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MEMORIAL

OF

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MISSOURI,

That the N. and N. W. boundary may be enlarged, and a mounted force granted for the protection of the frontier of the State, and its trade with Mexico and the Indians.

FEBRUARY 28, 1831.

Read, and ordered to be laid on the table and printed.

To the Honorable the Congress of the United States of America:

The memorial of the General Assembly of the State of Missouri,

RESPECTFULLY SHOWS:

That many inconveniencies have already arisen, and others are expected to arise, from the improvident manner in which certain parts of the boundaries of this State have been designated. When this State Government was formed, the whole country on the west and north was one continued wilderness, inhabited by none but savages, and but little known to the people or to the Government of the United States. Its geography was unwritten; and none of our citizens possessed an accurate knowledge of its localities, except a few adventurous hunters and Indian traders. The western boundary of the State, as indicated by the act of Congress of the 6th March, 1820, and adopted by the Constitution of Missouri, is a meridian line passing through the middle of the mouth of the Kansas river, where the same empties into the Missouri river, and extends from the parallel of latitude of thirty-six degrees and thirty minutes north, "to the intersection of the parallel of latitude which passes through the rapids of the river Des Moines." The part of this line which lies north of the Missouri river has never been surveyed and established, and consequently its precise position and extent are unknown. It is believed, however, that it extends about one hundred miles north from the Missouri river, and almost parallel with the course of the stream, so as to leave between the line and the river a narrow strip of land, varying in breadth from fifteen to thirty miles. This small strip of land was acquired by the United States from the Kansas Indians, by the treaty of the 3d of June, 1825, and is now unappropriated, and at the free disposal of the General Government.

Aware that it has been and now is the policy of the Government to remove the Indians yet remaining in the United States to the country west of the Missouri and Arkansas, we cannot suppress the expression of our fears of the many and great calamities which may be brought upon this

State by crowding our frontiers, already surrounded by restless hordes of native savages, with a mixed multitude of foreign Indians, amounting, as we are informed, to about one hundred thousand. The greater part of the country west of this State is destitute of wood, and poorly supplied with water. The buffalo have disappeared before the white man, and have fled from the sound of the rifle; and such is the growing scarcity of game, that even the aboriginal tribes of that region are annually thinned by famine. The Government cannot be ignorant of their wretched condition, for the melancholy truth is forced upon the attention of the nation by the public officers stationed on this frontier. The superintendent of Indian affairs at St. Louis, more than three years ago, in an official letter addressed to the Secretary of War, disclosed a degree of suffering and misery among our Indian neighbors inconceivable to those who are ignorant of their improvident habits and precarious mode of life. He declares "that the living child is often buried with the dead mother, because no one can spare it as much food as would sustain it through its helpless infancy."

If such be the deplorable condition of the native tribes, what horrors may we not anticipate when the frontier shall be surcharged with the jarring nations from the interior of the States? Without a system of judicious legislation, and the constant interposition of the strong arm of the Government, war will be the inevitable result. Already the official reports of the War Department manifested the inability of the Executive to preserve the peace of the frontier without the intervention of Congress; and the necessity will soon become apparent, to create a force, more active and efficient than the ordinary material of the army, to protect the whites from the Indians, and the Indians from each other.

If the Indian tribes alone were to suffer by this policy, we should leave them in their misery to the wisdom and humanity of Congress. But we, too, are involved in the evils of their lot. Our frontier inhabitants must suffer by their famine, and will be forced to participate in their wars. If divided from us by an ideal line only, those who are beaten in war, or are suffering with hunger, will fall back upon our settlements for safety and food. If these be denied them, or inadequately granted, the nation is at once in a state of war, for the vanquished will flee from death; and it is idle to talk about the principles of law and the rights of property to starving men with arms in their hands. When our affairs shall arrive at this crisis, we must destroy them, or fall by their hands. All experience proves that men of such opposite habits and conditions cannot live in contact with each other in harmony and peace. Their discordant habits will conflict and irritate; the mingling of their horses and cattle in a common pasture will produce continued quarrels; and the imprudence and the crimes of individuals will provoke the vengeance of communities already viewing each other with mutual fear and hatred. This picture, it is believed, will not be considered overcharged; but if the Government, in its wisdom to get rid of the great difficulty, connected with the existence of Indian tribes within the boundaries of sovereign States, should think proper to place them on our borders; we call upon the General Government to adopt a system of defence for us commensurate with the dangers.

These considerations seem to us sufficiently obvious to impress upon the public mind the necessity of interposing, whenever it is possible, some visible boundary and natural barrier between the Indians and the whites. The

Missouri river, bending, as it does, beyond our northern line, will afford that barrier against all the Indians on the southwest side of that river, by extending the northern boundary of this State in a straight line westward, until it strikes the Missouri, so as to include within this State the small district of country between that line and the river, which we suppose is not more than sufficient to make two, or at most three respectable counties.

Aside from considerations connected with the peace and safety of the frontier, there are other and all sufficient reasons for this addition to the State. Our western line, as it is now supposed to run from the mouth of the Kansas, north, is about one hundred miles long, and the country is settled, and is rapidly settling, to its utmost verge. The Missouri is the only great highway of this region, and the only means of conveying its productions to market. Without this addition, those who may settle near the northwest corner of the State will have a hundred miles of land carriage to the nearest point of their only great road to market, or will be compelled, in order to reach the nearest point of navigation, to pass for twenty or thirty miles through a savage and perhaps a hostile country. A view of the map will prove this position.

The district of country in question is represented to be as rich, as beautiful, as well adapted to all the purposes of agriculture, as any in the west, and to abound in creeks and rivulets which afford excellent sites for all the mills and machinery which the densest population and the highest culture can require. While we consider that the incorporation of this slip of country with Missouri would produce a considerable addition to the revenue of the General Government from the sale of the public lands therein, and is necessary to the commerce of a large portion of the State; and to the peace and safety of the frontier, we do not hesitate to declare, that it is, in our opinion, inconvenient and unsuitable for the Indians. Its contact with the white settlements, with no barrier between, and its proximity to the Delaware Indians, who are located by the Government on the opposite side of the river, forbid the hope of their subsistence by the chase; and the history of our country affords no example of a savage community forsaking, at once, their hereditary habits and settled prejudices, to practice the arts and enjoy the comforts of civilized life.

In every view, then, we consider it expedient that the district of country in question should be annexed to and incorporated with the State of Missouri; and to that end we respectfully ask the consent of Congress.

Your memorialists further represent that the northern boundary of this State; as indicated by the act of Congress of the 6th of March, 1820, and adopted by our Constitution, is the parallel of latitude which passes through the rapids of the river Des Moines, extending on that line from the northwest corner of the State "to the middle of the channel of the main fork of the said river Des Moines; thence, down along the middle of the main channel of the said river Des Moines to the mouth of the same, where it empties into the Mississippi river." This line is vague and indefinite. The country on the Des Moines is still unsettled, and comparatively unknown, although the flood of migration, now pouring into this State, is rapidly tending to that border. We are not informed of the exact local position of the "rapids of the river Des Moines," nor whether those rapids are occasioned by a single obstruction of the stream, so as to indicate the precise position of the line, or are produced by a succession of shoals, extending like the rapids of the Mis-

Mississippi, for many miles. And if, on examination, it should be found that the course of the Des Moines, like that of the Mississippi, is disturbed by different rapids, with long intervals of a smooth current between them, it may well be doubted which of the rapids shall indicate our northern boundary. And we consider it highly important that the line in question should be definitely settled and distinctly known before the white settlements, now rapidly spreading, shall reach the borders, and before the possibility of a conflict with the Indian tribes, which we have reason to apprehend, may be removed to that frontier. And to that end we respectfully request that Congress will take such measures as to their own wisdom and justice shall seem most proper.

Your memorialists further represent, that the small tract of country lying immediately in the fork of the Mississippi and Des Moines rivers, and extending to the northern boundary of this State, when produced in a right line through the Des Moines to the Mississippi, has been ceded to the United States by the Sac and Fox Indians, by treaty of the fourth of August, eighteen hundred and twenty-four, and is now held by the United States for the use and benefit of the half-blood descendants of those tribes. It has ceased to be Indian land, and is held by the nation for the use of individuals only, some of whom have been reared among us, and are as civilized and as well instructed as any of our citizens. The tract is small, being an acute angle between the rivers, and extending, according to common belief, about thirty miles from south to north. Considered in reference to its area only, it is of little moment either to this State, or to the nation; but there are many considerations which give to it importance and value. It is a wedge in a corner of the State, disfiguring the form, and destroying the compactness, of our territory. The title is vested in the United States, and the usufruct belongs to a class of individuals, who are incapable of establishing a separate Government for themselves, and can never be acknowledged as a state or nation. It borders upon the Mississippi for the greater part, perhaps the whole extent of the lower rapids of that river, and thus embraces a spot, which, in future times, will be of immense importance to the commerce and intercourse of the whole western valley. Your memorialists anticipate the day when the obstructions to navigation will be overcome by a canal around those rapids; when the inexhaustible power of that mighty stream to almost every variety of manufacturing machinery, and when a commercial city, will spring up in that wilderness, to serve as the great entrepot of the Upper and Lower Mississippi.

With these views of the present condition and future importance of that little section of country, and seeing the impossibility of conveniently attaching it now, or hereafter, to any other State, your memorialists consider it highly desirable, and indeed necessary, that it should be annexed to, and form a part of, the State of Missouri: and, to the accomplishment of that desirable end, we respectfully request the assent of Congress.

JOHN THORNTON,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

DANIEL DUNKLIN,

President of the Senate

January 13. Returned with the objections of the Governor. January 17. Passed; the Governor's objections notwithstanding.

J. H. BIRCH,
Secretary of the Senate.

Passed the House of Representatives; the objection of the Governor to the contrary notwithstanding.

SAMUEL C. OWENS,
Clerk of the House of Representatives.

I certify that the memorial contained in the five preceding pages is a correct copy of the original roll, now on file in my office.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand, and affixed the seal of my office. Done at the city of Jefferson, the 4th day of February, 1831.

[L. s.]

JOHN C. EDWARDS,
Secretary of State, State of Missouri.