the two main routes into a closer competition, giving the mining and agricultural interests of Montana an improved outlet and better competing lines of land and water travel, and affording all of the attendant advantages in the transaction of business, settlement of new country, and the shipment of Army and Indian supplies. It is fraught with lasting benefit to the people of Montana and Northern Idaho, and will hasten the utilization of the Yellowstone National Park as a place of summer resort.

Tables.

		<i>Miles.</i>
I.	By rail:	
	Omaha to Corinne, Union Pacific Railroad	1,055
	Omaha to Point of Rocks, Union Pacific Railroad	805
	Distance saved by rail	250
II.	Omaha to Yellowstone Lake, present route:	
	Omaha to Corinne	1,055
	Corinne to Fort Ellis	403
	Fort Ellis to Yellowstone Lake	118
	Omaha to Yellowstone Lake	1,576
	Proposed route:	<i>Miles.</i>
	Omaha to Point of Rocks	805
	Point of Rocks to Yellowstone Lake	289
	Omaha to Yellowstone Lake	1,094
	Distance saved from Yellowstone Lake	482
Omaha to Bozeman, Montana, present route:		
Omaha to Corinne	1,055	
Corinne to { Fort Ellis } { Bozeman }	403	
Omaha to { Fort Ellis } { Bozeman }	1,458	
Proposed route:	<i>Miles.</i>	
Omaha to Point of Rocks	805	
Point of Rocks to { Fort Ellis } { Bozeman }	437	
Omaha to Bozeman	1,242	
Distance saved to { Fort Ellis } { Bozeman }	216	

		* Passenger rates, (railroad :)	
III.	{	Omaha to Corinne, Utah	\$79 25
		Omaha to Point of Rocks, Wyoming	57 25
	Amount saved per man		22 00
		* Freight rates, (railroad :)	
IV.	{	Omaha to Corinne, (third-class,) per ton	\$42 20
		Omaha to Point of Rocks, (third-class,) per ton	32 20
	Amount saved per ton		10 00

* As the distance (wagon-road) is about the same in the two cases, the saving effected can very fairly be represented by the saving over 250 miles of railroad.

To sum up: The proposed wagon-road saves 250 miles of railroad; 482 miles of distance to the Yellowstone National Park; and 216 miles to Fort Ellis, Bozeman, and the principal cities of Montana, which is one of the most productive mining regions of the West; is the shortest and most practicable road to the Yellowstone National Park and Montana; is heavily timbered through the belt of country where the heavy snows fall, indicating a probable winter route, while, at present, there is none; opens up a large tract (2,000,000 acres) of low-lying timberland—a very important feature; will open to settlement the Wind River Valley, the Teton Basin, and the valley of the Upper Yellowstone; will hasten the attainment of the objects for which the Yellowstone Park was created by law; and will afford better competing lines of travel to the mining and other industries of Montana.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. A. JONES,
Captain of Engineers.

The CHIEF OF ENGINEERS,
United States Army, Washington, D. C.

Forty-third Congress, First Session, H. R. 2854. In the House of Representatives, April 6, 1874. Read twice, referred to the Committee on Military Affairs, and ordered to be printed.

Mr. Steele, on leave, introduced the following bill:

A BILL for the location and construction of a military wagon-road from Green River City, Wyoming Territory, to the Yellowstone National Park, and to Fort Ellis, Montana Territory.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That there shall be located and constructed, under the direction of the Secretary of War, a military wagon-road from Green River City, in the Territory of Wyoming, or from such other point in said Territory as may be selected, to the Yellowstone National Park, and to Fort Ellis, in the Territory of Montana. And the Secretary of War is hereby authorized to expend, for the prosecution of said work, any sum of money necessary therefor, not exceeding the sum of sixty thousand dollars; which said sum of money, or so much thereof as may be necessary, is hereby appropriated for that purpose out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated.