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1st Session }

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

REPORT
No. 681

TO COMMEMORATE THE BATTLE OF WESTPORT

MARCH 27, 1926.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed

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

REPORT

[To accompany S. 2479]

The Committee on Military Affairs, to which was referred the bill (S. 2479) to declare a portion of the battle field of Westport, in the State of Missouri, a national military park, and to authorize the Secretary of War to acquire title to same on behalf of the United States, having had the same under consideration, reports it back with amendments, with recommendations that the amendments be adopted and that the bill as so amended be passed.

The amendments are as follows:

In line 5 of page 2, strike out the words, "and directed."

In line 6 of page 2, strike out "\$600,000" and insert \$400,000."

After comma following the word "appropriated," in line 7 of page 2, insert "such portion of."

After the word "municipality," ending in line 10 of page 2, insert "as shall be suitable and proper for the memorial objects of this act."

Following comma after the word "dollars," in line 5 of page 4, strike out the words "one-half for the use of the park and one-half to the informer."

The bill, except for certain modifications relating for the most part to maintenance and administration, is the counterpart to House bill (H. R. 5585) upon which extensive hearings have been conducted by the subcommittee to which it was referred. The subcommittee favorably reported the House bill back to the whole committee with amendment of like tenor as this now proposed to this bill (S. 2479).

HISTORY OF THIS LEGISLATION

Attention is called to the unusual course this legislative proposal has already run; this is urged as special warrant for the approval now accorded.

This movement to commemorate the Battle of Westport was prompted by the survivors of participating troops in eight States of the West and has been sponsored by the Missouri Valley Historical Society at Kansas City. The first step was a bill (H. R. 5417) in the Sixty-eighth Congress. That bill authorized and directed the Secretary of War, by aid of a commission, to investigate the feasibility and to ascertain and report the cost of establishing a national military park, commemorative of the Battle of Westport. After hearings in both the House and Senate, the bill was enacted into law. In obedience to the enactment, the Secretary of War appointed a commission, consisting of two civilians—both veterans of the Civil War, one a State Commander of the Confederate Veterans, the other formerly a State Commander of the Grand Army of the Republic—and an officer of the Regular Army. The hearings disclose that the commission, so composed, made a most thorough investigation of the subject. In its report, commended generally by the Secretary of War and by him transmitted to Congress, the commission recommended the commemoration both from the standpoint of feasibility and of cost. Referring to the ground described in this bill, the commission by its report finds:

It marks the site of the decisive battle of Price's invasion—the Battle of Westport; a great battle judged by its effects as well as by the large number of troops engaged, representing, as they did, practically all the States of the Middle West, both North and South. The battle field is thus of great interest to a large section of the country.

It is already a finished park, requiring no beautifying—bounded on the four sides by fine boulevards and magnificent homes with spacious, well-kept lawns.

It is accessible by boulevards or by street car—is on that great national highway, the Santa Fe Trail, where the thousands of auto tourists from the eastern States can view it, en route to the Pacific coast.

The price asked is believed to be extremely reasonable—approximately one-third the value of the tract if developed for home sites. A reason for action at this time is that the recommended site will never again be available except at prohibitive expense.

The service of this specially created commission would seem to put this project in a category somewhat distinctive and to constitute an unusual basis for congressional action.

A PROJECT OF WIDE CONCERN AND PECULIAR APPEAL

As was stressed in the hearings upon the bill (H. R. 5417) in the Sixty-eighth Congress, so it now appears that the commemoration of the Battle of Westport has made a wide and very strong appeal to the people of the West. It was the most important land battle of the Civil War west of the Mississippi River. It has come to be known as the "Gettysburg of the West"; points strikingly in common in this battle in the West and the Battle of Gettysburg in the East have come to be recognized—"each was the culmination of a campaign deliberately planned and executed to sever Union communications at the point of attack; in each case the territory chosen for operations embraced places of strategic importance—Washington, Baltimore, and Philadelphia in the East and St. Louis, Kansas City, and the military post of Fort Leavenworth in the West; both were battles of three days of hard fighting, distinguished by the brilliancy, valor, and heroism of the attack and the brave unyielding stubborn-

ness of the resistance; in each case the aim was defeated and the battles were the final attempts to carry the war northward."

It has been pointed out in the hearings that the battle was fought almost on the dividing line of communities between whom bitterest enmities had been engendered by the issues of the Civil War; that efforts to commemorate the struggle, the bitterness of which was intensified by these local conditions, would not have been practicable at a former time. But, as evidencing the healing virtues of time and of renewed associations in restoring mutual trust and respect and cementing elements once estranged, there was put in the hearings a list of patriotic organizations that have indorsed and now earnestly and insistently appeal to the Congress on behalf of this project. They are as follows:

Maj. William Warner Post, No. 36, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War.
 Farragut-Thomas Post, Grand Army of the Republic.
 McPherson Post, Grand Army of the Republic.
 Auxiliaries, Grand Army of the Republic.
 Kansas City Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution.
 Elizabeth Benton Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution.
 Athenaeum of Kansas City.
 The Council of Women's Clubs.
 The Missouri Valley Historical Society.
 City Klub of Kansas City.
 Missouri Division, United Daughters of the Confederacy.
 Missouri Division, Confederate Veterans.
 Missouri Commandery, Loyal Legion.
 Gold Star Mothers of Missouri.
 Missouri Division, Grand Army of the Republic.
 American Legion, Missouri Division.
 United Daughters of the Confederacy of America.
 National encampment, Grand Army of the Republic.
 Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (national encampment).
 Sons of Union Veterans of Civil War, auxiliary.
 Sons of Confederate Veterans of America.
 Daughters of 1812.

In the hearings was also disclosed a feeling in the West of lack of memorials of this character. As evidencing that the project is not merely local but assumes state-wide interest, an editorial of the *Globe-Democrat* of St. Louis, Mo., is quoted in the hearings as follows:

Its consummation would give to Missouri a park commemorating a great event in the Nation's history and one where memorials might be raised to those who gave their lives in that part of the great internal conflict that was fought in this State. Here patriotism would be evoked by a realization of the struggle through which our national destinies were shaped. The movement should have popular support, and the request for a Government appropriation to purchase the park is worthy of special consideration.

In like vein appears in the hearings an editorial from the *Kansas City Star*:

A nation is built on its past. The industry, the courage, the integrity, the devotion of its dead are at the foundation of its national life. Without the consciousness of the past, the present falls to pieces. A nation without a past is not a nation. It is simply a collection of individuals.

That is why historic memorials of every sort are important. They help to keep the past alive. They are binding forces in the national life.

These reflections come in connection with the bill introduced in Congress for establishing a national park in commemoration of the Battle of Westport. This was the most important land battle fought west of the Mississippi River. It ended the war in the West. It was the clash of men of high ideals. Victors and vanquished alike were standing for the best that human nature affords.

The inevitable bitterness of such a struggle has faded. A united people is now ready to do honor to the great qualities that inspired former foes.

The West has done its share in establishing similar memorial parks in other parts of the country. Now it invites the Nation to join with it in providing a suitable memorial on the site of the old battle field. The cost would be inconsequential. The benefit would lie in the quickened impulse to patriotic idealism that would stream out from such a national park through the whole western country.

THE EXPENDITURE IS JUSTIFIED

It has not been overlooked that the expenditure called for is large, even after the reduction to be effected by the amendment reported. The justifying circumstances, summarized, are these:

The battle is in rank and importance worthy of commemoration. Major Gee, the military member of the commission, a graduate of West Point, after a painstaking survey of the battle field in the light of full historical data, has, as quoted in the hearings, said:

This battle has been lost sight of. It has not been properly appraised or studied. It should have been taught in the schools. We should have had the benefit of it. While not in point of numbers engaged and other like considerations of the rank of some major battles of the Civil War, it was indeed a great battle and in the significance of the culminations and the outcome it is entitled to so rank and to be so memorialized.

The cost of acquiring the land has, of course, been enhanced by lapse of time, rendered necessary by the peculiar conditions already mentioned, more fully pointed out in the hearings. But those very conditions will also greatly enhance the broad and peculiar benefits to be realized. Moreover, the price of the land, location, special fitness, and surroundings considered, is generously fair to the public. The initial cost will also be greatly extenuated by the small necessity for further expenditures.

Though, as will presently be emphasized, this commemorative work, in the contemplation of the proponents, is to be a rallying place for the patriotic concerns of the general public—a center from which it is confidently hoped will radiate varied and salutary influences—the military values are not to be ignored. While the small part of the battle field selected will, perhaps, hardly lend itself to delineations of the battle on the broad scale or by the methods that would be employed were the whole area to be treated, it is nevertheless, proposed that in some suitable way, perhaps by a relief map fitly located, to portray the battle from military standpoints and in graphic fashion—so as to preserve the salient features, the lines, the locations, on succeeding days, of the troops engaged, the tactics resorted to and the strategy employed—an unfolding of the story of the dramatic struggle, the display of the matchless valor of the actors in both armies.

One all-important reason for pressing forward this project at this time, that must not be disregarded, lies in the fact that this part of the battle ground, fortunately preserved through use by a golf club, will, upon the expiration of a lease a few months hence, be thrown upon the market. The commission has called attention to this fact and in connection with it stated that the value of the ground for residence purposes will be three times the price that is being now asked by the owners for devotion to this purpose. It is, indeed, "now or never."

Finally, to present this project as it has appealed in successive Congresses, it seems to fit include excerpts from the forceful and

eloquent presentations made in its behalf by members of the House from the fifth Missouri district, authors respectively of the bills in that behalf, Hon. Henry L. Jost of the Sixty-eighth and Hon. Edgar C. Ellis of this, the Sixty-ninth, Congress. Mr. Jost, in the course of his remarks in the committee of the Whole House, said:

In that State, martyrs for the lost cause and champions of the national integrity came from the same neighborhoods; aye, oftentimes from the same fireside. The Civil War in that section of the country was a vastly different thing from what it was in the ultra northern and southern States. In Massachusetts and in South Carolina it was a sectional conflict; but out in Missouri it was truly and really a civil war, an internecine strife, a domestic quarrel, that divided and disrupted neighborhood, friends, and families.

It was a tremendously serious thing there. It was the culminating event of a decade of border warfare along the Kansas and Missouri line that provoked the most extreme bitterness and hatred. It was a day of final settlement. It was the most gripping and momentous factor in the infancy of Kansas as a Territory and Commonwealth and in the regeneration of the political thought of Missouri. There was not a household up and down that border of any note but what had one or more of its men folk in that Westport fight.

"Jim" Lane, who helped shape the early history of Kansas and afterwards became a United States Senator from that State, was there commanding a unit of the Kansas troops. John J. Ingalls, Preston B. Plumb, and Edmund Ross, all of whom afterwards served Kansas with distinction in the United States Senate, were in that battle, as also was Samuel Crawford, who became Governor of Kansas, and whose daughter is the wife of United States Senator Capper. A thousand other names which later found places on the pages of history of this Nation and of Missouri and Kansas were on that battle roster.

That event touches intimately and sentimentally every family which had to do with the starting and prospering of those two States. It goes to the very core of our community life. It means a lot to us. When our State capitol building was recently completed there were half a dozen outstanding events in Missouri's history which were deemed worthy of the artist's brush for its mural decorations. Of these, two paintings depict scenes of the Battle of Westport.

Mr. Ellis, in his appeal for his bill to the House Committee on Military Affairs, said:

To my mind, and I am not unfamiliar with the history, the Price invasion was one of the greatest, if indeed not the greatest military exploit of the Civil War. It was deliberately planned at the southern capital. It was approved by the commander in chief of the southern armies. It was executed by a master mind—by a military genius of highest order. But on this battle ground we ask to have commemorated, less than 30 miles of his goal, the Leavenworth military post, Sterling Price met his Verdun.

But, you will ask, why the delay—why was the Congress not appealed to 40 years ago, when the Congress was awarding like recognition to other battle fields of the Civil War? I will tell you, and you will perceive in the cause of the delay a strong reason why the appeal should be granted now. Neither 40 years ago, nor in fact at times much more recent, would the commemoration of this battle in the manner now sought have been welcome. Lapse of time has been required in this case and for sound reasons. The people of Missouri were peculiarly circumstanced in the Civil War. They were in hostile camps. Moreover, the Battle of Westport was fought almost on the dividing line of communities between whom bitterest enmities had been engendered upon the issues of the Civil War. More than once before then had these flamed forth in border warfare. It has taken time for mutual trust and respect to be restored and an era of good feeling to come so far along as to make welcome and inspiring to all the story of this battle and the deeds and valor of the participants in it.

Though perhaps the West comes late, the West now comes in its turn. And need I remind you that there still remain to justify the expenditure and fine accomplishment for which we here appeal, all and singular, the manifold and sound reasons that have availed in other instances? It has not been alone to honor the dead, who wrought gloriously or achieved mightily in the past, that these memorials have been set up. It has been recognized that they greatly serve the living of the present and the future; that whatever betokens the controversies, struggles, dramatic episodes along the path we have come as a people,

is inspirational—stimulates taste and eagerness for American history and cultivates appreciation of American institutions. Not only is this essential to rising generations of native born, it is of utmost value in the preparation and assimilation of those coming to us, affected by alien ideas and traditions.

And so, finally, I now point to the happy circumstance that out there, where but little before the time of that battle the West ended, where now the West begins; out there at the center of a populous, typical western city, in the midst of an abounding western life, where in American homes are rising generations of American youth; out there where the urge of material gain is strong and the whirl of industry would dull men's ears to finer appeals; out there in what we proudly perceive to be the heart of America—out there has, as if by Providence, been spared, unmarred and unappropriated, this battle ground. Those beautiful acres make mute but unmistakable appeal to be endowed, fitted, and consecrated to the task, where the need of the task is greatest and most keenly felt, of perpetual inspiration to patriotic regard, devotion to high ideals, ennobling memories and cherished traditions.

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