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FORT HAYS MILITARY RESERVATION, IN THE STATE OF
KANSAS.

JANUARY 11, 1896.—Committed to the Committee of the whole House on the state
of the Union and ordered to be printed.

Mr. CURTIS, of Kansas, from the Committee on the Public Lands,
submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany H. R. 1238.]

The Committee on the Public Lands, to whom were referred the bills (H. R. 276 and H. R. 1238) granting to the State of Kansas the abandoned Fort Hays Military Reservation, in said State, for the purpose of establishing western branches of the Kansas Agricultural College and the Kansas State Normal School, and for a public park, have carefully considered the bills, and respectfully submit the following report:

A bill similar to this (see S. 2799, third session Fifty-third Congress) passed the Senate on the 26th day of February, 1895, and the House, by unanimous consent, on the 2d of March, 1895.

The bill grants the land to the State for the purpose of establishing western branches of the Kansas Agricultural College, the Kansas State Normal School, and for a public park. There are 7,600 acres in this reservation, upon which are located 40 buildings, which are going to ruin, as vacant, unused, and unprotected buildings are bound to. This reservation was abandoned about ten years ago, and was turned over to the Interior Department for disposal under the act of July 5, 1884.

In 1889 the Honorable Secretary of the Interior directed the suspension of action on this reservation to await the action of Congress in regard thereto.

In view of the passage of the bill, S. 2799, the district land officers were advised by telegram, dated March 22, 1895, that said lands were withdrawn from settlement and entry to give opportunity for further legislation.

The land granted by the bill reverts to the United States whenever it is abandoned by the State.

The facts are set out in Senate Report No. 1012, Fifty-third Congress, third session, from which your committee takes the following:

On the 18th of February, 1895, the legislature of the State of Kansas passed a concurrent resolution requesting the Senators and Representatives in Congress from that State to secure the passage of an act of Congress donating said Fort Hays Military Reservation to the State of Kansas for the purposes hereinbefore mentioned, which resolution is as follows:

[House concurrent resolution No. 20. By Mr. Schlyer.]

Whereas the experience of the settlers upon the plains of western Kansas, covering a period of more than twenty years, has demonstrated conclusively that agriculture can not be pursued with profit under existing natural conditions, and that artificial means and methods must be substituted therefor; and

Whereas the tests and experiments required to determine the fitness of new methods applicable to these higher altitudes and limited rainfall can not be made at the agricultural college of the State; and

Whereas the Fort Hays Military Reservation, at an altitude of 2,000 feet above sea level, contains a valuable body of native timber that should be preserved to posterity, and the land of said reservation is admirably adapted for such experiments in agriculture as are required in the premises; and

Whereas the buildings upon said military reservation, formerly used as residences for officers and their families, barracks for troops, storehouses, etc., are large and commodious, but can not be moved without destruction of their value, but in their position are of great value, and could be used with little additional repairs for the purpose of a branch of the State Normal School; and

Whereas the location of a branch of the State Normal School at this place would be central and convenient for the whole of the north half of the State; and

Whereas the said military reservation has long since been abandoned by the United States Government as a military post: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the house of representatives of the State of Kansas (the senate concurring therein), That our Senators and Representatives in Congress are hereby requested to secure the passage of an act of Congress donating the said Fort Hays Military Reservation to the State of Kansas for the following public purposes:

- First. For a western branch of the Kansas Agricultural College.
- Second. For a western branch of the Kansas State Normal Institute.
- Third. For a public park.

Resolved further, That the secretary of state be, and he is hereby, instructed to transmit a copy of these resolutions to the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and to each Senator and Representative in Congress from the State of Kansas.

STATE OF KANSAS, *Office of the Secretary of State:*

I, W. E. Edwards, secretary of state of the State of Kansas, do hereby certify that the following and annexed is a true and correct copy of the original instrument of writing filed in my office February 18, 1895.

In testimony whereof I have hereunto subscribed my name and affixed my official seal. Done at Topeka, Kans., this 19th day of February, 1895.

[SEAL.]

W. E. EDWARDS, *Secretary of State.*

On Saturday, February 23, 1895, a copy of said concurrent resolution was laid before the Senate by the Vice-President and was duly referred to the Committee on Public Lands, to accompany S. 2799.

The Fort Hays Military Reservation is situated in what is known as the arid belt of the State of Kansas.

This post was established in the early history of Kansas for the purpose of furnishing a convenient basis of operations against the Indian tribes of the West, and was maintained for many years for that purpose. Excellent buildings were erected thereon for officers' quarters and other army purposes, and are admirably adapted in many respects for the purposes contemplated by this bill. As the Indian tribes were gathered on the reservations in the Indian Territory, this military reservation became useless, and several years ago was abandoned as a military station and turned over to the Interior Department, and from thence until the present time it has been of no service to the Government of the United States; upon the contrary, a continued expense and embarrassment.

In view of the arid condition of the land it would be difficult to sell it for any reasonable amount. A part of the reservation is covered by an unusual growth of timber for that section of the country, and it is important that this timber be preserved for public-park purposes.

The State of Kansas has already established a State agricultural college at Manhattan, in Riley County, about 110 miles west of the eastern border of the State. It has also established a State normal institute at Emporia, Lyon County, about 125 miles west of the eastern border of the State.

The entire length of the State is about 407 miles, and the result is that the people in nearly two-thirds of the State are practically deprived of the benefits and advantages of both of these institutions.

In view of the arid character of this land and its situation in the western part of the State, about 175 miles west of the present location of the agricultural college and the State Normal Institute, it would furnish an admirable location for the establishment of branches of these institutions for the benefit of the inhabitants of nearly two-thirds of the State.

It is and always has been the policy of the Government to encourage and develop institutions of learning of this character, and the establishment of a western branch

of the State agricultural college at this point would be particularly beneficial and appropriate for the reasons herein stated and more fully set forth in the concurrent resolution above named, as it would form a nucleus from which important developments might be expected in determining the agricultural character and value of the arid lands in the western part of Kansas and eastern Colorado, and for all these reasons the committee is of the opinion that the policy contemplated by this bill is a wise and prudent one, and will result beneficially not only to the State of Kansas, but to the whole country, and we therefore recommend the passage of this bill.

Your committee therefore recommend that H. R. 276 lie on the table, and that the bill H. R. 1238 do pass without amendment.

