

PENITENTIARY BUILDINGS.

[To accompany bill H. R. No. 221.]

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LETTERS

FROM THE

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

IN RELATION TO

*The occupation of the penitentiary buildings in the District of Columbia  
as a place of storage for ammunition and other materials of war.*

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JANUARY 17, 1862 —Ordered to be printed.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
*January 14, 1862.*

SIR: I have made some inquiries in reference to the condition of the penitentiary of the State of Maryland, and, from such information as I have been able to obtain, I think arrangements cannot be made to transfer the prisoners of this District there. It is probable that such arrangements can be made with the penitentiaries of Pennsylvania or New Jersey. It might be well to contract with different institutions and divide the prisoners. It may be necessary to obtain authority from the legislatures of the States, which I presume can be readily obtained.

I send you, herewith, a draft of a bill which would effect the object. I have limited the cost to the United States per head for keeping the prisoners during the last year. It may be done for less, but I have not as yet been able to obtain such information as will enable me to decide that point.

The War Department is very urgent that the buildings shall be surrendered for the purposes of an arsenal, and insists that unless it is done new buildings, for that purpose, must be erected.

While the buildings are unfit for the purposes of a prison, they are well adapted to the storage of arms and ammunition, and, from their close proximity to the arsenal, they can be very advantageously used for that purpose; and I think the arrangement proposed can be made

with decided advantage to the government, to be continued until it shall be thought expedient to erect new and suitable buildings for a penitentiary.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,  
CALEB B. SMITH, *Secretary.*

Hon. CHARLES R. TRAIN,  
*Ch'n Com. Public Buildings and Grounds,*  
*House of Representatives.*

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ORDNANCE OFFICE,  
*Washington, January 6, 1862.*

SIR: The commanding officer of the Washington arsenal has, on several occasions, represented the insufficiency of the storage room at that place. The absolute necessity of keeping on hand large supplies of ammunition and other materials of war requiring careful storage and shelter, calls urgently for the adoption of some measure to secure, at least, the temporary use of additional buildings adjacent to the arsenal. By far the most, if not the only, convenient and suitable building for the purpose, is that now used as a penitentiary, and situated within the limits of the arsenal grounds. It is suggested that other arrangements for taking care of the convicts may be made of a temporary, or probably to greater advantage, of a permanent character, whereby the penitentiary may be made available for arsenal purposes.

In view of the present importance of the matter, I respectfully call attention to this suggestion, with the recommendation that measures be taken for an examination of the subject in the proper quarter, and the adoption of such measures, either legislative or executive, as may be considered best to attain early action in the case.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JAS. W. RIPLEY,  
*Brigadier General.*

Hon. SIMON CAMERON,  
*Secretary of War.*

[Indorsed]

Respectfully referred to the honorable the Secretary of the Interior Could not the prisoners be transferred, for the present, to the Maryland penitentiary at Baltimore?

SIMON CAMERON,  
*Secretary of War.*

WAR DEPARTMENT, *January 6, 1862.*

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
January 8, 1862.

SIR: I enclose herewith copies of letters from General Ripley, chief of the Ordnance department, and from the Secretary of War, in reference to the occupation of the penitentiary buildings as a place of storage for ammunition and other materials of war.

As this department does not possess the power to transfer the prisoners, as suggested, I present the subject for your consideration, with a view to invite such legislation as may be necessary to effect the object, if it shall be deemed proper to comply with the request of the War Department.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

CALEB B. SMITH,  
*Secretary.*

Hon. CHARLES R. TRAIN,  
*Chairman of Committee on Public Buildings,  
House of Representatives.*

