REPORT OF COST FOR NATIONAL MILITARY PARK AT OR NEAR KANSAS CITY, MO.


JANUARY 4, 1926.—Referred to the Committee on Military Affairs and ordered to be printed, with report of the commission.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, December 19, 1925.

The Speaker House of Representatives.

Sir: In accordance with the provisions of an act, Public, No. 352, Sixty-eighth Congress (approved January 30, 1925) authorizing and directing the Secretary of War to investigate the feasibility and to ascertain and report the cost of establishing a national military park in and about Kansas City, Mo., commemorative of the Battle of Westport, October 23, 1864, I transmit herewith the report of the commission appointed by me under section 2 of the said act. The commission was composed of Mr. Alfred Zartman, past commander, Department of Missouri, Grand Army of the Republic; Mr. Archibald A. Pearson, commander of the Missouri Division, United Confederate Veterans; and Maj. C. C. Gee, Corps of Engineers, district engineer, Kansas City. The commission served without compensation, and, due to local assistance made available, its report was prepared and submitted without expense to the United States.
The commission's report, supported by various exhibits, accompanying papers, and correspondence, recommends the purchase by the United States of a 110-acre tract, known as the Kansas City Country Club site, for $600,000. The commission reports this site available for the time being at the quoted price, which the commission believes to be reasonable. The tract which, according to the commission, marks the decisive action of the Battle of Westport, is improved as a golf course, is well served by highways as well as municipal car lines, and, in the opinion of the commission, would require nothing further to convert it into a commemorative park. The site is described as located in the heart of valuable residential property and soon to be subdivided for sale into lots if not purchased under this proposal.

In addition to the recommended site, the commission reports upon another tract, called the Hagerman property, containing some 89 acres north of Swope Park and west of the Big Blue River. This land, which is reported as offered at $2,500 per acre, while suitable in the opinion of the commission to commemorate the preliminary events leading up to the Battle of Westport, is not sufficiently large to include the actual battle ground. The site is reported as practically undeveloped, and, in the opinion of the commission, would require a heavy expenditure to convert it into a suitable and accessible park.

In view of the above outlined recommendations of the commission, all of which are inclosed herewith and which, moreover, are understood and accepted as expressing the consensus of opinion of the proponents of the basic proposition under consideration, I am of the opinion that, should Congress so desire, it would be feasible to establish a national military park on the country club site of Kansas City at a cost of $600,000, commemorating the Battle of Westport and preserving for historical purposes the essential parts of the battle field.

Respectfully,

Dwight F. Davis,
Secretary of War.

REPORT OF MILITARY PARK COMMISSION

1. A commission of three members, viz, Mr. Alfred Zartman, Judge John B. Stone, Maj. Cleveland C. Gee, Corps of Engineers, was appointed by the Secretary of War to investigate and report on the feasibility of establishing a national military park in and about Kansas City, Mo., commemorative of the Battle of Westport, October 23, 1864. All in compliance with section 2, of H. R. 5417, Sixty-eighth Congress. Judge John B. Stone was later replaced by Mr. A. A. Pearson.

2. Due to the assistance rendered the commission by Mr. H. H. Crittenden and Mr. William N. Lewis of Kansas City, whose unfailing services are hereby acknowledged, the investigation has been carried out without expense to the United States. The maps and bound copy of official reports were furnished by these gentlemen without compensation.
3. The commission has gone over the ground covered by the operations of October 21 to October 23, 1864, with a view to gaining necessary insight into the topography and to be better able to interpret the official reports of these engagements. The inspection also covered the question of feasibility of various sites for location of a national park.

4. Careful study of official reports of the military leaders involved in the Battle of Westport and engagements preceding the final battle convince the commission that the decisive action, the action that determined the failure of General Price to carry out his complete mission, and the action that marked the change from successful advance to complete rout, was that engagement of October 23, just south of Brush Creek in the vicinity of what was at that time called Westport. This engagement raged for hours over the present location of the Kansas City Country Club and on the high ground to the east of the opposite side of Wornall Road.

5. The commission was immediately impressed with the advantages of the site now occupied by the Kansas City Country Club—covering approximately 110 acres. This site, now used for club and golf purposes, retains all of its natural beauty enhanced by the constant care given it in development of a golf course. In fact, it is a park in every sense of the word. It is located in the heart of the "country club district," the most beautiful and most exclusive residence section in greater Kansas City. The surrounding subdivisions are almost completely developed into fine streets and beautiful homes. Two street car lines run within a few blocks of the club. The attached photographs bring out the natural beauty of this site and emphasize the fact that nothing remains to be done to convert it into a commemorative park. To extend from this club site in any direction in order to cover a larger portion of the battle field is deemed impracticable on account of the development of all the surrounding land into beautiful and expensive homes. This club site lies along one side of Wornall Road, an improved boulevard developed from the old Line Road mentioned in several of the official accounts of the engagements.

6. The country club site is offered to the United States for park purposes at a price of $600,000. It is the understanding of the commission that it is the intention of the owners (Ward Estate) to develop this tract into home sites if the United States does not take it over for a park.

Exhibit A is submitted as a description of the country club site. Exhibit B is a statement with regard to cost of the tract.

7. One other tract presents itself as a possibility—the so-called Hagerman tract described and plotted in Exhibit C and offered at $2,500 per acre. (See Exhibit D.) This tract contains about 89 acres lying north of Swope Park and west of the Big Blue River. This site would be entirely suitable to commemorate the incidents leading up to the Battle of Westport but it is not sufficiently large to include the actual battle ground mentioned. This site is practically undeveloped and would require a very great expenditure to convert it into a suitable park. The section cut from the city map to indicate the location of the sites shows rather complete development of streets at the Hagerman site. This development is on paper only.
Such roads as exist are unimproved and in such condition as to be impassable for an automobile.

8. The commission is unanimous in indorsing the country club site for consideration for the following reasons:
   (a) It marks the site of the decisive battle of Price’s invasion—the Battle of Westport.
   (b) It is available for purchase.
   (c) It is already a park requiring no further beautifying.
   (d) It is readily accessible by boulevards or by street car.
   (e) The price asked is believed to be extremely reasonable. This price is approximately one-third the value of the tract if developed for home sites.

9. A supplementary letter drawn up and signed by General Pearson and Mr. Zartman, both Civil War veterans, is attached hereto. This letter is for the purpose of emphasizing other interesting phases of the question, not essential to this report, which deals primarily with the availability of site, feasibility of the project, and cost of acquisition.

10. The various exhibits, photographs, maps, etc., pertaining to this study are mailed under separate cover.

   A. A. PEARSON,
   ALFRED ZARTMAN.
   C. C. GEE,
   Major, Corps of Engineers, Secretary.

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Supplementary Reports

HEADQUARTERS MISSOURI DIVISION,
UNITED CONFEDERATE VETERANS,
Kansas City, Mo., July 20, 1925.

Hon. John W. Weeks,
Secretary of War,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir: I respectfully submit the following letter, additional to our committee’s joint report in connection with the feasibility and desirability of establishing a national military park in Kansas City, Mo., commemorative of the Battle of Westport, October 21, 22, 23, 1864.

LOCATION OF BATTLE

Under the leadership of Maj. C. C. Gee, United States Army district engineer, our chairman and secretary, we first located the area of ground covered in the three days’ fighting, which was quite extended. We then left our conveyances and walked on foot over several tracts of land, covering the major portion of the more prominent sections of the battle ground, and by this means we obtained a clear vision of the topography of the land.
Section lines, maps showing old roads used, with minute descriptions of officers engaged on each side, who lived within the environs of the battle ground, who had pointed out to their children and neighbors in the years following the war the places where heaviest fighting occurred, even the location of various divisions, brigades, and regiments.

LAST DAY'S FIGHTING, OCTOBER 23, 1864

It was on this memorable date the contending forces swept up and down over the Seth Ward farm and contiguous territory, as the brave soldiers on each side rushed forward in charges, only to be driven back and countercharges made; the battle hanging in the balance, as first one side and then the other seemed to have the ascendancy in holding that battle ground, "swept by shot, shell, and saber stroke," the soil fairly saturated with the life blood of some valiant soldier, whose soul found surcease from earthly strife, or the wounded wearers of the blue and gray, under skilled surgeons, who ministered to them, recognizing no difference, the old Wornall home, as a hospital, filled from each army.

ONE HUNDRED AND TEN ACRES OF SETH WARD FARM SELECTED

Reasons for selection: Because it is where the principal part and deciding events of the battle occurred; because there are no buildings on the ground except a substantial clubhouse; because it is bounded on the four sides by fine boulevards and magnificent homes with spacious, well-kept lawns; because it is on that great national highway, the Santa Fe Trail, where the thousands of auto tourists from the Eastern States can view it, en route to the Pacific coast section; because it is only 4 miles from Kansas City's famous Union Station and the $3,000,000 monument and memorial to our World War soldiers, many of whom were the sons and grandsons of the wearers of the blue and the gray, who fought at Westport; because here nature, on her part, has formed a beautiful park studded with stately forest trees, mute witnesses of a deadly conflict 61 years ago, that strengthened the Union; because fate has been kind in keeping this blue-grass park intact, free from the despoiler and commercial greed, owned by one set of heirs, in the form of a corporation; because it is a finished park already, the center of a large and imposing residential section, one of the most beautiful in the United States, having both a national and international reputation, "The Country Club district," comprising 3,000 acres, restricted as to value of residences erected thereon.

SENTIMENTAL REASONS FOR ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL PARK

Because it will please a vast population of eight large States, whose citizens were the soldiers on one side or the other of that battle, their children, descendants, relatives, and friends will thank Congress for establishing that park.
Four of the officers in the Westport battle attained national prominence as United States Senators from Kansas; opportunity knocked at John J. Ingall's door, Edmund G. Ross, Preston B. Plumb, and James Lane, all Senators. Another officer became Governor of Kansas, Samuel J. Crawford, the father of the wife of Senator Arthur Capper of Kansas. Missouri claimed four of the officers in that fight as governors, Sterling Price (Confederate commander in the Battle of Westport), Thomas C. Reynolds, Thomas T. Crittenden, and John S. Marmaduke; another officer became United States judge, serving 27 years, John F. Philips; and the dashing Cavalry general, Jo. O. Shelby, became United States marshal for the western district of Missouri; Gen. John B. Clark served in Congress several terms from Missouri, and thousands of others obtained prominence in useful lives.

In conclusion, two of the undersigned members of your commission, one the commander of all Confederate veterans for the State of Missouri, and the other representing the Grand Army of the Republic organization of Missouri, join in asking that you assist us in our efforts to cement our united country in stronger bonds of national fealty and patriotism by establishing a national military park to commemorate the Battle of Westport.

Respectfully yours,

ARCHIBALD A. PEARSON,
Commander of Missouri ex-Confederates.
ALFRED ZARTMAN,
Past Commander Department of Missouri,
Grand Army of the Republic.

KANSAS CITY, MO., December 2, 1925.

Hon. Dwight F. Davis,
Secretary of War,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir: Replying to your letter of October 19, 1925, relative to the report of the Westport Military Park Commission, I wish to say that I have interviewed the members of the commission and the proponents of the proposition advanced in our report concerning their desires in the way of suggesting alternatives to the establishment of a national park. The desire of these people is to allow the proposition to stand or fall on its merits. They do not desire to present any alternate suggestions, for reasons which follow.

A careful study of war records indicates that while the Battle of Westport may not have been a major engagement of the war, it was nevertheless of supreme importance to a large section of the country, representing as it did the critical culmination of Price's great Confederate invasion. This was a great battle judged by its effects as well as by the large number of troops engaged, representing as they did practically all the States of the Middle West, both north and south. The battle field is thus of great interest to a large section of the country.
A further reason for action at this time is that the recommended site will never again be available except at prohibitive expense. The Ward estate has served notice on the Kansas City Country Club to vacate the property. It is understood that it is proposed to divide this property up into lots suitable for home sites, provided it is not taken over by the Government.

The original report suggested an alternate site and gave reasons for not recommending that site.

The objection to the use of markers and monuments is that the battle was composed of a series of small preliminary engagements extending over a wide area and a final death grapple on the Country Club grounds. The markers would be so scattered as to be impossible of connection and they would fail to describe the battle properly. A great deal of confusion and argument would precede the determination of the preliminary engagements to be marked. On the other hand, the establishment of a park on the Country Club site could easily commemorate not only the final action but also the preliminary incidents of the battle. Any other solution of the problem would result in such a cheapening of the project as to make it preferable to drop the matter altogether.

Yours very respectfully,

C. C. Gee,
Major, Corps of Engineers,
Secretary Westport Military Park Commission.