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HOSTILE INDIANS IN FLORIDA.

Public meeting of the citizens of St. Augustine, in relation to the hostile proceeding of the Indians in Florida, &c. &c.

JANUARY 27, 1836.

Read, and referred to the Committee on Military Affairs.

ST. AUGUSTINE, *January 13, 1836.*

SIR: Agreeably to the resolutions passed at a meeting of the citizens of St. Augustine, on the 9th and 10th instant, I herewith enclose to you a copy of the proceedings of that meeting.

I have the honor to be,

Very respectfully,

Your most obedient servant,

DAVID R. DUNHAM,

Secretary.

The Hon. JOSEPH M. WHITE, *in Congress.*

The memorial will probably be prepared and forwarded to you by the next mail.

At a meeting of the citizens of St. Augustine, held at the court-house on Saturday, 9th January, 1836, the Hon. Judge Gould was called to the chair, and David R. Dunham appointed secretary. After a few pertinent remarks by Judge Smith, a committee of nine was appointed, viz :

Judge Jos. L. Smith,

Judge Strong,

Doctor Peter Porchee,

Col. O. S. Rees,

Col. Jos. S. Sanchez,

Charles Downing, Esq.

Lot Clark, Esq.

Alex. Watson, Esq.

Thomas Douglas, Esq.

The committee were directed to call on General Hernandez for information, and requested to express in a suitable manner the thanks of this city to the citizens of Charleston, for their prompt and magnanimous offers of relief, and to report to this meeting to-morrow, at 3 o'clock, P. M.

January 10th.

In consequence of the indisposition of Judge Gould, Frederick Weedon, Esq. mayor of the city was called to the chair, *ad interim*. The preamble and resolutions reported by the committee were unanimously approved and accepted, and it was

Resolved, That copies be forwarded to our Delegate in Congress, to the Intendant of the city of Charleston, and published in the St. Augustine Herald, Jacksonville Courier, Charleston Mercury, and Savannah Georgian. And thereupon the meeting adjourned.

E. B. GOULD, *Chairman*.

DAVID R. DUNHAM, *Secretary*.

REPORT.

The committee appointed by this meeting to consider the dangers which threaten this city and the adjacent country—the devastation and destruction of property, and the sufferings of the people, caused by the hostile operations of the Indian enemy upon our borders, and to report the means that may be adopted to avert or mitigate these evils,

RESPECTFULLY RECOMMEND :

That, for the immediate relief of the poor families of this community belonging to the country, whose dwellings, provisions, and means of subsistence have been burnt, destroyed, or abandoned, and who have fled for refuge here; that, for the relief also of the poor and suffering families of this city, who depended for their daily bread, upon the daily labor of their fathers, husbands, and sons, who have been taken from them for the general defence, and who are now held, and must be continued on that service, in behalf of, and by the authority of, this Territory and of the United States, for the protection of all that is most dear to their and our families and firesides; that to all these suffering persons, General Hernandez, now in command, be requested to cause sufficient issues of provisions for their relief from the public stores; and that so soon as an officer of the United States army, now momentarily expected, having public provisions in his control, shall arrive, that he also be earnestly solicited to aid, by their distribution, in this work of duty and charity.

The committee further recommend the continuance of the active charities of the females of the city, whose benevolence and means united, have done much to sustain those who otherwise would have suffered most severely, from want, in this time of calamity and distress: and they suggest that their labor of charity may be useful in pointing out to the commanding general, and to the public authorities, fit objects for the relief recommended.

The committee also recommend that, for the Government, and the Congress of the United States, a memorial be prepared, and our Delegate requested to urge upon Congress, upon the proper heads of Departments, and upon the President, the early consideration of the calamities and ruin in which many of our citizens have been involved by the ravages of an unrestrained savage foe; and especially, that he use his best and every exertion, to obtain immediate appropriations for the payment of the troops, citizens of Florida, called and continued in service for the public defence, for the time they have already been so employed, and monthly, or bi-monthly for the future, while they may yet be held in that service.

They recommend this measure, convinced of its necessity and justice, because the greater part of our fellow citizens composing these troops are of a class depending for their own subsistence, and that of their families, upon their daily earnings. These daily earnings have ceased, and want

and distress have followed, which may be averted effectually, by the interposition of Government in the mode recommended.

The committee also further recommend, that our Delegate do also use his best exertions to procure the immediate passage of a law for the compensation, (full and adequate, if possible) of those whose plantations or other property has been destroyed, or taken from them, by the lawless and incendiary enemy; that thereby the country may in some measure, be restored and saved from ruin; and that our fellow citizens, who, from a *competence*; acquired by industry and persevering enterprise, have, in many instances, been suddenly overwhelmed with absolute poverty and the deepest distress, while living in confidence under the pledged protection of their Government which has not saved them, may be relieved; and those depending upon them saved from the agony of threatened want:

The committee do, therefore, recommend the adoption by this meeting of the following resolutions:

1st. That Brigadier General Hernandez, commanding the militia and other troops in this city and east of the St. Johns river, be requested to issue provisions from the public stores, sufficient for the relief of such persons as are in immediate want, by reason of the destruction of their means of subsistence by the savage enemy, or by reason of the absence in the public service of their husbands, sons or fathers, and that so soon as an officer of the United States Army shall arrive, having public provisions under his control, that he also be requested to aid in this necessary work of charity and duty.

2d. That our Delegate in Congress be requested to use his best exertions to obtain appropriations for the immediate payment of the troops, citizens of Florida, called into military service for the public defence, for the time ~~has~~ already passed, and for their future payment, monthly, or bi-monthly, while they shall be continued in such service.

3d. That our said Delegate be also requested to use his best exertions to procure the early passage of a law, providing, if possible, for adequate compensation to the citizens of Florida, whose plantations or other property, has been taken or destroyed by the incendiary and lawless enemy that has been loosed upon them; or that, in respect to this interesting matter he takes such other course, as in his judgment shall be deemed best suited to ensure ultimate payment of their losses by the Government of the United States.

4th. That Joseph L. Smith; Thomas Douglass; Lot Clarke, David Levy and O. S. Rees, esqrs. be a committee charged in behalf of this meeting, to draft and prepare a suitable memorial for Congress, praying for the appropriations and the passage of a law pursuant to the foregoing resolutions; and that said committee have power to attest the same for this meeting in the name of its chairman and secretary, and to transmit it without delay to our Delegate in Congress.

5th. That the thanks of this meeting be presented to the Intendant, Wardens and citizens of Charleston, South Carolina, and to the citizens of Savannah, Georgia, for the kindness and sympathy manifested by them towards our fellow citizens in this trying emergency, and for the aid so promptly and generously tendered by the former and afforded by the latter to our distressed community.

By the unanimous order of the committee:

JOS. L. SMITH.

Copy of a letter from a highly respectable gentleman of Florida, dated

CHARLESTON, January 20, 1836.

MY DEAR SIR: I scarcely trust that any communications of mine can be of value to you, amidst the mass of others which you must have received from Kingsley and others, upon the Indian war in Florida; but I cannot help transcribing to you some of the accounts which arrive to us daily, keeping us in continual alarm.

You will see the account in our *Courier* of to-day, received via *Mobile*, from the want of direct communication, of the fatal action of 28th ultimo, of one hundred United States troops going from Tampa bay to join Gen. Clinch at Fort King: all cut off and sacrificed to a man except three! including six valuable officers. In this manner, the disasters are actually greater than are painted in private letters. I have seen myself parts which are suppressed. There is a strong belief that the Creeks from Georgia are coming down the *Chattahoochee* to join the Seminoles. A great error has been committed, and a false estimate created, by the representations of the agent, Gen. Thompson, who has fallen a victim to his confidence. It continues to be a matter of the utmost astonishment, that these Indians should have been permitted leisurely to mature their plans, send off their women and children, purchase rifles and ammunition in the greatest abundance without a single effort being made to prevent them.

Now just conceive their position: eight hundred or one thousand warriors, animated by sentiments of hatred and revenge, and well aware what is to be their fate on losing their superiority;—with them three or four hundred negroes of their own, better disciplined and more intelligent than themselves, to whom there is a daily accession of runaway negroes from the plantations, supplied with arms and ammunition from the deceased whites. Conceive these people living upon roots, if necessary, for weeks entire, flying before regular charges of disciplined troops, or avoiding fortresses or stockades; but from their ambushes and retreats cutting off the most valuable lives of individuals, or attacking and destroying valuable properties.

In this kind of warfare, be assured, that all the troops in Florida, and all the militia which can be superadded, will be sacrificed by piecemeal. Even *St. Augustine* is by no means safe. Gen. Clinch dare not to move one step from his position, and, as you see, any troops moving to join him run the greatest risk. Gen. Hernandez also maintains one position, while the Indians, moving with the greatest celerity, can at any time bring to bear three or four hundred men upon a given point for attack or destruction.

To repair the great error already committed, a great effort must be made, bearing in mind, that if operations are to be protracted to the summer months, the case will be much worse from the sickness of the soldiery. It is of no use to speak now of disbursements of \$80,000; this sum is but as a drop; a million will not now effect the object. I repeat, that an overwhelming force must be sent, say two or three thousand regular troops, and that instantly, in steam-boats from all parts. You cannot trust the militia; their term is too limited, and they have been panic struck; besides, no militia or volunteers will go from these neighboring States. These will go to Texas willingly, when no inducement will make them face the Indians.

A very heavy claim is now preparing upon Congress for the property thus destroyed from the want of the protection of the Government. I dare not say to you how much.

*Extract from a letter, from the Postmaster of St. Augustine, dated
15th January, 1836.*

The Indians are destroying all the plantations around us, and no means of their being prevented from doing so, and their trail has been discovered within eight or ten miles of this place. If the Government does not send a force sufficient, immediately, to stop them in their devastation, God knows where it is to end; General Clinch, and the troops under him, being compelled now to act merely on the defensive. The Middle Florida militia having returned home, as well as those from East Florida, there can be no active measures taken to curtail them in their waste of life and property until a sufficient force arrives. The planters are ruined, the present crop destroyed, cotton, molasses, sugar, and corn, all burnt; and it is impossible to plant the approaching season; and unless the Indians are immediately put down, you are well aware, sir, that it is impossible to act against them in the summer, so that the year following there can be no calculation on a crop; in the mean time starvation must be the consequence with hundreds who, heretofore, were in comparatively easy circumstances.

I remain, sir, very respectfully,

Your most obt. serv't,

ELIAS WALLEN.

To the Hon. JOSEPH M. WHITE, *Washington.*

From the St. Augustine Herald of the 13th of January.

We learn, also from various sources, that the officers and soldiers behaved with the most determined bravery. General Clinch, (who of course had the command,) distinguished himself upon the occasion, and the soldiers speak with animation of the coolness and deliberation with which he conducted his men to the charge. General Call and Colonel Warren were also in the action. The latter, we understand, was severely wounded.

We have been furnished with a diagram of the battle ground, and we think nothing could indicate greater skill than the position which the enemy had taken. The approach to the *Ouithlacoochy* is from the northeast side. The crossing to the southwest side was in an Indian canoe which carried eight men; of course much time was consumed in the crossing of the two hundred and thirty. After the crossing to an open landing place, a trail led, by a sinuous route, to an open field, in the shape of a horse shoe, in which the whole of our force was posted. The position was surrounded on all sides by a thick hammoc. The firing commenced from the hammoc, which concealed the enemy, and protected them in a great measure from the destructive fire of our troops.

From the same officer we learn, that the general impression was that an understanding exists between the Creeks and Seminoles; and it was his opinion, that during the action, the Seminoles were reinforced, as he saw several Indians come into the action with packs on their backs.

This is our opinion also, and has been, from the time that we were advised of the murders committed by the Creeks, on the Chattahoochie river. There is also reason to apprehend a union of a more alarming nature, and one that may render our position deeply interesting to the southern States generally.

Capt. John S. Williams, having just returned from Tomoko and Spring

Garden, has obligingly informed us of some particulars which enables us to correct our former accounts.

He confirms the loss of Judge Dunham's house. In relation to the destruction of this place, Mr. Sheldon informs us that the occurrence took place at 12 o'clock at night; that he was on the opposite side of the Hillsborough, and saw by the light of the fire a great number of Indians, as he supposed, as many as 100. The whole premises are a complete ruin. Mr. Sheldon says, that when the roof of Dunham's house fell in, the yell of the savages were terrific, and he saw them dancing in numbers around the flames.

About 12 o'clock the succeeding day, he says, eleven Indians crossed over to Col. Dummett's, and laid waste the plantation; demolished every thing in the dwelling except two tables, and built a fire upon the floor, evidently with a view to consume it; but the fire having burnt a hole in the floor, went out.

Capt. Williams also says, that Depeyster's dwelling house, out houses, and sugar works were burnt, and the negroes, with but one or two exceptions, captured and taken off.

Hunter's cotton house burnt, and four or five negroes taken.

The lantern in the light-house at Mosquito demolished.

At Anderson's plantation but little injury was done.

Mr. S. H. Williams's dwelling house burnt, but sugar works uninjured.

Major Herriot's sugar works, dwelling and small corn house burnt. But his negro houses and principal granary untouched. All the negroes captured and taken off.

At Spring Garden, we learn from Mr. Forrester, that the loss was a total one. The plantation laid waste, and the buildings and thirty-five hogsheads of sugar, and the cane sufficient to manufacture seventy hhds. more destroyed; and the negroes, amounting to one hundred and sixty, and horses, and mules taken off. Loss about \$130,000.

The following, being a more particular account, will be read with interest:

On the morning of the 26th or 27th of December, the Seminole Indians under the chief, Philip, together with a small party of Uchees, and a number of Indian negroes, estimated from 80 to 120, came to New Smyrna, south of Mosquito inlet, took possession of and plundered the house of Mr. Dunham. Parties of them scattered about the neighbouring plantations of Cruger and Depeyster and Mr. Hunter. The Indian negro, John Caesar, endeavored to decoy Mr. Hunter from his house, on pretence of selling him cattle and horses. He, however, having heard from his negroes, that large numbers of Indians were about, refused to go, and in the afternoon crossed the river to Col. Dummett's. The Indians had possession of Dunham's house all day, and about one in the morning of the following day, set it on fire and burned it, together with all the out buildings, to the ground; in the course of that day, they burned and destroyed all the buildings on Cruger and Depeyster's plantation, except a corn house; also all on Hunter's, except a corn house. A party of 11 Indians then crossed the river, and plundered and destroyed every thing in Col. Dummett's house, and set it on fire; from some cause or other it did not burn. They also burnt the dwelling house of Mr. Racliff, a little to the north of Col. Dummett's, and broke and destroyed the lantern and every thing they could at

the light-house. The next day they proceeded up the river 16 miles north, to Anderson's, plundered the dwelling house, and carried off the boats, flats, and stores of every description, but did no other damage. They burnt the dwelling house of Mr. S. H. Williams, but the sugar works, having a large quantity of corn stored in them, they were left unharmed. On Major Herriot's plantation they burnt every thing to the ground, sugar works, negro houses, and all except the corn house, and carried off all the negroes, about 75 in number. Some of Depeyster's negroes joined them, and they carried off all the rest, about 60, except one old negro man, whom they shot, and burned in his hut. All the negroes from the other plantations escaped, except 3 of Hunter's.

In the Herald notice is taken of the killing of Llenovar, on the St. Johns. This is a deeply afflicting occurrence. We understand that he was 23 years old; had just returned from Picolata, where he had been on duty, and had distinguished himself by his good conduct and soldierly deportment; and had gone to the plantation of Mr. Baya, to endeavour to save as much of the crop of provisions there as could be brought away. Two brothers of this young man were then absent in another part of the country, for the purpose of protecting the plantations south of us.

The Indian Chief POWELL.—The character of this chief is but little known, and not sufficiently appreciated. He is represented to be a savage of great tact, energy of character, and bold daring. The skill with which he has for a long time managed to frustrate the measures of our Government for the removal of the Indians beyond the Mississippi, entitle him to be considered as superior to *Black Hawk*. *Charley Omathla* a chief of the friendly party, interposed difficulties to the execution of his plans, and he at once shot him. He bore an inveterate hatred towards Gen. Thompson, the agent, and yet he concealed his antipathies so skilfully, as completely to deceive the agent, and to induce him to consider *Powell* as personally friendly. General Thompson fell by the hands of *Powell*: This war-rior chief was present three days after, at the battle of the Ouithlacouchy, a detail of which, so far as we are able to collect the same, is contained in this day's paper. It is proper to observe that he ought not to be called *Powell*, as that is only a nick name. His Indianname is "OSEOLA," and by that he should be distinguished. It is apprehended that he will give the Government much trouble, if they do not act with that decision and energy, that becomes the power and force of the country. The devastation and ruin that he has already caused will not fall short of a million of dollars.

Spring Garden burnt.—This valuable plantation belonged to an enterprising citizen from the State of South Carolina. It is situated on Spring Garden creek, which empties itself into the St. Johns, about 12 miles above Lake George. The settlement was made at great expense and labor, and under the active and judicious management of Mr. Forrester, had advanced to great value. Besides cotton, corn and other articles of provisions, which the place had yielded in very great abundance, the present season the proprietor reasonably calculated on upwards of one hundred hogsheads of sugar.

The settlement is in the way of an old and constantly used crossing place of the Indians, and as a frontier position, a station might have been

formed here which would have been advantageous to the public service; and it is the opinion of many, that if the Government had afforded the means of stationing twenty men there, and at two or three other points on the St. Johns, it would have afforded complete protection to all the settlements east of the St. Johns. The estimated loss of Col. Rees, is from \$130,000 to \$150,000.