

6-30-1886

Military quarters, Wyoming and Nebraska

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

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

Recommended Citation

H.R. Rep. No. 3112, 49th Cong., 1st Sess. (1886)

This House Report 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 darinfox@ou.edu.

MILITARY QUARTERS, WYOMING AND NEBRASKA.

JUNE 30, 1886.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

Mr. CAREY, from the Committee on Military Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany bill S. 1935.]

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (S. 1935) authorizing and directing the Secretary of War to enlarge, repair, and complete certain military quarters and barracks in Wyoming Territory and in the State of Nebraska, have had the same under consideration, and submit the following report thereon:

The bill provides for an appropriation for the completion and enlargement of Fort D. A. Russell, Wyoming Territory and Forts Robinson and Niobrara, Nebraska.

The committee recommend that the bill do pass, and, adopting the report of the House Committee on Military Affairs on House bill 7192, and the report of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs accompanying this bill, make the following extracts and exhibits:

General Bragg, on behalf of the Military Committee, in the report on House bill No. 7192, says:

The second section of the bill provides for the completion of quarters and barracks at Fort D. A. Russell, in the Territory of Wyoming, and to enlarge and complete quarters and barracks at Fort Robinson, in the State of Nebraska, to a capacity for a garrison of ten companies; and \$175,000 is recommended for these purposes.

The committee find that it will cost to complete Russell about \$75,000, and nearly \$100,000 to complete Robinson, and the bill therefore appropriates so much as may be necessary of \$175,000 for the purposes named.

There has been a growing demand for years past to consolidate our troops on the frontier into larger garrisons, and the abandonment of a large number of small posts. It has been urged, in a military point of view, for strategic purposes. It is quite manifest also that it will reduce the draft on the line for details, and thus increase the effective force for the field. It will increase the *morale* of both officers and men, by bringing together larger bodies of men, making drills practicable, and arousing that feeling of pride in the superior efficiency of companies, battalions, and regiments absolutely essential to make good soldiers of both officers and men. Men who have been choppers, teamsters, cooks, servants, and idlers soon become soldiers, and are proud of their buttons and the letter of their company. Officers find something to do to occupy their time, instead of rusting out in sheer idleness, with its certainly attending vices. Large posts may be supplied cheaply with reading matter, and post schools may be supported, thus furnishing mental occupation as well as physical employment.

In an economical view this system should be carried into effect, because of the reduction in the enormous outlays for transportation now required, and the cheapness, relatively, at which a soldier may be maintained, as shown by tables appended.

It is desirable in a sanitary point of view, for comfortable and suitable hospitals can be maintained, and the sick be better cared for and at much less cost.

The advantages of the school and the maintenance of the two posts named are set

forth in the letter of Lieutenant-General Sheridan, made a part of this report; but the committee cannot forbear calling attention, in addition thereto, to the proximity of the reservation of the Sioux and Cheyennes, 18,000 strong, to Fort Robinson.

These Indians, many of them, were in the Custer massacre, and are among the worst of their species, and have had a taste of white man's blood. If we wish to encourage outbreaks and the wholesale slaughter of defenseless men, women, and children, we cannot better do it than by having a handful of men at Robinson; but if we desire to prevent it, give Robinson a garrison of sufficient size to cow down the savages by certain and immediate punishment.

It is necessary, as will be apparent upon a moment's reflection, that before the small posts can be abandoned and the troops be concentrated in larger bodies, there must be some place provided in which they may live in those inclement latitudes.

The committee in this bill hope to inaugurate the system which shall effect the good results hereinbefore described, and therefore give their hearty recommendation to it.

General Manderson, in the report on behalf of the Military Committee of the Senate, says:

A consideration applicable to Fort Robinson is found in the report of the Secretary of War for 1882, and a report of General Sherman for that year. The former suggests an abandonment of certain posts, which, because of changes on the frontier, had become useless.

This recommendation having been acted upon, in connection with General Sherman's in 1882, that Fort Robinson be retained, and the military policy of the Government in favor of concentrating troops at strategic points having become fixed and stable, it follows that greater economy, better discipline, and more ample protection will result if that policy is given that sustained and deserved support which prudence, justice, and the cause of humanity dictate.

The primary object of stationing troops at Fort Robinson and at Fort Niobrara is to hold in check 28,000 savage Sioux on the Sioux Reservation in Dakota, on the confines of Northern Nebraska. This tribe of hostiles is armed with the deadly Winchester rifle, and its warlike disposition has repeatedly left desolation and massacre in the track of its raids, and trouble therefrom may be again apprehended in spite of the civilizing influences at work to temper its ferocity. This is quite strongly hinted by Maj. Gen. O. O. Howard, in a report to the Secretary of War, dated September 19, 1885, the Sioux having previously left their reservation ostensibly on hunting expeditions, on which occasion there was a hurried concentration of troops from long distances, occupying much time and costing the Government a considerable sum of money.

Within the past five years Northern Nebraska and Southern and Interior Dakota have received such an influx of population that the homes of settlers are found at the very threshold of the Sioux Reservation and surround it on several sides, bringing the white man and the Indian in closer contact—well calculated to increase the danger of outbreaks and the infliction of great loss of life and property in case of a sudden raid.

The situation is well described by General Schofield in his report to the Secretary of War for 1885. He says:

"The great majority of the large frontier population are strangers to the earlier history of the Indian country. They have settled there *since* the Indians were located upon reservations. Relying upon Government protection, they are apparently unconscious of any danger, while in simple truth they are liable at *any moment* to experience all the horrors of Indian warfare."

Considering these facts, the close proximity of the Sioux to dense populations quite unconscious of danger and unprepared for an outbreak, your committee are of the opinion that the present garrison of one hundred and seventy enlisted men at Fort Robinson is too small, and that it should be sufficient to render it probable that the effect of an increased force, as suggested, would be to hold in check any disposition on the part of the Sioux to take the war path.

The buildings at Fort Robinson were temporary in their character, and no repairs thereon have been made for many years, and they are now almost uninhabitable. In this connection the following communication from Maj. Gen. John M. Schofield seems pertinent:

HEADQUARTERS DIVISION OF THE MISSOURI,
Chicago, February 9, 1886.

Respectfully forwarded to the Adjutant-General of the Army.

The fact that the Elkhorn Valley Railroad will pass Fort Laramie at a distance of 45 miles, while Fort Robinson is immediately on that road, greatly diminishes the value of the former and increases that of the latter post. Even if another railroad should hereafter be extended along the valley of the North Platte to and beyond Fort

Laramie, Fort Robinson would still remain much the most important station, because of its close proximity to the Sioux Reservation.

Hence I suggest the construction of additional barracks and quarters at Fort Robinson, and a corresponding reduction of the garrison at Fort Laramie. It would manifestly be unwise to expend money in repair of the old buildings at Laramie.

J. M. SCHOFIELD,
Major-General, Commanding.

While the buildings at Fort Niobrara may be large enough to accommodate the present garrison of 256 enlisted men, not unlike those at Fort Robinson, they were constructed of adobe, are not complete, and are out of repair, and there is no doubt that a pressing necessity exists for their completion and for such repairs thereon as shall place them beyond the danger of requiring a much larger outlay on repair account than now exists.

Fort D. A. Russell, in Wyoming Territory, is one of the twenty-five posts recommended by the General of the Army to be made permanent, and the following communication of the Lieutenant-General of the Army, approved by the Secretary of War, leaves no doubt of the necessity for the completion and enlargement of this military post:

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, D. C., February 25, 1886.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th instant requesting my views on House bill 4367, Forty-ninth Congress, first session, which provides for an appropriation of the sum of \$75,000, to be expended in completing the military post of Fort D. A. Russell, Wyoming Territory.

In reply, I beg to invite your attention to the following report of the Lieutenant-General, in whose views I concur:

"Fort D. A. Russell is 3 miles north of the Union Pacific Railroad, and in the suburbs of the city of Cheyenne. It is about midway between Chicago and San Francisco, and is connected by two direct railroads with Denver. It was established in 1867, and since that time has had and still has geographical advantages of location, which will make it the rendezvous for troops for equipment and distribution for a long time. I consider Fort Russell a permanent post. The large military depot is at the edge of the post, and connected with the Union Pacific Railroad by a side track. This depot has been of more service during the past eighteen years than any other depot in the country. We have held this valuable post until the present time by scanty repairs and patch-work, and now it is necessary to put it in good condition to make it habitable, and the amount asked for will suffice for that purpose."

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

WM. C. ENDICOTT,
Secretary of War.

Hon. J. M. CAREY,
(of Committee on Military Affairs, House of Representatives.

The following communications from the Secretary of War, Lieutenant-General of the Army, and Quartermaster General, have reference to the questions involved in this bill:

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington City, April 22, 1886.

SIR: In response to your letter of the 15th instant, inclosing, for the opinion of this Department, a copy of Senate bill 1935, providing for the enlargement, repair, and completion of certain military quarters and barracks in Wyoming Territory and in the State of Nebraska, I have the honor to invite attention to the inclosed copy of the Quartermaster-General's report on the subject, and its accompanying papers, which embody the views of the Department on the subject under consideration.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

S. V. BENÉT,
Brig. General, Chief of Ordnance, and Acting Secretary of War.

Hon. CHARLES F. MANDERSON,
Of Committee on Military Affairs, U. S. Senate.

Respectfully returned to the honorable the Secretary of War, and attention invited to memorandum notes, from which it will be seen that in regard to expending \$75,000 at Fort Russell he expressed his views on February 25, 1886, in a letter to the Hon. Mr. Carey, of the House Military Committee. In regard to Forts Robinson and Niobrara,

it will be observed that plans and estimates are now in, calling for \$82,054 for former and \$36,950 for the latter post; that while these expenditures were recommended by General Howard, the division commander approved *only so far* as state of appropriation and demands of other posts would justify. As condition of current funds would *not admit* of any portion of the work being done during *this fiscal year*, it was thought advisable to hold the plans and estimates until a new appropriation became available, when the Quartermaster-General might be able to make some definite recommendation in the premises.

S. B. HOLABIRD,
Quartermaster-General.

SIR: With reference to the completion of the barracks and quarters at Fort D. A. Russell, I would invite attention to my remarks of February 17, 1886, on House bill No. 4367, from which I extract as follows:

"Fort D. A. Russell is 3 miles north of the Union Pacific Railroad, and in the suburbs of the city of Cheyenne. It is about midway between Chicago and San Francisco, and is connected by two direct railroads with Denver. It was established in 1867, and since that time has had, and still has, geographical advantages of location which will make it the rendezvous for troops, for equipment and distribution, for a long time. I consider Fort Russell a permanent post."

Fort Robinson is situated in the northwest corner of Nebraska, very near to the southern limit of the great Sioux Reservation, and but a few miles from the extension of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad. The nearest military post—Fort Laramie—has now lost much of its military importance, while the location of Fort Robinson will make it a prominent point for many years to come. The concentration of troops and erection of the barracks and quarters necessary for their accommodation is therefore a wise military measure. For these reasons I heartily recommend the enactment of the various measures contemplated by this bill.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

P. H. SHERIDAN,
Lieutenant-General.