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Defence of frontiers of Arkansas [to accompany bill H. R. no. 292].

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Recommended Citation

H.R. Rep. No. 255, 23rd Cong., 1st Sess. (1834)

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DEFENCE OF FRONTIERS OF ARKANSAS.

[To accompany bill H. R. No. 292.]

FEBRUARY 10, 1834.

Mr. R. M. JOHNSON, from the Committee on Military Affairs, made the following

REPORT:

The Committee on Military Affairs, to which was referred the memorial of the Legislature of Arkansas, praying for the removal of the United States troops from Fort Gibson to some eligible point on the Arkansas frontier, near the western boundary line of that Territory, beg leave to report :

That, before Arkansas was formed into a territorial Government, the protection of our citizens, and the interest of the United States in that quarter, induced the Government to establish a military post at the junction of the Poteau and Arkansas rivers. This post was called "Fort Smith," and, for several years after its establishment, was on the extreme western boundary line of that Territory, and entirely west of the settlements of the citizens of the United States. By an act of Congress, approved in 1825, the western boundary line of Arkansas was removed forty miles (in a straight line) further west, and, after the passage of that act, and after the line had been run, it was deemed expedient by the Government to remove the garrison from Fort Smith to the extreme western boundary line of that Territory. The troops were removed, Fort Smith was abandoned, and Fort Gibson was established; and all the intermediate country, thus acquired, or added to Arkansas by the act of Congress aforesaid, was organized into counties by the Legislature of Arkansas, and settled by our citizens. Afterwards, in 1828, the Government, in opposition to the firm and spirited remonstrance of the Legislature of Arkansas, and the strenuous efforts of her Delegate, ceded the country, added as aforesaid to Arkansas, to the Cherokee Indians; and, by a clause in the treaty with that tribe, the western line of that Territory was brought back, and permanently fixed where it originally was before the passage of the act of Congress of 1825. The garrison, however, has not been brought back with the line. The troops intended for the protection of the citizens of Arkansas are still stationed at Fort Gibson, in the midst of the Cherokee nation, forty miles in a straight line, and about eighty by the military road from the settlements of our citizens. The garrison, situated where it now is, can afford but little protection to the citizens of Arkansas. It is believed by the committee to be bad policy to have an armed force stationed so remote from the frontier, and in the midst of an Indian country.

As the present western boundary line is fixed by treaty, and probably will never be extended further west, and as the policy of the Government has been, and will be, to settle various tribes of Indians permanently upon that frontier, and as, on that account, there will ever be a necessity to keep up a garrison there for their protection, the committee have no hesitation in unanimously recommending the removal of the garrison from Fort Gibson to some eligible point on the Arkansas river, near the western boundary line of Arkansas. They believe such a disposition of our troops would more effectually protect our citizens, and, at the same time, bring the troops nearer to the point from which they draw their subsistence and support. The committee refer to the memorial of the Legislature of Arkansas Territory, and make it a part of this report. They therefore report a bill.