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Government Road

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

APRIL 27, 1896.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. WARREN, from the Committee on Military Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany S. 1830.]

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred Senate bill 1830, having duly considered the same, beg to report it with an amendment, and recommend that as amended it do pass.

This bill provides for the construction of a Government road over the rough and mountainous districts between Fort Washakie, on the Shoshone Indian Reservation, and a point near the southern boundary of the Yellowstone National Park, on the Government Yellowstone Park timber reservation.

The proposed road starts from a point inside a Government or Indian reservation and ends at a point within another Government reservation—that of the Yellowstone Park. South and east of the park is the timber or game reserve of this great national pleasure ground. In the strip of country between these two great reserves the county authorities have provided a county and mountain road nearly all the way, but beyond the county road lies the most mountainous and difficult part of the way.

It is sometimes necessary and very often desirable to move Government troops with their attendant arms, supplies, etc., from Fort Washakie to the Government post in Yellowstone National Park or from the park out to Fort Washakie.

This road would connect the two military posts or stations with their Government reservations and greatly facilitate the movement of troops in protecting the formations, timber, and game in the park, as well as to guard the Indians or to guard against them, as the case may be.

Although but a little over 100 miles apart, yet to go from one to the other of the proposed points by present routes of travel necessitates more than 1,000 miles of travel.

Immediately south and east of the Yellowstone National Park is a region of country which for many years has been the hunting ground of certain Indians. The Indians hunting in this region have been the Shoshones and Arapahoes living on the Shoshone Reservation at Fort Washakie, in Wyoming, southeast of the National Park, and the Shoshones and Bannocks located at the Fort Hall Reservation, in Idaho, southwest of the National Park. The Indians come into this country

over a pass in the Teton range of mountains. The Indians from the Shoshone Reservation pass into this country over a trail up the Wind River. There has been a considerable amount of friction developed in the past in this region between the settlers and Indians over the hunting privilege—notably the trouble of the summer of 1895. While it is hoped that an understanding will be reached at an early date as to the hunting rights of Indians, there will continue to be the possibility of misunderstandings between roving hunting parties and the settlers in the region referred to, and the nearest troops to the locality where troubles are likely to occur are those stationed at Fort Washakie southeast, and the two companies of soldiers doing police duty in the Yellowstone National Park on the north and westward. The latter, however, are fully engaged in policing the park, protecting the formations, preventing fires, etc.

Whenever trouble occurs between the Indians and white settlers, and the Indians strike toward the settlements south and east, or the settlers pursue the Indians, there is no possibility of following them except by pack outfits unless this road is constructed.

Many thousands of dollars, probably more than the cost of this road, would have been saved to the Government in the movement of troops during the last summer in this region if the road had been already constructed for the transportation of troops and supplies to the country in question.

That part of the proposed road which is not on the Government or Indian reservations is in an uninhabited portion of the mountains. As a measure of economy to prevent or to safely encompass difficulties in the future in this region, the project of this road is meritorious. The Government also owes it to the pioneer settlers who have made homes in the valleys among the mountains, to provide a road across the range by which troops now stationed in that region may pass rapidly in case of future outbreaks with the Government wards, the Indians.

In support of the proposition to build this road is the following from Brig. Gen. J. J. Coppinger, commanding the Department of the Platte, who traversed the proposed route with a pack train when returning from the scene of the trouble between Indians and settlers over hunting privileges during the summer of 1895:

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE PLATTE,
Omaha, Nebr., February 10, 1896.

Respectfully returned to the Adjutant-General of the Army.

I am of opinion that a good wagon road connecting Fort Washakie by a nearly straight line with the eastern entrance to the Jackson Hole country, and thence to the junction of the Buffalo Fork with the Snake River, would be of value for military purposes.

So long as the Indians of the Fort Hall and Wind River reservations do not surrender the hunting privilege accorded them by treaty there will be danger of conflicts between them and lawless whites in the Hole, which the cavalry at Fort Washakie would be in the best position to put down.

Even if the Indians relinquish this privilege, the troops might still have to police the hunting grounds to prevent encroachments thereon by the young bucks, naturally reluctant to forego their annual sport.

The sum appropriated by the bill ought to be sufficient, if expended under the direction of the War Department, for the construction of a good road between the points mentioned, including any bridging of streams necessary.

In order that the Department may be left free to select the most practicable route, it is suggested that the bill be amended as shown in the accompanying draft.

A sketch of the country to be traversed by the proposed road is inclosed.

J. J. COPPINGER,
Brigadier-General, Commanding.

Also the following from the Commanding General of the Army:

HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY,
Washington, D. C., February 21, 1896.

SIR: Referring to House bill No. 4445, entitled "A bill providing for the construction of a military road from Fort Washakie, Wyo., to the mouth of the Buffalo Fork of the Snake River, near Jacksons Lake, in Uinta County, Wyoming," referred to me for report, I have the honor to submit the following:

I concur with Brigadier-General Coppinger, commanding Department of the Platte, in the following:

"A good wagon road connecting Fort Washakie by a nearly straight line with the eastern entrance to the Jackson Hole country, and thence to the junction of the Buffalo Fork with the Snake River, would be of value for military purposes.

"So long as the Indians of the Fort Hall and Wind River reservations do not surrender the hunting privilege accorded them by treaty, there will be danger of conflicts between them and lawless whites in the Hole, which the cavalry at Fort Washakie would be in the best position to put down.

"Even if the Indians relinquish this privilege, the troops might still have to police the hunting grounds to prevent encroachments thereon by the young bucks, naturally reluctant to forego their annual sport.

"The sum appropriated by the bill ought to be sufficient, if expended under the direction of the War Department, for the construction of a good road between the points mentioned, including any bridging of streams necessary.

"In order that the Department may be left free to select the most practicable route, it is suggested that the bill be amended as shown in the accompanying draft."

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

NELSON A. MILES,
Major-General, Commanding.

The SECRETARY OF WAR.