

69TH CONGRESS }
1st Session }

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

{ REPORT
No. 680

TOURIST CAMP, EAST POTOMAC PARK, WASHINGTON,
D. C.

MARCH 27, 1926.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the
state of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. ELLIOTT, from the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds,
submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. J. Res. 174]

The Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, to which was referred the joint resolution (H. J. Res. 174) providing that no permanent building shall be erected in East Potomac Park solely for tourist-camp purposes pending the selection of a more suitable site, having duly considered the same, hereby make report of it to the House with the recommendation that the joint resolution do pass.

The District of Columbia appropriation act for the fiscal year 1926 appropriated \$50,000 "For continuing construction of tourists' camp on its present site in East Potomac Park," which sum, as set forth in the hearings held before the Appropriations Committee, is to be expended in the construction of a permanent building on the said site. The enactment of this legislation would prohibit the erection of such a building solely for tourist camp purposes, and a majority of your committee were of the opinion that it is not advisable to expend \$50,000 in the development of a permanent tourist camp, especially in view of the fact, as developed in the hearings, that it will probably be necessary in a few years to remove the camp from its present location.

The Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital has recommended the passage of H. J. Res. 174. His report thereon, which contains a full explanation of the entire proposition and sets forth reasons why no permanent camp should be established in its present location, is as follows:

OFFICE OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND PUBLIC PARKS
OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL,

March 1, 1926.

Hon. R. N. ELLIOTT,

Chairman Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds,
House of Representatives.

MY DEAR MR. ELLIOTT: In reply to your inquiry of February 19, 1926, relative to H. J. Res. 174, it is my recommendation that this joint resolution

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be acted on favorably. It is intended to stop the construction of a permanent building for the automobile tourist camp in its present location in East Potomac Park.

The District of Columbia appropriation act for the fiscal year 1926 carried an item under the heading "Improvement and care of public grounds" of \$50,000 "For continuing construction of tourists' camp on its present site in East Potomac Park." It was understood at the hearings held before the Appropriations Committee that the greater part of this sum would be expended for a permanent building having rest room, sitting room, store, and general community facilities for the tourists using the tourist camp. At the time it was known by the committee that the use of the camp site for general athletic purposes had been suggested and that there was considerable opposition to the permanent location of a tourist camp there, largely for esthetic reasons. In spite of this known opposition, the appropriation was reported on favorably and passed. Under the circumstances, I considered it the duty of this office to carry out the program of construction as intended at that time. The plans for the building have accordingly been completed, approved by the Fine Arts Commission, in compliance with existing law, and proposals will be invited for its construction by contract in the next two or three weeks.

There are good reasons for not making East Potomac Park permanently a large automobile tourist camp. First, such a camp is necessarily unsightly, and lying as it does on the main railroad entrance to the city from the South, it must make a disagreeable impression on many visitors to the Capital, as well as threatening the possibility of making East Potomac Park a much less agreeable driving and breathing space in summer for the enjoyment of the people of Washington. Second, the tourist traffic is increasing very rapidly and it will be but a few years when the requirements of the automobile tourists will be seriously encroaching on the adjacent recreational facilities. Third, as the city increases in population the demands for additional space for sports, such as baseball, football, swimming, golf, etc., is increasing, and East Potomac Park offers one of the few sites capable of development for those sports requiring a considerable amount of space. Finally, while the location is convenient enough for tourists coming in from the South, it is difficult to find and relatively inaccessible for tourists coming from the North and East.

However, a practical solution must immediately be found to the problem arising from the coming to Washington each season of a large number of tourists from all over the country. These tourists are many of them persons of considerable education and having a real patriotic interest in the Capital of their country; as such they are entitled to find reasonably good accommodations here, available at a price at least not higher than that for which similar facilities can be obtained in other cities. It must also be borne in mind that a tourist camp is necessarily somewhat unsightly, and wherever located will be thought objectionable by some of the inhabitants of the vicinity.

East Potomac Park is admirably located for the tourists because of its vicinity to the Government buildings and points of interest, because the topographic conditions are such as to make the camp easily controlled and policed and its distance from neighboring houses and private property prevent the tourists from being an annoyance to any local residents. Efforts made in the past to obtain another suitable site have been unsuccessful, and for the present, and at least a few years, this site is the only one that can be available for the automobile tourists reaching the city.

The ideal solution of the whole problem would be the location of a small tourist camp on each of the main highways leading into Washington, it being kept in mind that this location might have to be changed every 10 years or so to make way for the regular development of the city. For the present the location in East Potomac Park appears to be reasonably suitable and a good practical solution for the problem as far as concerns tourists coming from the South. It should not be allowed to grow at this site, but provision should be made to locate suitable sites for camps on the roads coming from the North and East. Relieved of the traffic from along those roads, the tourist camp in East Potomac Park might remain there for a period of perhaps 10 years more, after which it would probably be necessary to remove it to a more distant point.

Should the foregoing opinion be concurred in by your committee and the proposed joint resolution passed by Congress, this office would complete the improvement of bathing and washing facilities now in progress in East Potomac Park, and continue improvement in the way of bettering the roads and planting trees, etc., and would do over the present building, which can not stay in its

present condition for long. This building is an old wooden temporary war-time garage and is in very bad condition at the present time. It is thought that it could be fixed up to meet the situation temporarily at an expenditure very much less, of course, than the construction of the new building proposed. It is expected that the abandonment of the permanent building would permit a greater expenditure for roads and planting in the camp than was anticipated, which expenditures would be conducive to the comfort and convenience of the tourists. There would probably be a balance of about \$15,000 that could be turned into the Treasury at the end of the fiscal year.

Plans of the proposed permanent building are inclosed for your information. If this building were built for the tourist camp, it would have to receive considerable alterations for use as a field house for sports, should the tourist camp eventually be moved away from this location.

Recognizing the necessity for removing the tourist camp from this site in the course of between 5 and 10 years and the objection that would arise to such a move had too large an investment been made for the tourist camp purpose, I recommend that the joint resolution be approved by your committee.

I have held this matter a few days to obtain a report from our informal planning committee, made up of representatives from various executive offices of the District. This committee concurs in and indorses the foregoing statements and recommendation.

Yours very truly,

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U. S. GRANT, 3d, Director.

MINORITY VIEWS

The adoption of the pending resolution means that improvement in camp facilities in the District of Columbia for automobile tourists shall be indefinitely postponed. After several years of controversy on this question no other site is recommended. It will be many years before any site will be selected and improved. In the meantime the present site will continue at a standstill as to improvements, lacking the facilities that should be available in the National Capital for automobile tourists, and presenting an unnecessarily objectionable appearance through continuance of unattractive buildings.

The only automobile camp for tourists in the District of Columbia is the one located just east of the railroad embankment in East Potomac Park. Until the 1926 District of Columbia appropriation bill, only negligible appropriations had been made for the development and maintenance of this camp. Through those appropriations and through fees and revenues derived from patrons of the camp considerable progress had been made and the patronage of the camp has constantly increased. During the calendar year 1925, 71,484 persons, not including children under 14 years of age, made use of the camp. Through maintenance of this camp, many thousand persons from all parts of the United States were enabled to spend time in Washington that would permit them to enjoy their National Capital who could not otherwise have done so. In this connection Colonel Sherrill, then in charge of Public Buildings and Grounds, said before the subcommittee on appropriations for the District of Columbia, January 5, 1925:

* * * There is nothing that will be more valuable to the National Capital than an up-to-date model tourist camp, because it would encourage the people to come to Washington to see the National Capital and get acquainted with it. It would encourage people to come who could not come otherwise. For instance, a mail carrier from Kansas City, who used to deliver mail to my family, came up here with his wife and four children. As soon as he found that I was connected with it, he came to see me, and he said that they could never have remained here under any other conditions nor have seen the Nation's Capital. They are a very decent, respectable sort of people, but of limited means, and they can not expend the money to see the Capital in any other way.

Because of the lack of desirable facilities for these visitors in this camp and the importance of having the camp as presentable in appearance as possible, Congress in the appropriation bill for the District of Columbia for the current year appropriated "for continuing construction of the tourist camp on its present site in East Potomac Park, \$50,000." This appropriation was based upon the following statement by Colonel Sherrill at that time before that committee:

* * * The big building that we have there is an old garage; it is an awfully ugly thing, but it will last for several years. The smaller building is an equally unattractive one, and very fragile, and that will only last probably three or four years. So, to replace those two buildings alone with permanent buildings and complete the necessary grading, plant the necessary trees, etc., would cost, I should say, \$50,000.

At the same time Colonel Sherrill stated to the committee that the establishment and development of a camp with equal facilities elsewhere would cost \$50,000 more than the development of the existing camp.

The point at issue now is the use of \$40,000 of this appropriation for construction of the needed central building to take the place of the big buildings there now, an old garage, called by Colonel Sherrill "an awfully ugly thing." The old garage naturally has none of the appointments and accommodations required. It offers no facilities or comfort to the visitors and the camp. Passage by Congress of the pending resolution stops the construction of the central building.

Before the subcommittee on appropriations for the District of Columbia in connection with the bill for the next fiscal year, Maj. U. S. Grant, who has succeeded Colonel Sherrill as director of the office of Public Buildings and Public Parks, stated that the plans of his office for that building contemplate a structure of hollow tile or brick to be covered with cement or stucco finish and to look the same as the golf camp building that is there now, and that if later the use of that location as a tourist camp should be abandoned and the ground developed in baseball field, football fields, a possible cricket field, and uses of that kind, "that building could be changed around probably so that it could be used as dressing rooms and locker rooms for that purpose. It would not be exactly suited for such a purpose, because we have put in the tourist camp a wash room and facilities of that kind in another little building that is already there, because there is a good deal of activity of that kind and it would not be pleasant, perhaps, to mix it with what is a club room and sitting room for the tourists at night. The building would not be entirely suitable. It would have to be altered, but it could be altered undoubtedly for that purpose, to make it suitable for locker and field-house use," and further, that the building would be so located as not to interfere physically with use of that portion of East Potomac Park for such other purposes in the event the camp should be abandoned. In that event, the same \$2,000 now suggested for alterations in the interior of the present ugly structure would, when the time should come, suffice for the necessary changes in the proposed new structure.

With the constant increase in the number of visitors to the National Capitol, one or two other camps may later be required. No one urges that all of this patronage must be cared for in one mammoth camp. It is urged, however, that provision should be made as speedily as possible to give entirely desirable and satisfactory facilities to meet the present demand. That will be done within a few months if the appropriation made by Congress for the current year is not diverted by passage of the pending resolution. The pending resolution would not only prevent the construction of the central building in accordance with the original plans and the appropriation, but will indefinitely, if not permanently, postpone construction of a suitable tourist camp in keeping with the desire and wishes of local influential interests which do not and care not to understand the beneficial purposes of a tourist camp.

Washington profits immensely from the tourist traffic to the National Capital. It is always a liberal education for Americans to

visit their National Capital. The institutions, objects of interest, memorials and points in and around the Capital are naturally of great interest to all. Were it not for the automobile and the facilities of these tourist camps, travel, education, and enjoyment would be deprived to thousands and thousands of American citizens. Congress has set aside \$50,000 of the amount appropriated for District expenses to be used for the development of this tourist camp which would be enjoyed by visitors to the Capital coming from all parts of the country. The appropriation should be expended in accordance with its original purpose.

F. LA GUARDIA.
FRANK OLIVER.
CLIFTON A. WOODRUM.