

University of Oklahoma College of Law
University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons

American Indian and Alaskan Native Documents in the Congressional Serial Set: 1817-1899

1-16-1857

Mary Ann Williams

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/indianserialset>



Part of the [Indian and Aboriginal Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

H.R. Rep. No. 83, 34th Cong., 3rd Sess. (1857)

This House Report is brought to you for free and open access by University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in American Indian and Alaskan Native Documents in the Congressional Serial Set: 1817-1899 by an authorized administrator of University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. For more information, please contact darinfox@ou.edu.

MARY ANN WILLIAMS.

[To accompany bill H. R. No. 719.]

JANUARY 16, 1857.

Mr. SAPP, from the Committee on Military Affairs, made the following

REPORT.

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the memorial of Mary Ann Williams, of the St. Regis tribe of Indians, respectfully report:

The petitioner is the widow of the late Thomas Williams, (known by the name of Cahnawaga,) a chief of the St. Regis tribe of Indians, and comes before Congress for pay for rations which were promised by the American government to herself and husband, but which were never furnished, and also for the loss of property and annuities in Canada, in consequence of their acceptance of the offers and requests of this government to abandon the British territory during the war of 1812, and exercising their influence over other members of the tribe not to engage in the war, and to establish themselves permanently in the United States.

The committee refer the House to the memorial of the petitioner herewith amended, and the evidence marked from A to F inclusive, which, to the minds of your committee, is so conclusive of the justice of Congress granting some relief to this helpless widow of the chief of a race of Indians which did the country much service as to render all comment unnecessary. That the inducements were held out to acquire the friendship of these Indians, and secure their removal from Canada, where they might have been a source of great annoyance to us, is clear. That the petitioner and her husband did lose property and forfeit annuities from the British government, is also evident. That the United States government never fulfilled its promises, is equally conclusive. The committee accordingly report a bill for the relief of the memorialist.

To the honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled:

The memorial and petition of Mary Ann Williams, of the St. Regis tribe, in the county of Franklin, in the State of New York, respectfully sheweth:

That your memorialist is the widow of the late Thomas Williams, an Iroquois chief of the aforesaid tribe; that he was a native of Canada; and of the Iroquois nation of Indians; and that in consequence of the menacing aspect of affairs between the United States and Great Britain, the government of this country became solicitous to gain the co-operation or secure the neutrality of the various tribes of Indians in the vicinity of the northern frontier. With this view, President Jefferson, in 1808, addressed an earnest letter to those Indians, the original of which is in the possession of your memorialist, (marked A,) in which, after recommending to them to maintain a neutral attitude in case war should occur between the two countries, he says: "Should the English insist on their taking up the hatchet against us, if they choose rather to break up their settlements and come over to live in peace with us, we will find other settlements for them, and they shall become our children."

Your memorialist further represents that it was well known to the American government that the husband of your memorialist, Thomas Williams, was one of the chiefs of the Iroquois nation, and that he possessed a very great influence with his own and other tribes within the British dominions. In fact, he was regarded as capable of determining the part which they should take in the anticipated war; and it became important, therefore, to engage his efficient co-operation and good wishes. He was consequently, when hostilities commenced, especially invited to join the American standard, and to repress, by his influence and efforts, any warlike movements which might be contemplated by his own or other tribes against the United States.

For the services which he was asked to render, he was assured that he and his family should receive a support during the war, and a full indemnity for any losses he might sustain in consequence of connecting himself with this country. Feeling entire confidence in these assurances, he came to the United States in the beginning of 1813; engaged warmly in the American cause, and exerted, with great success, his influence with his own and neighboring tribes in Lower Canada. It is well known to the inhabitants on the northern frontier that those nations took no part against the United States in that war.

In consequence of thus abandoning the cause and leaving the territories of Great Britain, the husband of your memorialist was deprived as well of his own property as that in which he participated as one of the tribe; and at the termination of the war, his conduct having awakened the resentment of the British functionaries, and particularly those connected with the Indian Department, he was prohibited from returning among them. Thus compelled to fix himself in the State of New York, where he resided but a short time before his death, greatly advanced in years, and was for many years wholly incapable of maintaining himself, his own property has been sacrificed in furthering the views and advancing the interest of the United States.

Your memorialist would further represent, that in confirmation of the foregoing statement that the deceased chief and his family were to be sustained and supported by the government, an order was issued by the War Department on January 23, 1816, to the commanding officer at Plattsburg, "to issue six rations per day to Thomas Williams,

an Iroquois chief, for the support of himself and family, until further orders," (marked B.)

Under this order the deceased chief received rations only one year after the date of the said order, and this in consequence of the military post at Plattsburg being evacuated; and from that period up to the time of his death he received no more rations from the government, although the order was "never revoked," (paper C.) Your memorialist conceives that the accompanying letter (marked D) from Mr. Graham, the Secretary of War, to Thomas R. Gold, esq., sufficiently showeth that the chief and his family "have still a well-founded claim to compensation from the government." And your memorialist being greatly advanced in years, and wholly incapable of maintaining herself, therefore, in her own behalf and family, prays that she may yet be fully allowed the rations according to the aforementioned order of the War Department, and that she and her family be liberally remunerated for the services rendered by her late deceased husband to the United States.

Your memorialist and petitioner, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

MARY ANN ^{her} + WILLIAMS.
mark

Signed in presence of—

ELEAZER WILLIAMS.

Hogansburg, September, 1849.

A.

To Colonel Louis Cook and Jacob Francis, of the St. Regis Indians.

MY CHILDREN: I take you by the hand, and all the people of St. Regis within the limits of the United States, and I desire to speak to them through you. A great misunderstanding has taken place between the English and the United States; and although we desire to live in peace with all the world and unmolested, yet it is not quite certain whether this difference will end in peace or war. Should war take place, do you, my children, remain at home in peace, taking care of your wives and children. You have no concern in our quarrel; take, therefore, no part in it. We do not wish you to spill your blood in our battles; we can fight them ourselves. Say the same to your red brethren everywhere; let them remain neutral and quiet, and we will never disturb them; and should the English insist on their taking up the hatchet against us, if they choose rather to break up their settlements and come over to live in peace with us, we will find other settlements for them, and they shall become our children. The red nations who shall remain in peace with the United States shall forever find them true friends and fathers; those who commence against them an unprovoked war must expect their lasting enmity.

My children, I wish you well and a safe return to your own country.

TH. JEFFERSON.

MAY 5, 1808.

B.

DEPARTMENT OF WAR,
January 23, 1816.

SIR: You will please to direct that six rations per day be issued to Thomas Williams, an Iroquois chief, for the support of himself and family, until further orders. The rations may be delivered to him from time to time, as he shall be able to carry them to his residence, which I understand is too distant to be received daily, or even weekly. You are also authorized to present to him three suits of clothing, such as are supplied to the soldiers of the United States.

I have the honor to be, &c.,

WM. H. CRAWFORD.

OFFICER COMMANDING AT
Plattsburg, New York.

C.

DEPARTMENT OF WAR, OFFICE INDIAN AFFAIRS,
December 12, 1835.

SIR: Your letter of the 3d ultimo, to the Secretary of War, has been referred to this office.

After diligent search it cannot be found that the order in 1816, authorizing the furnishing of rations to Thomas Williams, has ever been revoked.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

ELBERT HERRING.

Mr. ELEAZER WILLIAMS,
Hogansburg, New York.

WHITESTOWN, NEW YORK,
April 25, 1817.

SIR: Mr. Thomas Williams, possessing extensive influence over the Indians in Canada, and there resident at the commencement of the late war, was induced by General Dearborn to restrain the Indians from aiding the British in the war; General D. pledging himself to provide for him, Williams. Williams was finally obliged to abandon his property, about \$13,000, and to remove to the United States. He repaired to Washington in the winter of 1816, and presented his claims, which were referred to the Secretary of War. The claim was suspended for the proofs as to his property in Canada; proof was afterwards furnished. I am requested to ask what determination has been made on his claim, and what may be expected from the government? Please, sir, inform me.

I am, sir, respectfully, your obedient servant,

THOS. R. GOLD.

HON. GEORGE GRANAM,
Acting Secretary, &c.

D.

An extract from a letter from George Graham to Thomas R. Gold, esq.

DEPARTMENT OF WAR,
August 16, 1817.

SIR: Your letter of 25th April was duly received. The papers in the cases of Thomas and Eleazer Williams had all been before Mr. Crawford, but were not acted upon by him while Secretary of War. On the receipt of your letter, I had the papers collected, with the intention of laying them before the President previous to his departure on his tour; but the account of Eleazer Williams and agreement with General Dearborn, which he states to have been forwarded to this department by Mr. Savage, are not with the papers, nor have I since been able to find them, and there is no memorandum of their having been received.

From the answers of General Dearborn and General Mooers to the letters addressed by this department to them in relation to these claimants, it appears that they *have a well-founded claim to compensation from the government*; but how far the executive government can grant them compensation for the property lost in Canada is doubtful.

With sentiments of great respect and esteem, &c.,

GEORGE GRAHAM.

THOMAS R. GOLD, Esq.,
Whitestown, New York.

E.

PLATTSBURG, *September 8, 1815.*

We hereby certify that Thomas Williams, a chief of the Iroquois nation of Indians, known by the name of Cahnawaga, in consequence of his attachment to the United States during the late war, left his residence, in the province of Lower Canada, and came to the United States, where he now remains; the consequence of which, it is said, was the loss of considerable property, large expenses, and other personal inconveniences.

BENJ. MOOERS,
PETER SAILLY.

I, Eleazer Williams, of Lawrence, in the county of Brown and State of Wisconsin, testify and say: That I was in the secret service of the United States in the war which commenced in 1812, and that I had the charge and commanded the secret corps of observation on the northern frontier during the said war; and that it was through me that my father, Thomas Williams, an Iroquois chief, was especially invited, in behalf of the general government, by Major General Dearborn, of the United States army, and Major General Mooers, of the New York division, to join the American standard, and to repress, by his influ-

ence and efforts, any warlike movements which might be contemplated by his own and other tribes against the United States. For the services which he was asked to render, he was assured that he and his family should receive a support during the war, and a full indemnity for any losses which he might sustain in consequence of connecting himself with the United States. Having a great confidence in these assurances, he came to the United States in 1813, engaged warmly in the American cause, and exerted, with great success, his influence with his own and neighboring tribes in the Canadas.

And further, I testify that instead of receiving his support and family's from the government, as he was promised, it was only occasionally some rations were issued to him, and these were obtained, with much difficulty, from the commissariat department; and to prevent their suffering for want of food and clothing, I was compelled to sustain them; and that the War Department had such a strong evidence of his claim upon the government for the promised rations, it issued an order on January 23, 1816, for "*six rations per day, for the support of himself and family, until further orders.*" Which order was intended, and so understood at the time by the War Department and Thomas Williams, that it should continue for a series of years; but, instead of this, its continuance was but for a short time, in consequence of the post at Plattsburg, whence he drew his rations, being evacuated by the troops; and that, according to the best of my knowledge, said Thomas Williams was never indemnified for his losses of property, or remunerated by the United States for his services, as he was promised by the government through me, as one of its secret agents, when he was invited to join her standard in 1812; and that the sacrifices and losses he sustained in property for so doing were estimated to be between seven and eight thousand dollars, and besides the annuity of two hundred and fifty dollars which he was allowed, and received, from the British government.

In *confirmation* of the value of the above property, *affidavits* were made by persons of probity and honor, from Canada, before the Honorable Pliny Mooers, of Champlain, in the county of Clinton and State of New York, in March, 1816. The same were forwarded to the War Department by Mr. Savage, then a member of Congress from the State of New York. It is to these papers that Mr. George Graham, Secretary of War, in his letter to the Honorable Thomas R. Gold, (of 16th August, 1817,) refers, when he says: "The papers in the cases of Thomas Williams and Eleazer Williams had been all before Mr. Crawford, but were not acted upon by him while Secretary of War. I had the papers collected, with the intention of laying them before the President previous to his departure on his tour."

ELEAZER WILLIAMS.

Personally appeared Eleazer Williams, to me well known, and made oath to the truth of the foregoing deposition, by him subscribed before me this 18th day of January, 1850.

EDWARD OUTHWAITE,
Notary Public, Brown county, Wisconsin.

A letter from the Hon. John Savage, the late Chancellor of the State of New York, to D. L. Vanderheyden, Esq.

SALEM, July 1, 1816.

DEAR SIR: Yours of the 25th ultimo is but just received. All I can say in answer is, that the Secretary at War, to whom the petition of Thomas Williams was referred, made no report. I presented to him the affidavits sent me by Mr. Williams, but he gave me no intimation on the subject from which I can give an opinion as to the probable result. My own opinion is, that compensation ought to be made him upon principles of justice as well as policy. Whether the Secretary entertains the same opinion I know not. Much will depend upon his report.

I am, dear sir, very respectfully, yours, &c.,

JOHN SAVAGE.

D. L. VANDERHEYDEN, Esq.