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Letter from the Secretary of War, transmitting a report of the acting Chief of Engineers, upon a provision in the Sundry Civil Bill, approved March 3, 1879, discontinuing the geographical surveys west of the one hundredth meridian under the War Department after June 30, 1879

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LETTER
FROM
THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING

A report of the Acting Chief of Engineers, upon a provision in the sundry civil bill, approved March 3, 1879, discontinuing the geographical surveys west of the one hundredth meridian under the War Department after June 30, 1879.

APRIL 7, 1879.—Referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington City, April 7, 1879.

The Secretary of War has the honor to transmit to the United States Senate a copy of a report of the Acting Chief of Engineers, dated the 3d instant, upon a provision in the sundry civil bill, approved March 3, 1879, discontinuing the geographical surveys west of the one hundredth meridian under the War Department after June 30th next, as well as other surveys under direction of the Interior Department, and making no provision for continuing these surveys under another organization.

As a result of this legislation, on the 30th of June next the efficient organization under which the geographical and topographical surveys have been prosecuted by the War Department will be broken up, unless Congress at its present session takes some action for its continuance.

Inviting special attention to the reasons stated by the Acting Chief of Engineers in his report, it is respectfully recommended that an amendment be made to the appropriation bill now pending, for the support of the Army, similar to the memorandum herewith, marked A, appropriating \$50,000 for the continuance of the survey during the coming fiscal year; this form to be substituted for the item of \$75,000 to be found on page 101, Ex. Doc. No. 1, Forty-sixth Congress, first session.

GEO. W. McCRARY,
Secretary of War.

The PRESIDENT of the United States Senate.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS,
Washington, D. C., April 3, 1879.

Hon. GEO. W. McCRARY,
Secretary of War:

SIR: In the sundry civil bill, as approved by the President on the 3d of March, 1879, Congress enacted, under the head of "Geological Sur-

vey," that the survey known as the "Geographical Surveys West of the 100th Meridian under the War Department" should be discontinued after the 30th June next. Other surveys, under the direction of the Interior Department, were, by a similar provision, to be discontinued at the same time, so that while the geological survey and the classification of the public lands are authorized, no provision is made for the geographical and topographical survey upon which they must be based.

Judging from the debate upon this subject at the last session, it is presumed that, in passing the enactment above referred to discontinuing the existing geographical and geological surveys under the War and Interior Departments, Congress designed to substitute therefor a single organization in place of the three then existing, under which the geographical and topographical surveys in progress should be continued, and not to discontinue them altogether.

No such provision was, however, made, and the result will be the breaking up, on the 30th of June next, of the efficient organization under which the geographical and topographical surveys under the War Department have been prosecuted, unless Congress shall, at its present session, take some action for its continuance. I have, therefore, to respectfully suggest that recommendation be made to Congress to add to the annual appropriation bill for the support of the Army, now pending, an amendment similar to the memorandum herewith, marked "A," appropriating \$50,000 for the continuance of the survey during the coming fiscal year; this form to be substituted for the item of \$75,000 to be found on page 101, Executive Document No. 1, 46th Congress, 1st session.

There would seem to be abundant reason for prosecuting these surveys under the War Department. Most of the geographical and topographical knowledge of the country west of the Mississippi River has been obtained through the surveys and explorations of officers under that department, and most of the maps of that extended country are based on knowledge thus obtained.

Prior to the organization of the Pacific Railroad surveys, no less than twenty-five distinct expeditions for exploration and reconnaissance, commencing with Lewis and Clarke, in 1803, were sent out by the War Department; and between 1853 and 1861, twenty principal expeditions took the field. Shortly after the close of the war the reconnaissance surveys by engineer officers at headquarters of divisions and departments were taken up, as also the geological exploration of the 40th parallel, and in 1871 the systematic surveys west of the 100th meridian; and parties under the War Department direction have taken the field annually without interruption since 1867.

The geographical and topographical explorations and surveys above referred to, extending from 1819 to the present date, embracing at least sixty expeditions, have been executed in so satisfactory a manner and with such marked economy, that it seems unwise to make any change in the general plans and methods hitherto adopted or in the department by which they have been controlled. Moreover, the knowledge obtained from these is peculiarly needed by the War Department in the movements of troops, establishment of posts for controlling the Indian tribes, and reliable maps of the country are indispensable in this connection.

The preparations of the present efficient means for carrying on geographical and topographical surveys under the War Department have been progressive, and there is now on hand a supply of animals, instruments, outfits, and material which must be disposed of; while the *personnel*, which has had the benefit of years of experience, and which is now in readiness to take the field, must be disbanded and scattered so

as not to be readily available in the future, if the survey is now discontinued.

Referring to the debate in the last House on the legislative, executive, and judicial bill, from which the item authorizing the appointment of a geological director was transferred in the committee of conference to the sundry civil bill, it will be observed that the word "geographical" was stricken out, leaving the survey provided for purely a geological survey, so that geographical and topographical surveys, and the resulting maps upon which the colors and signs representing the results of geological surveys and examinations must be placed, are not now provided by law.

If authority be given for the continuation of the geographical and topographical surveys under the War Department as is hoped, the maps thereof may be constructed on such a scale as to meet all the wants of the "geological survey" in its examination of the geological structure, mineral resources, and products of the national domain, and the classification of the public lands, and in plotting the results of such examinations and classifications, thus avoiding the necessity for any further survey of a geographical and topographical character for such purposes.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant.

H. G. WRIGHT,
Acting Chief of Engineers.

A.

For military geographical surveys of the War Department, to be expended in such parts of the territory of the United States, west of the Mississippi River, as the Secretary of War may deem necessary, the supply branches of the department affording such aid as has heretofore been furnished for military surveys, \$50,000: *Provided*, That the maps be prepared on scales suitable for geological representation and the classification of land, and be furnished to the director of the geological survey, under the Department of the Interior, in such numbers as he may require; and that nothing herein shall be construed as authorizing the employment of geologists in connection with the survey, but such information respecting geology and kindred branches of science as may be incidentally collected in the progress of the survey shall be turned over to the Interior Department, for the use of that department.