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5-26-1830

**B. H. Reeves, G. O. Sibley, and Thomas Mather.**

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### Recommended Citation

H.R. Rep. No. 416, 21st Cong., 1st Sess. (1830)

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B. H. REEVES, G. O. SIBLEY, AND THOMAS MATHER.

MAY 26, 1830.

Read, and committed to the Committee of the Whole House to-morrow.

Mr. WHITTLESEY, from the Committee of Claims, to which was referred the claim of B. H. Reeves, G. O. Sibley, and Thomas Mather, made the following

### REPORT:

*The Committee on Claims, to which was referred the claim of B. H. Reeves, G. C. Sibley, and Thomas Mather, report:*

That the Secretary of War addressed a letter to the Chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means, accompanied by an account of the persons above named; on which there is said to be due \$ 1,504 54, for which he requested an appropriation to be made. The chairman of that committee presented the account and the letter mentioned, to the House, and they were referred to this committee. The claimants were appointed by the President commissioners to lay out a road from the Western frontiers of Missouri to the confines of Mexico, under an act passed on the 3d of March, 1825. By the act \$20,000 were appropriated to extinguish the Indian title to the land, or to purchase the right of way over which the road was to pass; and \$ 10,000 for marking and constructing said road. Copies of the instructions, marked 1 and 2, are filed herewith, and made a part of this report. It appears that the instructions given to the commissioners by the Secretary of War were specific, positive, and definite, as to their duty, and as to the disbursement of the money. They were told that each expenditure must be kept within its appropriate object, and in no event exceeded; and that the expenditures must be arranged under their appropriate heads. The commissioners were informed that they would be entitled to receive \$3 per day, when negotiating treaties, and \$5 per day, when employed in laying out and making the road; and that, when they were acting in the two fold capacities, and were engaged in the two fold duties assigned to them, that they would be entitled to \$8 per day, besides their expenses; but that they would be entitled to the per diem compensation mentioned, when discharging the separate duties. In the account presented, B. H. Reeves has charged for his personal services \$3,600, G. C. Sibley \$5,352, and Thos. Mather \$2,360; but they do not state the number of days by either or all of them employed in this business; nor do they discriminate as to the services performed in one or the other capacity. It does not appear from the account that they arranged the expenditures under their appropriate heads, at the time they were made; but after the services were performed, and the expenses incurred, they have attempted to make a distribution, and have placed under the head of expenses for Indian negotiations \$12,327 10, and for making the road, \$18,677 44. They say they found it impracticable

to keep the expenses separate, and to present the accounts as they were directed by the instructions. The purchase of the Indian rights fell short of the expense contemplated, while the construction of the road far exceeded it. Whether they are justified in diverting the fund from an object for which it was not wanted, and expending it for another object, the committee will not at present decide; but before they will recommend an appropriation to cover the expenses said to have been incurred over and above the appropriation, they require the vouchers of their account to be presented, and a particular statement of the number of days each was employed in the service, discriminating as to the particular service performed. The following resolution is submitted:

*Resolved*, That the claimants are not entitled to relief, for the reasons assigned in this report.

No. 1.

*Secretary of War to Messrs. Reeves, Sibley, and Menard, Commissioners, &c. &c.*

DEPARTMENT OF WAR,

16th March, 1825.

GENTLEMEN: You are appointed, by the President of the United States, Commissioners, to carry into effect the objects contemplated by the act of Congress, authorizing the President to cause a road to be marked out from the Western frontier of Missouri to the confines of Mexico; a copy of which act is herewith enclosed for your information and government. Your commissions will be forwarded to you so soon as they are prepared by the Department of State.

Two preliminary steps are required to be taken before you can proceed, definitively, to mark the road. First, the consent of the Indian tribes is to be procured: and second, an agreement is to be entered into between the United States and the Mexican Government for continuing the road from the boundary line of the United States to the frontier of New Mexico. Measures have been taken to confirm the latter, the result of which, it is hoped, will be ascertained in time, and if so, will be communicated to you on your arrival at the boundary line of the United States, so as to render any delay on your part unnecessary. But should any delay take place, you will proceed no further in the survey and marking the road than to the boundary line of the United States, until you are informed of the result of the agreement with Mexico.

Your first step will be to enter into negotiations with the intervening Indian tribes, for their consent to the establishment and use of the road. For this object, as you will see by the act, twenty thousand dollars are appropriated. The method of assembling the tribes with a view to get their consent, is left to your discretion; as is also the mode of compensation which you may adopt to obtain it. But in no case is the sum appropriated for this object to be exceeded. Your compensation as Commissioners in this branch of your service will be three dollars per day for each Commissioner, whilst actually engaged in holding the treaties, and five dollars per day for a Secretary, whom you are authorized to appoint; which compensa-

tions, together with all necessary expenses, will constitute an item in the disbursements of the \$20,000, and to be deducted from that sum, leaving the balance to be disposed of, in your discretion, to the tribes with whom you may hold treaties, to carry into effect the object contemplated by the act.

The appropriation will be put at your disposal in any manner which you may direct, in whole or in part, either by the acceptance and payment of your bills, or by remittance. Should you draw bills, any premium which you may sell them for will form an item to the credit of the appropriation, and will be accounted for by you in your returns.

You will be careful in keeping separate the disbursements under the two divisions of the duties which are assigned to you; and your returns will be accompanied by your certificate of honor, that the sums which you may have disposed of, have been disposed of as stated in your accounts, and that the time which you may charge for yourselves and Secretary, is that in which you were actually engaged in carrying into effect the objects connected with this branch of your commission.

I have, &c. &c. &c.

JAMES BARBOUR.

To BENJAMIN H. REEVES,  
GEORGE C. SIBLEY &  
\*PIERRE MENARD,  
Commissioners, &c.

No. 2.

Secretary of War to Messrs. Reeves, Sibley, and Menard, Commissioners, &c.

DEPARTMENT OF WAR,

March 16, 1825.

GENTLEMEN: The two-fold duties which are assigned to you, of treating with Indian tribes, and marking a road from the boundary line of the United States to the frontier of Mexico, will require to be kept distinct in your disbursements in carrying each into effect, with the view of confining to the two branches of this Department the correspondence and the accounts relating to each: to that of the Engineer Department, those which relate to a survey and marking the road, and the disbursements made in the execution of this branch of your trust; and to the Office of Indian Affairs, those which relate to treaties with the Indian tribes, and the disbursement of the appropriation made by Congress for this object. The sum of \$10,000 is appropriated to defray the expenses of surveying and marking the road. Your disbursements under this head of appropriation will embrace your own pay as Commissioners, which is fixed, for this branch of your service, at \$5 each per day, whilst actually engaged in surveying and marking the road, and for the pay of a surveyor, chain-carriers, markers, and hunters, and all other necessary expenses: The appropriation is in no event to be exceeded.

\* Col. Menard declined accepting, and Thomas Mather was appointed in his place.

The object of the act of Congress is specific: no instructions, in detail, are necessary, therefore, to be given, except in making your report in full in your field notes and plat of the road, in which you will be full and explicit in remarking upon the district of country through which you may pass, the rivers and creeks which may cross it, &c. &c. The form of making up and vouching your accounts will be the same as is directed to be observed in my letter of this date, relating to the treaties which you may enter into with the tribes through whose country the road may pass. Your compensation as Commissioners will be, as you are informed, \$3 each, and \$5 per day for your Secretary, whilst actually engaged in treating with the Indians, and \$5 a day for each Commissioner, whilst actually engaged in surveying and marking the road.

It is in the meaning of these instructions to allow you \$8 a day each, whilst engaged in the twofold duties assigned to you, and \$5 a day for a Secretary whilst engaged in treating with the Indians.

There is no compensation for a Secretary provided for in the estimate upon which the appropriation is made for surveying and marking the road.

I have, &c.

JAMES BARBOUR.

To BENJ. H. REEVES,  
GEORGE C. SIBLEY, and  
PIERRE MENARD,  
*Commissioners, &c.*

NOTE.—P. Menard having resigned, and Thomas Mather, Esq. having been appointed by the President in his stead, he will be governed, accordingly, by the foregoing instructions.

By order.

THO. L. MCKENNEY.

*Report of the Commissioners on the road from Missouri to New Mexico. October, 1827.*

To the Hon. JAMES BARBOUR,  
*Secretary of War, Washington City.*

SIR: The undersigned, Commissioners appointed by the President to carry into effect the act of Congress, passed on the 3d day of March, 1825, "to authorize the President of the United States to cause a road to be marked out from the Western frontier of Missouri to the confines of New Mexico," have, after some unavoidable delays, fully completed the duties assigned them, and now do themselves the honor to lay before you, for the information of the Government, the following report.

Anxious to execute the intentions of Congress promptly, the Commissioners did not lose a moment, after the receipt of your communication dated the 16th of March, 1825, (announcing their appointment, and conveying to them instructions,) in making suitable preparations for the work before them, aware that the season would be far advanced before they could collect their men and the necessary equipment on the frontier, and that they would probably be obliged to encounter the extreme heat of Summer, and the still greater inconveniencies of the prairie flies. These apprehensions

were fully realized; for it was not till the 17th of July that the enterprise could set forward from Fort Osage, the point fixed on for the commencement of the proposed road; and the journey, for the first 160 miles, was attended throughout with difficulty and embarrassment, arising chiefly from the annoyance of the green flies of the prairies, which obliged the party to travel much in the night, frequently leaving the direct route in order to find shelter from the flies, during the day, in the small groves that are seen here and there, scattered like little green islands over the plains. This irregular way of travelling not only harassed the horses and mules excessively, but rendered a satisfactory view and survey of the country impracticable at the time, and a subsequent examination necessary.

The only intervening tribes of Indians whose consent it was deemed incumbent upon the Commissioners to obtain by treaty to the marking out and free use of the road, were the Great and Little Osages and the Kansas; and, as it was known to be most agreeable to the wishes of the chiefs and head men of those tribes (who were consulted by Mr. Sibley on the subject at St. Louis, in June) to meet the Commissioners at some convenient places on their route from Fort Osage to the Arkansas river, it was believed to be unnecessary to postpone the survey and examination of the route through the territory claimed by those tribes, these being at most preliminary operations, necessary to the ultimate location and marking out of the road.

On the 10th and 16th days of August, the Commissioners met successively, by appointment, full deputations of the chiefs and head men of the Osages and Kansas; and, after carefully explaining the object and wishes of the Government, so as to be perfectly well understood by them, concluded and signed the treaties that have been already reported to, and duly ratified by, the competent authorities.

Having thus completed their negotiations with the "intervening tribes of Indians" within the limits of the United States, the Commissioners proceeded with their survey and examination, without any further interruption, to the boundary line between the United States and Mexico, at the point (as nearly as they had the means to ascertain it) where the 100th degree of longitude West from London intersects the Arkansas river; which point is in North latitude  $37^{\circ} 47' 37''$ ; is distant from Fort Osage by the survey as now corrected three hundred and eighty-six and forty-three eightieth and a half miles; and which they reached on the 11th day of September.

When the Commissioners set out from Fort Osage, they entertained the expectation of being able to carry their surveys and examinations quite through to the frontier settlements of New Mexico, before the Winter set in, so as to enable them to locate and mark out the road as they returned home early the next ensuing Summer, and to this end were all their preparatory arrangements made, and all their exertions pointed. And they were fully justified in indulging this expectation, by the assurance of your letter, that measures have been taken to obtain the co-operation or consent of the Mexican Government, which it was hoped would be effected in time to prevent any delay at the boundary line, and by the well founded belief that the Government of Mexico would promptly accede to a measure which was obviously quite as much, if not more to her advantage, than to that of the United States.

Great was the disappointment of the Commissioners, therefore, when, on their arrival at the line, they were obliged to suspend their operations for want of the expected authority to proceed through the Mexican Territory.

They waited until the 20th of September, in the daily hope that they might receive the permission to go on with their survey, but in vain, and the season being now so far advanced, it was believed that, go which way they might, there was but barely time left to reach the settlements before the setting in of the Winter, especially with reduced and tired horses and mules. It was obviously necessary, therefore, to determine immediately what to do, and promptly to set about it. After much deliberation, the Commissioners at length concurred unanimously in adopting the following plan of procedure. That one of them, accompanied by the Surveyor and a small party of the hired men, should proceed to New Mexico as expeditiously as possible, to find Winter quarters at or near the city of Santa Fé. The other two Commissioners, with all the remainder of the men and equipment, should return to Missouri as speedily as they could. That, if the Government should so direct, the two Commissioners returning should join the other in New Mexico as early as practicable the ensuing Summer, while the one in New Mexico should possess himself of such information within his reach, as might be desirable, to enable the Board properly to locate the road, or, in any event, that portion of it within the limit of the United States, it being considered indispensably necessary for the Commissioners to possess some previous knowledge of the country, and the route between the Arkansas and the frontier settlement of New Mexico, to enable them even to make a definitive location of the Eastern section of the proposed road.

This arrangement was considered, at the time it was adopted, decidedly the best one that could be made; and subsequent events have proven that it was the only one that could have been carried into effect, by which the Commissioners could possibly have completed the road, even as soon as they have done it. It has also been the means of reducing the expense somewhat that was necessarily attendant on the unlooked for delay of the Mexican Government.

To Mr. Commissioner Sibley was assigned the duty of proceeding to Santa Fé, it being understood that he was to remain in New Mexico no longer than 'till the 1st of July, unless he should have substantial reasons to justify a longer stay.

On the 22d September, the two parties took leave of each other, and proceeded on their respective journeys. The returning party completed theirs early in November. The other arrived safely at San Fernando, in the valley of Tau, on the 31st day of October.

Very soon after his arrival, Mr. Sibley inquired of the Governor of the Territory, (resident at Santa Fé,) if the Government of Mexico had taken any order in relation to the road; and was answered, that none had been communicated to him. Mr. Sibley immediately addressed a note to Mr. Poinsett, informing him of the progress already made by the Commissioners, stating the serious inconvenience, and expense of delay, and urging him to obtain the necessary order, if possible, in time to enable the Commissioners to complete the road early the next Summer. This note was despatched to Mexico in a few days, under the Governor's envelope, by the monthly courier, was duly received by Mr. Poinsett, who answered by return of the courier that he had not been able to effect any arrangement with the Government at Mexico for the continuance of the road through the territory of that Government, but entertained hopes that he should soon obtain one. Mr. Sibley also addressed Gov. Narbona on the subject, verbally, and by note, who professed himself to be most favorably inclined towards the

establishment of the projected road, and promised to represent to his Government his views of its importance, which he said he could strikingly set forth in the fact, that the trade from Missouri already yielded an annual revenue of twenty thousand dollars, besides many other great advantages.

Notwithstanding these flattering hopes and promises, no order was received from Mexico on the subject of the road, until the 16th June, 1826, when Mr. Sibley received a note from Mr. Poinsett, informing him, that, on the 13th. of May, he had obtained from the President of the Mexican States, an order to the Governor of the Territory of New Mexico, "to permit Mr. Sibley, Commissioner of the United States, to make an examination of the western part of the road from Santa Fé, to Missouri, without marking or cutting it out, or establishing any works of any class;" and on the same day, Mr. Sibley received an official notification to the same effect from Governor Narbona.

Although this permission fell very far short of what might have been reasonably expected, and could not indeed have been deemed sufficient to warrant the Commissioners in accepting it, without further instructions, if it had been communicated and received otherwise than it was; yet, from the knowledge Mr. Sibley possessed of the country through which "the Western part of the road" *must* pass, he did not entertain a moment's doubt as to the propriety of its being accepted and acted on by the Commissioners, all the circumstances being duly considered!

The following extract of a letter from Mr. Sibley to Mr. Poinsett, dated "Valley of Taos, in New Mexico, June 19, 1826," will sufficiently illustrate his views (and those of all the Commissioners) on this subject. "This very restricted permission would avail the Commissioners but little indeed, if it were not for the fact, that there is no "marking" or "cutting out" or any "works" necessary, or indeed practicable to be done on any part of the Road within the Mexican Territory. From the crossing of the Arkansas to this valley, and to Santa Fé, the road will not pass over timbered land exceeding one mile in the whole, and that is so scattered and open, that it can be passed without the least difficulty with carriages, with no other labor than removing a few logs, poles, &c.; and as it will be labor and time lost to attempt to "mark out" the road by any artificial means that the Commissioners can devise and effect, we shall probably no otherwise mark it, than by furnishing a chart of the route, founded upon an accurate examination and survey, upon which will be noted, with great care, all the prominent land marks already set up by the hand of nature, which are numerous, and now serve as admirable guides to the traveller. Any artificial hillocks or mounds thrown up, unless of much greater magnitude than our limited means will justify, would be destroyed in a very short time, by the immense herds of buffaloes that are continually passing to and fro over the plains; and what they might be unable to destroy, would assuredly be levelled by the roving bands of Indians, who are always sufficiently inclined to commit wanton mischief. I have no objection, then, myself, and I presume the other Commissioners will have none, to proceed with the "examination" as permitted; inasmuch as we can effect every thing under that permission that we could do if it were as ample as our Government wished and expected. It is certain that, if the Commissioners shall determine to proceed as above suggested, their report of the road will be such as to make it entirely unnecessary for the Government of the United States ever to take any further order or interest in the matter. I have deemed it proper for me to communicate to you these facts for your information."



Meanwhile, the Commissioners, who had returned to Missouri, were officially advised that no arrangement was likely soon to be made between the two governments for the continuation of the road through the Mexican territory; and they consequently determined not to join Mr. Sibley in New Mexico, but wrote him by the Spring caravan, on the 19th of May, 1826, to urge his immediate return home. This communication was received by Mr. S. on the 1st day of August, who immediately made such preparations as were necessary for his return, determining to make a complete survey and examination of the route from San Fernando, in Taus, to the boundary line, and connect it with the survey recently made from Fort Osage to the same point.

Mr. Sibley adopted this course without the least hesitation, because it was authorized by the Mexican government, would be attended with little or no additional expense, and would, in effect, enable the Commissioners to complete the whole road from Missouri to Taus, as perfectly as it could be done under any arrangement, however formal, that the two governments might ever enter into on the subject. He accordingly commenced a survey at San Fernando, on the 24th of August, ran it through the Mexican territory, and, on the 16th of September, connected it with the former survey at the line, on the Arkansas river. On the journey from the boundary line to Fort Osage, Mr. Sibley made some necessary corrections of the first survey, but had not time, or indeed the means, to "mark out the road," or, in fact, to complete all the necessary alterations in the survey of the first *one hundred and sixty* miles from Fort Osage, which, as has been already stated, was passed over at first, under circumstances that made a satisfactory survey of it impossible.

Mr. Sibley went out in May last, with a small party, to make the last mentioned corrections of the survey, and to "mark out," by suitable mounds, so much of the road as extends from the Western boundary of Missouri, to the Buffalo Range, beyond which, it was entirely useless to incur any expense in setting up marks. This last object was effected in a very satisfactory manner, (notwithstanding the journey was extremely unpleasant) and was completely finished early in July.

The Commissioners had the honor, on the 10th of January last, to submit to the President the opinion (which they still entertain, and beg leave here to report) that it is unnecessary for the Government of the United States to do any thing further in relation to that section of the road that has been surveyed through the Mexican territory. Even if it were *practicable* to "mark out" that portion of the road, by permanent artificial "works," they would deem it a very useless expense of money and labor, for the reason already given in another part of this report.

In the belief, therefore, that they have effected all the objects proposed by the act of Congress, under the authority of which they were appointed, the Commissioners report.

That they have surveyed, located, and marked out, a road from the Western frontier of Missouri to the confines of New Mexico, and from thence to the frontier settlements of New Mexico. That they have located the road upon the best practicable route that exists; and that the whole is sufficiently marked out by natural and artificial conspicuous objects, and by the track of the numerous caravans that have passed on it, to prevent in future any the least difficulty in the commercial intercourse between the Western parts of the United States and New Mexico, Sonora, and Chihuahua, in so far as a

direct and most excellent road from Missouri and the Mexican settlements is considered useful in promoting that object.

From Fort Osage, on the Missouri river, (in latitude  $39^{\circ} 10' 19''$  North, and longitude  $93^{\circ} 51' 05''$  West from London,) to the village of San Fernando, in the valley of Taus, in New Mexico, a few miles Eastward of the Rio Grande del Norte, and about 65 miles North  $25^{\circ}$  East from the city of Santa Fé, (in latitude  $36^{\circ} 24'$  North, and longitude  $105^{\circ} 31'$  West from London,) the whole distance, ascertained by actual measurement upon the courses of the road, as located and established, is  $746\frac{15}{80}$  miles:  $425\frac{78}{80}$  miles of this distance, by way of the road, lies within the limits of the United States, and  $320\frac{1}{4}$  miles within the Mexican territory.

The road, in nearly its whole extent, passes over open, grassy prairie. The forest or timber land over which it runs does not exceed altogether 20 miles. Water, fuel, and pasturage, are sufficiently plentiful, and, with but few exceptions, are good. Caravans may obtain their chief supplies for subsistence, without difficulty or delay, from the numerous herds of buffaloes that are almost continually passing and repassing over the plain, crossing the route every where along the greater part of the way; and many years must elapse before this great resource will fail, or materially diminish.

Between Fort Osage and San Fernando there does not exist on the road a single serious difficulty or obstacle to the passage of carriages of any description. Even the mountains near Taus (where scarcely any effort has ever yet been made to form a road) are crossed without any great difficulty; and, whenever the authorities there shall think fit to order it, an excellent road may be made at a very trifling expense. Caravans, with or without carriages, may either go direct to the city of Santa Fé, without crossing the mountains at Taus, or they may go down through the settlements from San Fernando. Both routes are, or may very easily be made, perfectly safe and good; and from Santa Fé to the city of Mexico the road is said to be "nearly equal to a turnpike."

In short, it may safely be assumed that there are fewer natural obstructions to the passage of loaded carriages (as respects the road merely) between Fort Osage and the city of Mexico, a distance not much short of 2,500 miles, than there are on the established road from Fort Osage to St. Louis, which is probably not inferior to any (except turnpikes) in the Union, of the same extent, about 260 miles.

Upon the whole, the Commissioners may congratulate themselves, and all concerned, that they have succeeded in locating and marking out a very direct and permanent highway across the immense desert plain that intervenes between the settlements of the Missouri river, and those of the Rio Grande del Norte, which, until recently subdued by the enterprising spirit of our Western citizens, has been considered an impassable barrier to any direct or profitable commerce. That barrier is now removed; the way is open, plain, and direct; and a stream of commerce is already flowing upon it, which it is believed will grow into some considerable importance, and is certainly entitled to the favorable consideration of the two Governments whose citizens are mutually benefitted by it.

Although this is a subject that does not strictly come within the official duty of the undersigned to mention in this place, they cannot suffer the present occasion to pass without expressing their opinion of its importance. They could not *mechanically* locate and mark out a road of such extent, through such a country, and for such an object, without feeling some interest in, and

forming some estimate of its probable future usefulness, nor can they now omit to suggest, what, from the view they have been able to take of the whole ground, they consider necessary yet to be done, in order to render this *highway between the nations* what it evidently should be, not only open, plain, and direct, but free in its whole extent from every obstruction. It has been already stated, that no natural obstructions worth notice exist on the road. The only danger to which it is now liable, is from the roving bands of Indians that sometimes beset small parties of our traders, and either steal or forcibly take away their horses, mules, and other property. Such outrages most frequently occur on the journey homeward from New Mexico, and most generally on the Mexican side of the Arkansas, though some of the depredators are known to leave their villages within the territory of the United States, and receive presents, and other favors from the Government.

The Indians who are most commonly engaged in these lawless practices belong to the nations or tribes called Pawnees, Arapahoes, Kiawaws, Camanches, Appaches, and Yutahs; the first, and probably the second named, are within the agencies of the United States; the others reside within the jurisdiction of the Mexican Government. It is not supposed that the irregularities of these savages can be suddenly suppressed, but it is very confidently believed they may be materially checked, and ultimately entirely prevented, by a seasonable interference of the two Governments; while it may well be apprehended, that, unless this is done, some of those tribes may be tempted to form combinations, and establish something like a system of highway robbery, that may be extremely difficult to suppress, if too long neglected. Individual losses have already been sustained on this road, from Indian robberies, to a large amount, to say nothing of the personal suffering consequent upon them.

As there is no position on the whole route, except near the mountains, about 36 miles from the settlements of Taus, suitable for a military post, having for its object the protection of the road, no other fit means of protection can be suggested, than occasional escorts of troops from the nearest military posts, and proper admonition to the Indians. With the exception of the Pawnees, the tribes that have been mentioned have but little knowledge of the character of our Government and people; and none of them have any respect for the Mexican authorities. It is presumed, however, that a very salutary change might easily be effected in the disposition and conduct of those Indians, if the two Governments were to act in concert, and announce, in a suitable manner, their determination to protect their commerce on this road, and occasionally detach light parties of regular soldiers to scour the country, and detect, and arrest for punishment, all those who should presume to infringe the rights of the highway.

A very brief notice of the country examined by the Commissioners will here suffice. The field notes and maps presented by Mr. Brown, the Surveyor of the road, which accompany and belong to this report, furnish, in detail, whatever it is supposed may be at all useful or interesting in relation to the survey and location of the road, and of the streams, ridges, hills, mountains, &c. that it crosses.

A rapid glance, confined as much as possible to the scope taken in the surveys and examinations, will be given, in the belief that it may supply some facts not heretofore very generally known.

It has already been observed, that the space between the Missouri river and the Rio Grande del Norte is occupied by an almost unbroken plain or prairie. Taken as one great whole, this vast expanse of open, naked wilderness, presents but little more variety of surface than the face of the Atlantic ocean. Its features are generally proportioned to its great magnitudes, except as to its streams; numerous rivulets, creeks, and small rivers flow through it, the most of which are marked in their courses by narrow fringes of forest trees, and thickets of underbrush. Prominent ridges frequently occur, which give direction to the flow of the streams, and serve to relieve, in some degree, the dull and tedious *monotony* of the scene. These elevations are usually *poor*, compared with the interjacent level valleys and bottoms, which are in general tolerably fertile. The herbage of this plain is, in general, rich and luxuriant, consisting chiefly of strong and succulent grasses, of many varieties; some of which would doubtless prove valuable additions to the cultivated grasses of the United States. In the season of flowers, a very large portion of this great plain presents one continued *carpet* of soft verdure, enriched by flowers of every tint. These beauties afford pleasure for a time, but the traveller is apt soon to lose the relish for them, as he pursues his tedious way, under a cloudless sky, and exposed to the unbroken rays of a burning sun, which, but for the brisk flow of air that usually prevails, would be scarcely supportable.

Except the Arkansas, the road does not cross a single stream that is an hundred feet wide, (at or near the crossing) very few of them are half that width, and none of them are deep or difficult to cross; one only it has been found necessary to bridge with poles and brushwood:

The Arkansas flows over its shallow, sandy bed, through a very broad, level, naked valley, the soil of which is generally extremely fertile, having a slight saline impregnation, which renders the pasturage peculiarly nutritious and inviting to the buffaloes, of which great numbers successively occupy it, in their migratory passage to and from the upper regions of the Missouri. The qualities of this pasturage are found also to agree well with the horses, mules, and other animals used on the road, restoring them to health and vigor with surprising rapidity.

The road strikes the Arkansas (going Westward) ten miles below the extreme of the North bend, at the mouth of Walnut creek, in lat. 38° 21' 10" North, and by the survey 271 $\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Fort Osage, and then pursues the course of the river, and never far from it, about 170 miles, to a large island (in lat. 37° 53' 18", where it finally leaves it, having crossed about 20 miles below.

In that distance, and for full 50 miles below the North bend, the character of this river varies but very little indeed. It bears a uniform width of from 400 to 500 yards, a depth of from 18 inches to 4 feet—velocity of current 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  miles an hour—its bed, sand—banks, low and loose—water turbid, sometimes filthy—channel crowded with sand banks and islets—forest growth very little, and that little chiefly on the islets, and is principally of the species of poplar called cotton wood.

Its annual floods occur in June, and frequently inundate much of the adjacent flat land. In its ordinary stages, it may be crossed by carriages without the least difficulty or moment's delay.

At the mouth of the Walnut creek the Arkansas approaches within 20 miles of the "Smoky Hill Fork" of the Kansas river, and if there is any point upon the road within the territory of the Union where a small milita-

ry establishment might for a short time be maintained at a great expense, and for some useful purpose in protecting the trade, it is here. But the Commissioners cannot recommend it.

Whether the "Smoky Hill Fork" of the Kansas river is navigable, and to what extent, or how far it is capable of being made so, could not be ascertained. Except during its floods, the Arkansas has no navigation within 200 miles of the North bend, or Walnut creek.

After leaving the Arkansas, there is a striking difference in the general aspect of the country. It is more broken, sterile, sandy, and dry—its features are more bold and various, especially after arriving within an hundred miles of the mountains, when they become more and more grand and interesting.

The distance across the mountains is  $34\frac{5}{8}$  miles; of this, about 10 miles is somewhat rough and precipitous, the rest is level enough; in fact, the greater portion of it is open and rich prairie. The forest growth on the mountain sides is chiefly pine of various kinds, but thinly scattered, and of very inferior size and quality.

In the whole distance, from the Western boundary of Missouri to the village of San Fernando in New Mexico, the road does not pass over any body of wood land exceeding one mile in depth; there is but one that exceeds *five hundred yards*, and the whole, united, (in a distance of *seven hundred and fifteen miles*) would not make a forest of three miles in depth. Yet good camping places are to be had, at convenient intervals, the whole way, with water, fuel, and pasturage, generally good and sufficient.

From the Missouri to the Arkansas, with one or two exceptions only, wood for fuel is abundant at the usual camping places, and the annual deposits of drift wood furnish ample supplies during the journey up the Arkansas. After leaving that river, there is, in some places, a deficiency of wood; but, wherever this occurs, upon the whole journey, the *ordure* of the buffalo is found in great abundance, which is a very excellent substitute for wood as fuel.

While in New Mexico, Mr. Sibley was able to ascertain, satisfactorily, some facts, which, as they concern the *utility* of this road, may be mentioned here without impropriety: *First*, The stream that issues from the mountains North of Santa Fé, commonly called there, "*Rio Colorado*," and which has been heretofore laid down on the maps as a principal head branch of the Red River of Natchitoches, is now well ascertained to be the main branch of the *Canadian*, that runs into the Arkansas about forty miles below Fort Gibson.

The Canadian is navigable only a short distance above its mouth, the whole river being frequently lost for miles together in the deep sands.

*Second*. The Red river of Natchitoches has none of its sources in the Great Range of the shining mountains, as has been supposed, nor is there any branch of that river that is navigable, even for canoes, within three hundred miles of *Santa Fé* or any of the settlements of New Mexico.

*Third*. The Rio Grande del Norte does not, and will not probably forages to come, afford any safe or certain navigation, exceeding an hundred miles at most, upward from its mouth. In its whole course, from the mountains near Taus, to its entrance into the Gulf of Mexico, its channel is more or less *choked* with rocks, ripples, sand banks, &c. Its tributaries are few and insignificant; and this "*great river of the North*," as it is called, even if cleared of the innumerable obstructions in its channels, would only rate among the third or fourth class of rivers in the United States.

In fine, it may be safely asserted, that the nearest approaches that can be made to Santa Fé or the other settlements of New Mexico, by *water*, for the purposes of commerce, are by the Missouri and Kansas rivers, and the Gulf of California, at Guaymas. When the highway now opened from Missouri to Santa Fé shall be cleared of the *pirates of the plains*, there is good reason to believe that the trade between the two countries in that direction will assume a character, and employ an amount of capital, not only greatly advantageous to those immediately engaged in it, but beneficial in no trifling degree to some of the manufacturing interests of the United States.

With very great respect,

We have the honor to be,

Sir, your obedient servants,

B. H. REEVES,

G. C. SIBLEY,

THOMAS MATHER.

*St. Charles, Missouri, October 27, 1827.*

It may be proper to state, that the longitude given in the preceding report has been, from necessity, deduced from the results of the survey. Westward from Fort Osage, which place is assumed to be in  $93^{\circ} 51' 5''$ , upon the presumption that the range of the public lands are correctly surveyed between that point and the mouth of the Ohio river, where it is believed Mr. Ellicott fixed the longitude accurately. This method of ascertaining longitude, must, obviously, be attended with some uncertainty as to the result. Great pains were taken, however, to test the accuracy of the survey and measurement, by lunar observations; but, as these were taken by one observer only, with a single sextant, and by common time; there is no reason to suppose that the longitude has been *accurately* found in a single instance, though it is probable they are all nearly correct.

As to the latitudes, of which a great many parallels were taken at remarkable points along the survey, and elsewhere, they are all believed to be *critically* true, and may be relied on, having been taken with very great care, in the best manner, and with the best instruments.

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The following table exhibits some of the Latitudes and Longitudes ascertained at points on the road from the Missouri to Santa Fé, in New Mexico.

Names of Places.	Latitude.	Longitude.	Distance from place to place.	
			miles.	Whole distance.
Fort Osage, on the Missouri River,	39° 10' 19"	93° 51' 05"		
West boundary of Missouri, -	38 54 28	94 17 22	81	31
Council Grove, Necoshok, -	38 40 00	96 12 22	109	140
Diamond of the Plains, (a fountain,)	-	-	17	157
Walnut Creek, (N. bend Ark. R.)	38 21 10	-	114	271
Mulberry Creek, (S. bend Ark. R.)	37 38 52	99 about	83	354
U. S. and Mexican boundary line,	37 47 37	100 00 00	32	386
Chouteau's Island, Arkansas R. -	37 53 18	-	59	445
Lower Lemarow Spring, -	37 24 00	-	32	477
Upper Lemarow Spring, -	36 51 40	-	73	550
Rabbit Ears, (a detached mount'n,)	36 33 00	-	45	595
Rock Point, (or Mound No. C.) -	36 25 42	-	47	642
Foot of Great Mountain Range, -	36 10 20	-	69	711
San Fernando Village, (in Taus,) -	36 24 00	105 31 00	35	746
Santa Fé City, - - -	35 41 00	106 10 00	65	812