

University of Oklahoma College of Law

University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons

American Indian and Alaskan Native Documents in the Congressional Serial Set: 1817-1899

2-25-1870

Flathead Indians. Letter from the Secretary of the Interior transmitting a copy of a letter from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, submitting an estimate of appropriation for the purchase of mills and construction of buildings for the benefit of the Flathead Indians, to replace those destroyed by fire

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



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

Recommended Citation

H.R. Exec. Doc. No. 165, 41st Cong., 2nd Sess. (1870)

This House Executive Document 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 Law-LibraryDigitalCommons@ou.edu.

FLATHEAD INDIANS.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

TRANSMITTING.

A copy of a letter from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, submitting an estimate of appropriation for the purchase of mills and construction of buildings for the benefit of the Flathead Indians, to replace those destroyed by fire.

FEBRUARY 25, 1870.—Referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, D. C., February 24, 1870.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith a copy of a communication dated the 23d instant, and accompanying papers from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, submitting an "Estimate of appropriation required for the purchase of mills and construction of buildings for the use and benefit of the Flathead Indians, to replace those destroyed by fire," amounting to \$7,800, to which the attention of Congress is respectfully invited.

Very respectfully,

J. D. COX,
Secretary.

Hon. JAMES G. BLAINE,
Speaker House of Representatives.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, D. C., February 23, 1870.

SIR: I have the honor to inclose, herewith, a copy of a letter from Agent Galbreath, dated the 26th of August, 1869, and referred to this office by General Sully, superintendent of Indian affairs for Montana Territory, relative to the destruction, by fire, of the mills; barn, and stables at the Flathead agency, on the 1st and 2d of said month; also of one from the superintendent, dated the 24th of October last, submitting an estimate of funds required for the purchase of machinery, and the construction of a steam saw and grist mill for said agency.

The facts and circumstances connected with the burning of said build-

ings are fully set forth in Agent Galbreath's letter, and it is, therefore, unnecessary for this office to make any explanation in regard to the matter. The superintendent recommends the rebuilding of the mills, and says he does not look for a favorable settlement of the existing difficulties between the Flatheads and white settlers, until the agency is placed in good working order.

There can be no doubt of the necessity of replacing the mills and other buildings destroyed as aforesaid, or that the placing of said agency in good condition would have a great tendency to bring the Indians there, and remove them from the vicinity of the settlers; but as there are no funds at the disposal of the department applicable for the purchase of the mills, and the construction of a suitable building therefor, it will be necessary for Congress to appropriate the requisite amount for that purpose.

The superintendent estimates the cost of the mills and machinery at \$4,800, and of constructing the buildings at \$3,000. These items are not considered too large for those objects. He also estimates for \$4,000 to transport the mills from Chicago to the agency; but this will not be required, as there are sufficient funds now on hand, appropriated for transportation of goods, &c., for said Indians, that can be used to pay for transporting the mills to the agency.

After the saw-mill has been put in operation, timber can be sawed for the other buildings, and it is thought they can be constructed by the employes without any extra expense. It is the opinion of this office, therefore, that the sum of \$7,800 is all that will be required to replace the mills and buildings destroyed at said agency.

In view of the foregoing, I have caused to be prepared, and inclose herewith, an estimate of an appropriation required for the purchase of a saw and grist mill, and for the construction of a suitable building therefor, for the use and benefit of the Flathead Indians, and to replace those destroyed by fire on the 1st and 2d of August, 1869, and I respectfully recommend that the same be submitted to Congress for its action.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

E. S. PARKER,
Commissioner.

Hon. J. D. Cox,
Secretary of the Interior.

Estimate of appropriation required for the purchase of mills and construction of buildings for the use and benefit of the Flathead Indians, to replace those destroyed by fire, on the 1st and 2d of August, 1869.

For this amount, or so much thereof as may be necessary for purchasing a saw and grist mill for the Flathead agency, Montana Territory, and for constructing the necessary buildings therefor, to replace those destroyed by fire in August, 1869, \$7,800.

OFFICE FLATHEAD INDIAN AGENCY,
Missoula County, Montana Territory, August 26, 1869.

GENERAL: I have the honor to submit the following additional report and information regarding the destruction by fire of the mills, barn, and stables of this agency on the 1st and 2d of the present month.

On the night of my arrival here, the 29th of last month, the prairie lying between the buildings surrounding the agency office and the mills

was set on fire. These mills were situated from the office about two miles and a half. Fearing that the fire might extend to them, every available person on the place was ordered to assist in suppressing it and protecting the property. This work was continued, and a vigilant watch kept up until the fire was successfully put out, and no further danger to any part of the property apprehended. But on the night of the 1st instant fire was communicated to the mills, and they were destroyed, whether from the fire breaking out anew in the cañon where they were situated, and sparks being carried to them, or by the hand of an incendiary, I am unable to say. When I visited the mills the day after they were burnt, I could discover no fire that could possibly have communicated itself to them.

The only report I have received of the origin of the fire in the prairie is, that an Indian boy was fishing in the Jocko River, that he built a fire for the purpose of cooking some fish he caught, and that the fire extended to the tall grass on the plain. Further than this I can ascertain nothing. I am informed that this boy will soon return to the agency, so I will get all the information possible to obtain from him regarding this matter.

The burning of the barn is still a greater mystery, as there was no possibility of fire getting to it without being carried there by some one with the object of destroying the barn and stables, or carelessly going into them with a lighted pipe or cigar. Every possible effort was employed to save these buildings, and it was only through the greatest exertions that I succeeded in preventing the fire from spreading to others and destroying all.

I have heard many rumors and expressions of opinion regarding this matter, but the majority of them are so foolishly absurd that I give them no credence whatever. One is that the Indians, being dissatisfied with the late changes, and the policy of the government in the assignment of army officers to duty in the Indian Department, are provoked to commit these acts in order to make their dissatisfaction the more apparent. But it is my opinion, if this property was destroyed by incendiaries, that it was done at the instigation of men more deeply interested in breaking down this policy than are the Indians. And further, if it was the result of accident, it was certainly a strange combination of unfortunate circumstances that seldom occurs.

I respectfully state that it is the desire of the Indians located on this reserve to have the mills rebuilt, and I recommend that it be done at as early a period as possible after a satisfactory settlement of the difficulties is effected now existing between the Flathead Indians in the Bitter Root Valley and the white settlers there.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

A. S. GALBREATH, U. S. A.,
Indian Agent.

Bvt. Brig. General ALFRED SULLY, U. S. A.,
Supt. of Indians for Montana, Helena, M. T.

[Indorsement.]

SUPERINTENDENCY MONTANA,
Helena, Montana, September 25, 1869.

Respectfully forwarded. I would recommend the rebuilding of the mills if an appropriation can be made for that purpose. I think I can rebuild suitable mills for \$7,000.

ALF. SULLY, U. S. A.,
Superintendent Indians.

SUPERINTENDENCY INDIANS OF MONTANA,
Helena, M. T., October 24, 1869.

SIR: In compliance with your communication, I have the honor to inclose you an estimate of the cost of erecting a saw and grist mill in the Mission Valley, the valley where I propose to move the agency now on the Jocko to, as I suggested in a former letter, where all the Pend d'Oreilles and Kootenays live and farm.

In this estimate I give a large margin for transportation. I did not take this into consideration when I wrote you I could replace the mill at \$7,000, for I was told that there was a considerable sum on transportation account for Flatheads not used, and I supposed the transportation could be paid out of that fund.

The prices of the engines and mills are taken from the prices at the Eagle Works, Chicago.

I do not look for a favorable settlement of the Flathead and white settlers' difficulties till the agency in the Mission Valley is placed in good working order; then, I believe, the Flatheads, or part of them will be glad to move there.

I have made out the transportation by rail; by water, perhaps, it would be nearly one-half, provided the articles were shipped by the first boats in April, instead of waiting till late in July, as was the case this year with the Indian goods. I would also state I could purchase here a new 12-horse power engine for, I think, \$1,000, if purchased now.

With much respect, your obedient servant,

ALF. SULLY, U. S. A.,
Superintendent Indians.

Hon. COMMISSIONER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, D. C.

Estimate of funds required for erecting buildings, purchasing machinery, &c., for Flathead Agency.

For the purchase of one 15-horse power engine and machinery for a saw-mill complete.....	\$2,800
For the purchase of one grist-mill, to be worked by steam engine, capacity, 75 bushels daily.....	2,000
For the erection of suitable buildings for the saw and grist mills, and putting up machinery.....	3,000
For transportation of saw and grist mills and engine, about 20,000 pounds, from Chicago, Illinois, to Corinne, Utah, by rail, and from Corinne, Utah, to Flathead Indian agency, Montana, 700 miles, by team, at 20 cents per pound for the entire distance.....	4,000
	11,800
	11,800

ALF. SULLY, U. S. A.,
Superintendent Indians.