

GOVERNMENT TO PURCHASE 16,663 ACRES ADJOINING LEON SPRINGS PROPERTY

Big Military Reservation to Be Almost Doubled in Size by Congressional Approval of War Department's Recommendation

PRICE WILL BE ABOUT \$19 AN ACRE

Land in Shape of Rectangle Along Blanco Road and Reaches Within Seven Miles of City. Accessible by Three Highways

Congressional approval for the purchase of 16,663 acres of land adjoining the Leon Springs military reservation is now virtually assured, according to news dispatches received Saturday from Washington. This project, first suggested by Col. Harry L. Rogers, now with the expeditionary forces in France, has been recommended by the War Department and is now before the appropriations committee of the House, which has indicated it will make an early and favorable report.

Work Through Chamber of Commerce.

With the acquisition of this land the Leon Springs military reservation will become one of the largest in the country and still further emphasizes San Antonio's importance in a military way. As was the case when the government recently leased 5000 acres to be used by military aviators at Camp Kelly, adjoining South San Antonio, the War Department operated directly through the San Antonio Chamber of Commerce. The options were obtained by W. B. Tuttle, representing the Chamber of Commerce and the National Council of Defense, and Capt. Henry Fink, United States Reserve Corps.

Average of \$19 an Acre to Be Paid.

The price to be paid for this land is \$316,941, or an average of about \$19 an acre. This is deemed an exceptionally low price considering the fact that much of it is either in cultivation now or could be utilized for farming purposes and some of it extends south to within seven miles of San Antonio. The land is declared to be ideal for military purposes for in addition to the tillable portions part of it is rugged. It comprises a number of small farms, has a railroad, the San Antonio & Arkansas Pass, running through it and possesses a number of deep wells, insuring ample water facilities.

Rogers Pointed Out Need.

It was several months ago that Colonel Rogers, then quartermaster for the Southern Department, pointed out the necessity for additions to the Leon Springs reservation, if it were to be used for the maneuvering of a division of troops. It was with the sanction of the War Department that the San Antonio Chamber of Commerce, acting through W. B. Tuttle, undertook to assemble enough land to double the size of the Leon Springs reservation. Captain Fink, who was thoroughly familiar with the Leon Springs country, was detailed to assist Mr. Tuttle and prepared the preliminary surveys.

One Tract Contains 8000 Acres.

The largest single tract obtained comprised the 8000 acres formerly owned by the Gerfers heirs and acquired from them by the late G. A. Stowers. The options for the remaining 8663 acres were obtained from a dozen or more owners of small tracts. Roughly speaking, the land thus assembled constitutes a large rectangle, one side facing on the Blanco road for nearly its entire length and in most places extending west to the Fredericksburg road. There were several homestead farms fronting on the Fredericksburg road, however, on which options were not obtained. Should the government later decide to include these, separate negotiations would have to be taken or condemnation suits instituted. At present, however, it is not thought these will be needed.

A feature which commends the purchase of this land to the War Department, aside from the railroad facilities, water and topography, is its proximity to San Antonio and its accessibility to Fort Sam Houston over three main roads. These are the Fredericksburg, Blanco and Vance-Jackson roads and by the use of them the military authorities might start three columns of troops from Fort Sam Houston at the same time and all could bivouac that same night on government property, as the south line of the reservation will only be seven miles from the city. At present when troops are marched from Fort Sam Houston to the Leon Springs reservation it has been the custom to end the first day's march at or about the nine-mile hill. This has necessitated the use of private property.

Part of Original Plan.

It is pointed out that when the Leon Springs reservation, as now constituted, was acquired by the government it was to form one of four training camp sites which were each to comprise about 30,000 acres. There are about 17,000 acres in the reservation as it now exists and for some reason the additional land was not purchased so that the tract now assembled and held under option will serve to carry out the original plan.

When the plans of the War De-

partment to make this the mobilization point for a large part of the new National Army became known it at once occurred to officers of the Southern Department that additional land would be necessary for maneuvering purposes. The 17,000 acres in the present reservation is wholly inadequate for demands made on it now.

In the first place part of it is used for the remount station and this requires many acres. Then it is the site of the Officers' Training Camp and cantonments are now building for the medical corps while three regiments of artillery and one of infantry are encamped there. The reservation is so crowded now that it is impossible for the regiments of artillery to use the range at the same time and this retards the training of a most important section of the enlarged army.

Options Expire August 24.

Although the appropriation specifically authorizing the purchase of this land has not been passed by Congress, Representative Buchanan of Texas, a member of the appropriations committee has declared that an early report will be made and has indicated that the recommendations of the War Department will be accepted. It is essential that this deficiency appropriation be made soon if the government is to avail itself of these options as they will expire on August 24.