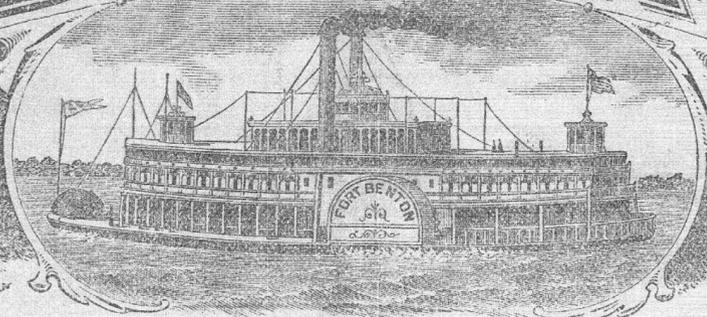


FORT BENTON RECORD



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THE BENTON RECORD.

Fort Benton, M. T.,

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5 "	7 00	9 00	12 00	14 00	30 00	40 00	64 00
6 "	8 00	10 00	14 00	16 00	36 00	48 00	80 00
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OTIS.

As a rule the army inspectors perform their duties to the best interest of the service and the public at large. In examining into the affairs of the several posts which comprise their circuits, and in considering the usefulness of those stations as means of protection to the immediate locality, the officers, especially those in command of the posts, are generally conceded to be the best authority on the subjects. And indeed the general and prevalent rule is, that inspectors will on all occasions heed the opinions and recommendations of those officers which are founded upon experience of the locality, its requirements, &c. No officer of the U. S. army, nor citizen of Montana, is as well qualified to illustrate the necessities of this section, or to represent the position of the troops in relation to the same, than is the Commandant at Fort Benton. Neither can any other company or subaltern officers in this Territory show a like amount of duty performed within the same time as can those stationed at this post for the last three years, during which time the depredations of Indians almost constantly kept the little garrison on the qui vive. The nature and amount of duty performed by Co. "B," 7th Infantry, should entitle the opinions of its officers regarding the needs of this locality as unanswerable arguments and the most reliable information that can be obtained on the subject. Contrary to all rule, however, we understand Col. Otis not only refused to consider the recommendations and suggestions of the officers of this post, but even denied them a place

in his report. The question therefore naturally occurs, upon what grounds then did he make his report of the situation of this vicinity? Col. Otis arrived here by coach on Saturday evening, and proceeded to inspect the books and stores of the post, staff, and company, and continued the inspection until Sunday evening. The troops were not paraded, for the simple reason that the four or five men who at present compose the garrison were under orders to escort the inspector to meet the steamer. On Monday morning the Col. started for Cow island, and by driving the baggage wagon himself managed to reach that point in fifty hours. Now, is it possible that an Inspector General could conscientiously base a report of the situation of this post in regard to usefulness in protecting this vicinity, in his lightning tour or upon the opinions received from social confab with designing enemies of this section? Such seems to be the case. In discussing the military situation with a party at this place Col. Otis admitted the necessity of two companies of soldiers being stationed here. On reaching Cow island, no doubt soured by the incapacity of the teamster, through which he was himself compelled to drive the wagon, he recalls the opinions expressed here and says no troops are needed around Benton. If the Department receives this report of Col. Otis, we desire that it may be compared with the opinions of any officer in this Territory founded on a more substantial basis than a 2-40 gait through this district.

The Commanding Officer at this post is of long military experience, which includes the Indian question in all its phases, and though not cognizant of his opinion on the subject, we are willing to accept it before that of one whose ideas are seemingly formed upon the representations of the prejudiced and the envious. And if the Department is desirous of conforming to the general welfare of the Territory, they would do well to communicate with the Commandant at Fort Benton on the subject—if it has not done so already—whose disinterested experience will enable him to represent the true interests of Benton, both in its local and Territorial character.

The attention of our readers is called to a letter from Sun River published on 2d page.

THE INDIAN RING.

Recent exposures of the Indian ring must lead the public to believe that there is something "rotten in Denmark," and that Delano and his followers are not as saintly as they would have the people suppose. From the many letters and articles that have of late been published in regard to the robberies of the Indian clique, we must conclude that there is good ground for these assertions and complaints. The latest exponent of the Indian Peace "to ourselves while we divide the spoil" game, which has been going on for some years in the peaceful advocating, is a gentleman of high standing in the city of Philadelphia both in business and social circles. His letter to Prof. Marsh, who also knows a thing or two about the same subject, will undoubtedly receive the attention of the Commission now in session. But we may ask, suppose the present outfit of thieves were ousted from their position, and a strictly honest Department organized or selected, what would be the difference in the end? The policy is a failure, and the most honest or upright men in America to-day can make nothing else of it. There is but one way of treating the Indian question, so far at least as relates to the frontier Indians, and that is to turn the subject over to the War Department. Give the military complete control of Indian affairs, build a line of posts along the border of each reservation, garrison each post with Infantry and Cavalry, allow no Indian off his reservation, or if found off, drive him back again—do this, and you have the Indian question solved. And ye journals who cry "abolish the army, reduce the military force," while at the same time upholding the present robbing peace policy, which could not maintain its worthless existence without the aid of the troops, turn this matter in your mind and come out boldly with the demand to transfer the Indian question to the military. Enforce this demand and you will to an extent have done penance for the crimes you have committed, through your former course, against the peace and welfare of the frontier settlements where alone the Indian question becomes one of deep study and intense importance.

We have received No. 18 of the Ogden "Freeman," and take pleasure in adding this valuable journal to our list of exchanges.

DOES CHOTEAU COUNTY NEED MORE TROOPS?

We were in hopes that the Secretary of War would visit this section before he had completed his tour through the Territory. Indeed we had the strongest reasons to believe that he would not return to Washington until he had seen for himself the position of this vicinity, which must be conceded the most favorable and effective point of concentration for troops in the Territory, and which at the present time is the most neglected and least protected portion of the American Continent. It is impossible to realize the true situation of the Territory, without an accurate knowledge of the nature of the country, and it is absurd to think that a proper estimate can be formed of the relations of any section to the Territory at large, or of the needs of any locality, from a few moments hurried conversation with persons of a different locality whose sole desire and aim is to serve the interests of their own neighborhood regardless of the general welfare or the sufferings that may be entailed through their conduct. In reviewing the records of the Territory for the past few years, we plainly perceive that local prejudice has severely injured the general welfare of Montana. Most peculiarly unfortunate has this section been in this respect. With a powerful influence directed against our interests have we struggled; against commercial enemies, backed by all the influence of politicians, have we contended. Barely have we withstood the shock of this powerful contention, and bravely have we fought and gained every inch, and to-day the standing of the County of Choteau, its local and Territorial advance, is beyond question. In spite of this prevailing opposition, we have proved that our position is one of Territorial advantage and that any decline from this prominence in the commercial carte must necessarily entail a decline in the business and commerce of Montana.

But outside of our commercial situation other grounds present themselves, upon which the friends of the Territory must base a favorable conclusion of the necessity of encouraging all attempts connected therewith. The borders of our county encompass some of the best agricultural land in the Territory and the fairest ranges for cattle in

the world. Settlements are springing up in our midst, immigration is tending this way, and hither will it wend its welcome course until every acre has an occupant. To facilitate this flow of population, to render the settler secure from depredations such as have prevailed in our vicinity, and such as will again become the bane of settlements unless proper protection is afforded, we ask the interference of the authorities. Threatened on the north and east, by Piegans, Assinaboins, Yantonai, Santee Sioux, and other hostile tribes, and infested on the south by Crows, Gros Ventres, the attendant dangers of the farmer can only be realized by experience. Within a few years over thirty murders have been committed by Indians in this vicinity, and in the same period one thousand head of horses have been stolen by Indians from whites in this locality. So that whether the hostility of the Indians has abated, or whether they are friendly to the whites or not, the consequence is the same to the farmer in the absence of sufficient troops to check the depredations of the savages. It may be said we have a post in our vicinity. We have a post, but the little garrison cannot perform miracles; they cannot prove themselves ubiquitous. To show the ineffectiveness of the handful of troops that is stationed here, one instance may suffice. A few days ago word was brought to this place that a party of Indians were on the Teton River, about thirty miles up the valley from Benton, that they were supposed to be Sioux, and that the farmers in the immediate vicinity were alarmed for their safety and had to cease work. The Commandant at this post, though willing to ascertain the exact condition of affairs and relieve the anxiety of the farmers, was obliged to turn a deaf ear to the request that he would send out some troops to disperse the Indians, on account of the limited number at his command. At the beginning of the Sioux raid this season the first attack was made in this vicinity. Fortunately a company of cavalry had been stationed for a short time on the Teton and their presence turned the Sioux from their course. Now that the cavalry has gone to where they can be of little service and the garrison at this place being in a depleted condition the most disastrous results may be in store for us. We are not alarmists. We fully comprehend the situation, which is by no means favorable to the speedy settlement of this County or Territory, and for this reason we ask that proper military protection be afforded.