

DOCUMENTS

1.40

FRINTED BY ORDER OF

THE LEGISLATURE

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE,

DURING ITS SESSION

A. D. 1348.

AUGUSTA: WM. R. SMITH & Co., PRINTERS TO THE STATE

1843.

TWENTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE.

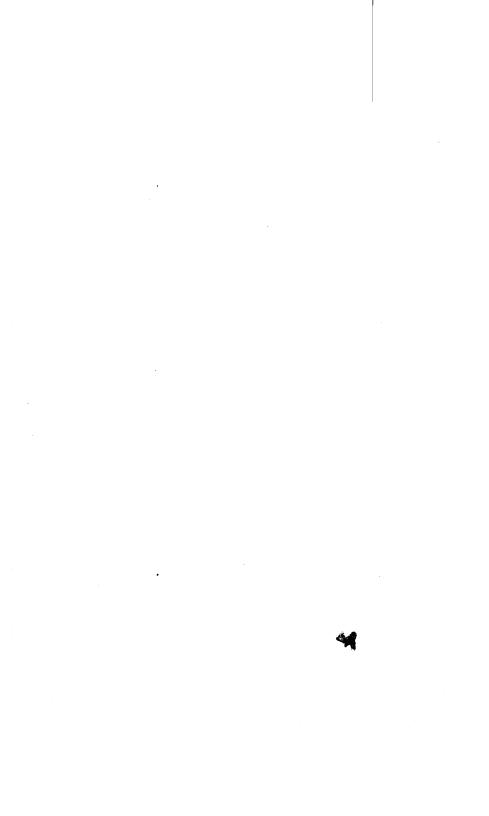
[SENATE.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE

ON THE

NORTHEASTERN BOUNDARY.

[WM. R. SMITH & Co....Printers to the State.]



REPORT.

IN SENATE, March 21, 1843.

The Joint Select Committee, appointed to consider a Report, bearing date January 4, 1843, from the Commissioners under Resolves passed on the 26th of May, 1842, entitled "Resolves in relation to the Northeastern Boundary of this State;" and to whom were also referred certain Resolves of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the petition of Eusebius Weston in relation to the said boundary, and also a message from the Governor transmitting a letter from the Secretary of State for the United States, in relation to "disputed Territory Fund," so called; have had the same under consideration, and ask leave to

REPORT

the accompanying Resolves, together with the reasons which have induced them to recommend their adoption.

The settlement of the long pending questions connected with the Northeastern Boundary line of this State, is undoubtedly an event of the first magnitude. If effected upon principles in harmony with the past attitude of Maine, and in a manner to secure and protect her honor and interests, it would be a cause of high and universal congratulation. If effected upon different principles, and in a different manner, the satisfaction arising from the termination of a vexatious and embarrassing difficulty, could not fail to be alloyed by many and painful regrets.

The committee propose to review, briefly, the several steps in the negotiation which has resulted in the establishment of a new boundary of the State, for the purpose of deducing from that review, a just conclusion as to the present duty of the Legislature.

On the eleventh of April, 1842, Mr. Daniel Webster, Secretary

of State for the United States, addressed a letter to the Governor of this State, in which he announced that Lord Ashburton had arrived at Washington, "charged with full powers from his sovereign, to negotiate and settle the different matters in discussion between the two governments," and that in reference to the boundary question in particular, Lord Ashburton had "authority to treat for a conventional line, or line by agreement, on such terms and conditions, and with such mutual considerations and equivalents, as might be thought just and equitable." In the same letter, Mr. Webster requested Maine to unite in an attempt to agree upon such "a conventional line," by appointing commissioners clothed with power to assent to the terms and conditions which might result from a negotiation to be carried on at Washington.

The idea prominently and distinctly conveyed by this letter, is, that Lord Ashburton had "full powers" in reference to the proposed negotiation, and the amplest authority to assent to any "terms and equivalents" connected with the conventional line to be agreed upon, without any restriction, except that they should "be thought just and equitable." The same idea is understood to have been communicated by Mr. Webster in letters addressed to several members of the Legislature, during its extra session commencing in May, 1842; and it is further understood that he urged upon that Legislature, through these and other channels, that the commissioners to be appointed by them must be clothed with "full powers," in order to be placed upon an equal footing with Lord Ashburton, and that the negotiation would otherwise fail at its very commencement.

In consequence of Mr. Webster's letter of the eleventh of April, 1842, and without having received, as the committee know or believe, any different or additional information as to the actual powers of Lord Ashburton, the Governor of this State, in the exercise of his constitutional power, convened a special session of the Legislature in May, 1842.

During the winter of 1842, and while the Legislature was holding its regular annual session, an official letter, although received through an informal channel, was laid before the northeastern

4,

boundary committee, in which Mr. Webster announced that his department had received information that Lord Ashburton was on the point of leaving England, with the powers, and for the purposes, described in his subsequent letter of April eleventh, 1842, and invited the concurrence of Maine in effectuating the objects of Lord Ashburton's mission.

A similar letter was addressed to the Legislature of Massachusetts, then holding its annual session, and that body immediately expressed its acquiescence in the proposed negotiation, and authorized the appointment of commissioners to participate in it. The northeastern boundary committee of the Legislature of this State, which was a numerous committee, and believed itself to be acting in conformity to the unanimous opinion both of the Legislature and people, declined to recommend a compliance with the invitation of Mr. Webster, declaring themselves ready, however, to act upon the question of a conventional line, when its terms, conditions and equivalents should be definitively presented to the proper authorities of Maine.

Mr. Webster's letter of April 11th, 1842, presented no information not known to the Legislature of that year, during the period of its regular session, and no information which that body, at that time, thought a proper basis of any action on their part.

The Governor felt bound, however, upon evidence satisfactory to himself, of a change in public opinion, to convene a special session of the Legislature.

That there was such a change, to a certain extent, there can be no doubt; and as little doubt, in the opinion of the committee, that this change was brought about by an organized system of deception as to the real purposes and views of the British minister extraordinary. The people of Maine were induced to believe that Lord Ashburton was prepared to treat in a spirit of liberality and justice, and upon the principle of a substantial acknowledgment of our rights under the treaty of 1783. The debates in the Legislature, during its extra session, afford abundant proof that such were the expectations of that body, and that those expectations formed the basis of, and the inducements to, the action finally adopted by it.

The source from which erroneous views as to the powers of Lord Ashburton were derived, is known. In the opinion of the committee, it is safe to attribute to the same origin, the equally great misapprehensions in regard to the spirit by which he would be actuated, and the principles by which he would be governed.

It is the more safe to do so, inasmuch as the secretary of state for the United States was represented before the northeastern boundary committee of the Legislature, during its special session in May 1842, by a confidential, personal and political friend, and a resident of the same city and commonwealth, Hon. Peleg Sprague, through whose instrumentality the misapprehensions referred to, and the consequences of which have been so mischievous, were, in a very important degree, confirmed and made effective.

The views and impressions under which the Legislature acted during its special session in May last, corresponding as they did with the views and impressions of the people, are too recent and too notorious, to require, in the opinion of the committee, any further statement either of their general character, or of causes which It is sufficient to say, and the assertion is not originated them. susceptible of a fair contradiction, that the Legislature, at the timereferred to, acted under a full belief that Lord Ashburton was clothed with full powers to adjust the disputed boundary upon principles of equity and justice; that he was authorized and disposed to waive the vexatious pretensions previously maintained by Great Britain; and that while he was undoubtedly anxious to obtain a: portion of Maine important to the convenience of the colonies of that nation, he was ready and willing to offer, as an equivalent therefor, territorial concessions which would have left our importance, as a State, unaffected. The ownership of land lying between our eastern line and the Saint John River, from the Grand Falls southerly to the Eel River, together with Grand Menan and the adjoining islands in Passamaquoddy Bay, afforded the means for such concessions, interesting to us, and at the same time, not injurious to Great Britain's colony of New Brunswick. That the offer of equivalents of substantially that character, was confidently and universally expected in this State, during the period of the special

session of our Legislature in May last, is not a matter, in the opinion of the committee, which can ever be drawn into doubt or dispute.

The committee are not, however, compelled to rely upon an appeal to the public recollection of the opinions prevalent at the period referred to, satisfactory and convincing as they well know such an appeal must be.

More precise and authentic evidence of the expectations of the Legislature, exists in the resolves under which the commissioners to treat (through Mr. Webster) with Lord Ashburton, received their appointment.

One of these resolves, and it is the only one which bears upon the question under discussion, is in the words following :

"Resolved, That this State cannot regard the relinquishment by the British Government of any claim heretofore advanced by it. to territory included within the limits of the line of this State, as designated by the treaty of 1783, and uniformly claimed by Maine, as a consideration or equivalent, within the meaning of these resolutions."

Nothing can be clearer than this language. It announces with a definiteness which leaves no room for mistake, the principles upon which Maine was willing to negotiate.

She was willing to assent to a new line of boundary, which might be more convenient for both parties, and for that purpose, was ready to yield a portion of her territory for adequate equivalents. But she would not admit that there was any doubt in regard to the line actually existing, and which she had uniformly claimed, nor did she attach importance enough to the counter claim of Great Britain, to regard its withdrawal as the least equivalent or consideration for any action on her own part. Every acre within the line of 1783, she claimed as indisputably and beyond controversy her own, and for every acre to be yielded she demanded an ample indemnity. She refused to go into the negotiation upon the principle of compromise. Rejecting all idea of concession, and standing firmly upon her manifest rights, she declared her fixed determination to regard the pretensions of Great Britain as a nullity, and her fixed refusal to buy her peace, by yielding to those

ł

pretensions in the least degree. But while refusing to settle the pending disputes, upon the obnoxious principle of yielding a portion of her rights for the sake of quieting and confirming the remainder, she was ready, at the same time, to assent to a new line of boundary upon honorable terms and equivalents, to be adjusted, not upon the principle of pusillanimous concession, but of mutually advantageous exchanges.

The opinions as to the powers and intentions of Lord Ashburton, which prevailed in the Legislature during its special session in May last, and the principles upon which the commissioners elected by it were instructed to assent to a settlement of the Northeastern Boundary line, having been thus briefly sketched, it remains to inquire, how far those opinions turned out to be well founded, and how far those principles were respected in the final adjustment of the question.

The committee do not think it necessary, or indeed proper, to go into a detailed examination of the negotiations which terminated in the recent treaty of Washington. They propose only, to compare its results so far as they affect Maine, with the expectations and hopes which induced her to become a party to it.

Soon after the arrival of our commissioners at Washington, it was announced to them, (through Mr. Webster,) by Lord Ashburton, that he had no power to offer to Maine, by way of equivalent, any territory belonging to the adjoining colonies of Great Britain. Instead of being clothed with the "full powers" described in Mr. Webster's letter of April 11, 1842, he had not only no power, but was absolutely forbidden to negotiate upon the basis so confidently anticipated by Moine. Instead of being able to treat for the surrender of Grand Menan, the strip of land from Eel river to the Grand Falls, or any thing else territorially desirable to Maine, his powers and instructions were, simply, to get as much of our territory as possible, and to pay us as little as possible, and that only in dollars and cents. In the "equivalents" he was prepared to offer, he was tied down by far different restrictions than that they should be "thought just and equitable." He was, in fact, interdicted from offering the only "equivalents," which, in any fair mind,

8

could possibly be "thought just and equitable," or which had ever been anticipated by Maine.

Maine, on more than one occasion, and by more than one functionary of the general government, has not been treated in this matter of the northeastern boundary "as she has endeavored to deserve." But never before has she had occasion to complain of a treachery so signal, as that which induced her to participate in a negotiation with a minister, forbidden by his instructions to yield any thing which she had a right to expect, under official assurances that he had "full powers" to treat, and was prepared to treat upon any terms which should "be thought just and equitable." The experience of Maine had taught her to expect perfidy from Great Britain, but she might reasonably claim fair dealing from the diplomatic secretary of the union of which she is a member. If this claim has shared the fate of others equally reasonable, it only adds another to the list of grievances of which she has to complain.

The spirit with which Lord Ashburton entered upon the negotiation, corresponded as little with the expectations of Maine, as did the powers with which he was clothed. So far was he from yielding the pretensions of his government, or from being willing to treat upon the basis of a substantial acknowledgment of our title, that it may be truly said, that no British negotiator has ever assumed a tone more arrogant, pressed unfounded claims with more tenacity, or made unavoidable concessions with more reluctance.

The committee will not review the published correspondence between Lord Ashburton and Mr. Webster, in which there is so much deserving of criticism, but will proceed at once to the enquiry whether the line of boundary fixed for Maine, with its terms, equivalents, and considerations, was such as we had a right to expect, or as our commissioners, within the spirit of the instructions, under which they were appointed, were authorized to assent to.

The treaty of Washington conveys and transfers to Great Britain, of the territory of Maine, 4,119 square miles, or 2,636,160 acres, being the territory awarded to Great Britain by the King of the Netherlands, and in addition thereto, 893 square miles, or 571,520 acres, on this side of the line of the Dutch award; making a total of 5,012 square miles, or 3,207,680 acres. The equivalents stipulated for Maine, are

1st. A right of navigation down the St. John, under certain restrictions and limitations.

2d. The payment to Maine and Massachusetts, to be equally divided between them, of the sum of 300,000 dollars, by the United States.

3d. The satisfaction to Maine and Massachusetts respectively, of "all claims for expenses incurred by them in protecting the said heretofore disputed territory, and making a survey thereof, in 1838."

The first of these equivalents is the only one, in regard to the value of which there can be any difference of estimation. The committee do not propose to go into a discussion of all the considerations bearing upon its importance or unimportance. They will however, state some of the facts which tend to throw light upon its real character.

The right of navigation in question, is confined to the products of our forests and the unmanufactured products of our agriculture, and there is no right of transit up the river for any article whatever.

A right of navigation to this, if not a greater extent, belonged to Maine already, in the opinion of the committee, upon a fair construction of the principles of the law of nations, applicable to the situation of states and nations, possessing the upper portions of rivers, having their outlet in the territory of another country.

Whether however this right did, or did not belong to Maine, as a matter of right, its enjoyment by her, as a matter of fact, would always be fully assured to her, by the manifest commercial interests of Great Britain. The trade, having its seat at the mouth of the Saint John, must always look for its nourishment and support, to the forest and agricultural productions of the upper valley of that river, and the experience of the past assures us, that we were in no danger of being interdicted from rights of navigation, by those to whom their free exercise was a principal source of profit and advantage.

By an ordinance of the British government, adopted within the last twenty years, all their colonies, through whose territory rivers, having their sources in other countries, pass to the sea, are forbidden to impose any duty upon the raw productions of such countries, entering their territory upon the water of such rivers. Under this ordinance, the permanence of which is assured by the best possible guarantee, the interest of Great Britain herself, our forest productions have long enjoyed the identical rights in the navigation of the St. John, the stipulation of which in the treaty of Washington, is now, for the first time, set up as a compensation for the surrender by us, of the most valuable and extensive territories.

The mere settlement of the boundary line, would have drawn after it all the benefits of navigation in the St. John, which are unnecessarily stipulated for by the treaty. The only difficulties heretofore experienced in reference to lumber cut upon the disputed territory, have arisen from the British claim of property in lumber itself, and of a resulting right to demand stumpage upon it. No such difficulties have attached in respect to lumber entering New Brunswick upon the waters of the Presque Isle, the Meduxnekeag, or any other river draining territory, the jurisdiction and possession of which was actually engaged by Maine. The mere settlement of the line would have left the lumber and produce of the Aroostook and all other rivers entering the St. John from the south and east, in as good a condition as the treaty leaves it. The claim of British property in it, being ceded, no claim of stumpage would exist, and under the British ordinance referred to, no tolls or duties have been for years past, or would be imposed upon it.

Finally, it is to be considered that the grant of rights in the St. John is mutual; Maine yielding as much to Great Britain in this respect, as Great Britain yields to Maine.

That the pecuniary stipulations in favor of Maine, together with the rights of navigation which the committee have considered, constitute a consideration utterly inadequate for upwards of three thousand square miles of valuable territory, is a proposition too plain to need argument. It is sufficient to say that the British negotiator himself, did not affect to maintain any such position.

In his letter to Mr. Webster, under date of July 11, 1842, Lord Ashburton says: "I would further suggest for your consideration whether, supposing the division by the King of the Netherlands to

be admitted to satisfy fairly the equity of the case between the parties, what is proposed to be added by Great Britain, viz: the strip on the 45th parallel of latitude, and the use of the navigation of the Saint John, be not an ample compensation for what we ask in return, viz: that barren strip above the upper Saint John, which is wanted for no other purpose than as a boundary, for which purpose it is admitted on all sides to be most convenient."

All which Lord Ashburton claims, amounts simply to this, that the right of navigation in the St. John, together with the strip of land conceded to the States of New Hampshire, Vermont and New York, are an equivalent for the 893 square miles on the northwest boundary of Maine, described by him as the "barren strip above the upper St. John." The basis of his proposition is, that the line of the Dutch award satisfies "fairly the equity of the case between the parties," and the variations from it in his own favor, he supposes to be fairly met by the compensations which he proposes.

Maine, however, never assented to any such basis. She has never admitted that any line, other than that of 1783, met "fairly the equity of the case between the parties," and she had a right to expect, not merely an indemnity for the 893 square miles upon her northwest, but an indemnity also for the 4,119 square miles upon her northeast.

Lord Ashburton attaches a value to the British claim, while Maine has ever insisted upon regarding it as a nullity.

Lord Ashburton views the award of the Dutch King, as a fair settlement of the questions in dispute, and is willing to pay for only so much as he obtains beyond the line of that award. Maine, on the contrary, insisted upon all her rights up to the line of 1783, and instructed her commissioners to yield nothing within that line, without ample indemnity. Such indemnity she has not obtained, even upon Lord Ashburton's own estimate of the value of the compensations and equivalents to which he assented.

The rights of navigation secured to her in the St. John, and the concessions upon the 45th parallel of latitude, made to New Hampshire, Vermont and New York, and the benefits accrued to Maine, by means of a pecuniary commutation at the expense of the treasury of the United States, were not pretended by the British negotiator himself, to be more than an equivalent for the territory which he obtained on this side of the line of the Dutch award. For all which Maine loses on the other side of the line of that award, amounting to upwards of four thousand square miles of territory, she obtains no compensation, even according to the exaggerated estimate put by her adversary in the negotiation, upon the value of the equivalents which he yielded.

One section of the treaty remains to be noticed, not connected, indeed, with the compensations stipulated for Maine, but yet of much importance to her interests. The committee refer to the provisions in relation to the *disputed territory fund*, in regard to the several conditions of which Lord Ashburton appears to have possessed the same superiority of information, which enabled him to overreach his antagonist on so many other points.

It is assumed by the treaty, that by consent of the parties, the authorities of New Brunswick had been entrusted with the receipt and custody of the monies constituting the fund in question. The committee are not advised who are the "parties" who consented to such an arrangement, but are certain that among them cannot be reckoned either Maine or Massachusetts, or the citizens of Maine who have been plundered of their property for the benefit of this fund.

The treaty provides that an account of the receipts and expenditures connected with this fund, shall be furnished to the government of the United States, within six months from the date of the ratification of the treaty; and that the proportion belonging to Maine and Massachusetts, of the monies constituting such fund, and of all bonds and securities pertaining thereto, shall be delivered to the government of the United States, to be by that government divided between Maine and Massachusetts.

The sources from which this fund has been derived, may be classed under three heads.

1st. The stumpage upon timber cut upon the St. John and Aroostook, under the authority of permits from New Brunswick.

2d. The proceeds of the sale and seizure of timber cut upon

14

the disputed territory, by mere trespassers, and without the authority of either Maine, Massachusetts or New Brunswick.

3d. The proceeds of the seizure by New Brunswick of timber cut under permits from Maine and Massachusetts.

It is in reference to that portion of the fund, arising from the last mentioned source, that the provisions of the treaty seem to be most singular and unjust.

The timber cut upon the Aroostook, under permits from Maine and Massachusetts, was seized under the British claim of property in the timber itself and in the territory upon which it was cut; because if cut upon American soil, it would have been free of all duty or toll.

The individuals who have bought this timber of Maine and Massachusetts, were compelled to submit to the most onerous exactions. Their timber was taken from them by the power of New Brunswick, and they were forced to yield to such terms as were dictated.

The bonds mentioned in the treaty arose under these seizures; the owners of the timber seized, having been required to give bonds, payable in three months, at the rate of one dollar and sixty cents for each ton, as the only condition upon which they could obtain the release of their property. The bonds thus taken in 1839 having been put in suit by the province government, their payment was resisted on the ground, that the timber out of which they arose, had been lawfully cut upon American soil and was therefore free of all duty or exactions. These suits having been continued in the province courts for upwards of eighteen months, occasioning great loss and expense to the parties obliged to defend them, were finally compromised on the payment of twenty five per cent. of the amount due upon the bonds, and on the agreement of the governor of New Brunswick that he would recommend to his home government that the amount remaining due should be cancelled. The committee believe that this recommendation has been complied with, but are not authentically apprised of the fact.

Whether, however, these bonds have been cancelled or not, the committee cannot see how they can have been paid over for the benefit of Maine or Massachusetts, arising as they did from the stumpage of timber sold by those States, and the price of which has been for a long time in their respective treasuries.

Believing, however, that these bonds have been in fact cancelled, the provision that they shall be paid over for the benefit of Maine and Massachusetts, strikes the committee as a very peculiar one, and only to be compared with the cession of large tracts of territory, for right of navigation which we already possessed.

It cannot be gravely contended that any such results were anticipated by the Legislature, during its extra session in 1842, or that it would have entertained, for a moment, any idea of participating in the negotiation, had such results been foreseen.

It is not possible, after rejecting the Dutch award, even when coupled with an offer of lands from the United States of millions of dollars in value, that Maine can accept without mortification, a line still more seriously curtailing her fair proportions, and for equivalents, which are either illusory or contemptible. It is not possible that she can witness such a termination of her twenty years struggle for her rights and honor, without feeling the keenest regrets, which crushed hopes, baffled efforts and unremunerated sacrifices, can excite.

In their discussion of the treaty of Washington, the committee trust that they shall not be thought to have been unmindful of the eminent claims to respect enjoyed by the patriotic gentlemen who represented Maine in the negotiation. Higher considerations than such as can arise from a regard for any individuals, however estimable, have compelled the committee to express the belief, that those gentlemen assented, in the settlement of the boundary question, to terms not contemplated by the Legislature or people of Maine.

The committee would however do injustice to their own opinions, as well as to public feelings, if they did not add the expression of their fullest confidence, that those gentlemen acted with the purest intentions, with the most assiduous fidelity, and with purposes devoted to the best interests of the State.

The committee are not insensible to the pressure of adverse in-

fluences to which they were subjected; the appeals from the other States in the Union; and, the committee regret to add, the tyrannical threats addressed to them by the diplomatic secretary of the United States.

Better, indeed, had all been braved. Better, indeed, had the American secretary been told, that Maine would lose her whole territory by honorable arbitration rather than sacrifice an acre to the spirit of unworthy compromise. Better, indeed, if our sister States had been admonished that they degraded themselves as well as us, when they asked us to yield our part of a common American birthright.

The committee cannot feel justified in closing this report, without emphatically disclaiming the existence of any such spirit in any portion of the people of Maine, as the American secretary appears to have believed prevailed in the American Senate. A map hunted up among the archives of the French capital, by Mr. Jared Sparks, is understood to have been privately communicated to the Senate by Mr. Webster, with the purpose of proving the claims of Maine to be entirely unfounded, and of urging upon the Senate the ratification of the treaty pending before them, in order to avoid, before it was too late to remedy them, the consequences of a discovery by the British diplomatists, of the true extent of the rights of their country. It is deeply to be regretted that the original privacy of such a communication, had not been better preserved. Certainly, the spirit which dictated it, could not have found an answering chord in the bosom of a single Senator. The inducement presented by it to the Senate, was predicated upon nothing more nor less that the desirability of clinching a bargain which defrauded an unsuspecting adversary. No code of morality, with which the offering of such an inducement is consistent, is cherished, as the committee believe, by any considerable portion of the people of Maine. They have insisted upon the line of 1783, as believed by them to be susceptible of demarkation upon the face of the earth, only because they were intelligently convinced, that it was one of their clear and manifest rights. If satisfied by more evidence, that they had been in error, it would never afford them

pleasure to have overreached an adversary, nor satisfaction to enjoy what justly belonged to others.

If so high a functionary of this government as the Secretary of its diplomatic department, has been capable of presenting to the Senate of the United States an inducement so unworthy as the one upon which the committee have commented—it does not seem unjust to believe that he may have also intended to coerce the ratification of the treaty, by destroying all hopes of success from an arbitration. No better means, certainly, of destroying such hopes, could be devised, than to prevail upon members of the Senate to advocate the authenticity of a map, which strikes at the foundation of our claim.

> SHEPHERD CARY, JOHN W. DANA, CULLEN SAWTELLE, AMASA STETSON, LEONARD PIERCE, WILLIAM FRYE.



STATE OF MAINE.

RESOLVED, That the terms of the Treaty of Wash-2 ington, concluded on the 9th day of August, 1842, 3 so far as they affect the State of Maine, are not sat-4 isfactory to the people thereof.

RESOLVED, That the hopes and expectations, under 2 which the State of Maine consented to participate in 3 the negotiation which eventuated in the Treaty of 4 Washington, are greatly disappointed by the result of 5 that negotiation.

RESOLVED, That the true meaning and intent of the 2 resolves passed by the Legislature of Maine, on the 3 26th of May, 1842, entitled, "Resolves in relation to 4 the northeastern boundary of this State" did not au-5 thorize the commissioners elected under said resolves 6 to surrender any portion of the territory within the 7 line of the treaty of '83 as claimed by Maine, without 8 a full equivalent therefor.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN SENATE, March 16, 1843.

ORDERED: That 1,000 copies of the foregoing Report and Resolves, be printed for the use of the Legislature.

#

JERE HASKELL, Secretary.