

GRANTING HOMESTEADERS RIGHT TO PURCHASE LAND ON CERTAIN RESERVATIONS, ETC.

APRIL 10, 1902.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

Mr. MONDELL, from the Committee on the Public Lands, submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany S. 3908.]

The Committee on the Public Lands, to whom was referred the bill (S. 3908) granting homesteaders on the abandoned Fort Bridger, Fort Sanders, and Fort Laramie military reservations, in Wyoming, the right to purchase one quarter section of public land on said reservation as pasture or grazing land, make the following report:

The reservations named in this bill were opened to homestead entry by the act of July 10, 1890, except the Fort Bridger Reservation, which was opened to entry under the act of August 23, 1894.

The Fort Sanders Reservation originally contained 19,428 acres, of which 5,028 are still vacant public land.

The Fort Bridger Reservation originally contained 10,941 acres, of which 4,881 acres are at this time vacant public land.

The Fort Laramie Reservation originally contained 33,405 acres, of which 25,107 acres are still vacant public land.

These reservations having been subject to entry only under the provisions of the homestead law for from eight to twelve years past, all of the lands which are irrigable and of value for agricultural purposes have been entered, leaving only the comparatively valueless grazing lands undisposed of. Had the general land laws of the United States other than the homestead law been operative on these reservations, settlers could have obtained, in addition to their homesteads, other tracts which would be used for pasturage purposes, but this they have been unable to do under the circumstances.

It is proposed by this bill to give homesteaders and resident owners of lands on these reservations the opportunity to purchase from the Government tracts of not to exceed 160 acres for each such settler or resident, unfitted for cultivation and homestead entry, as pasture or grazing land, at \$1.25 per acre. The bill provides that said purchase

of pasture or grazing land shall not, with the land heretofore entered, exceed in the aggregate 320 acres to one owner.

The lands which it is proposed to sell to the settlers and residents on these reservations, and which must be unfitted for cultivation or homestead entry, are of the ordinary character of arid grazing lands, largely rough and broken, and would not be worth the price fixed in the bill to anyone but settlers in the vicinity, who can use them for pasturing their stock, and the Government is making a most excellent sale if they can be disposed of under the terms of the bill.

The committee saw fit to amend the bill by bringing within its provisions the abandoned Fort Laramie Wood Reservation in Wyoming, which contains 39,680 acres. This reservation has recently been surveyed; and not having yet been opened to entry, the bill was amended so as to extend the homestead laws to this reservation as well as the other provisions of the bill. This reservation is, with the exception of a few small valleys, rough, hilly, or mountainous. It was thought best to amend the bill so that it would apply to future homestead entrymen, as well as those who had already exercised that right, and that it should be required that any landowner who purchased under the provisions of the act should also be a resident.

A bill containing practically the same provisions as contained in this act, and which related to the abandoned Fort Fetterman Reservation in Wyoming, was passed by the Fifty-sixth Congress and has operated successfully and advantageously.

It is recommended that the bill be amended as follows:

On line 3, page 1, strike out the word "exercised" and insert in lieu thereof the words "or may hereafter exercise."

In line 6, page 1, after the word "reservations," insert "or the abandoned Fort Laramie Wood Reservation, to which the homestead laws are hereby extended."

In line 6, page 1, strike out the word "now."

In line 8, page 1, after the word "is," insert the words "a resident and."

Amend the title by adding after the word "reservations," in line 2 of the title, the words "and Fort Laramie Wood Reservation;" and by adding to the title the words "and for other purposes."

As amended it is recommended that the bill do pass.