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INDIAN HOSTILITIES IN FLORIDA.

MEMORIAL

OF

CITIZENS OF EAST FLORIDA,

Convened at St. Augustine, upon the subject of the hostile proceedings of the Seminole Indians in the said Territory.

FEBRUARY 2, 1836.

Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled:

This memorial, in behalf of the people of East Florida, ordered by a meeting composed of inhabitants of various parts of that district, assembled in the city of Saint Augustine, on the — day of January, 1836,

MOST RESPECTFULLY REPRESENTS:

That the people of East Florida, some of whom resigning their allegiance to the Spanish monarchy upon the transfer of the Floridas, preferred to shelter themselves under the free constitution of the United States, upon whose readiness to foster them, and power to protect them, they were taught to rely; and others of whom, invited here by the offer of the public lands for sale, felt a pledged assurance, on the part of the Government, that in coming to a country under its own especial care and guardianship they might repose in safety, and reap the benefits of their enterprise without disturbance; have thought themselves warranted in resting confidently and securely upon the protection and power of the great nation to which the Territory they inhabit appertains and is subject: that, in this dependence they had gone on in the improvement of their habitations and property, with that confidence and spirit which their reliance upon their Government naturally inspired, until by the free expenditure of their means, and the industrious application of their time, they had, in some measure, subdued the hardships attending the settlement of a wild country, and were gradually gathering around their families the comforts and competence necessary to render health secure, and life agreeable. Suddenly, when prosperity and success were crowning their labors, and the country was at last rising superior to the difficulties and accidents which had for years embarrassed its advancement, they find themselves surrounded by a savage foe, bearing

the firebrand and tomahawk through the land with unrestrained fury, and their whole country enveloped in the horrors of a warfare at which the imagination of civilized man revolts, and humanity sickens. They have been forced almost universally to abandon their habitations and their property to the licentious rage of the enemy, and flee with their families to places of temporary security. In this emergency they looked around them for the protecting arm of the Government to shield them from ruin, but discovered, to their dismay, that the commanding general of the force in Florida, in whose bravery and conduct they repose the most lively confidence, was, at this trying crisis, supported by a force too utterly inconsiderable to restrain the ravages or check the progress of the foe, and barely sufficient to maintain itself in safety. The consequence of this has been that desolation has covered the country, and numbers of their fellow citizens, who a few weeks since were in the enjoyment of competence and independence, are now reduced to want and absolute ruin. Nor has the misfortune and misery of the condition in which they have been placed, rested here. By far the largest portion of the sparse population of East Florida consists of those who depend upon their own personal labor and industry for the daily support of their families. Those of them that resided in the country have been obliged to flee for safety to fortified posts, in most instances saving and taking with them their clothes only. All have been compelled to forego every other consideration, and take up arms for the defence of their own, and the lives that are dear to them. The very aged and cripple have been obliged to forget their years and their infirmities, and shoulder their muskets for the general safety. And a total suspension of all ordinary business occupations has necessarily occurred. The most serious and lamentable distress has been by these means produced. In the picketed posts in the interior, where the inhabitants have flocked together for mutual defence, the provisions they were able to accumulate in the first stages of the war are being fast consumed, and the most serious apprehension may well be entertained that famine will soon be added to the other sufferings which attend the crowding together of men, women and children, in small enclosures, and without necessary shelter. In this city, which is compelled, from its small population, not only to provide for its own defence, but for the most part to furnish troops for the protection of the whole extended country east of the St. John's river, for the defence of which not a single soldier of the regular army has been able to be spared from the operations of the small United States force on the other side, actual and distressing want has already visited the families of the laboring classes. Forced to abandon their occupations, and cut off from the fruits of the daily labor upon which their subsistence depended, they have to witness the sufferings of those they love, without the power to relieve them; and so far has this distress in some cases prevailed, that there are instances of those who have been obliged to limit their own meal, that they might divide with their families the single ration allowed them from the public stores while on duty. When to these are added the number of families that have sought refuge here from the surrounding country, abandoning their provisions with their other property, and not possessing the means of purchasing supplies here, the list of sufferers is indeed considerable. Private charity is now actively engaged in the succor of these people, but this resource can afford but partial and temporary relief. Nor is it possible to foresee the period to which this general distress may yet be

protracted. The supplies of provisions produced by the last year's industry, have, to a great extent, already been destroyed by the enemy. It is impossible at this late season that the troubles of the country can be quieted sufficiently early to enable agriculturists to return to their pursuits in time for the crop of the present year, especially when it is considered that many of the farms, with their stock, have been entirely destroyed; and that many more must yet share the same fate, before the Government can interpose its might to arrest the hostile career of the savages. How it is, that at a juncture which should long since have been provided for, by those whose duty it was to anticipate it, the lives and property of this people have been thus wantonly and inexcusably exposed to destruction, they cannot know: upon whom responsibility for the neglect and supineness which has resulted so disastrously should justly rest, they may not judge; but of this they are advised, that had the recommendations and requisitions of the commanding general of this brigade, made at an early day, as well as those (as they are informed) of the general in command of the regular forces in Florida, received attention, the blood which has unfortunately been shed would have been spared for better purposes, the country would not thus have been devastated, nor this appeal been rendered necessary. It is with strong claims therefore upon the sympathy and consideration of the Government, that they come forward now, in the midst of their distress, to pray, as most respectfully yet earnestly they do, that the officers in command of the forces in Florida, be instructed to provide from the public stores for those who may be suffering from the causes above stated; that the militia of East Florida, engaged on duty, be allowed to receive their pay monthly, or bi-monthly, if possible, and an immediate appropriation be made for that purpose; and that a law may be passed, at an early day during the present session, providing for the remuneration of the losses suffered by our citizens, and which may yet be suffered. The two first stated objects of their prayer are called for by humanity, and are eminently necessary for the immediate relief of our suffering people; the last, the remuneration of losses, is a measure supported by precedent, and the strongest considerations of justice, and a prompt action upon which is highly important, that those who have lost their all, and are now beggared, may have the means of supporting their families until they are again in the train of their agricultural pursuits.

And your memorialists will ever pray, as in duty they should, &c..

F. WEEDON,

*Mayor of the city of St. Augustine,
and chairman of the meeting.*

DAVID R. DUNHAM,
Secretary.