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## Contemporaneous Reactions to Statehood: State Government

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## CONTEMPORANEOUS REACTIONS TO STATEHOOD

Tallahassee *Floridian*  
March 8, 1845:

On the glorious news from Washington, received this morning, all the bells in the town rung their merry chimes, and the old nine-pounder bellowed forth 36 guns, for the Senators who voted for Florida, and ten more for David Levy, the favorite son of Florida.

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*Pensacola Gazette*, March 8, 1845:

### STATE GOVERNMENT \*

We are now a state. In a few days we may expect the proclamation requiring the election of a Governor, members of the General Assembly, and a Representative in Congress. The election is required to be held on the first Monday after the lapse of sixty days from the date of the proclamation. So that the election will probably take place about the middle of May.-The members of the General Assembly are to assemble at Tallahassee on the fourth Monday after the election. Escambia County (as it stood before the setting off of Santa Rosa) sends one Senator and three Representatives. Walton and Washington Counties send one Senator, and each of these two counties sends one Representative.

Such an opportunity as will be here offered to serve the people with disinterested regard, rarely occurs. The Treasury of Florida is empty ; and we are largely indebted. Treasury warrants are at a discount of 50 per cent. The people are unwilling to be taxed, indeed the very lightest tax which can

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\*Benjamin D. Wright, later to be Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Florida, had sold the *Gazette* long before this, but still wrote its editorials.

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be imposed, will be felt as a burthen ; but at all events no money can be raised by taxation in much less than a year, and when raised, it will come in, not in the shape of cash, but in outstanding Treasury warrants. The pay of the members of the General Assembly will necessarily be small, and will be in such shape that they cannot discharge their stage fare nor feed themselves upon the road with it. But this is not all. It is but honest to pay our oldest debts first; so that the Treasury warrants to be issued under the state, ought certainly to be postponed until the indebtedness of the *Territory* be extinguished.

It follows then that none but those who are willing to spend their own means, can be expected to take upon themselves the burthen of this public duty ; for a great and heavy burthen, it is sure to be. Yet we trust that there will be found and chosen by the people, the right sort of men to represent us—men who have the requisite intelligence, integrity and industry, accompanied by that spirit of self-sacrifice which will be so necessary in this case.—Much of our prosperity and success hereafter, will depend upon the character and the impulse now to be imparted to the new state. Our most anxious wish therefore is, and this is doubtless the desire of all, that the wisest, the purest, and the best among us (if their private interests do not absolutely forbid it) will consent to serve for the General Assembly. Their being chosen will involve them in a present sacrifice of time and money, but we trust they will be content thus to “cast their bread upon the waters, that it may return to them after many days.”

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We will publish in our next number the Constitution of Florida. It is modeled after that of Alabama. At the time of its adoption many of the mem-

bers of the Convention were so greatly dissatisfied with its details, that they left the Convention before the time came for signing the Constitution. Others were called away by public duty as members of the Legislative Council. This will account for the fact that the instrument is signed by only about two-thirds of the members.

Constitution making now, is no very difficult task, and ours is as good as any other. Even the details of which we have spoken and which at first gave so much offense, seem now upon reflection, not likely to work the injurious consequences which were then expected from them.

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*Florida Herald* (St. Augustine)  
February 25, 1845:

#### FLORIDA A STATE

The bill to admit Florida and Iowa into the Union as States passed the third reading in the House on the 13th inst. by a vote of 145 to 46. The bill will probably pass the Senate without opposition. Strenuous opposition was made to the measure by the Abolitionists and an attempt was made to admit Iowa alone and leave Florida out. Mr. Levy said he was opposed to the erection of Florida into a State as a mere matter of present policy; but he felt there was no choice left between this and the future. The change of condition will bear hard on us, but it will have its counter-balancing advantages-not the least of which is that we shall have the right and privilege of protecting and securing our property, which is such an eye sore to certain Northern Fanatics. We rejoice the matter is settled. We now know the worst, and it rests with the people themselves to elevate their character in all that can dignify free-men. They now can *demand* where they were forced to beg.

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*Ibid.* March 18, 1845:

Florida has by the act of the late session of Congress been admitted into the Union as a sovereign State. She with Iowa and Texas will add three more stars to the brilliant galaxy that emblazons the flag of our vast Republic. The terms upon which she has been admitted is not satisfactory to a portion of her people; but we doubt not that the change will be less onerous than anticipated. Florida is a Sovereign State now, and it is idle for those who have opposed the change to waste their time in unavailing regret, and it becomes the people to take such measures as will insure to themselves the enactment and continuation of wise and beneficial laws to the maintenance of good order and the well being of society.

The people of Florida now have a voice in all the great and exciting questions of national politics. Two Senators and one Representative will express their will in the halls of the Capitol at Washington, and we have three votes in the Presidential election. By the position Florida has assumed she has added strength to the Southern section of the Union and her people have displayed a patriotism worthy their illustrious ancestry.

The Constitution of Florida is one of the most Democratic Constitutions ever framed. It contains the accumulated wisdom of ages and is the "embodiment" of all the world has ever done for liberty. That there are defects in it, it would be folly to deny, yet such is the condition of man and so varient are human opinions, that in the eyes of one those very defects are beauties, while to others they are hideous deformities. But the Constitution of Florida will bear comparison with the whole twenty-nine, which constitute the fundamental law of the twenty-eight Republics of this Union and the Union itself.

*Florida Sentinel* (Tallahassee) February 25, 1845:

PUBLIC MEETING IN QUINCY, RELATIVE TO THE ADMISSION OF FLORIDA INTO THE UNION, HELD

21ST FEBRUARY, [1845].

Information having been received of the passage of the bill by the House of Representatives,<sup>1</sup> for the admission of Florida into the Union, the citizens spontaneously assembled in front of the Court House, and after firing *thirteen* rounds of cannon, and ringing all the town bells, met at the court room ; when, upon motion of P. A. Stockton, General CHARLES H. DUPONT, was called to the Chair, and ISAAC R. HARRIS, appointed Secretary.

After some explanatory remarks from the Chairman, on motion of N. H. Stewart, a committee of five was appointed by the Chair, to draft resolutions expressive of the sense of the meeting, in reference to the prospect of our speedy admission into the Union, as a *Sovereign and Independent State*. Whereupon, the Chairman appointed N. H. Stewart, George W. Bruton, Isaac Nathans, Philip A. Stockton and Dr. B. McMillan, as said committee, who retired for a short time, and reported the following resolutions, viz :-

*Resolved*, That as citizens of Gadsden county, we have learned with unfeigned gratification, of the passage by the House of Representatives, of the bill for the admission of Florida into the Union.

*Resolved*, That our kindest feelings are tendered to such of the members of Congress representing the non-slaveholding States, as discarding the petty sectional prejudices which are so rife in our national assembly, have had the independence and patriotism to advocate our admission.

*Resolved*, That our thanks are due in an especial

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<sup>1</sup> On February 13, 1845.

Notes are by Dr. Dorothy Dodd, Florida State Archivist, and this issue of the *Sentinel* is in the Florida State Library.

manner, to Gen. Bayley <sup>2</sup> [*sic.*] of Virginia, who so ably advocated our right to admission.

*Resolved*, That it be recommended to our citizens, to illuminate their houses, when it shall be known that the bill for admission has been passed by the Senate. <sup>3</sup>

*Resolved*, That a committee of *thirteen* be appointed by the Chair to make such arrangements for testifying our joy upon the admission of our Territory into the Union, as will best demonstrate the public feeling on the subject.

Which resolutions were read and unanimously adopted. Whereupon the Chair appointed the following gentlemen as such committee, viz.: Sam'l B. Stephens, Isaac Nathans, P. A. Stockton, Geo. W. Bruton, A. J. Forman, Dr. B. McMillan, Wm. Forbes, James L. Tompkins, John H. Keadle, Dr. Thos. Munroe, Wm. T. Stockton, N. H. Stewart and Geo. A. Dilworth,

On motion of G. W. Bruton, the Chairman was added to said Committee.

On motion of P. A. Stockton, it was unanimously resolved, by a *rising vote*, that an extra gun be fired after adjournment of this meeting as a testimonial of our appreciation of the service rendered by Gen. Bayley. (*Cheering*).

On motion of N. H. Stewart, resolved, That the proceedings of this meeting be published in all the Tallahassee papers.

After adjournment, an extra gun was also fired by general acclamation, in honor of our Delegate, <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Henry Bayly successfully opposed an amendment to the bill that would have required the calling of a new convention to strike from the constitution the clauses prohibiting the emancipation of slaves and the immigration of free Negroes.

<sup>3</sup> The bill passed the Senate March 1, 1845. The news reached Tallahassee March 8.

<sup>4</sup> David Levy.

for his indefatigable exertions in behalf of the Territory. (*Cheering*).

C. H. DUPONT, *Chairman*.

ISAAC R. HARRIS, *Sec'y*.

P. S.-The whole proceedings of the meeting were characterized by the utmost unanimity and good feeling, and the enthusiasm and joy manifested on the occasion, were such as is seldom witnessed in the quiet town of Quincy.

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*Pensacola Gazette*, March 18, 1845:

**FLORIDA**

Start, start from thy slumber, bright Land of the Sun!

For blessings unnumber'd their course have begun ;  
True liberty now doth thy off-spring await,  
They breath the free air of a sovereign State.

On history's pages no name hast thou won,  
No hero hast thou ever owned for a son ;  
Thy voice has been silent, nor heard in debate,  
For thou ne'er hast been crown'd as a power giving  
State.

Too long have thy sons in supineness remained  
Nor glory, nor honors have ever attained ;  
They have clung to their yoke, as a blessing of fate,  
For, alas! they breathed not the free air of a State.

Away with dependence! - we scorn the base word!-  
To the heart of a free man, it naught can afford;  
It enerves the strong mind that would seek to be  
great,  
If it breathed the free air of self-govern'd State.



The north with its ice, and its regions of snow,  
Can never the beauties and balminess know,  
That will strengthen each arm, and each bosom dilate  
To sustain the proud name of a free-governed State.

Thou now hast a name 'mong the nations of earth,  
Future heroes and sages, from thee shall claim  
birth ;  
Thy glory shall many a freeman elate,-  
Sweet Land of the South! now a starry crowned  
State.

We will soon in the banner, which floats to the  
breeze,  
Over snowy-tipped mountains, and foamy-wreathed  
seas,  
Three stars in its heaven of azure create,-  
The brightest is Florida's, flow'r'y gemmed State!

Then, Florida! in thy new honors step forth!  
Haste to join the brave band from the West and the  
North!  
Nor fear that thou e'er will -regret the stern fate,  
That hath made thee a free and sovereign State.  
March 12th, 1845. IONE.

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*Florida Sentinel* (Tallahassee) Feb. 25, 1845:

#### THE STATE OF FLORIDA

The anticipations of the friends of State Govern-  
ment are, at length, probably realized, and our Ter-  
ritory has, in all likelihood, been placed in the digni-  
fied position of a sovereign member of the great  
American Confederacy. On the 13th inst., the bill  
admitting Florida and Iowa, passed the House by  
the unexpected majority of ninety-one; and no one,  
apparently, seems to anticipate its defeat in the  
Senate . . . .

The friends of this great measure have beheld its apparent consummation with delight. It has been welcomed with the roar of cannon, with shouts and cheers, and every customary demonstration of joy. We certainly have no disposition to interrupt this festivity; but let us bear in mind that State Government will be found truly valuable not as an *end*, but only as a *means*. That it brings with it important duties and weighty responsibilities, the conscientious, upright and faithful discharge of which can alone make that a blessing which otherwise will infallibly prove an unmitigated curse.

To those who have uniformly opposed the measure, either upon grounds of expediency, or real or supposed sectional interest, and to whom its consummation will be a bitter disappointment - to such may we be allowed to say, that State Government has now probably ceased to be a question, and that opposition or regrets are alike unavailing. Its duties are now probably *imposed* upon us, and escape or evasion is utterly impossible. May we, therefore, conjure them, in the name of our infant State, whose destinies for weal or woe devolve partially on them - in the name of our common country, whose honor is now concerned in our action - by whatever motives should influence the good citizen, may we beseech them to act well their part. Laying aside all that is past, let them now, in this moment of their country's need, come to the rescue in the spirit of enlarged, liberal and comprehensive patriotism.

No intelligent mind, we apprehend, can look at the present condition of our Territory, and at her past political history, without feeling a most anxious solicitude for the future. What manner of men have heretofore had the ascendancy - the dominant power in our home government? Who have enacted our laws, and under what sort of influence have they

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been enacted. Has it been a controlling sense of moral, social and religious obligation? a devotion to the true and permanent interests of the Territory? Have men of probity, candor, sincerity, faithful in all the relations of life, industrious, staid, sober, honorable men-have such held the reins of power? On the contrary, in the management of our little affairs, have not already crept, all the more contemptible vices of old and corrupt governments? -intrigue, maneuvering, trickery, double-dealing, and all the degrading resorts which selfish and designing men use to answer their own sinister ends! . . . .

What fate awaits our young republic? . . . . Will she, with a moral dignity and energy becoming her new sphere and its important relations, exert herself to inspire love and devotion at home and respect abroad? Will her people, with a public spirit due themselves and the occasion, address them one and all with judgment, energy, and disinterestedness to the establishment of a well-ordered government.

We will not permit ourselves to think otherwise. God grant that whatever of moral and intellectual worth-whatever of disinterested patriotism there may be among our whole people, may be brought to this work.