

Washington City, D. C.

December 21<sup>st</sup> 1834.

Meers

P. P. Pelchlynn & others.

Choctaw Delegates

Gentlemen,

In answer to your letter of the 17<sup>th</sup> inst, I have to state, that for several years before the treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, I had been a licensed trader among the Choctaw Indians. As such, I had extensive dealings with them, and was well acquainted with their leading men, and with the great body of the people. There was a strong and I believe universal feeling in opposition to the sale of any portion of their remaining country in Mississippi. I was present during the negotiation and signing of the treaty, and when the proposition to sell their country was submitted by the Commissioners, it met with no favor whatever. The Indians were assembled in large numbers and the promises made to them were of the most tempting character; but no one seemed to be in the least moved from what was obviously the fixed determination of all, not to sell. The Commissioners were fully apprised of the unwillingness of the Indians to give up their country and therefore acted on the policy of alternately exciting to the utmost their hopes and fears. Accordingly the opening speech of Genl Eaton, which was mainly addressed to their hopes was full of flattering assurances and promised blessings. Among other things of like character, he told them that their Great Father, Genl. Jackson, by whose side many of them had fought, cherished a particular regard for his Choctaw children; that feeling a deep interest in their welfare he had sent him, the Secretary of War, to make arrangements with them whereby the evils

with

with which they were threatened might be averted and their happiness and prosperity as a people secured and promoted; that to this end, it was necessary for them to cede their country in Mississippi to the United States and remove to the country which they owned west of Arkansas; that in asking them to do this, there was no design to take any advantage of them; that the Government did not want their lands for the purpose of speculation or gain; that the right of jurisdiction over the country was all the Government desired and that all the pecuniary benefits resulting from the cession would accrue to them. These and similar protestations and promises were reiterated in various forms of expression, all intended to impress the Indians with the belief, that they would get the full value of their lands, and that the treaty would be in every respect eminently beneficial to them. The idea that the government desired nothing but the right of jurisdiction, and that all else was to be for the benefit of the Indians, was repeatedly presented and with special emphasis. At the conclusion of this address, the treaty, or the outlines thereof, which had been previously drawn up by the Commissioners, was read and interpreted to the Indians; but, although they listened respectfully and attentively to Genl Eaton's speech, they paid no attention to the reading of the paper - during which there was a general conversational pow-wow going on among them. Their inattention to the reading was doubtless owing to the fact that at that time they had no idea of making a treaty and consequently felt no interest in what the paper contained. The Council then adjourned until the next day and when they reassembled, the Indians announced to the Commissioners that they had considered what had been said to them and that it was their unanimous and fixed determination not to sell their country. Thereupon, Genl. Eaton rose and delivered a very eloquent harangue, the object of which was to alarm the fears of the Indians; and in this he succeeded completely. He portrayed at length and with startling effect the evils that would speedily befall them if they did not yield to the wishes of the Government. He told them that they would be subjected to the operation of the State laws, by which they would be compelled to muster, pay taxes and work on roads; that their country would be overrun by the white men, who would come among them.



the Indians doubtless understood that it contained all the beneficial provisions that had been held forth to them by the Commissioners, it was nevertheless signed by them under the controlling influence of fear, coercion and duress. I will add, though not requested by your letter, that the manner in which the treaty has been enforced by the Government is equally arbitrary and oppressive towards the Indians. It is notorious that some of its most important provisions have never been fulfilled, nor can they be at this late day, in consequence of the past delinquency of the Government. Of all our Indian tribes the Choctaws deserve to be dealt with liberally and magnanimously. They have always been the true and steadfast friends of our people in peace and war, and it would take millions to compensate them for the losses, injuries and sufferings they have endured in consequence of submitting to the policy and measures of the Government.

You say in your letter that you seek information from reliable and disinterested sources. For myself, I have no connexion with your business in any way whatever, and have made the statements contained in this communication with entire disinterestedness and impartiality.

With sincere regards,

Your friend & Ob't Serv't,

W. H. Grant

Recd from Genl W. H. Grant  
to Choctaw Delegation  
Decemr 21. 1854