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Road – Memphis to Fort Gibson (to accompany bill H. R. no. 947).

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ROAD—MEMPHIS TO FORT GIBSON.

[To accompany bill H. R. No. 947.]

FEBRUARY 22, 1837.

MR. MERCER, from the Committee on Roads and Canals, made the following

REPORT:

The Committee on Roads and Canals, to which was referred a resolution of the Legislature of Arkansas, asking the aid of this Government to improve and repair the road from Memphis, in Tennessee, to Little Rock, and thence to Fort Gibson, in Arkansas, have, according to order, had that subject under consideration, and report:

That the road from Memphis to Little Rock, the seat of Government of Arkansas, affords the only passage from the Atlantic States across the Mississippi, and the extensive flats to the west thereof, subject to the periodical floods of the St. Francis river, which can be at all times relied upon, either for purposes of ordinary intercourse, the transportation of the mail, or the conveyance of troops and munitions of war. Although not so denominated, it is throughout, equally with that part of it between Little Rock and Fort Gibson, a military road; and, as such, it has been constructed at great expense by the United States.

Beyond Fort Gibson, and in the vicinity thereof, along the western border of Arkansas, are the Indian tribes recently removed from the eastern side of the Mississippi; so that upon this road, in case of hostilities between these Indians and the United States, reliance must be had for succors to the infant white settlements along that exposed frontier. With these considerations before them, the committee could not refuse an adequate sum to put this road in complete repair.

The committee, however, do not consider this appropriation as resting on the same constitutional grounds with those disbursements from the national treasury for the same object, prior to the admission of Arkansas into the Union; and, had this road been in good repair at that period, they would have hesitated in reporting the accompanying bill. Their reluctance to appropriate further sums to this road would have been augmented by the terms of the act admitting Arkansas into the Union, by which that State is entitled to five per cent. of the proceeds of the sales of the public lands for the improvement of the roads within her limits, without the correspondent release, for a term of years, of the lands sold by the United States from taxation, which is made a correlative condition in the several acts for the admission of the States of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois.

The committee deem it, therefore, proper to state that they regard the present as the last appropriation which should be made for the repairs of this road, which, from its great use, (as far, at least, as from Memphis to Little Rock,) would, by a moderate toll, defray the annual expense of repairing it.

ROAD-MEMBERS TO PORT GIBSON

REPORT