

INDIAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION,
995 DREXEL BUILDING,
PHILADELPHIA, PA.,

May 14, 1917.

To the members of our Association, and to all those persons of good will among the general public, it is my pleasant duty to announce a great victory won for the cause of good government and the rights of the Seminole Indians. The story is simply and graphically told by the pen of Mr. Claud F. Johnson in *The Florida Times-Union*. Especial credit for this achievement is, in my opinion, due to our Secretary, Mr. M. K. Sniffen, who labored for the passage of the bill with untiring energy and skill, and with, let me add, characteristic modesty and courtesy.

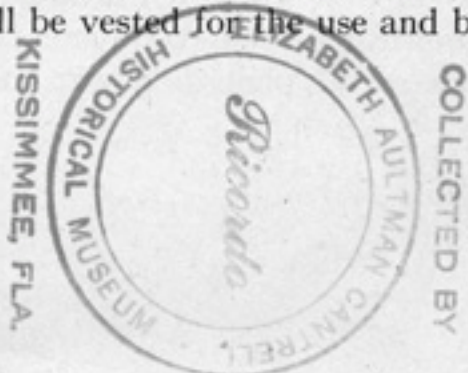
Respectfully,

HERBERT WELSH,
Corresponding Secy., I. R. A.

From *The Florida Times-Union*, Jacksonville, Florida, Thursday, May 10, 1917.

Tallahassee, May 9.—(Special.)—Gov. Catts today signed the following bill:

House Bill No. 32.—A bill to be entitled an act providing for and setting aside certain lands to the Seminole Indians as a reservation, providing for the trustees, in whom the title to said lands shall be vested for the use and benefit of said Indians.



FLORIDA SEMINOLE INDIANS WILL HAVE HOME AT LAST

LEGISLATURE PROVIDES FOR RESERVATION IN MONROE COUNTY, NEAR THE TEN THOUSAND ISLANDS—GOVERNMENT NOW IN POSITION TO AID BRAVES OF SEMINOLE TRIBE

BY CLAUD F. JOHNSON

TALLAHASSEE, May 9.—(Special.)—The American Indian standing out, life size, over both entrances to our state Capitol, with open hands, inviting his white brother to share this goodly land of Florida, is a striking picture. Underneath are the prophetic words "In God We Trust." On all documents of the state this picture is stamped. It is the seal of the great state of Florida, representing the attitude of the powerful Indian tribe toward the white people when Florida became one of the states of the Union, in 1821.

Now for a moment look at the other side of the picture. Nearly a century later these Indians, reduced to the most abject poverty (see report of a congressional committee made in 1917 on "Condition of the Florida Seminoles") and without a foot of land to call home, have been forced back and back until the state now finally gives them a resting place on the gulf coast at the extreme end of Florida, near the Ten Thousand Islands. This act of the 1917 legislature, together with our big-hearted Christian governor, who mentioned in his address to the legislature that in simple justice something ought to be done for our Seminole Indian, will go down in history as being the most humane act ever performed by any legislature of Florida, and as the one piece of legislation that will reach into eternity. By the setting aside of approximately 100,000 acres of land for the Seminole Indian, the state's plain duty was finally accomplished. In

passing it may be said that it is estimated that only 5 per cent. of this land is tillable and all of it is outside of the drainage district.

Many factors have helped to bring about this good result, one of the most prominent being Mrs. Minnie Moore Wilson, of Kissimmee, who made the uplift of these Indians and the securing of land for them her earnest and persistent work for nearly twenty years. Another was a society known as the Friends of the Florida Seminoles, with headquarters in Kissimmee, whose membership included many prominent people in Florida and other states. Still another factor was the press of Florida, which went on record as favoring the state providing permanent homes for the Seminoles. Then, last but by no means least, was the Indian Rights Association of Philadelphia. This organization, more than a year ago, sent its very efficient secretary, M. K. Sniffen, and one of its directors, Joseph Elkinton, down to study at first hand the condition and needs of the Seminoles. He was accompanied by J. M. Wilson, Jr., who has known for more than thirty years many of these Indians, personally. They visited many of their camps in the Everglades and Big Cypress region. As a result, the association took an active interest in the matter, which has brought to a successful conclusion the work commenced nearly twenty years ago.

Regarding the previous efforts on behalf of these Indians, it might be noted that in 1899 the Florida legislature passed a bill granting the Seminoles a reservation of about 835,000 acres. This was approved by the governor, but speculators and other active interests between the time the land was selected and the meeting of the legislature secured this particular tract, and the Indians got left. A later session of the legislature passed a bill providing 235,000 acres for these Indians, but on the last day of the session the governor vetoed it, because the land was alleged to be worth \$10 per acre.

At the next succeeding legislature, another Indian bill was introduced and was progressing to the entire satisfaction of the friends of the measure, when certain active poli-

ticians, known to be strongly opposed to these Indians having any land in Florida, arrived at the state capital, and this bill went into a "big sleep." Now comes the 1917 legislature, which has covered itself with everlasting glory by redeeming Florida's obligation to the Seminoles.

In this final effort, the national government was ably represented by Capt. L. A. Spencer, special commissioner to the Florida Seminoles, who rendered valuable service by giving information to the members of the legislature. The government is now in position to establish industrial schools and assist these Indians in the live stock industry, agriculture and more sanitary ways of living. It is confidently believed by their friends that these Indians will now begin to develop into the best class of citizenship.

The highest duty of a state is the making of good citizens, and Florida has in these Seminoles the best material to be found anywhere.

The gold pen with which the governor signed the bill was presented to Mrs. Wilson in recognition of her long-continued efforts on behalf of these Seminole Indians.