

12-29-1890

Military Post at Plattsburgh, New York

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

DECEMBER 29, 1890.—Ordered to be printed.

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

REPORT:

[To accompany H. R. 608.]

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 608) making an appropriation for the construction of new buildings and the enlargement of the military post at Plattsburgh, N. Y., having duly considered the same concur in the report of the Committee on Military Affairs of the House of Representatives thereon, which report is hereby appended to and made a part of this report, and recommend that the bill as amended by the House Committee do pass.

[House Report No. 787, Fifty-first Congress, first session.]

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 608) making an appropriation for the construction of new buildings and the enlargement of the military post at Plattsburgh, N. Y., submit the following report:

Plattsburgh is situated on Lake Champlain, in the State of New York, and on the Canada border. From the earliest history of the country it has been a military post. Prior to the Revolutionary war it was the scene of many wars between, first the French inhabitants of Canada and the Iroquois Indians, and afterwards between the French and the English colonists. It was on the line of march when Montcalm entered the territory of New York in 1756. It was part of the route taken by Burgoyne when he began the campaign which resulted in his defeat and surrender at Stillwater during the Revolution.

It was again the arena in which the American volunteers successfully engaged the British army under Sir George Prevost in the war of 1812. It will be perceived that in all the wars between our Government and the sovereigns of the Canadas Lake Champlain has been considered a strategic point. It must ever remain so because of its vicinity to the Canadian border and to the chief city of the Dominion, Montreal.

The suggestion made by the General of the Army that, because of its strategic value, it ought to be made a permanent point of location for a regiment which would act as a nucleus for the formation of an army or corps in case of war with England is approved by the committee.

It is near the Canadian border, is connected by lines of railway and a canal with the central portion of New York, giving easy modes of transport to troops and the material of war at any time. A concentration of troops on the lake would protect the country from invasion, and if intended for aggressive purposes the most convenient place for an invasion of Canada being not more than a day's march from the St. Lawrence River.

Such a reservation and depot as is contemplated by the bill would be of inestimable value (should war with England occur) as a rendezvous for volunteer troops from the Atlantic States. The committee call attention to the recommendations of the general of the Army and Secretary of War, as follows:

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, February 20, 1890.

SIR: I return herewith House bill 608, "making an appropriation for the construction of new buildings and the enlargement of the military post at Plattsburgh, N. Y."

referred to this Department on the 15th instant, and invite attention to the inclosed letter from the major-general commanding the Army on the bill, and to the marked paragraphs on pages 5 and 18 of the accompanying copy of his annual report to the Secretary of War for the year 1889, and also to a copy of the telegram from the Hon. Smith M. Weed to Major-General Schofield on the subject of the bill.

I concur in the recommendation of the major-general commanding the Army, and strongly recommend favorable action on the bill.

Very respectfully,

REDFIELD PROCTOR,
Secretary of War.

Hon. B. M. CUTCHEON,
Chairman Committee on Military Affairs, House of Representatives.

HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY,
Washington, D. C., February 19, 1890.

The SECRETARY OF WAR:

SIR: Upon House bill 608, Fifty-first Congress, first session, "making an appropriation for the construction of new buildings and the enlargement of the military post at Plattsburgh, N. Y.," I have the honor to report that the possession by the Government of a valuable military reservation, with some good buildings, at Plattsburgh; suggests that point, rather than any other in that part of the country, for military occupation. If it be admitted, as suggested in my annual report, that it is not expedient to make any additions "to the old fortifications or armament of the military posts along the northern border of the United States," it becomes the more important "that a moderate force be maintained in barracks at those posts."

At least one regiment of infantry and a battery or two of field artillery should be stationed at Plattsburgh, as a nucleus for the force, mostly State troops, which would be hastily assembled there in any emergency, for the purpose of crossing the northern border and taking possession of the channels by which an enemy might otherwise send armed vessels from the Lower St. Lawrence into the lakes. I regard this as one of the most important features of the present military policy of the United States.

The additional ground which is to be donated will not only serve as a target and drill ground for the regular garrison, but will afford the necessary camping ground for additional troops temporarily assembled there.

I respectfully recommend favorable action upon the bill.

Very respectfully,

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

The committee recommend the passage of this bill with an amendment of section 2 thereof, so that said section shall read as follows:

"SEC. 2. That the Secretary of War is hereby authorized to accept, free of cost to the United States, a donation of a tract of not less than five hundred acres of land for a target range and other military purposes at or near the post of Plattsburgh Barracks, New York: *Provided*, That in his judgment the said tract of land is found to be in all respects adequate and suitable to meet the wants of the post, and that the title shall have been declared valid by the Attorney-General of the United States. *And provided further*, That no part of said sum hereby appropriated shall be expended until the aforesaid tract of land shall have been conveyed to and accepted by the United States."