

MINERVA; or, ANTI-JACOBIN.

TWO & A HALF DOLS. PER ANNUM. Payable half Yearly.

PUBLISHED (WEEKLY) BY WILLIAM BOYLAN.

TWO DOLLARS PER ANNUM. Paid in Advance.

Vol. 8.]

RALEIGH, (N. C.) MONDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1803.

[No. 400.]

AN ACCOUNT OF LOUISIANA.

Being an Abstract of Documents, in the Offices of the Departments of State, and of the Treasury.

The object of the following is to consolidate the information respecting the present state of Louisiana, furnished to the Executive by several individuals among the best informed upon that subject.

(CONTINUED)

Chapitoulas, first and second German castles,--Catahanote--Fourche and Iberville.

The best and most improved are above the city, and comprehend, what is there known by the Paroisse de Chapitoulas, Premier & second Cote des Alemans, and extend 16 leagues.

Above this begins the parish of Catahanote, or first Acadian settlement, extending eight leagues on the river. Adjoining it and still ascending is the second Acadian settlement or parish of the Fourche, which extends about six leagues. The parish of Iberville then commences, and is bounded on the east side by the river of the same name, which though dry a great part of the year, yet, when the Mississippi is raised, it communicates with the lakes Maurepas and Ponchartrain, and through them with the sea, and thus forms what is called the island of New-Orleans. Except on the point just below the Iberville, the country from New-Orleans is settled the whole way along the river, and presents a scene of uninterrupted plantations in sight of each other, whose fronts to the Mississippi are all cleared, and occupy on that river from 5 to 25 acres with a depth of 40; so that a plantation of 5 acres in front contains 200. A few sugar plantations are formed in the parish of Catahanote, but the remainder is devoted to cotton and provisions, and the whole is an excellent soil incapable of being exhausted. The plantations are but one deep on the island of New-Orleans, and on the opposite side of the river as far as the mouth of the Iberville, which is 35 leagues above New-Orleans.

Bayou de la Fourche--Atacapas, and Opelousas.

About 25 leagues from the last mentioned place on the west side of the Mississippi, the creek or Bayou of the Fourche, called in old maps La Riviere des Chitachas, flows from the Mississippi, and communicates with the sea to the west of the Balise. The entrance of the Mississippi is navigable only at high water, but will then admit of craft of from 60 to 70 tons burthen. On both banks of this creek are settlements, one plantation deep, for near 15 leagues, and they are divided into two parishes. The settlers are numerous though poor, and the culture is universally cotton. On all creeks making from the Mississippi, the soil is the same as on the bank of the river, & the border is the highest part of it, from whence it descends gradually to the swamp. In no place on the low lands is there depth more than suffices for one plantation, before you come to the low grounds incapable of cultivation. This creek affords one of the communications to the two populous and rich settlements of Atacapas and Opelousas formed on & near the small rivers Teche and Vermilion which flow into the bay of Mexico. But the principal and swiftest communication is by the Bayou or creek of Plaquemines, whose entrance into the Mississippi is seven leagues higher up on the same side, and 32 above New-Orleans. These settlements abound in cattle and horses, have a large quantity of good land in their vicinity, and may be made of great importance. A part of their produce is sent by sea to New-Orleans, but the greater part is carried in bateaux by the creeks above mentioned.

Baton Rouge and its dependencies.

Immediately above the Iberville, and on both sides of the Mississippi lies the parish of Manchac, which extends four leagues on the river, and is well cultivated. Above it commences the settlement of Baton Rouge, extending about nine leagues. It is remarkable as being the first place, where the high land is contiguous to the river, and here it forms a bluff from 30 to 40 feet above the greatest rise of the river. Here the settlements extend a considerable way back on the east side; and this parish has that of Thompson's creek and Bayou Sara sub-

ordinate to it. The mouth of the first of these creeks is about 49 leagues from New-Orleans, and that of the latter 2 or 3 leagues higher up. They run from north-east to south-west, and their head waters are north of the 31st degree of latitude. Their banks have the best soil, and the greatest number of good cotton plantations of any part of Louisiana, & are allowed to be the garden of it.

Pointe Coupee and Fauffe Riviere.

Above Baton Rouge, at the distance of 50 leagues from New-Orleans, and on the west side of the Mississippi is Pointe Coupee, a populous and rich settlement, extending 8 leagues along the river. Its produce is cotton. Behind it, on an old bed of the river, now a lake, whose outlets are closed up, is the settlement of Fauffe Riviere, which is well cultivated.

In the space now described from the sea as high as and including the last mentioned settlement, is contained three-fourths of the population, and seven-eighths of the riches of Louisiana.

From the settlement of Pointe Coupee on the Mississippi to Cape Girardeau above the mouth of the Ohio, there is no land on the west side, that is not overflowed in the spring to the distance of 8 or 10 leagues from the river with from 2 to 12 feet of water, except a small spot near New-Madrid; so that in the whole extent there is no possibility of forming a considerable settlement contiguous to the river on that side. The eastern bank has in this respect a decided advantage over the western, as there are on it many situations which effectually command the river.

Red River and its Settlements.

On the west side of the Mississippi, 70 leagues from New-Orleans, is the mouth of the Red river, on whose banks and vicinity are the settlements of Rapide, Aveyelles and Nachitoches, all of them thriving and populous. The latter is situate 75 leagues up the Red river. On the north side of the Red river a few leagues from its junction with the Mississippi is the Black river, on one of whose branches, a considerable way up, is the infant settlement of Ouachita, which from the richness of the soil may be made a place of importance. Cotton is the chief produce of these settlements, but they have likewise a considerable Indian trade. The River Rouge, or Red River, is used to communicate with the frontiers of New-Mexico,

Concord--Arkansas--St. Charles, and St. Andrew, &c.

There is no other settlement on the Mississippi except the small one called Concord, opposite to the Natchez, till you come to the Arkansas river, whose mouth is 250 leagues above New-Orleans.

Here there are but a few families, who are more attached to the Indian trade (by which chiefly they live) than to cultivation. There is no settlement from this place to New-Madrid, which is itself inconsiderable. Ascending the river you come to Cape Girardeau, St. Genevieve and St. Louis, where, though the inhabitants are numerous, they raise little for exportation, and content themselves with trading with the Indians and working a few lead mines. This country is very fertile, especially on the banks of the Missouri, where there have been formed two settlements, called St. Charles and St. Andrew, mostly by emigrants from Kentucky. The peltry procured in the Illinois is the best sent to the Atlantic market; and the quantity is very considerable. Lead is to be had with ease, and in such quantities as to supply all Europe, if the population were sufficient to work the numerous mines to be found within two or three feet from the surface in various parts of the country. The settlements about the Illinois were first made by the Canadians, and their inhabitants still resemble them in their aversion to labor, and love of a wandering life. They contain but few negroes, compared to the number of the whites; and it may be taken for a general rule, that in proportion to the distance from the capital, the number of blacks diminish below that of the whites, the former abounding most on the rich plantations in its vicinity.

General description of Upper Louisiana.

When compared with the Indian territory, the face of the country in Upper Louisiana is rather more broken, though the soil is equally fertile. It is a fact not to be contended, that the west side of the river possesses some advantages, not generally incident to those regions. It is elevated and healthy, and well watered with a variety of large rapid streams, calculated for mills & other water works. From Cape Girardeau, above the mouth of the Ohio, to the Missouri, the land on the east side of the Mississippi is low and flat, and occasionally exposed to inundations; that on the Louisiana side, contiguous to the river, is generally much higher, and in many places very rocky on the shore. Some of the heights exhibit a scene truly picturesque. They rise to a height of at least 300 feet, faced with perpendicular lime and free-stone, carved into various shapes and figures by the hand of nature, and afford the appearance of a multitude of antique towers. From the tops of these elevations, the land gradually slopes back from the river, without gravel or rock, and is covered with valuable timber. It may be said with truth that, for fertility of soil, no part of the world exceeds the borders of the Mississippi; the land yields an abundance of all the necessaries of life, & almost spontaneously; very little labour being required in the cultivation of the earth. That part of Upper Louisiana, which borders on the North Mexico, is one immense prairie; it produces nothing but grass: it is filled with buffalo, deer, and other kinds of game; the land is represented as too rich for the growth of forest trees.

It is pretended that Upper Louisiana contains in its bowels many silver and copper mines, and various specimens of both are exhibited. Several trials have been made to ascertain the fact; but the want of skill in the artists has hitherto left the subject undecided.

The salt works are also pretty numerous: some belong to individuals; others to the public. They already yield an abundant supply for the consumption of the country; and if properly managed, might become an article of more general exportation. The usual price per bushel is 150 cents in cash at the works. This price will be still lower as soon as the manufacture of the salt is assumed by government, or patronised by men who have large capitals to employ in the business. One extraordinary fact relative to salt must not be omitted. There exists about 1000 miles up the Missouri, and not far from that river, a Salt Mountain. The existence of such a mountain might well be questioned, were it not for the testimony of several respectable & enterprising traders, who have visited it, and who have exhibited several bushels of the salt to the curiosity of the people of St. Louis, where some of it still remains. A specimen of the same salt has been sent to Marietta. This mountain is said to be 180 miles long, and 45 in width, composed of solid rock salt, without any trees, or even shrubs on it. Salt springs are very numerous beneath the surface of this mountain, and they flow through the fissures and cavities of it. Caves of salt-petre are found in Upper Louisiana, though at some distance from the settlements. Four men on a trading voyage, lately discovered one several hundred miles up the Missouri. They spent 5 or 6 weeks in the manufacture of this article, and returned to St. Louis with 400 weight of it. It proved to be good and they sold it for a high price.

The geography of the Mississippi and Missouri, and their contiguity for a great length of way, are but little known. The traders assert, that 100 miles above their junction, a man may walk from one to the other in a day; and it is also asserted, that 700 miles still higher up, the portage may be crossed in four or five days. This portage is frequented by traders, who carry on a considerable trade with some of the Missouri Indians. Their general route is through Green Bay, which is an arm of Lake Michigan; they then pass into a small lake connected with it, and which communicates with the Fox river; they then cross over a short portage into the Ouisconsin river, which unites with the Mississippi

some distance below the falls of St. Anthony. It is also said, that the traders communicate with the Mississippi above these falls, through Lake Superior--but their trade in that quarter is much less considerable.

Canal of Carondelet.

Behind New-Orleans is a canal about 1 1/2 miles long, which communicates with a creek called the Bayou St. Jean, flowing into Lake Ponchartrain. At the mouth of it, about 2 1/2 leagues from the city is a small fort called St. Jean, which commands the entrance from the Lake. By this creek the communication is kept up through the lake and the Rigoles to Mobile and the settlements in West-Florida. Craft drawing from 6 to 8 feet water can navigate to the mouth of the creek, but except in particular swells of the lake cannot pass the bar without being lightened.

St. Bernard's.

On the East side of the Mississippi, about five leagues below New-Orleans & at the head of the English bend, is a settlement known by the name of the Poblacion de St. Bernardo or the Terre aux Boeufs, extending on both sides of a creek or drain, whose head is contiguous to the Mississippi and which flowing eastward, after a course of 18 leagues and dividing itself into two branches, falls into the sea and Lake Borgne. This settlement consists of two parishes, almost all the inhabitants of which are Spaniards from the Canaries, who content themselves with raising fowls, corn and garden-stuff for the market at New-Orleans. The lands cannot be cultivated to any great distance from the banks of the creek, on account of the vicinity of the marsh behind them, but the place is susceptible of great improvement and of affording another communication to small craft of from 8 to 10 feet draught, between the sea and the Mississippi.

Settlements below the English Turn.

At the distance of 16 leagues below New-Orleans, the settlements on both banks of the river are of but small account. Between these and the fort of Plaquemines, the country is overflowed in the spring and in many places is incapable of cultivation at any time, being a morass almost impassable by man or beast. This small tongue of land extends considerably into the sea, which is visible on both sides of the Mississippi from a ship's mast.

Country from Plaquemines to the Sea, and effect of the Hurricanes.

From Plaquemines to the sea is 12 or 13 leagues. The country is low, swampy, chiefly covered with reeds, having little or no timber and no settlement whatever. It may be necessary to mention here, that the whole lower part of the country from the English Turn downward is subject to overflowing in Hurricanes, either by the receding of the river or reflux from the sea on each side; and on more than one occasion it has been covered from the depth of 2 to 10 feet, according to the descent of the river, whereby many lives were lost, horses and cattle swept away and a scene of destruction laid. The last calamity of this kind happened in 1794; but fortunately they are not frequent. In the preceding year the engineer who superintended the erection of the Fort of Plaquemines was drowned in his boat near the fort, and the workmen and garrison escaped only by taking refuge on an elevated spot in the fort, on which here were notwithstanding 2 or 3 feet of water. These hurricanes have generally been felt in the month of August. Their greatest fury lasts about 12 hours. They commence in the south-east, veer about to all points of the compass, are felt most severely below and seldom extend more than a few leagues above New-Orleans. In their whole course they are marked with ruin and desolation. Until that of 1793, there had been none felt from the year 1780.

Passes, or mouths of the Mississippi.

About 8 leagues below Plaquemines, the Mississippi divides itself into three channels, which are called the passes of the river, viz. the East, South & South West passes. Their course is from 5 to 6 leagues to the sea. The space between

(Continued in last page.)