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John P. Baldwin

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H.R. Rep. No. 698, 26th Cong., 1st Sess. (1840)

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JOHN P. BALDWIN.

JULY 10, 1840.

Read, and laid upon the table.

Mr. GIDDINGS, from the Committee of Claims, submitted the following

REPORT :

The Committee of Claims, to whom was committed the petition of John P. Baldwin, report :

That the petitioner sets forth that, in 1835, the Spanish brig *Gil Blas* was wrecked upon the southern coast of Florida ; after which, she was sold to the petitioner ; that, in 1836, she was burnt by the order of the United States officers. In consequence of which he sustained a loss of—

6 tons of lead, valued at	-	-	-	-	-	\$480 00
5 tons of kentledge	-	-	-	-	-	100 00
30 water-casks	-	-	-	-	-	75 00
3 anchors	-	-	-	-	-	75 00
2 chain cables	-	-	-	-	-	300 00
Hull, sail, and rigging	-	-	-	-	-	175 00
						\$1,205 00

The proofs furnished to the committee show that the object of burning said brig was to prevent the Indians from obtaining possession of the property, and particularly of the lead on board. The owner having permitted the vessel to lie stranded upon a hostile coast so long, is evidence of the estimation in which he held the property. The water-casks, hull, sails, and rigging, are shown to have been *burnt and destroyed* by order of the United States officer commanding on that station. They were not taken for public use, nor did the Government receive any benefit from them. It was done to prevent the enemy from taking possession of them. It is to be presumed that the officer did not act without good and sufficient reason. The committee cannot suppose the order to burn the property was given, until all reasonable hopes of saving it were abandoned. Indeed, the proof shows that there were good reasons for supposing that the enemy would have taken possession of the property, and would, doubtless, have converted the lead to their own use, and destroyed the hull, sails, and rigging, &c. Would the petitioner then have been in any better situation than he now is? or would his loss have been less than it now is? The committee think not. If this be the case, he has lost nothing by the Government. They suppose the lead, kentledge, anchors, and cables were not *destroyed* by the fire; that, by burning the brig, the lead was probably *preserved* for the owner.

