

REPORT
OF
THE SECRETARY OF WAR,
COMMUNICATING,

In compliance with a resolution of the Senate, communications from Major Steen and Lieutenant Mullan, relative to the movement of troops overland to the northern portion of the department of the Pacific.

MARCH 13, 1861.—Referred to the Committee on Military Affairs and the Militia.

MARCH 15, 1861.—Report in favor of printing submitted, considered, and agreed to.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
March 11, 1861.

SIR: In compliance with the resolution of the Senate of the 7th instant, I have the honor to transmit herewith copies of communications from Major E. Steen and Lieutenant John Mullan, relative to the movement of troops overland to the northern portion of the department of the Pacific.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

SIMON CAMERON,
Secretary of War.

Hon. HANNIBAL HAMLIN,
President of the Senate.

REPORT ON LIEUTENANT MULLAN'S WAGON ROAD, VIA FORT BENTON,
ON THE UPPER MISSOURI.

FORT WALLA-WALLA, W. T.,
January 5, 1861.

GENERAL: I take the liberty, and feel it my duty, to call your attention to the Fort Benton wagon road, as I believe, from experience in the service, and crossing the plains frequently for the last thirty years, that the cost of sending recruits or horses to this coast by that route will be ten times as much as by the route from Fort Leavenworth, *via* Forts Riley, Laramie, Hall, and Boisé, to this post; for by the boat to Benton each soldier will cost one hundred

dollars, and each wagon the same; then to get mules or oxen for the wagons would be double the cost that it would be at Leavenworth.

Purchase your horses, wagons, and oxen or mules to transport your supplies at Leavenworth, and if the transportation is not needed here on its arrival, it can be sold at public auction for its full value in the States. By this means each soldier will hardly cost ten dollars, whereas by the Benton route each one would cost three hundred by the arrival here.

One more suggestion. Could not the one hundred thousand dollars already appropriated, and not yet expended, be transferred to the old road I speak of? It is much the shortest and best route, and emigrants come through every season, arriving here by the end of September, their animals in very good condition.

A post is to be established at Boisé in the spring, and there will always be troops at Fort Hall to protect emigration, and all that is needed are ferries at these posts, and very little work on the road.

There will then be grass, water, and all that is requisite for a military or emigrant road.

I do believe, if the one hundred thousand dollars is expended, and the Benton road finished, that not ten emigrants will travel it for twenty years to come.

But suppose you make the road from St. Paul to Benton, then you must establish a line of posts through the Sioux and Blackfoot country, requiring at least 1,500 soldiers, at a cost of half a million annually, and there would be a war, at a cost of three or four millions more.

In a conversation with Major Blake, of the army, who came by the Benton route with 300 recruits last summer, he spoke favorably of the route, and said he would apply to bring over horses from St. Paul, *via* Benton, to this department. Now, I am satisfied that the cost by that route will be ten times as much as by the route from Leavenworth, *via* Laramie, Hall, and Boisé, and, in addition, the major's route is much the longest; and in the months of May and June, from St. Paul west, say one thousand miles, you have much wet and marshy prairie, which I consider impassable.

Starting in July, then, you could not come through in the same season; and wintering in the mountains northeast of us would cause much expense, the loss of many animals, and much suffering amongst the men.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

E. STEEN,

Major 1st Dragoons, Commanding.

General JOSEPH E. JOHNSTON,

Quartermaster General U. S. A., Washington, D. C.

ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE, *March 11, 1861.*

A true copy.

L. THOMAS,

Assistant Adjutant General.

MILITARY ROAD EXPEDITION,
Camp at Fort Walla-Walla, W. T., November 1, 1860.

SIR: I would respectfully submit to the colonel commanding the department of Oregon the following statistics and views relative to an annual military movement of recruits from Fort Snelling to Fort Walla-Walla, and would request that the same would be laid before the general-in-chief and quartermaster general, with such remarks as the colonel may deem necessary or pertinent.

As you are aware, during the summer of 1859 and 1860 the Missouri river was proved to be navigable to within 100 miles of the Rocky mountains, and during the present season a military detachment of 300 recruits, under Major Blake, ascended in steamers as high as Fort Benton, where, taking land transportation, they moved safely and in good season to Fort Walla-Walla.

This demonstrated that the Missouri river, together with the intervening land transit to the Columbia, could be used as a military line whenever the necessity for a movement existed, and provided the proper season for navigation be taken advantage of. But in future years, or until the condition of the interior shall guarantee an abundance of land transportation at the head of navigation on the Missouri, the element of uncertainty must ever enter into the movement of any body of troops to this coast *via* the Missouri and Columbia.

During the last season it was practicable because we had land transportation at hand for the movement westward. Doubtless this transportation would be had in sufficient abundance at all times at Fort Benton by private enterprise, provided the government would hold out any assurances of a certainty of movements, which, however, will not be guaranteed. Under the peculiar circumstances, therefore, under which this line would have to be made use of, the following has seemed to me to be not only judicious, but feasible and economical; and as it is one in which the colonel commanding would feel a direct interest, courtesy to him, and my interest in seeing this line practically opened, have dictated my officially submitting the subjoined views.

Suppose, then, it is intended to send a detachment of 300 recruits (which we will take as a unit of estimate) to supply the more eastern posts of the department of Oregon, say Fort Vancouver, Fort Dalles, Fort Walla-Walla, and Fort Colville. Let these troops be rendezvoused at Fort Snelling by the 1st of May, with transportation for their baggage, and two months' supply, and take up the line of march for Walla-Walla *via* Fort Union, (mouth of the Yellowstone,) Fort Benton, and the Bitter Root valley. By the steamers that annually leave St. Louis in May for the mountains, send up for these troops one month's supplies, to be deposited at Fort Union, and two months' supplies to be deposited at Fort Benton. The troops starting from Fort Snelling with supplies for two months, a liberal allowance of time to the Yellowstone, will reach the latter point with empty wagons. Here they will replenish their stores by the month's supply there left. The wagons, being only half laden, will be light, and the animals thus enabled to make good time and improve in flesh on the march. In one month more they reach Fort Benton, again with

empty wagons, and where they again replenish their stores with two months' supplies there left, with which they reach Fort Walla-Walla in good season. Thus it is seen that though the troops may be five months on the march, they are not compelled at any one time to carry supplies for more than two months, thus saving the heavy outlay of starting with a large train, which, by the time they complete one-half of their journey, would be half empty, and thus to be either abandoned on the road or brought to the Pacific at heavy cost.

The advantages growing out of overland movements through large bands of Indians are admitted by all, and, for one, I am free to believe that the presence of a large force alone, at Fort Benton, during the past season, prevented the turbulent and uncertain spirit of the Blackfeet from finding a vent in an attack upon my own or other smaller parties, passing to and fro through the country; and I am convinced that an annual movement, thus initiated under auspices so favorable, can be successfully repeated, and be the means of not only keeping the Indians of the eastern section of the department of Oregon quiet and contented, but will give that feeling of security to the two borders of our frontier, that will cause the now scattered settlements, making out both from the Columbia and the Missouri, at no distant day to form a single belt across the country.

The question, then, of efficiency to the men, and the advantages, both in subjecting the Indians, and giving a feeling of security to the settlements and protection to the lines of overland emigration, are easy of solution, and so fraught with importance that they cannot be silently passed over.

On the score of economy I will submit an estimate of costs, which may safely be taken as a close approximation to truth.

Suppose, then, that we purchase every item of transportation needed for this movement, taking, say, forty wagons, to be drawn by six mules each:

Forty wagons, at Fort Snelling, will cost \$200 each.....	\$8,000
Two hundred and forty team mules will cost \$110 each.....	26,400
Sixty mules for herding and contingencies, \$110 each.....	6,600
Forty sets 6-mule harness, \$72 a set.....	2,880
Necessary tools and general equipments for the march, say	2,000
Two wagon masters, at \$100 each for five months.....	1,000
Fifty employes, cooks, herders, and teamsters, at \$25 per month each for five months	6,250
Value of five months' rations of civil employes, at forty cents a ration, 7,800 rations.....	3,120
Contingencies, &c.....	3,750
Making total cost.....	<u>60,000</u>

In this estimate, no figures are included for the first cost, and transportation of three months' supplies from St. Louis to Forts Union and Benton, because, if this enter as an element of cost, we should be compelled to include the cost on the western slope for the same period; and an accurate estimate shows these items to be about one and the

same, and hence may be regarded as cancelled. The actual outlay to the government that this movement calls forth may be therefore estimated at \$60,000. On arriving at Fort Walla-Walla, the wagons, mules, and harness, as is well known, are worth their eastern cost, which is \$43,880, leaving the actual cost \$16,120, or \$54 per man, from Fort Snelling to Fort Walla-Walla, or about the same per man as the actual cost of transportation this season from St. Louis to Fort Benton.

The value of a ration at St. Louis is, say.....	20	cents.
Transportation to Fort Union, at three cents a pound.....	9	"
The value of a ration at Fort Union....	29	"
The value of a ration at St. Louis is, say.....	20	"
Transportation to Fort Benton, ten cents a pound.....	30	"
The value of a ration at Fort Benton.....	50	"
The value of a ration at Fort Walla-Walla is.....	35 $\frac{1}{4}$	"
Transportation to Colville, say 15 cents.....	15	"
The value of a ration at Fort Colville.....	50	"

Thus it will be seen that the first cost of the ration plus the transportation on each side will be about equal.

Fort Walla-Walla is a large and important depot post, from which the large military operations against the Indians in the interior must take place. Concentrating, then, at this point, annually, the new transportation thus brought across the country enables the quartermaster's department to replace their old wagons, harness, and animals, which last can be disposed of in the country advantageously; and when it is known that every wagon used in the department is made of material shipped from the east to this coast, it will be readily seen that, on the score of economy alone, thousands of dollars can be saved to the government. For, taking \$150 per man as the unit of estimate of transporting each recruit from New York to Fort Walla-Walla, you incur, in transporting 300 men, an expense of \$45,000, whereas the overland route, costing say \$16,000, leaves an actual saving to the government of \$29,000.

This is an advantage that we can readily and accurately estimate in dollars and cents; but when we couple with this the natural and incidental advantages, both to the recruits and the Indians, growing out of an overland movement, truly it seems to me that every consideration would appear to be in favor of the recommendation set forth.

The only objection which it seems to me would be validly urged against the department of Oregon being supplied with recruits *via* this route, might be that they would not arrive in the department in time to take part in any campaign contemplated during the same season. But when it is remembered that the contingency of a campaign might render the region over which these troops must pass the field of operations, with as much probability as the other sections of the department where Indian difficulties are likely to arise, this objection must lose much of its force; for the troops in movement to the department actually wage a bloodless campaign, and thus do that for which otherwise an expensive expedition must be specially organized. Excepting the Snake country, there is no region within the

department of Oregon where difficulties are more likely to arise than on the eastern line of the department. Here we have in and bordering upon the department the large bands of Blackfeet, Crows, Banacks, and also Snakes, none of which tribes are our fast friends. Intervening, we have smaller bands whose moods are still turbulent. On the score of probability of a field of operations, therefore, this line compares but too favorably with others, and renders this objection, which at first glance might be of importance, weighless in the scales of military prudence. As the colonel is aware, every mile of the road from Fort Snelling to Fort Walla Walla (1,600 miles,) has been passed over by wagons, and therefore the uncertainty of wagon road practicability no longer exists.

I lay before the colonel the foregoing views for his consideration. They have appeared to me pertinent to my present labors, and if they contain anything of value that could be practically carried out I shall rest content.

I am, sir, truly and respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN MULLAN,

1st Lieut. 2d Artillery, charge Military Road Expedition.

Capt. A. J. HARDIE,

A. A. Adjutant General,

Headquarters Department of Oregon.

ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE, *March 11, 1861.*

A true copy.

L. THOMAS,

Assistant Adjutant General.

Indorsement by the commander of the department of Oregon.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF OREGON,

Fort Vancouver, W. T., November 6, 1860.

Respectfully forwarded to the headquarters of the army. After having carefully considered the within recommendation of Lieutenant Mullan, I concur in his views so far as sending recruits for the posts in this department east of the Cascade mountains *via* the route proposed by the lieutenant.

The passage of a body of troops from Fort Snelling overland to Washington Territory would doubtless have an excellent effect upon the various tribes of Indians on the route, and check every disposition among them to commit hostilities.

G. WRIGHT,

Colonel 9th Infantry, Commanding.

Lieutenant Colonel L. THOMAS,

Assistant Adjutant General,

Headquarters of the Army, New York.

ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE, *March 11, 1861.*

A true copy.

L. THOMAS,

Assistant Adjutant General.