

The Woodruff Gun

Annotations to the Margreiter Article

Quincy, Illinois, Touted as Key to Union Control of the West

Official Records of the War of the Rebellion, Series I, Volume I, S. 1, Chapter VIII, pp. 677-678.

Correspondence and Orders Relating to Events in Arkansas, the Indian Territory, and Missouri from February 7 to May 9, 1861.

Union Correspondence, Etc.

Letter from Erastus Corning to Secretary of War Simon Cameron, 1 May 1861:

commissary and quartermaster at Saint Louis, Mo. Please give orders to have these drafts met.

The distance from Omaha to Marengo, where the railroad terminates, is one hundred and seventy-five miles, and which ought to be marched in eight days. The hire of the wagons will be from \$3.50 to \$4 per day.

On descending the Missouri the captain of the steamer received a dispatch from the owner or agent of the line at Brownsville that the military at Saint Joe consisted of a battery of four cannon and about two hundred armed infantry; that if I attempted to pass Saint Joe I would be fired on and the boat injured; that he must land the troops at Belmont, five miles above, and I could march four miles to Palermo, nine miles below Saint Joe. I determined to do so to save the boat, but on arriving at Belmont an express arrived from the agent that "the Missouri troops had relinquished the idea of attacking me, and that I would be permitted to pass unmolested," which I did without any demonstration whatever, having my men formed, muskets loaded, bayonets fixed, ready for any emergency.

On my arrival at this post I found Captain Steele, Second Dragoons, had taken into service parts of three volunteer companies from Leavenworth City, under Captains McCook, Cozzens, and Clayton, numbering one hundred and twenty, rank and file. These troops I shall discharge to-day, believing my force at present sufficient to guard the public property at this post against any rabble or detached secessionists formed or forming in this vicinity.

I am, colonel, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

D. S. MILES,

Colonel Second Infantry, Commanding.

ALBANY, May 1, 1861.

Hon. SIMON CAMERON, *Secretary of War*:

DEAR SIR: I wish to call your attention to certain matters connected with the affairs of the State of Missouri, and particularly as regards the arsenal at Saint Louis.

1st. There seems but very little doubt at the present time, particularly in Illinois, as regards the secession of the State of Missouri from the Union. The secession movement in Northern Missouri and along the line of the Hannibal and Saint Joseph Railroad is scarcely stronger in any Southern State.

2d. Judging from what has been done elsewhere by the various seceding States, one of the first acts of secession by Missouri would be the seizure of the Hannibal and Saint Joseph Railroad, the interruption, if not the entire suppression, of Government and free State transportation and travel over it, and, if the contest continues, in the entire confiscation of the road and its property, as far as concerns Northern and Eastern interests.

3d. I also think that it is of vital importance to the Government that the Hannibal and Saint Joseph Railroad be preserved to its owners, and that its free and uninterrupted use be maintained at all times and at all hazards. It furnishes the only accessible and speedy route by which the Government can communicate with Kansas, Nebraska, and Utah, or with its military posts along the Western and Northwestern frontier to the foot of the Rocky Mountains, and, if allowed to fall into and remain in the hands of an enemy, it is easy to see how difficult and well-nigh impossible in such an emergency it would be for the Government to pre-

serve its Western Territories and military posts, for the danger to which they would be exposed would indeed be serious, and they could only be supported at immense expense and loss both of time and of means.

4th. Quincy, in Illinois, which from the course of the Mississippi River projects into the Missouri at a distance of sixty-five miles west of Saint Louis, presents immense advantages as a military post, and as such should be occupied by the Government. By merely looking at the map you can see what an important position is Quincy. It is the key to Northern Missouri, Kansas, Utah, Nebraska, California, and Oregon. Missouri once against the Federal Government, the only present feasible and expeditious road by which troops, munitions, provisions, transportation, and general travel can pass is the Hannibal and Saint Joseph Railroad, over Northern Missouri, between those Western sections and the country east of the Mississippi River. The forces to be placed at Quincy should be placed there at once, to keep open the communication by way of the Hannibal and Saint Joseph Railroad.

5th. To further strengthen the Government position at Quincy as a key to the Western section, I should strongly urge the removal of the arsenal now at Saint Louis to Quincy. The disadvantages of the present locality are manifest. Situated in what may soon be a disaffected country, it is at any moment liable to attack, and even at the present moment has been threatened. Saint Louis in itself commands nothing—is in reality a key to nothing. The site of the arsenal is disadvantageous, as it can readily be commanded from adjacent heights, and its original location was probably on account of its vicinity to a large city, whence supplies could easily be obtained. The present difficulties show that such a vicinity for Federal property only renders more liable to attack. As to the supplies, they are in a great degree derived from Illinois, and not a small part of them from that part of Illinois which finds its outlets at Quincy.

At Quincy, with its eighteen thousand inhabitants, and to which one of the finest sections of the Western country is tributary, an arsenal could be furnished in all abundance, and cheaper than at Saint Louis. But the great public commendation for the establishment of an arsenal there is that it could and should be made an all-important auxiliary in securing the command of this very much needed and useful key to our Western communication. The facilities possessed by the Hannibal and Saint Joseph Railroad for the transportation of munitions of war, troops, &c., are very great, and the speed and easiness of communication by that route with the Western posts cannot be too much valued. I would strongly urge upon you the necessity of your immediate attention to this matter, as I deem the change of the arsenal from Saint Louis to Quincy and the protection and preservation of the Hannibal and Saint Joseph Railroad as of immense importance to the country.

I remain, yours, very truly,

ERASTUS CORNING.

WASHINGTON, *May 2, 1861.*

Hon. SECRETARY OF WAR:

SIR: Mr. J. L. Bittinger, recently appointed postmaster at Saint Joseph, Mo., arrived here yesterday, and gave me information in regard to secession movements in that State, which I take the liberty of conveying to you.

He states that while descending the Missouri River he met with a Mr. Jeff. Thompson, who informed him, not supposing that he was in favor

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