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General Harney's administration in Oregon. Letter from the Secretary of War, in answer to a resolution of the House calling for copies of correspondence in reference to General Harney's administration of the department of Oregon.

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Recommended Citation

H.R. Exec. Doc. No. 51, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess. (1861)

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GENERAL HARNEY'S ADMINISTRATION IN OREGON.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

IN ANSWER TO

A resolution of the House calling for copies of correspondence in reference to General Harney's administration of the department of Oregon.

JANUARY 31, 1861.—Laid upon the table and ordered to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT, *January 30, 1861.*

SIR: In compliance with the resolution of the House of Representatives of the 24th instant, by which the Secretary of War is requested to furnish that body with "copies of all correspondence on file in the War Department, not heretofore published, having reference to General Harney's administration of the military department of Oregon," I have the honor to enclose to you copies of the following papers, viz:

1. Colonel Wright to General Scott, August 28, 1860.
2. Same to Captain Pickett, August 29, 1860.

There are also on file three letters addressed to the late Secretary of War by George Ihrie, formerly a lieutenant in the United States army, under dates of July 29 and December 9 and 15, 1860. They make allusion to Brigadier General Harney's administration of the department of Oregon, but consist almost entirely of coarse personal denunciations of that gallant officer. Copies of these letters are withheld, since alike their vituperative language and the apparent purpose of their author forbid that this department should be in any way instrumental in giving them publicity.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. HOLT,
Secretary of War.

Hon. WILLIAM PENNINGTON,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

1. *Colonel Wright to General Scott.*

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF OREGON,
Fort Vancouver, W. T., August 28, 1860.

SIR: I am now preparing a report exhibiting the condition of affairs in this department, in which its wants will be fully set forth, having special reference to the defenceless state of our maritime frontier and navigable rivers. This report will be transmitted at an early date.

In the meantime, I beg leave to submit to the lieutenant general commanding the army the absolute necessity there exists for a speedy settlement of the boundary between Washington Territory and the British possessions on our north. For the last twelve months the *San Juan* imbroglio has only served to keep up a feverish excitement and a hostile feeling between our citizens and those of British Columbia. This feeling will not subside so long as the question of title to the island of *San Juan* shall remain in abeyance. The slightest provocation from either side might produce a collision, from which the most deplorable results would follow.

This state of affairs requires prudence and firmness in its management. An early settlement of this question would not only allay all excitement in that quarter, but would enable us to establish a permanent military post on the island, the troops of which, with the aid of a fast-going steamer, could effectually guard the whole of *Puget's Sound* from the incursions of northern Indians. Once established, such a post could be supplied cheaper than any in this department.

Since I have been in command of this department I have received no instructions from any source touching our occupancy of *San Juan* island; hence, until the sovereignty of the island shall be definitely settled by the two governments, unless otherwise directed, I shall be guided by the orders of the lieutenant general from the 5th to the 9th of November, 1859. (See enclosure.)

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

G. WRIGHT,

Colonel 9th Infantry, Commanding.

Lieut. Colonel L. THOMAS,

Assistant Adjutant General,

Headquarters of the Army, New York City.

2. *Colonel Wright to Captain Pickett.*

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF OREGON,
Fort Vancouver, W. T., August 29, 1860.

SIR: Wherein the instructions from these headquarters to the commander at *San Juan* island, of April 10, 1860, may be judged to conflict with the tenor of Lieutenant General Scott's instructions to the officer in command of the United States troops which he placed on that island, of the 7th and 9th of November, 1859, the colonel commanding

directs you; in any procedure connected with the subject of those orders, to govern yourself in accordance with the views and directions of the lieutenant general commanding in chief.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JAS. A. HARDIE,

Captain 3d Artillery, Acting Ass't Adjutant General.

Captain GEORGE E. PICKETT,

9th Infantry, Commanding Camp Pickett,

San Juan Island, W. T.