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Letter from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting an estimate of appropriations for the service of the civil government in the Territory of Alaska

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CIVIL GOVERNMENT OF ALASKA.

L E T T E R

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY,

TRANSMITTING

An estimate of appropriations for the service of the civil government in the Territory of Alaska.

FEBRUARY 16, 1885.—Referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
February 14, 1885.

SIR: I have the honor to forward herewith amended estimates of appropriations for the service of the civil government in the Territory of Alaska, submitted by the governor of Alaska through the Secretary of the Interior.

Very respectfully,

CHARLES E. COON,
Acting Secretary.

The Hon. SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, February 13, 1885.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith a copy of a letter addressed to this Department by the governor of Alaska, suggesting amendments to the estimates for appropriations for the public service in that district for the next fiscal year, together with copies of the papers referred to therein.

I commend the subject to your favorable consideration, with the request that it be brought to the attention of Congress as soon as practicable.

Very respectfully,

H. M. TELLER,
Secretary.

The Hon. SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY.

WASHINGTON, D. C., *February 13, 1885.*

SIR: The appropriations for Alaska estimated by the Treasury Department should, in my opinion, be amended as follows:

1. "Contingent expenses" from \$1,500 to \$5,000, for the reason (1) that it is not enough for actual needs, and (2) there should be some fund to draw upon in case of emergency or trouble with the natives, for purposes of charity, for transportation, and for sanitary purposes in keeping the towns and villages clean, and for various other possible contingencies. The district has no revenue from taxation, licenses, or any other domestic source.

2. "Commission on condition of Indians," &c., from \$2,000 to \$5,000. To properly report on this subject involves much labor, and extensive traveling; the Commission, I think, should have authority to settle all troubles that do and will arise between the natives and others, except in capital offenses.

3. "Construction and repairs of buildings in Alaska." First, \$1,500 for repairing Government building for court-room at Sitka. Under section 10 of the "Act providing for a civil government for Alaska" all public buildings not required for customs service or military purposes shall be used for court-rooms and offices of the civil government.

I inclose letter from Lieut. Commander Henry E. Nichols, senior officer in command of naval forces, in reference to the building known as the Barracks. The guard-house, called by courtesy the jail or penitentiary, is situated in this building; it is totally unfit for the purpose. If this building is set apart for military purposes, as I think it should be, some provision must be made for a jail or penitentiary some place else. The only other building in any manner suitable is that known as the Club House, No. 61 on the Department map. This could be repaired at a cost of \$8,000 to \$10,000; would afford, in addition to the penitentiary, offices for the United States district judge for court-room and chamber, offices for the clerk, marshal, and surveyor-general, district attorney, and commissioner; it is a large, substantial building of hewn logs, two stories high, 100 by 42 feet, but badly out of repair.

The Custom-House building, the best in the town, was partially destroyed by fire; this should be repaired, and will afford suitable and proper offices for the collector and the executive; it will cost probably about \$2,500.

The building known as the Government House should also be repaired; it is the most conspicuous building in the town, has for fifty years been the residence of the governor, and carries with it the respect and veneration of the natives. It could be utilized for governor, signal-service, marine hospital, and other purposes. Repairs would cost probably \$5,000.

The United States wharf and large warehouse attached will be destroyed unless very soon protected; the needed amount for this purpose will be about \$2,500.

These estimates aggregate large, but they are necessary, and it will be economy to restore them as soon as possible.

The appropriation for Oonalaska is not sufficient. A court-room and jail could hardly be constructed for \$1,000. The estimate of \$25,000 for the protection of sea otter, hunting grounds, and the seal fisheries would indicate that a good prison should be constructed for the safe keeping of offenders. The United States marshal's estimate for this work is \$10,000; probably \$5,000 would be sufficient. The provision for Wrangel and Juneau I think ample.

The great want of the district is *transportation*. Without additional facilities in this respect, the appropriation for the education of children in Alaska is unnecessarily large.

Traveling expenses for judge, marshals, and attorneys when on duty should be increased to \$2,000 or \$3,000.

In the event that the Government deem it wise to make the repairs to the public buildings, a competent architect should be sent to Alaska for that purpose. It would certainly be economy. Nearly all the material and labor must be brought from Puget Sound or Oregon.

Unfortunately, not being a Territory invested with a legislature to make laws and regulate domestic affairs, especially for purposes of incidental expenses, we are compelled to look to the General Government for every expense that must arise in any new country. The civil officers receive a bare subsistence, and cannot possibly afford relief that is frequently demanded.

I do not know what, if any, estimates have been made from the Attorney-General's Office. No money even for the subsistence of prisoners has been appropriated, or for their or witnesses' transportation.

I append correspondence (copies thereof) between the United States district judge and the senior officer in command of the naval forces in the district.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN H. KINKEAD,
Governor of Alaska.

The Hon. SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

SITKA, ALASKA, *December 2, 1884.*

DEAR SIR: I have committed one Michael Travers to jail, in default of \$1,000 bail, for trial at the May term of the district court, he being charged with the offense of selling malt liquors to Indians. Under the circumstances, and considering the peculiar condition of affairs now existing in this Territory, the want of funds to provide for the maintenance of prisoners, and in fact the neglect of the Government to provide for the civil government in any way, I am obliged to request you to allow the said Travers to be confined in your prison, and to ask you also to feed him while so confined, as you have so kindly done in other urgent cases.

Should you see proper to comply with this request, I will be very much obliged, as otherwise I will be under the necessity of discharging the prisoner.

I have the honor to remain your obedient servant,

WARD MCALLISTER,
United States District Judge for Alaska.

Capt. H. E. NICHOLS,
Commanding United States Man-of-War Pinta.

U. S. S. PINTA (4th rate),
Sitka, Alaska, December 3, 1884.

SIR: I have to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of the 2d instant regarding the issue by the Navy of a ration to "one Michael Travers," who in default of bail has been bound over for trial at May, 1885, term of the district court, and requesting from me the issue of the ration for his benefit until that time.

In reply I would say that while I consider myself under every obligation to assist the civil authorities of Alaska in the execution of the laws for the district government, yet I cannot under any circumstances place myself in the position assumed by you.

It is possible and indeed probable that you do not understand that I am personally responsible through my purse for every order I give to the paymaster for the issue of rations, clothing, or money in any irregular manner; this action which you desire is most irregular. You may quote as a precedent the case of the Indian now in prison awaiting trial for murder. To me that is no precedent, for up to the time of my arrival here there was no government beyond that exercised by the common sense of the senior naval officer.

At the urgent personal request of Governor Kinkead, I consented to allow the Indian's ration to go on until your arrival, when it was supposed that in the natural and proper state of affairs his trial would take place, this being, as I understand, a regular session of the district court, or if even a special session the facts are the same.

Referring to your letter I quote "and in fact the neglect of the Government to provide for the civil government in any way." I would respectfully suggest that it is rather late in the day to bring that up; you should have found that out immediately upon your arrival here, and it is possible that some means might have been taken to tide over the difficulty.

You inform me that unless I am willing to feed the said Michael Travers you will be under the necessity of discharging him. I must distinctly state that I decline in every particular to be the pivot on which the success of this new civil government of Alaska shall swing. The fact of the commitment of Travers depends upon the law and the evidence, and not upon the fact of whether I will feed him or not. The officer of the civil government who has charge of the prisoners is responsible for that part of it.

In conclusion, I would say to you as district judge that if you do not feel that you can execute the laws of this new district because an all-wise Government has not seen fit to provide you with such means as you deem necessary, that you allow the business to revert to its former very peaceful state, or else, in consultation with such Government officers as are officially here to aid and assist in carrying out the laws, make such arrangements as will afford temporary relief.

Until some further and distinct understanding is arrived at, I must after December 5 proximo, decline to issue rations to the Indian prisoner, and in no case can I issue a ration to Michael Travers.

I am, sir, very respectfully,

H. E. NICHOLS,
*Lieutenant-Commander, U. S. N.,
Commanding U. S. S. Pinta, and Senior Officer present.*

Hon. WARD McALLISTER,
United States District Judge, Sitka, Alaska.

U. S. S. PINTA (4th rate),
Sitka, Alaska, December 9, 1884.

DEAR SIR: In view of the fact that, by section 10 of the organic act creating a civil government in Alaska, certain buildings, &c., are to be retained for military (naval) purposes, and by that act will not be turned over to the United States marshal as custodian, I would respectfully say that that portion of the Government building next south of the custom-house, now in use by the Navy as barracks for marines, including the marine officer, and the cells and prison, known as the naval guard-house, and also the house west of the building and now used as a cook house and mess room for the marines in barracks, including the necessary outhouses for their occupation, are especially needed for the continuance of the same, and I would beg, therefore, that due consideration be given to this same present use and that the rooms and buildings noted may be continued in my charge as senior naval officer for the same purpose.

Very respectfully,

H. E. NICHOLS,
*Lieutenant-Commander, U. S. N.,
Commanding Pinta, Senior Officer present.*

Col. PETER FRENCH,
United States Collector and Custodian of Public Property, Sitka, Alaska.