1-17-1817

Report of the committee to whom was referred a memorial of a convention of delegates from fifteen counties in the Mississippi Territory praying that the said territory may be admitted as a state entire and without division: accompanied with a bill for the admission of the people of the Mississippi Territory into the union, &c

United States. Congress. House

United States. General Land Office

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REPORT

Of the committee to whom was referred a Memorial of a Convention of Delegates from fifteen counties in the Mississippi Territory, praying that the said Territory may be admitted as a State entire and without division; accompanied with a bill for the admission of the people of the Mississippi Territory into the Union, &c.

January 17, 1817.

Read, and Ordered to be printed.

The committee to whom was referred the memorial of a convention of Delegates from fifteen counties of the Mississippi Territory, praying that the said Territory may be admitted as a State, entire and undivided, respectfully beg leave to

REPORT......

That they have considered the subject with all that attention which the means in their power have enabled them. The question most immediately involved in the reference was, Whether the Mississippi Territory ought to form one entire State or be divided into two?—a question much more important both to the people of the Territory and to the nation, than whether its admission should be
immediate. The considerations deemed of most weight in determining this question are, 1st. As regards the general interest of the Union. 2d. The wishes of the people of the Territory; and 3d, The convenience and policy of the particular government of the Territory.

First, The principal points affecting the national interest will consist in the great relative strength of such an extensive member of the confederacy, if admitted entire. The great extent of its limits, and the space it occupies on the map of the United States, naturally excite inquiry as to the capacity of its soil and other qualities, to afford at any period a dense population. And the inquiry should be directed to a remote period, when the Indian titles shall have been extinct and the country matured by improvement. Although your committee deem it impracticable to obtain any thing like an accurate estimate of the proportions of land fit and unfit for cultivation in that remote Territory, so great a portion of which is yet a wilderness; yet from the general information collected from those who have explored its different parts, and from the progress of settlement and sale of public lands within the tract of country to which the Indian title has been long extinguished, your committee cannot apprehend that the whole Territory is capable of such a strong population as ever to render it a formidable State compared with the largest sized of the northern, middle, and western States.

By a statement from the general land-office, accompanying this report, it appears that the amount of sales of public land in the Mississippi Territory from the first opening of a land-office therein (in 1807) till the 30th September last, exclusive of Madison county, was 833,534, \(\frac{2}{90}\) acres. The
land districts in which these sales were effected extend from the Mississippi river eastward more than 220 miles to the dividing ridge, between the Alabama and Tombigby rivers, and a little over 60 miles from the 31st degree of latitude northward, and containing more than eight millions of acres.

It appears from the concurrent testimony of persons acquainted with the Territory in question, that an uncommon proportion of its lands is unfit for cultivation; much thereof consisting of poor pine barrens. While on the other hand it is certain that there is much fertile soil on the margin of the rivers, and interspersed over different parts, capable to sustain a sufficient population for a respectable State. Its political strength will also be held in check by the great proportion of slaves it is destined to contain. This circumstance added to the climate and soil will render its numbers (entitled to political calculation) relatively small compared with its extent.

2d. As to the wishes of the people themselves, various representations have been made showing a difference of sentiment to exist among them in regard to a division. It is however worthy of notice that for several successive years the legislature of the Territory have petitioned to Congress for admission as a State; in none of which have they intimated a wish to be divided.

3d. As to the policy and convenience of the particular government. The form of the Territory is nearly square, and its average length and width nearly equal. By any line of division, the distant extremes will be but little more convenient to a point at the centre of either division, than to the centre of the whole Territory.

As to the different parts having different avenues to market—the western by the navigation of the
Mississippi river and the waters of lake Pontchartrain, the eastern by the waters of Mobile and Chatahouchee—it is not seen that this will create any material diversity of interest, or interfere with the internal policy and harmony of the State, all parts of which will be agricultural and capable of similar products. Nor is it known that local animosities are more peculiar to large than to small States; these are not unusual even in the bounds of a county. It is, indeed, more probable that a large State would incline to cherish its institutions by a liberal policy.

The geographical position of this Territory may render it necessary that its military defences should be more combined than would, at all times, be practicable in two distinct sovereignties.

It may be proper to take notice of the situation of each division, in case the parts are separated by a line such as has been in contemplation, and as proposed by a bill now before this House; although your committee presume, if any division is to be made, the line proposed may be as judicious as any other. The western division will contain 25,037 free white inhabitants, and 22,834 slaves by the census taken lately; by the census taken in 1810 there were, west of the line of division, 16,602 white inhabitants and 14,523 slaves, (including in the last census the county of Jackson, formerly a part of Florida,) making an increase of 8,435 white, and 8,311 slave inhabitants in the last period of six years, including a new county from Florida. In the whole western division there is no land to which the Indian title is extinguished, but what has been some time in market, and most of it embracing the oldest settlements in the Territory. What prospect may exist of extending the scope for settlement by purchases from the Indians, is not known
to your committee; until which time the increase of population in that quarter must be gradual.

While your committee believe it expedient to admit the whole Territory to the rights of State government, and that immediately, they consider it just to the population which will in a few years occupy the extensive space on the east side of the Tombigby, which has lately been acquired from the several Indian tribes, to afford the citizens of the State now to be formed, a fair opportunity of revising their constitution after a reasonable time, and recommend a provision for that purpose.

Your committee ask leave to report a bill for admitting the Mississippi Territory into the Union as a State.
General Land Office,
13th January, 1817.

Sir,

In conformity with your request in your letter of the 11th instant, I transmit, annexed hereto, a statement of the lands sold in the Mississippi Territory: the surveyor's returns do not describe the lands as first, second, and third quality, but merely give the timber, and the nature of the soil where their lines are run.

I have the honour to be,
Most respectfully, sir,
Your obedient servant,

JOSIAH MEIGS.

Hon. Israel Pickens,

House of Representatives.
Statement of the quantity of land sold in the Mississippi Territory from the opening of the Land Offices to the 30th September, 1816.

<table>
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<th>YEAR</th>
<th>West of Pearl River</th>
<th>East of Pearl River</th>
<th>Madison county</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1807,</td>
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<td>4,125</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1808,</td>
<td>13,819 90</td>
<td>4,073</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1809,</td>
<td>60,062 96</td>
<td>3,613 03</td>
<td>23,959 75</td>
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<tr>
<td>1810,</td>
<td>23,423 69</td>
<td>. . .</td>
<td>53,612 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>1811,</td>
<td>33,449 46</td>
<td>. . .</td>
<td>48,463 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1812,</td>
<td>53,362 09</td>
<td>64,301 48(\frac{1}{2})</td>
<td>22,209 18</td>
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<tr>
<td>1813,</td>
<td>5,844 62</td>
<td>3,221 27</td>
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<tr>
<td>1814,</td>
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<td>1816,</td>
<td>295,087 06</td>
<td>171,828 31</td>
<td>23,958 34</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>574,883 78(\frac{1}{2})</td>
<td>258,650 70(\frac{1}{2})</td>
<td>240,308 07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

West of Pearl River, 574,883 78\(\frac{1}{2}\)
East of Pearl River, 258,650 70\(\frac{1}{2}\)
Madison county, 240,308 07

Total acres, 1,073,842 56

General Land Office, 13th January, 1817.

JOSIAH MEIGS.