

Joseph McMinn to Andrew Jackson, August 30, 1816, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

THE GOVERNOR OF TENNESSEE (JOSEPH MCMINN) TO JACKSON.¹

¹ This letter is published in the *American Historical Magazine* (Nashville), VIII. 383. The original was sold in Stan V. Henkels's sale in Philadelphia in December, 1921.

Knoxville, August 30, 1816.

Sir, Your esteemed favour of the 12th Inst. addressed to Kingston, never came to hand until last evening, at which time, I had every thing in readiness to Set out for the *Treaty Ground*; but assure you *Sir*, never was I more gratified than to find myself disappointed, particularly from your very warm, and friendly acceptance of the office of Commissioner for holding a Treaty with the Cherokee Indians.

With respect to the Chickasaws, I am not perfectly satisfied, how far I am authorised to enter into an arrangement with them, for an extinguishment of their claim, to lands, within the limits of this State. More particularly, as I am not apprised of the extent of your power, derived from the Genl. Government; or of the views of the President of the United States, upon that subject, and therefore, will communicate what I have to say on a separate sheet,² to the end, that you may use it, or not, at your discretion.

² See the next letter.

Although I am well aware of the Justice, and policy of such a demand, as regards, those who held granted land within their Claim, I am nevertheless satisfied in dispensing with the subject for the present. But *Sir*, it appears to me, a great abuse of Justice, for our

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Government to transfer the Lands of those, who perhaps, have fallen in defence of our Countries best rights, to a Set of vagrant hunters. And as regards the Cherokee's, once unprincipled enemies, and whose only interest in the Soil was forfeited, by an aliance with Great Britain. Such however was not the fact, as regards the Chicasaws, they have not, at any time, engaged in open War against us, yet, that fact is not sufficient, to entitle them to claim nearly eight Million acres of Land, within the limits of our States; and between two and three millions of which is actually granted, or at least located.

Should the Government not have authorised you to purchase those lands, nor any part thereof; what would you think of sounding them for those lands which lie on the North side of Tennessee River, which from the map, I cannot suppose contains more than two millions of acres; out of which we may fairly suppose one forth is granted and about one half of the whole quantity seems to lie within the Mississippi Territory. In case you should be able to make a purchase, the sum given would (according to the plan laid down by the Secretary at War in the case of purchasing the lands from the Cherokees) have to be divided according to the relative value of each lot of Land. These remarks are however, predicated upon the supposition that Tennessee is bound to extinguish the Chickasaw Title; of which fact (as before remarked) I am not so well advised, as to enable me to give an opinion, tho' if I was to hazzard one, it would be to say, that I think Tennessee is not bound; and if you (who know infinitely better than I) should be inclined to the same opinion, you will easily perceive the propriety of keeping Tennessee out of view, in your negotiations with the Chickasaws. Although, Sir, it would give me the highest pleasure to have the honor, of throwing the weight of our beloved little republic into the scale, of negotiating for its own, and citizens rights, Yet Sir, a just regard to its resources, is sufficient to admonish us from siting a precedent, in purchasing the small Tract, North of Tennessee River, out of one so very large as the entire Chickasaw claim; whilst the propriety of purchasing the whole, is as obvious as the smallest portion. And I feel conscious, that the day is not very distant, when the General Government will have to adopt measures for the total redemption of all Indian claims within Our State.

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Very respectfully Your obed Servt