

TESTIMONY.

Laurent Fely, being duly sworn, deposeth and saith that a small piece of the above-described tract has been cultivated by the above-named Augustus Grignon for about nine years last past, and that he also cut hay on other tracts for the same length of time.

Farm No. 4.—Paul Ducharme.

Entry of land made this first day of May, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-one, by Paul Ducharme, which is described as follows, viz: situated on the east side of Fox river, at the Grand Kakalin or Great Rapids, bounded on the west by said river, and includes a small prairie in front, which is about four arpents in width, and extends westerly far enough to contain one section of land, bounded on the north, south, and east by unlocated lands; it being the same tract mentioned in the Indian deed of the date of seventeen hundred and ninety-three.

TESTIMONY.

John Lawe, being duly sworn, deposeth and saith that he has often seen stacks of hay, and sometimes corn, on the above-described tract of land, in passing there this last twenty-two years.

☞ An extract of a letter from Jacob Chukhaneous and others, sent to the General Land Office from the department of Indian affairs of War Department, states that this claim has been reported *favorably* by the commissioners. If so, it must be in a subsequent report. The Menomonees claim the land. See the extract filed with Col. McKenny's letter of March 1, 1825, answered March 31, 1825.

J. M. MOORE.

Report concerning the land titles at Prairie des Chiens, in the county of Crawford, and Territory of Michigan.

Few difficulties have been met with by the commissioners in their investigation of these titles; they are not individually intricate. The determination of a few principles of general applicability has furnished a rule by which they have all been decided, for they rest upon long-continued possession.

Notwithstanding the high antiquity which may be claimed for the settlement of Prairie des Chiens, and the very considerable numbers of which it has so long consisted, no one perfect title, founded upon French or British grant, legally authenticated, has been successfully made out; comparatively but few deeds of any sort have been exhibited to us. To an American, unacquainted with the astonishing carelessness of the Canadians in respect to whatsoever concerns their land titles, this fact must seem unaccountable. It nevertheless accords with whatever is known in this regard of the French population throughout this country.

It became manifest, therefore, immediately after the commissioners were possessed of the report of the agent, that whatever claim the people of Prairie des Chiens might have for a confirmation of their land titles must be founded upon proof of continued possession since 1796; a basis sufficiently broad to have comprehended perhaps all their claims, but for the changes which have occurred within a few years among them, and the interruptions and occasional evictions from their possessions, consequent upon the establishment there, since the late war, of bodies of American troops.

Such interruptions and evictions, though frequent since the period last alluded to, seem never, among the French population, to have excited a spirit of resistance, but to have been submitted to in silence. Since their ancestors were cut off by the treaty which gave the Canadas to the English from all intercourse with their parent country, the people, both of Green Bay and Prairie des Chiens, have been left, until within a few years, quite isolated, almost without any government but their own. And although the present population of these settlements are natives of the countries which they inhabit, and consequently are by birth citizens of the United States, yet, until within a few years, they have had, apparently, as little political connexion with its government as their ancestors had with that of the British. Ignorance of their civil rights, carelessness of their land titles, docility, habitual hospitality, cheerful submission to the requisitions of any government which may be set over them, are their universal characteristics. With those who know them, their quiet surrender of their fields and houses upon the demand of those who come ostensibly clothed with authority, would constitute no evidence of the illegality of their titles, or of the weakness of their claims.

A few additional remarks, in conclusion, might seem sufficient to satisfy the requisition of the law, and to explain adequately the grounds of the decisions the commissioners have made. A circumstance has occurred, however, which seems to call for a more detailed exposition of their views. After the agent had returned from Green Bay and Prairie des Chiens, and when it seemed too late to obtain rebutting or further testimony, a caveat was filed with the commissioners, at the instance of the superintendent of Indian trade, by John W. Johnson, esq., Indian factor, against the claim to village lot No. 14, preferred by the American Fur Company. The principles upon which that caveat is founded, and by which it is endeavored to be supported, apply with equal force to all the other land claims at Prairie des Chiens. The objections against the claim, and the documents adduced in its support, consist in this: that the settlement at Prairie des Chiens is of recent origin; that its residents have intruded upon the public lands in violation of the laws of the United States, and that, in truth, the Indian title to the country in question has not been extinguished, objections which, if sustained in one case, must conclude all cases there. Upon a critical examination of this matter, so unexpectedly and so recently presented to them, the commissioners have not been able to discover anything in the protest of the United States Indian factor, in the documents he has adduced, or in his own fair and candid statement, which could sanction a doubt as to the propriety of confirming the claim set up by the American Fur Company.

It appears to have been in the spring of 1673 that Pierre Marquette and Mons. Joliet took their departure from the French establishment at Green Bay, on a voyage of discovery up the Fox river, and