

**FORTIFICATIONS.**

In a list of appropriations asked for by the Departments of War, to be expended the present year in the construction and repair of fortifications, which was drawn up by Col. Totten, Chief Engineer, on the 21st of November last, we find Fort Adams put down for \$80,000, - The sums requited for the fortifications on the whole Northern frontier and New England Coast, amount in the aggregate to \$463,521: viz:

Repairs of Fort Niagara, New York,	\$27,500
Rebuilding old fort at Oswego, N.Y.	20,000
Fort at the outlet of Lake Champlain, NY	50,000
repairs of Fort Preble, Portland, Maine	3,200
Repairs of Fort McClary, Portsmouth, New Hampshire	750
Repairs of Fort Constitution do. do	3,671
Repairs of Fort Independence, and the sea wall of Castle Island, Boston, Mass	100,000
Fort Warren, Boston, Massachusetts	150,000
Fort Adams, Newport, Rhode Island	80,000
Fortifications at New London, Conn.	25,000

The total amount required for all the works under the Engineer Department is \$1,198,872.

The Committee of Ways and Means in the House, desirous to curtail expenses as much as possible, addressed an inquiry to the Department on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March, asking whether a reduction of 20 or 25 per cent could not be submitted to.

Mr. Poinsett says in his reply -

"The estimates of this branch of the service, together with all others, were attentively considered by me, and very considerably reduced before they were sent to the Treasury.

My views of the urgent necessity of placing the principal ports of the maritima and lake frontiers in a respectable state of defense at an early day, would have led me, under any other circumstances, to have accepted the original estimate for fortifications; but yielding reluctantly to the emergency, I presented them as they now stand and hope that no other reductions will be made in them."

Mr. Ponsett also submitted the following Report from Col.

Trotten, in answer to the enquiry.

Engineer Department, March 7, 1840.

Sir -

In answer to the inquiry made by this Committee on Ways and Means, whether a reduction of twenty or twenty-five per cent. On the estimates submitted to Congress for fortifications, cannot be made without material injury to the public service and interests, I have the honor, in obedience to your directions, to report:

1<sup>st</sup>. That a great proportion of the items, in th estimates for fortifications, are for repairs that are now in progress, or that are designed to be immediately taken up.

The last annual from this office refers to the importance of placing, without delay, all the existing fortifications, that are to be retained as parts of the system of defense, in proper condition for service, and as the works requiring repair are numerous, those only were selected for repairs which were deemed most important, and only such repairs were comprised in the estimates as were deemed indispensable.

2<sup>nd</sup>. All the new fortifications in progress are designed for the security of the great points on the coast - points which would be certain to attract the enterprises of an enemy, should a war find them with incomplete defenses. Even with large appropriations some time must elapse before most of them can be put in condition to afford the full security demanded by the great value of the objects. In the meantime it is proposed that the labors, from year to year, shall, whenever it is possible, be so directed as to bring portions of the works progressively into a state of efficiency.

3<sup>rd</sup>. The new works proposed to be begun are among those of the first necessity; and the amounts asked for a beginning were put in th estimate as low as was thought could be done, with an expectation of any material progress.

Finally, This department will devote itself to the judicious application of the means, whatever they may be, that Congress may grant; and will take especial care that the means are so applied as to advance the efficiency of the fortifications to the utmost; but it is, at the same tim, bound to say, that, considering how much yet remains to be done before the more important places on the seaboard will be in a defensible condition, the suggested reduction cannot be made with material injury to the public service and

interest.

This is, however, on the supposition that the country is liable within a few years, and perhaps suddenly, to be engaged in war. If it be otherwise - if it can certainly be foreseen that long years of peace await us - then, the progress of the works may be more deliberate; but this department has no right to rest its estimates on any such view of the future.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your most obedient,

JOS. G. TROTTER.  
Colonel, and Chief Engineer.

Hon. J. R. Poinsett, Secretary of War.