

MEMORIAL

OF THE PORT TOWNSEND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

—ON THE SUBJECT OF—

COAST DEFENSES.

To the Senators and Members of the House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled:

Your memorialists would most respectfully represent as follows:

Deeming it a vital necessity that some pronounced action should be taken by the Congress of the United States now in session to provide for the protection of life and property upon the shores of Puget Sound, in the State of Washington, in the event of hostilities with any foreign country, the Chamber of Commerce of the City of Port Townsend at its regular meeting November 25th, 1891, appointed a committee, whose members have attached their signatures hereto as your memorialists, to present before Congress facts showing why the immediate necessity exists.

At present this great body of water is unprotected either by land fortifications or by the presence of armored vessels, and a hostile fleet would find an open, unobstructed course from the ocean to the very heart of the State, and available means of access to the great storehouses of the country. At the same time there is no body of salt water of like extent on the shores of the United States that may be protected with such ease and such small expenditure of the public funds.

The subject of fortifications at the entrance to Puget Sound has been under consideration by the War Department, and there is no question but that the work will be undertaken at no very distant day. It is urged, however, that because of the magnitude of the interests to be conserved and now wholly defenseless, and because of the comparatively small cost of the work, it would be the embodiment of wisdom to provide protection at this point at the earliest practicable moment.

Bold headlands at the points favored by army officers and by the War Department as the sites of fortifications at the entrance to Puget Sound are now held entirely or in part by the government as military reservations. These sites are on Point Wilson, Admiralty Head and Marrowstone Point, each being in the angle of a triangle almost exactly equilateral with sides about three and one-half miles in length. An imaginary line drawn from Point Wilson to Admiralty Head is the boundary line between Puget Sound and the Strait of Fuca, and a line nearly three miles long drawn perpendicular to this line at its center intersects Marrowstone Point. Every vessel that enters the waters of Puget Sound must pass these three points, except craft of light draft which might venture the hazardous run through Deception Pass, a waterway that may be protected absolutely by torpedoes and which no war vessel would enter, not only because of the dangerous current, but also because it leads into only shallow water.

It would be impossible to protect the entrance to Puget Sound with torpedoes because of the depth of water. According to the soundings marked on Chart No. 684 of the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey, denominated the "Sea Coast and Interior Harbors of Washington," the depth of water between Point Wilson and Admiralty Head ranges from twenty-four to forty-four fathoms, and between Admiralty Head and Marrowstone Point, from twenty to sixty-one fathoms. Protection can be afforded only by fortifications, and with fair provision

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in this way, Puget Sound would need neither water batteries nor the presence of a fleet of men-of-war, for the vessel cannot be constructed which could successfully run the gauntlet of the cross-fire from Point Wilson and Admiralty Head and the certain head-fire from Marrowstone Point.

Economy demands the construction of land defenses, for the cost of a fleet of armored vessels sufficient to protect the entrance to Puget Sound would exceed many times the cost of the most ample fortifications on the headlands named, and the cost of maintaining defending forces would vary in the same proportion.

That this land may for all time be free from the horrors of international strife is the hope of its citizens, but that peace shall forever reign is beyond the bounds of probability, and it is the policy of enlightened nations to prepare for war in time of peace. It cannot be foreseen what international difficulties may arise to be settled only by force of arms, nor can it be foretold which of the nations of the earth will be the first to give or accept the gage of battle with the United States. But in case of hostilities, the Pacific Coast would be the first point of attack because of its defenseless condition. And if the Pacific Coast is attacked Puget Sound would be the first objective point as certain defenses exist in the harbor of San Francisco, and the channel of the Columbia river would be blockaded effectually within a short time. To a hostile fleet Puget Sound would have the double advantage of a waterway free from the slightest danger in navigation and of an unobstructed approach to inexhaustible supplies of food and fuel.

Friendly feelings between this country and Chile will not be firmly established for years. Diplomacy may lead to temporary quietude, but enmity will smoulder in the southern republic, possibly to break out at a time when this country shall be the least prepared to ward off calamity. A still greater danger may be apprehended in the direction of China. It has been openly asserted by intelligent men of that nation that if China felt sufficiently powerful to cope with the United States, measures of retaliation would be taken in return for the legislation of this country hostile to the immigration of Chinese. These men have asserted in the presence of your memorialists their belief that at some time in the future the Chinese will become an aggressive force in the world and that the United States will be one of the first points of attack. Should hostilities ever be inaugurated between these two nations, Puget Sound, being the nearest point of entrance, could be made the landing point of an almost countless army of Chinese. Not only probabilities but also possibilities are to be provided for in matters of this kind.

Within the point of fortification proposed and upon the shores of Puget Sound more than one-half of the wealth of the State of Washington is invested. The aggregate valuation of all real property in the State as fixed by the State Board of Equalization at its session of 1891, is \$266,867,742. Eight counties border upon the waters of Puget Sound within the proposed line of fortification. These are as follows together with their respective equalized valuations: Island, \$1,242,785; Jefferson, \$5,132,609; King, \$55,274,113; Kitsap, \$2,851,617; Mason, \$1,600,247; Pierce, \$53,333,658; Snohomish, \$7,710,018, and Thurston, \$9,955,906, or a total of \$137,100,953. These same counties have \$20,700,127 of the \$52,148,599 of assessable personal property in the State, and \$2,182,347 in assessed valuation of railroad track. These counties in addition to a number of rapidly growing towns contain the cities of Seattle, Tacoma, Port Townsend, Everett and Olympia, the last named being the capital of the State.

Several railroads have their terminals on Puget Sound within the proposed point of fortification. These roads are the Northern Pacific, the Great Northern, the Port Townsend Southern, the Seattle, Lake Shore & Eastern, the Columbia & Puget Sound, and several

other minor roads. The Canadian Pacific and the Union Pacific railroads also have connections to points within the line of defense. By means of these roads an invading force could easily

in this way. Fort Sumner would need neither water facilities nor the presence of a fleet of men of war for the vessel cannot be constructed which could successfully run the gauntlet of the cross fire from Fort Lytle, Wilcox and Abilene. It is the opinion of the American military authorities that

the most serious danger to the United States is the possibility of an invasion of the United States by the British. The British have a large fleet of ships and a large army and they are in a position to land troops in any part of the United States. The British have a large fleet of ships and a large army and they are in a position to land troops in any part of the United States.

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other minor roads. The Canadian Pacific and the Union Pacific railroads also have connections to points within the line of defense. By means of these roads an invading force could easily reach not only the interior of Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana, but could penetrate to the very center of the country before any material opposition could be placed in its way. Coast defenses at this particular point therefore become a matter of national importance.

There is now in course of construction in one of the inlets of Puget Sound within the proposed point of defense a government dry dock. A naval station and ship yards will probably at some time be established in connection with it. This plant, without fortifications, could be destroyed with ease by a hostile fleet.

The commerce of Puget Sound is a vast industry and is constantly on the increase. The following table of exports and imports for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1891, is taken from the records of the Customs House at Port Townsend :

		IMPORTS.		EXPORTS.
		Free.	Dutiable.	
July, 1890	.....	\$ 7,627.00	\$20,564.00	\$226,589
August, 1890	.....	21,597.00	31,855.00	300,451
September, 1890	.....	14,921.00	16,282.00	464,215
October, 1890	.....	2,597.00	10,160.00	487,543
November, 1890	.....	8,474.00	54,413.00	522,531
December, 1890	.....	1,048.00	7,820.00	503,329
January, 1891	.....	8,665.27	31,668.75	567,335
February, 1891	.....	12,121.00	34,160.50	607,253
March, 1891	.....	8,651.00	59,053.00	532,677
April, 1891	.....	6,383.00	17,317.00	438,496
May, 1891	.....	27,325.00	18,602.00	509,521
June, 1891	.....	9,747.00	26,061.80	561,237
Totals	.....	\$130,027.27	\$327,966.05	\$5,727,176

The following table of entrances and clearances of vessels under register for the same period is taken from the same records :

VESSELS ENTERED.									
		American vessels from foreign.		Foreign vessels from foreign.		American vessels from coastwise.		Foreign vessels from coastwise.	
		TON.	NO.	TON.	NO.	TON.	NO.	TON.	NO.
July, 1890	...	94,685	120	10,607	14	18,291	25	1,200	1
August, 1890	...	87,720	110	14,107	18	15,886	17		
September, 1890	...	76,400	99	15,368	16	16,823	24	857	1
October, 1890	...	81,025	100	7,650	8	14,562	22	1,802	1
November, 1890	...	82,259	105	10,102	11	11,178	17	1,637	2
December, 1890	...	81,031	105	7,602	7	16,770	21		
January, 1891	...	82,382	101	17,141	12	17,378	19		
February, 1891	...	71,277	103	3,278	6	24,652	28		
March, 1891	...	85,110	116	12,541	16	24,874	28		
April, 1891	...	74,227	112	11,705	22	20,582	24		
May, 1891	...	64,747	110	5,019	23	12,006	20		
June, 1891	...	72,013	116	12,565	20	27,178	26		
Totals	.....	942,804	1306	127,955	173	220,180	271	5,686	5

VESSELS CLEARED.							
		American vessels for foreign.		Foreign vessels for foreign.		American vessels for coastwise.	
		TONS.	NO.	TONS.	NO.	TONS.	NO.
July, 1890	...	80,344	111	6,594	12	16,148	23
August, 1890	...	97,744	110	9,943	12	12,716	24
September, 1890	...	78,499	104	13,010	16	12,222	16
October, 1890	...	83,609	117	14,052	15	12,564	13
November, 1890	...	86,881	116	15,952	16	13,498	17
December, 1890	...	87,834	114	10,302	10	8,360	10
January, 1891	...	86,837	112	13,528	10	14,495	17
February, 1891	...	84,023	110	12,562	11	15,752	18
March, 1891	...	81,088	118	10,164	14	16,201	21
April, 1891	...	82,926	120	10,286	15	8,568	19
May, 1891	...	81,359	135	10,459	24	4,356	13
June, 1891	...	102,896	126	14,335	20	22,646	21
Totals	.....	1,033,037	1402	140,817	175	157,526	212

Absolutely no protection is afforded the business represented in these tables.

other only a single. The Canadian Pacific and the Union Pacific railway of a large construction
to be built within the limit of 10 years. The names of these roads are interesting facts could easily
be found not only the history of the railway but also the names of the men who were instrumental in
the very origin of the railway. It is not only a matter of interest but also a matter of pride to
know that the Canadian Pacific railway is the longest railway in the world.

There is also a large railway in the United States which is the longest in the world. It is the
Great Northern railway. It is a very interesting fact that the Great Northern railway is the longest
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The Great Northern Railway	
Line	Miles
Great Northern	1,000
Canadian Pacific	900
Union Pacific	800
Great Western	700
Great Northern	600
Canadian Pacific	500
Union Pacific	400
Great Western	300
Great Northern	200
Canadian Pacific	100
Union Pacific	50
Great Western	25
Great Northern	10
Canadian Pacific	5
Union Pacific	2
Great Western	1

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The products and industries of Washington are now open to capture and devastation by an enemy. The wheat crop of the State for 1891, was in the neighborhood of 15,000,000 bushels. The hop crop of 1890 amounted to over 50,000 bales. Iron and precious metals abound. The amount of standing merchantable timber exceeds that of any other State in the Union. To an enemy the stores of spars and ship-building material are of inestimable value. Stock-raising and fruit-growing are among the important industries of the State, and a hostile fleet would have no trouble in securing abundant supplies of food. Most of these products seek their markets by way of Puget Sound and the granaries, flouring-mills and warehouses would be among the first objects of attack.

The fisheries of Puget Sound are extensive, and this body of water is the nearest of the harbors of the United States to the fishing, whaling and sealing grounds of the North Pacific ocean. In seeking to avoid the fleet of a nation engaged in war with this country fishermen naturally would seek the nearest haven, and unless Puget Sound was fortified they would be driven into a place from which there would be no chance for escape.

In case of hostilities and with the entrance to Puget Sound in command of the enemy, the entire Pacific Coast would be shut off from its source of coal supply. There are no coal measures in the States of California and Oregon, and a considerable proportion of the commerce of Puget Sound is in the shipment of the product of the mines of this State. Coal is mined in British Columbia, but in case of war, especially with Great Britain, this source would be unavailable. The area of the coal measures of Washington exceeds 1,000,000 acres. Twenty-four veins are now being worked. These cover an area of 16,000 acres, and in 1890 gave an output of 1,750,000 tons, which was probably increased in 1891 to 2,250,000 tons. Sixty other veins with an area of about 30,000 acres are in process of being opened, and will be producers in 1892. Ninety-five per cent. of the coal mined in Washington seeks an outlet to market on the shores of Puget Sound within the proposed point of defense, and this fact is the most imperative reason why fortifications should be established immediately. The coal supply of Puget Sound is a necessity for commercial, industrial and domestic uses throughout the length of the Pacific Coast; it is an absolute necessity for the vessels of the American navy that might be cruising on the coast or patrolling the waters of the North Pacific; it would likewise be an absolute necessity for the vessels of a hostile fleet whose supplies would be nearly exhausted by the time they had reached this coast. If there was no other reason, this alone makes it an incontrovertible certainty that Puget Sound would be the first point of attack on the Pacific Coast and with its waters and approaches in possession of an enemy, national disaster would follow, and any squadron of American vessels in the North Pacific deprived of its supply of fuel would fall an easy prey, being unable either to fight or run away.

The geographical situation of the waters of Puget Sound is such that the subject is of national importance, for they are contiguous to the shores of a foreign nation which maintains at Esquimalt, on Vancouver Island, one of its most important naval stations with powerful vessels capable of destroying within twenty-four hours everything of value from one end of the Sound to the other. It may be, also, that the interests of this country in Alaskan waters or territory will, at some time, need protection by aggressive force. If so, the waters of Puget Sound will be the natural base of operations, and without fortifications this base of operations would be a dangerous one.

In view of the facts set forth herein, your memorialists, on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce of Port Townsend and on behalf of the people and interests of the Pacific Coast, do earnestly and most respectfully urge upon Congress the existing necessities of the situation, and petition that an appropriation sufficient to allow the construction of fortifications on at least one of the sites named herein and favored by the War Department, be made at the present session.

And your memorialists will ever pray, etc.

Signed at Port Townsend this 18th day of December, 1891:

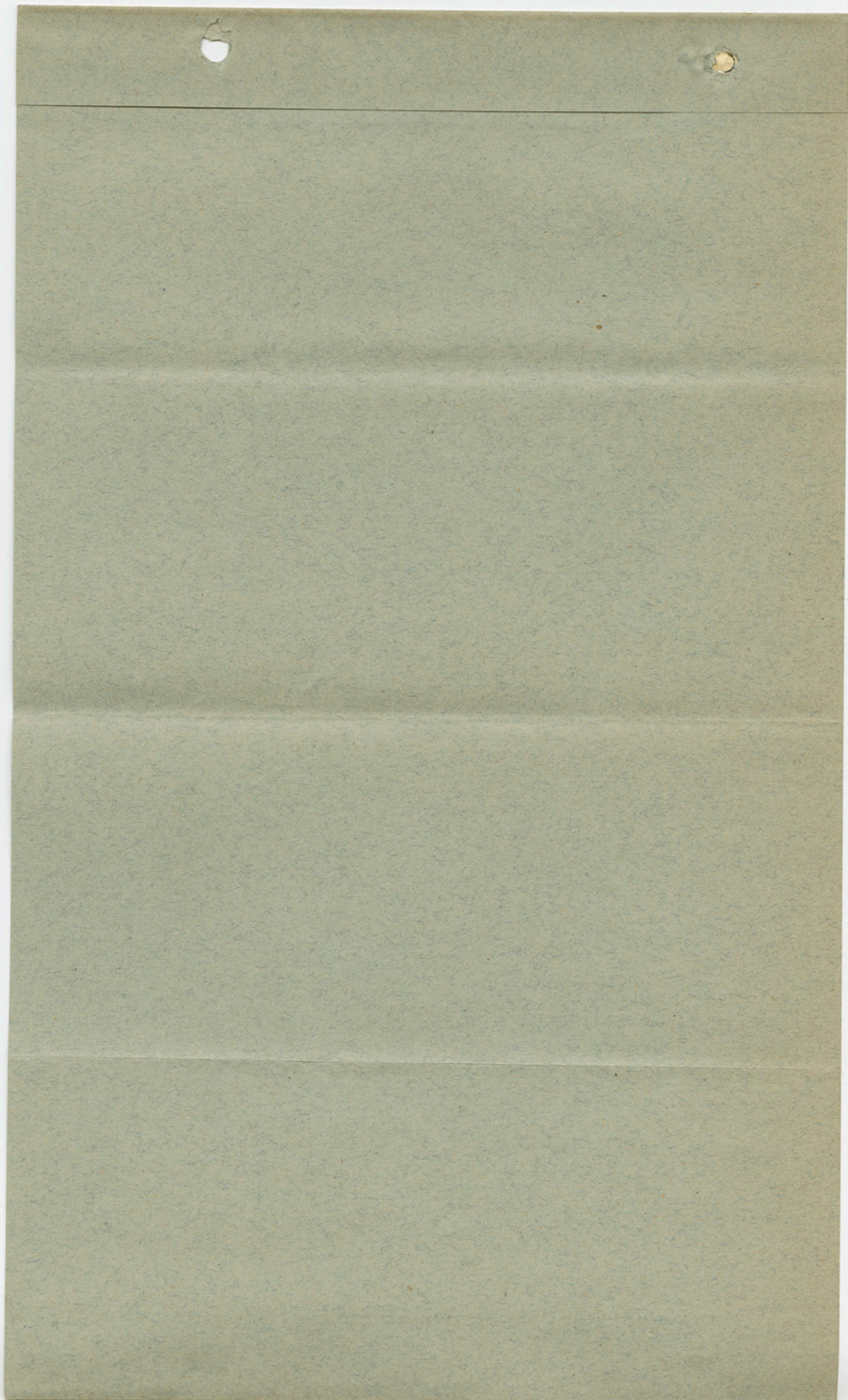
W. F. RUPERT, Chairman,

S. B. CONOVER,

W. A. KIMBALL, Lieut. 14th U. S. Inf.

J. H. STETSON,

J. A. PLUM, Secretary.



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