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SEAL ISLANDS IN ALASKA.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY,

TRANSMITTING

A communication from the agent in charge of the Seal Islands and the late agent to said islands, calling attention to the necessity for an appropriation for certain improvements.

MAY 3, 1894.—Referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,
Washington, D. C., April 27, 1894.

SIR: The inclosed copy of a report, dated the 26th instant, from Joseph B. Crowley, agent in charge of the Seal Islands, and Joseph Murray, late a special agent for said islands, in relation to the necessity for an appropriation of \$8,700 to furnish coal houses, water supply, telephones, arms and ammunition, teams, tools, freight, etc., is referred with the recommendation that the appropriation requested be made. Attention is called to the statement made in said report to the effect that the receipts to the Government from said islands during the past twenty-four years have amounted to \$9,500,000, while the expenditures of every nature during the same period have aggregated \$365,000.

In addition to the amount specified in the report, and for which an appropriation is asked, I have the honor to suggest that the sum of \$2,500 be appropriated to be disbursed for miscellaneous purposes, under the direction of the Secretary of the Treasury. The appropriation from which the salaries and traveling expenses of the four agents stationed on the islands of St. Paul and St. George are paid provides for no expenses other than those incurred in going to and returning from the islands. This provision has been construed by the accounting officers of the Treasury Department in such manner as to exclude the traveling expenses of the agents when occasion requires their presence at the Department, and in order to provide for such expenses and to furnish stationery, blank books, forms, etc., an appropriation of the sum named is recommended.

Respectfully, yours,

J. G. CARLISLE,
Secretary.

Hon. CHARLES F. CRISP,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, *Washington, D. C., April 26, 1894.*

SIR: We have the honor of calling your attention to the necessity of making the following-named improvements on the Seal Islands of St. Paul and St. George, Alaska, and we respectfully offer reasons why they ought to be made by the Department without unnecessary delay.

A careful review of the annual reports submitted to your Department by the several Treasury agents stationed at the Seal Islands for many years past, as well as our own personal observations and experience, convinces us that not only for the betterment of the native inhabitants, but more especially for the protection of the valuable interests of the Government on these islands, should these improvements be made.

As attention has only been called to these interests in a general way in the past we now desire, specifically, to call your attention to some matters heretofore neglected, as follows:

- (1) Building of coal houses for natives' coal.
- (2) A system of conveying water to the villages for domestic purposes.
- (3) Guarding seal rookeries.
- (4) Building roads from the villages to the rookeries.

COAL HOUSES.

As to the building of coal houses for the purpose of storing the natives' coal, there need be but little argument in this respect. It is only of late years that the Government has furnished coal for native use; and no provision has been made on the islands for the sheltering of this coal. To leave it out-of-doors would be to subject it to the winds, rain, and snow-fall of that climate, which would soon destroy its value for fuel. We do not advise the building of a coal-house for each native family, as their knowledge of caring for the amount of fuel given them is not sufficient to warrant a distribution equally among them when the coal is landed at the islands; but we do advise the building of a house on each of the two islands in which the coal may be stored in bulk, and from which weekly distributions may be made to the natives.

The approximate price of such houses will be \$400 each.

WATER FOR DOMESTIC PURPOSES.

The long-felt want of a supply of pure water for domestic purposes, and the miseries entailed on the people for the want of it, has been dwelt upon in the annual reports of many of the Treasury agents, and it is conceded on all sides that this one evil alone has been the cause of more suffering, disease, and death among the natives than all other causes combined.

The nearest drinking water on St. Paul Island is over half a mile from the village, and the women and children have to carry on their backs every drop they use. When the snow drifts in the winter are from 5 to 10 feet deep it is impossible for women or children to reach the well, and the people have to use melted snow for domestic purposes.

A windmill at the well will pump the water into a tank built on high ground, from which the water can be conveyed through pipes to a tank in the village.

A report made by Mr. Joseph Stanley-Brown in 1892, gives plans and specifications for all that is necessary to make the change, the approximate cost of which will not exceed \$3,500.

GUARDING SEAL ROOKERIES.

On this all-important subject much has been said by the respective agents in charge of the Seal Islands, from the time that marauding schooners first appeared in the Bering Sea, and their reports were noticed by the British Bering Sea commissioners when summing up their charges against our Government for dereliction of duty during the pendency of the Bering Sea arbitration matter. On page 32 of their report we find the following language:

"Some further evidences have been obtained in respect to the frequency of the raid upon the islands, and the facility with which in consequence of the wholly inadequate protection afforded by the U. S. Government, such illegal and highly injurious onslaughts on the seal life of the islands have been made. When it is shown on the sworn evidence of men who were concerned or took part in such raids that two schooners anchored to the northward off St. Paul for nearly the whole of the summer of 1881-'82, raiding the islands whenever the weather permitted a landing to be made, it can no longer be maintained by any impartial person that the

protection of the breeding islands has been in any sense satisfactory." (See also p. 116-117, argument of Great Britain in the fur-seal arbitration.)

Since the British commissioners were on the seal islands an improved method of protection has been adopted by the Department, part of which is to send revenue cutters to patrol the sea around the islands until late in the fall, all of which we heartily approve.

In addition to this, however, and in order to give absolute protection to the rookeries, we ask for the erection of a system of telephonic communication between the Government house and the watchhouses on the rookeries.

By this means constant communication can be had between the agent in charge and the native guard on the islands. The natives are able and willing to perform the duty of guards, but heretofore their facilities to perform such duty have been very limited and of the most primitive type. On page 293 in the counter case of Great Britain in the fur-seal arbitration, it is alleged by Mr. Maconn that "there is only one telephone line on the islands, and that during a greater portion of the season this line is not in a working condition."

This statement can not be successfully denied, and, in fact, the only telephone line upon either of the islands is the one from the North American Commercial Company's house to the northeast point rookery (a distance of 12 miles) on St. Paul Island, and this line is owned by and kept under the exclusive management of the company.

With the present system of patrolling Bering Sea by armed vessels, and with telephonic communication on the islands as indicated by us, so that the agent in charge may be in constant touch with the guards on each rookery, we have no hesitation in saying that absolute protection can be given to the islands as against any future attempt of seal poachers. To accomplish this it will require 40 miles of wire and 9 telephones, at an expense approximated at \$2,000.

A supply of 50 Winchester repeating rifles and sufficient ammunition for guarding purposes will cost \$1,000.

In this respect we find copied in the Counter-case of Great Britain Fur Seal Arbitration Case, p. 292, from the report of Agent A. W. Lavender, in 1890, as follows:

"I have again to request you to do your best to obtain arms and ammunition for these islands, and hope you will be able to secure them, for without them the rookeries can not be protected in a proper manner. The only rifles that answer for the protection of the rookeries belong to the natives and are of but little use.

"In addition to the few rifles owned by the natives the company has found four small Colt's rifles and one Sharp's, with very little ammunition for any of them."

Following which quotation we find the following allegation by the British commissioners: "It will thus be seen that raiding on the Pribilof Islands has been carried on persistently, at least since 1868, and that from that date the authorities have known of the raids, and from the earliest time urgently demanded precautions in prevention. In short, under present regulations and arrangements there is no difficulty or danger whatever to vessels raiding along shore in the night or in any of the frequent fogs at several of the best rookeries, except when a revenue cutter chances to be close by, an occasional occurrence well known to every marauding schooner."

By the terms of the decision of the arbitrators the whole range of questions appertaining to fur seals and the Seal Islands, may be brought up for discussion and review at the expiration of five years, and in order to prevent further adverse criticism of the Government's methods of protection of the seals on the islands we respectfully urge that these improvements be made.

ROADS, TOOLS, TEAMS, ETC.

The matter of building roads on the islands from the villages to the several rookeries is very important for many reasons, but especially so when additional guards are to be sent with rapidity in cases of danger and necessity. The labor of building roads can be performed by the natives, and if given proper tools and means to do it they will do it cheerfully without any additional expense to the Government. Two hundred dollars will buy all the necessary tools.

It should be borne in mind that there are times when the agent in charge of the islands should be on the ground with the native guard as early as possible in case of an attempted raid.

Up to the present time there has never been any means whereby the agent could find transportation across the islands, except through the kindness of the lessees, who have always, when requested, furnished a team and buckboard.

We, therefore, ask that two horses, harness, wagon, buckboard, saddles and bridles, and one road scraper be sent to each island. The total cost not to exceed \$1,000.

The horses, wagons, and scrapers are to be used on the roads during the working season. We have carefully estimated the cost of the articles and material necessary to make the proposed improvements, as follows:

Two coal houses	\$800.00
Water supply.....	3,500.00
Telephone lines, complete	2,000.00
Arms and ammunition	1,000.00
Teams, tools, etc.....	1,200.00
Freight.....	200.00
Total	8,700.00

Had the islands been a source of expense to the Government for the past twenty-four years, there might be a reason for the failure to protect the valuable interests there; but a careful review of the gross earnings and expenses of the islands shows that the receipts have been \$9,500,000, while the expenditures, including salaries and transportation of Treasury agents, fuel, and appropriations to natives, have amounted to only \$365,000. (See report of Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, Fiftieth Congress, second session, Report No. 3833.)

All of which is respectfully submitted.

JOSEPH B. CROWLEY,
JOSEPH MURRAY,

HON. JOHN G. CARLISLE,
Secretary of the Treasury.

