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Report on an Additional Land District in New Mexico

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

FEBRUARY 19, 1874.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. PRATT submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany bill H. R. 429.]

The Committee on Public Lands, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 429) creating an additional land-district in the Territory of New Mexico, submit the following report:

The bill creates a new land-district in the Territory of New Mexico, consisting of all that portion lying south of the principal base-line of the Territory, to be called the La Mesilla land-district, the land-office to be located at such place as the President may direct, with power on his part to change its site from time to time as the public interest may require.

The base-line crosses the Rio Grande about fifteen miles north of Socorro, and running east and west bisects the Territory into parts nearly equal; and as the townships are numbered north and south from this line, it is deemed a convenient one.

New Mexico contains 121,201 square miles and embraces an area of 77,563,640 acres, and therefore exceeds that of the State of Ohio more than three times. The surveys already made embrace 9½ million acres, nearly one-half of which consists of confirmed private land-grants.

The townships subdivided amount to 3,689,494.29 acres. The remaining surveys embrace Indian and military reservations, mining, mill, and town-site claims. The area remaining unsurveyed at the date of the last report of the surveyor-general of the Territory was over sixty-eight million acres.

In all this vast territory there is but one land-office, and that is located at Santa Fé, on the Rio Grande, in its northern part. In the southern part of the Territory, and bordering that river on each side, about 130 townships have been surveyed. While the business transacted at the existing land-office has been small, the Commissioner of the General Land-Office says, in a letter to the committee, that the greater portion of it comes from that portion of the Territory embraced in the limits of the proposed new district. He further says that the surveys in New Mexico are, as a rule, in detached bodies, and many of the settlers are compelled to travel a distance of two, three, or even four hundred miles, and their convenience would be subserved by the creation of the proposed district; though looking to the amount of business heretofore done, he does not recommend its establishment, on the score of the increased expense to the Government.

In the opinion of the committee, however, there are public reasons in favor of this measure which outweigh the expense, some of which the committee proceed to state:

The people of this Territory were made *de facto* citizens of the United

States by the proclamation of the 18th day of August, 1846, made by General Kearney, absolving them from their allegiance to the republic of Mexico. On the 2d day of February, 1848, by the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, New Mexico became a part of the territory of the United States, subject to its Constitution and laws, and, under the 8th and 9th articles of the treaty, most of the citizens of Mexico then residing in the Territory became citizens of the United States, and they and their descendants still reside there. The limits of the Territory were enlarged in 1853 by a further treaty with Mexico, by which a large tract of country was acquired, known as the "Gadsden purchase." Subsequently, in 1863, the western portion was erected into a new Territory by the name of Arizona.

In New Mexico proper, and within the limits of the new land-district five counties have been organized, containing a population made up of Americans, Englishmen, and Mexicans, of above 40,000 souls.

This distant part of our possessions has been and still is difficult of access by reason of its removal from existing thoroughfares of travel. But four railroads, pointing to the Territory, and ultimately to penetrate it, are in process of construction. These are the Texas and Pacific, running along the thirty-second parallel of latitude; the Atlantic and Pacific Road, on the thirty-fifth parallel; the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fé Road; and the Denver and Rio Grande Road, now running to Pueblo, Colorado, with a branch running to Cañon City.

The surveyor-general, in his last report to the Commissioner of the General Land-Office, speaks in glowing terms of the great mineral wealth of the Territory, consisting of gold, silver, copper, lead, iron, and coal deposits, which, as he says, have only to be known to the outside world to render that region as celebrated for mineral resources as any in the world. A good deal of capital has already been invested in mills, machinery, and mining operations generally in the vicinity of Silver City in the southwestern portion of the Territory. Besides, the country is one well adapted to agriculture, grazing, and fruit-raising, and is blessed with a most salubrious climate.

The committee append, and make part of this report, a highly interesting letter to a member of the committee, written by the Hon. John S. Watts, who has lived in the Territory most of the time since 1851, and was at one time one of its associate judges. His long residence there, and the abundant opportunities he has enjoyed of making himself familiar with the topography, geology, capacities, and resources of the country, qualify him, probably, better than any living man, to speak with authority upon this subject.

But few years must elapse before this region, so rich in every natural quality to attract the attention and excite the cupidity of miners, and to draw to it that larger and more valuable class of citizens who seek to plant their homes where competence may be acquired with ease, where the earth makes generous returns, and the climate is of that dry, bracing, and salubrious character that disease is scarcely known, shall become a densely populated State. The Government should afford such facilities as are in its power to bring about this desirable end. The committee think the creation of this new land-district the first and most obvious step in that direction. It is in the line of our policy to promote the settlement of new districts of country, extend the acreage of our cultivation of the soil, and lend the pioneer every proper facility in founding his home in the wilderness.

The committee, therefore, recommend the passage of the bill without amendment.

EXHIBIT A.

WASHINGTON CITY, D. C.,
February, 1874.

SIR: In response to your kind verbal request of yesterday, I take much pleasure in giving you a statement of the facts in regard to House bill 429, introduced into the House of Representatives by the Hon. S. B. Elkens, Delegate in Congress, "creating an additional land district in the Territory of New Mexico."

The portion of the Territory of New Mexico proposed in the first section of the said bill, constituting the proposed separate land district of said Territory of New Mexico, to be called the Mesilla land district, south of the principal base line of the surveys of the Territory of New Mexico, first made in New Mexico under the eighth section of the act of 22d July, 1854, will place, as you will see by reference to the splendid map of the United States and Territories compiled under direction of the Hon. Willis Drummond, Commissioner of the General Land-Office, late in 1873, will place the southern portion, nearly half, of the present Territory of New Mexico in said Mesilla land-district, consisting of the counties of Socorro, Doña Ana, Grant, and Lincoln. In these counties the population, consisting of Americans and Mexicans, will number about forty thousand people, the majority of natives of Mexico and citizens of that republic. On 2d day of February, 1848, the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo placed the sovereignty of the United States over the then province of New Mexico, and under the operation of the eighth and ninth articles of said treaty, almost unanimously, the former citizens of the Republic of Mexico became *de jure* citizens of the United States, having been *de facto* citizens of the United States and annexed to the United States by the proclamation of General Kearney, who took possession of Santa Fé, the capital of New Mexico, on the 18th of August, 1846, and absolved the citizens of Mexico from all allegiance to said Republic of Mexico on the 18th August, 1846, as will be seen by President's Message, Mexican war, pages 168 and 170. (See for said treaty Statutes at Large, vol. 9, pp. 929, 930.)

The limits of the Territory of New Mexico were somewhat extended by the first section of treaty of the United States with the Republic of Mexico, made the 30th of December, 1853, commonly called "the Gadsden purchase." (See for this treaty, Statutes at Large, volume 10, page 1032.) Under these treaties the United States acquired within the limits of the Territory of New Mexico alone about 155 millions of acres of land, an area four times as large as the great States of either Ohio or Indiana. The Territory of Arizona, constituted and established February 24, 1863, by an act of Congress, to provide a temporary governor for Arizona, was composed of the western half of New Mexico, as will be seen by reference to the boundaries designated in the first section of said act. (See Statutes at Large, volume 12, page 664, 665, for the said act of organization of the said Territory of Arizona.) It will thus be seen that the present limits of the Territory of New Mexico contain an area of about seventy-seven millions of acres of land, and about half that quantity of acres, thirty-eight millions, would be included in the separate land-district called La Mesilla, as designated in the bill (H. R. No. 429) now before the honorable Senate of the United States for consideration and action. In regard to the character and pursuits of the people and an intimate personal acquaintance with the soil and agricultural resources, pastoral resources, and great mineral wealth of that portion of the Territory of New Mexico which my business and pleasure has taken me over from Santa Fé to El Paso, Texas, more than sixty times during my residence in Santa Fé, New Mexico, the lands constituting the proposed additional land-district in the Territory of New Mexico, I knew well, having left my former residence in Bloomington, Ind., in May, 1851, arriving at Santa Fé 20th of June, 1851, having been appointed associate justice of the supreme court of the Territory of New Mexico, on the organization of the Territory of New Mexico, 9th of September, 1850. (See Statutes at Large, volume 9, page 446, for organic act of the Territory of New Mexico.) Now, the valley of the Rio Grande from the base line down that river is rich and fertile, and such as is capable of being irrigated, from the waters of the Rio Grande, produces large quantities of corn, wheat, oats, and barley, vegetables in great abundance, cabbages, beets, parsnips, beans of a fine quality, and wagon loads of red pepper, greatly loved and extensively used in all New Mexico, and vineyards of sweet and delicious flavored grapes for table, or for pure and pleasant wine unsurpassed by any locality in this or the eastern hemisphere, not excepting for table use any grape as its superior in any part of the world. The land outside of these valleys is useful only for the abundant supply of a grass known as "gramma," furnishing all the year good and plentiful pasturage for the raising with certainty and cheapness large numbers of sheep, goats, cattle, horses, and mules and donkeys. Some owners of favorable "haciendas" number in their flocks of sheep over 100,000 head. Now let me briefly call your attention to the mineral resources of New Mexico, and in particular that portion of it included in the limits of the proposed La Mesilla land-district. It so happens that I have been, during my long residence in New Mexico, a careful personal observer and

gatherer up of mineral statistics and specimens of the ores of silver, gold, copper, iron, and coal; and most of the specimens of gold, silver, copper, and coal in the Land-Office formerly, and now in the Smithsonian, were contributed by me at my own private expense. In ———, I engaged Professor Owens and ——— Cox, now the able and distinguished geologists of the State of Indiana, were engaged by me, and at my expense, to go with me from Indiana at my expense and make a thorough and reliable geological survey of the principal mining sections of the Territory of New Mexico. This duty was performed by Professors Owens and Cox, and with signal ability; and such has been the demand upon me in London, England, for copies of the report of Professors Owens and Cox that I have not a single copy to give you, but will loan you my copy now in the possession of the Hon. S. B. Elkins, our able, active, and useful Delegate from New Mexico in the present 43d Congress.

Now, you will see from this report, twenty-seven miles south of Santa Fé, N. Mex., at the foot of the Sandia range of mountains, the Ortis Mine was visited, and large bodies of anthracite coal were examined, and, on assay by Professor Cox, was found equal in its quality to the best anthracite coal of Pennsylvania; and many tons of iron-ore, magnetic, visible on the surface at mine, and sufficiently pure to put in the furnace of the blacksmith and make a pick-ax for the miner.

Professor Owens and Cox and myself made the journey to New Mexico, and thence south down the Rio Grande Valley to the town of San Mesilla, 300 miles distant from Santa Fé, N. Mex., and from the La Mesilla west we traveled to the celebrated copper-mines of Santa Reta and Hanover, 130 miles west of La Mesilla, and in the vicinity of Fort Bayard and the enterprising town of Silver City, where now are in operation several good steam stamp-mills crushing the silver ore profitably, and successfully working; and the extension of the mining business is expected to increase rapidly in the future, if the hope in the future of a railway in the thirty-second parallel of latitude to San Diego does not "fade away like the snow-flake on the river." For a description of the "situs" of the Santa Reta copper-mines, worked profitably since 1804, when not interrupted by the hostile raids of the great quasi-Indian nationalities, known as Navajoes and Apaches tribes of Indians, see report of Owens and Cox. Since the visit to the Santa Reta and Hanover copper-mines, the county of Grant has been organized with American settlers, the county-seat being called and inscribed on the land-office map of 1873 as Silver City, Grant County, N. Mex. On our journey to Santa Reta and Hanover and San José, and on the return, we stopped several hours at the celebrated Hot Springs of the Mimbres River, and I will leave the report alluded to of Professor Owens and Cox to describe them, only remarking that the Hot Spring has built itself a tuffaceous stone cone on the open plain one hundred yards in diameter at its base and about forty feet high, with an opening in the center about ten feet in diameter and about eight feet deep, of bright, clear, more than boiling-hot water; when reaching some two feet of the top of the rim, shoots off gayly down to the extensive plain through these several channels, which seemed to have been left designedly for that particular purpose; and I have spent several hours reposing on the brim admiring the contest of several bubbles every second struggling from the bottom to the top of the spring to see which could gain the exploding surface the soonest. The high repute of these Hot Springs of the Mimbres for medicinal purposes for a half century has been well known and highly spoken of by many invalids who have been restored by them to health and vigor much more certainly than by Dr. Sangrado's universal prescription for all internal and external ailments, of hot water. On the return to the Mesilla and Las Cruces towns, less than a league distant from each other, in the wide and rich valley of the Mesilla a few days were spent, in which Professor Owens and Cox visited the Stephenson and St. Adelia silver-mines at the foot of the Organ Mountains, about a dozen miles east of the town of Las Cruces Doña Aña, N. Mex., and I will omit the description of these mines of Stephenson and St. Adelia, and I will leave it to the interesting report of Professors Owens and Cox above alluded to. You will also notice in said report of Professors Owens and Cox you will find a notice of a vein of rich iron-ore visible and clearly defined on the surface for a distance of fifteen miles, and existing in quantities to keep in operation many iron establishments for the next half century. This vein of iron-ore is about one thousand yards from Hanover copper-mine. For the description of this county, ninety miles from the little village of Paroje, to Roblere and Doña Aña, where the Rio Grande strikes the base of the little mountain of Fra Cristoval, and then deflects a little west of south; it then hugs the western base of Fra Cristoval Mountain for ninety miles, with here and there a small fertile river-bottom covered with a beautiful forest of cotton-wood trees until it strikes the Roblero, and enters the wide and fertile valley of the Mesilla, Dona Ana, and Las Cruces, extending fifty miles, to a distance of nine miles this side of El Paso, Tex., and El Paso Chihuahua, N. Mex., where the Organ Mountains cross the Rio Grande and go southwest through the State of Chihuahua, celebrated justly from my personal knowledge for its delightful climate and rich and permanent pasturage, and extensive mines of silver worked to the extent of millions annually prior to 1860, opened and worked by the Spaniards. Now, when you come to examine the public surveys in the new county of Lincoln on the east of the moun-

tains bordering the Rio Grande Valley, and in the county of Grant on the west, and the surveyed portions of the public lands down the valley of the Rio Grande to the eastern boundary of New Mexico and the western boundary of the extensive State of Texas, owning and controlling under her State sovereignty two hundred millions of acres of fertile and productive lands, much of it justly and generously devoted to the listening of the steam-whistle of the railroad-engine heavily freighted with cattle and cotton for the northern cities, for sale and consumption. Now, when the honorable Committee on Public Lands of the honorable United States Senate see the distance to Santa Fé, and the expense of more than the value of the land to be entered absorbed in the journey to Santa Fé and return, it will satisfy the honorable committee of the Senate on Public Lands to report favorably, and soon pass the bill H. R. 429.

Yours, respectfully,

JOHN S. WATTS.

Hon. DANIEL D. PRATT,
United States Senate.

S. Rep. 114—2