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Illinois frontier settlers

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ILLINOIS FRONTIER SETTLERS.

APRIL 15, 1836.

Read, and laid upon the table.

Mr. PHILO C. FULLER, from the Committee of Claims, made the following

REPORT:

The Committee of Claims, to which was referred the petition of sundry settlers on the frontier of Illinois and Michigan, praying compensation for property destroyed by the Indians in 1832, report:

The petition is signed by Leonard Goss, George Cabbage, and thirty-six others, who describe themselves as settlers on the frontier of Illinois and Michigan. They set forth that in 1832, the Sac and Fox Indians crossed to the east side of the Mississippi, but from their having done so the previous year, and returned without committing depredations, the settlers were unapprised of the commencement of hostilities till it was too late to remove their property without hazarding their own lives and that of their families. Almost every article of property so left was destroyed, and the owners petition the Government for compensation.

The committee on application to the War Department, have been furnished with much information explanatory of this subject.

It appears, that in January, 1833, General Atkinson appointed two commissioners, Captain Legate and William Hemstead, Esq. for the purpose "of collecting, adjusting and examining all outstanding claims arising from the movements of the militia and friendly Indians called into service," during the summer of 1832. Captain Palmer seems to have been afterwards substituted for Captain Legate, who resigned that station.

Detailed instructions were given to these agents or commissioners, a copy of which is furnished to the committee, dated at St. Louis, January 10, 1833, together with a letter of Major Brant to the commissioners, dated the 15th of the same month, which papers are referred to, and made part of this report; a report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, dated January 14, 1836, and two statements of the commissioners, Palmer and Hempstead, dated respectively the 25th of April, 1833, and 25th of April, 1835, are also referred to, and made part of this report.

From these papers it appears, that many persons presented claims to the commissioners, which, not falling within the limits of their instructions, they could not allow. It also appears, that in some cases claims of this kind were prepared, and the papers forwarded to the Department. This was done in the case of thirteen out of the thirty-eight persons who signed the memorial under consideration; there is nothing in the other twenty-five cases showing any facts relative to their losses, except the general allegations of injury and damage contained in the memorial.

In regard to the thirteen petitioners, whose accounts have been made out against the United States, substantiated by the affidavits of the claimants and others, sent to the Department and thence to the committee, on examination there does not appear to be a single claim, embraced by any rule hitherto acted on by this Government in the payment of the claims of its citizens. It was unfortunately the fate of the petitioners to occupy a frontier position, and that they suffered hardships and privations of a severe kind there is no doubt, in addition to the losses of property for which they ask remuneration. There are three cases, those of Skillinger, Campbell and Hale, where charges are made for damages done to crops by our own troops under the immediate command of our officers, which if proved in a satisfactory manner, the committee think, should have been allowed by the commissioners; and one other case, that of Shook, whose horse is said to have been sold by order of General Aikinson for the benefit of the United States. If this be satisfactorily proved, the horse should be paid for.

Generally speaking, however, the charges are for damages, resulting in some instances from the action of the enemy, and in some instances from the absence of the owners, to growing crops, and for loss of labor in preparing ground which the claimants were unable to sow. Accounts are also made for losses of clothing, furniture and other property, destroyed or stolen by the Indians. These are not such accounts as the Government feels bound to pay; such losses have never been made good by Congress; they are incident to a frontier position, and to all the wars which have been or will be. The committee recommend the following resolution.

Resolved, That the prayer of the petitioners cannot be granted.