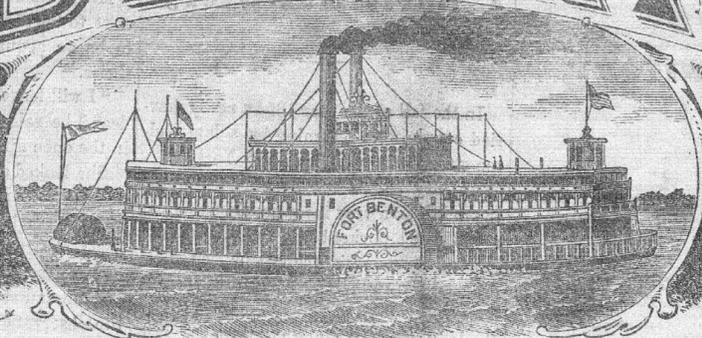


Historical Society

# FORT BENTON RECORD



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### UNFAIR APPORTIONMENT.

A correspondent invites our attention to the seeming unfairness of the apportionment of Representatives to the Ninth Legislative Assembly of Montana. It is very gratifying indeed to find that a strong and general desire exists among our people to have the exact standing of the County known, and its just claims properly recognized. And it is the same to us whether this feeling is the result of local rivalry produced by zealous advocates for their rights and privileges as defined by law, or whether it springs from a desire to see the laws so regulated or revised that the just dues of this or any other county cannot be neglected or abused by improper legislation. In either case it proves a warm interest in the political affairs of the Territory, it shows a healthy status, which we regard as a favorable omen of the future of the country.

Glancing over the list of Representatives to the House and Council, it certainly appears that some counties are by no means represented in the manner provided for by law, but a review of the law itself shows that the apportionment is properly made according to the provisions contained therein. At the eighth regular session of the Legislature held in 1874, a bill was passed regulating the apportionment and prescribing the time of election of members of the Assembly. As already provided for by the organic act, the act of 1874, sec. 2, says that "the Legislative Assembly of the Territory shall consist of thirteen members of the Council, and twenty-six members of the House of Representatives."

The members of the Council are apportioned as follows: Madison, one member; Madison and Beaverhead, jointly, one member; Deer Lodge, two members; Missoula, one member; Deer Lodge and Missoula, jointly, one member; Lewis and Clarke, three members; Jefferson, one member; Gallatin, one member; Jefferson and Gallatin, jointly, one member; Meagher and Choteau, jointly, one member. It will thus be seen that, outside of the Counties of Choteau and Meagher, independent of a fair representation in the Council an additional joint representation of three members is allowed to the Counties of Madison and Beaverhead, Deer Lodge and Missoula, and Jefferson and Gallatin, while the Counties of Choteau and Meagher have only joint representation.

The members of the House of Representatives are apportioned as follows: Madison, four members; Beaverhead, one member; Deer Lodge, five members; Missoula, three members; Lewis and Clarke, five members; Jefferson, two members; Gallatin, two members; Jefferson and Gallatin, jointly, one member; Meagher, one member; Choteau, one member.

While admitting that the apportionment is according to the provisions of the Statutes, we contend that a revision is necessary in order to place Choteau County upon a proper footing with other counties. The Organic Act provides that the apportionment shall be as nearly equal as possible, and shall be according to the number of qualified voters. As we understand it, the present apportionment is made up from the census of 1870. But six years have since elapsed, during which, Choteau County has emerged from comparative obscurity, her population has largely increased, many acres of her soil are settled and cultivated, her stock-raising and agricultural advantages have become an acknowledged source of unlimited wealth, and in the new era now dawning upon the commercial history of the country she can have no insignificant place, as she holds the key to the natural transportation highway of the Territory. All things considered common justice demands that Choteau County should have a proportionate voice in the Legislature of the Territory. It would not require a great effort to lay the matter in its true light before the present Legislature; and once our position is properly understood, and that slight tinge of local jealousy removed by the fact of our growing prosperity, in which to an extent all other localities are interested, the very evident fact that we are entitled to a more ample representation would be readily and practically acknowledged. We invite the attention of our worthy Representative to this matter, trusting that it will receive from him the consideration it certainly merits.

### THE INDIAN PROBLEM.

It cannot be other than a matter of astonishment to the people who inhabit the vast frontier settlements of the United States to view the manner in which the Indian problem is handled and attempted to be solved by the would be experts in Indian affairs, in the East. The ideas entertained by these experts seem more surprising just now than at any other time in view of the record of the past year, and the reports of the several district and division army commanders. Various are the reasons assigned for the hostile condition of the several tribes of Indians. Gen. Pope, in his report, deals with the cause of Indian hostilities as follows: "Whatever may have given rise to previous outbreaks, it cannot be claimed that the difficulties during the past season have been occasioned by the intrusion of the white men upon any right or privilege of the Indian.— The real cause, in my opinion, arises from the fact that several thousand wild savages are gathered and placed on remote reservations under no other control, restraint, or influence, than that exercised by one of the worst features of the same, without ever having an opportunity of seeing or knowing any of the more elevating influences that govern civilized people. Another and still stronger reason for disaffection, one that will demoralize any people, and which tends to create disaffection and arouse their turbulent spirits is the fact that the provisions given them are insufficient to satisfy their wants. They have been for weeks without the bread ration, and a year's allowance of food is exhausted in six or seven months. As these powerful tribes have been thoroughly subjected, and are now humble suppliants, the remedy is as simple as it is apparent to every one acquainted with the subject. Disarmed and dismounted, and kept so, they should be placed under some government

strong and just enough to command their respect. Their thousands of ponies, useful, only for war or the chase, should be sold, and the proceeds returned to them in domestic stock. Whenever anything like the above has been tried it has been eminently successful, and a marked instance of this is the powerful and now prosperous tribe of Navajos of New Mexico, while the strong, industrious, but degenerating tribe of Cheyennes prove the folly of the fruitless experiments and vacillatory policy that has governed them for the past twenty years."

The government which alone can suffice to restrain the Indian and enforce respect is the army. The transfer of the Indian affairs to the military is advocated by every one having any idea of the present condition of the Indian, and what it might be under a different rule from that which has occasioned it. Gen. Schofield, in advocating the transfer of the Indian Bureau to the War Department as a necessity of the public service, says:

"The events of the past five years have demonstrated the utter inability of a civil department of the Government to maintain the necessary control over uncivilized Indians. The effort to control through civil agents while at peace on their reservations, and then turn them over to the army when they leave their reservations or commit acts of hostility has proved, as might have been expected, a most efficient mode of producing war. The officers of the army are compelled to stand idly by, powerless for good, while their promises to the Indians made at the termination of hostilities are being violated, and the dictates of wisdom, justice, and even common honesty disregarded; in the daily treatment of the helpless savage, who has no possible means of redress but escape from a reservation when his life is made intolerable. Then the army is called upon to pursue the Indians, and force them back upon their reservations, and punish them for disobedience. Thus a war is inaugurated which could not have happened if the Indians had been under military control. No class of citizens is more desirous of peace with the Indians than the officers of the army. There is no glory to be won in savage warfare, and when to this feeling is added the conviction that the Indians have been driven to war by injustice and outrage, the indignation

felt by honorable soldiers can easily be imagined. The present system places the question of war or peace in our remote Territories absolutely under the control of irresponsible civil agents, while the army officers, who must fight the battles, are powerless to avert the unnecessary evil. However distasteful the duties of Indian agents may be, the officers of the army would gladly perform them, as the practical remedy for the existing evil. The proposed change could not but result in a great saving of expense to the country."

Among the bills presented at the opening of Congress we notice one by Steele, of Wyoming, providing for the election of the Governor and Territorial officers by the people. While we are in no wise anxious to advocate any measure that would entail additional expense to the present scattered population of this Territory, we are nevertheless in favor of such a law. The fact of an additional election expense being added thereby would be offset by the advantages which certainly would follow were our Territorial officials more deeply interested in the future welfare of the country, as would naturally be the case were these officials elected by and from among the people. While we are at present to a very great extent favored by an energetic and friendly set of officials, under the rule which now regulates the appointment of the officers of the Territory the case may at any time be reversed. As in the States, so is it necessary in the Territories that in particular the Governor and his successor in office, in case of a sudden vacancy, should be thoroughly identified with the trade, or commerce of the country over which he assumes such important jurisdiction. We might go farther even and insist that this status is more requisite in the Territories than in the States.

From late advices we learn that the supply of grain for the Fort Shaw military post is being filled through public contract, at extremely disastrous results to the original unfortunate and grasping contractor. This should be a lesson to our Granger friends. It must certainly strengthen in their minds the truths of our advice to them concerning the folly of attempting to monopolize the contract markets of Montana. The time has not arrived, the country is not ripe for such an undertaking.