

1-13-1876

Petition of Margaret E. West, for a pension

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MARGARET E. WEST.
[To accompany bill H. R. 1044.]

P E T I T I O N
OF
M A R G A R E T E . W E S T ,
FO :
A Pension.

JANUARY 13, 1876.—Referred to the Committee on Invalid Pensions and ordered to be printed.

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

We, the undersigned, do hereby earnestly petition your honorable body for the relief of the family of the late Robert M. West, who long and honorably served in the United States armies before, during, and after the late war of the rebellion. The said Robert M. West entered the service of the United States in the early part of the year 1856, enlisting in Col. Andrew Porter's regiment of mounted rifles, stationed on the New Mexico frontier. He served in this regiment until his term of enlistment had expired, in the early part of the year 1861, when he returned home to his family after a continuous absence of five years. Directly after his return, on July 26, 1861, he enlisted again in the service of his country as captain of Battery G, of the First Pennsylvania Artillery. For meritorious services he was promoted to the rank of major September 13, 1861, and on July 29, 1862, he was promoted to colonel of his regiment. At his own request, on the 29th of May, 1864, he was transferred, as colonel, to the Sixty-fifth Volunteers, or Fifth Pennsylvania Cavalry, and for meritorious services at the battle of Five Forks, Virginia, he was brevetted brigadier-general, April 1, 1865, and was finally mustered out with his command on the 7th of August, 1865, at Richmond, Virginia.

In consideration of his services during the rebellion, on the 1st of November, 1866, he was commissioned captain of Troop K, Seventh United States Cavalry, and reported for duty at Fort Riley, Kansas, and served with distinction, being brevetted colonel, until March, 1869, when he resigned his commission.

Six months later, on the 3d of September, 1869, he died near Fort Arbuckle, Indian Territory. Of his services on the frontier from 1856 to 1861, nothing in particular is known, further than that he earned a promotion from a private soldier to the rank of a non-commissioned

officer, and that at the expiration of his term of enlistment he procured an honorable discharge.

His record during the rebellion is conspicuous for his marked attention to duty, in camp and on the field, earning frequent promotions and honorable mention in many reports from the commanding generals. This fact is attested to by an annexed synopsis from S. P. Bates's History of Pennsylvania Volunteers, (to which we invite your attention,) which sketches his career during the rebellion with an impartial and an accurate hand.

As already stated, he reported for duty at Fort Riley, Kansas, November 1, 1866, was stationed there for a time, moved to Forts Dodge and Harker, and finally at Fort Arbuckle, Indian Territory.

He participated in the memorable campaign against the Kiowas and Cheyennes, in the severe winter of 1868-'69, and, owing to his early experience on the frontier, was intrusted with the command of numerous important scouts and expeditions. He is referred to as "an old Indian fighter, and too thoroughly accustomed to Indian tactics to permit his command to be surprised or defeated in any manner other than by a fair contest." He commanded an important detachment in the battle of Washita, on the 27th of November, 1868.

To illustrate the severe exposures Colonel West and his comrades were subjected to, we quote the following extract from General Field-Order No. 6, dated November 29, 1868, issued by General Sheridan: "The energy and rapidity shown during one of the heaviest snow-storms that has visited this section of country, with the temperature below freezing-point, and the gallantry and bravery displayed, resulting in such signal success, reflect the highest credit upon both the officers and men of the Seventh Cavalry." It was in this campaign that, we believe, the deceased suffered those hardships which undermined a naturally iron constitution, and which, together with his earlier experiences in the malarial swamps of the Peninsula during the rebellion, we believe were the ultimate cause of his death. Sufficient documentary evidence cannot be obtained to attest to this fact, for the following reasons:

First. His death occurred at the house of a private citizen, named Fitzpatrick, near Fort Arbuckle, and entirely away from a surgeon or other medical attendance.

Second. His fellow-officers are forbidden, by military rules, to give an opinion in such cases.

Were it not for this, there are numbers of his fellow-officers who would willingly give certificates that his death occurred from exposures and hardships experienced in the above-mentioned campaign. For these reasons a pension cannot be granted his family by regular application through the Pension Bureau, and we therefore pray and petition your honorable body to grant to his widow, Margaret E. West, and her two minor children, aged respectively thirteen and nine years, a pension due the family of an officer of the rank of deceased, and to date from his decease. At the death of Colonel West he left his family in very distressed circumstances, his widow vainly endeavoring to support herself and a family of small children; and in view of a long and honorable military career, extending over a period of thirteen years, during which, as before stated, experiencing hardships which eventually caused his death, it would seem that the Government should at least make the small return (small to it, though great to his family) of a pension. We would it were in our power to present more strongly to your honorable body the justice of this appeal, but we have every faith in your charity and sense of justice, and humbly petition that so deserving a case as

this may not be passed by. We have presented to your honorable body a brief sketch of the military services and career of the deceased, and in the name of justice and right we pray you to grant this pension to the needy and deserving family of a faithful soldier and distinguished officer.

We invite your attention to the annexed testimonials from General Sheridan and others.

W. H. FURNESS,
1426 Pine Street, Philadelphia, formerly of First Unitarian Church.

W. H. DRAYTON,
1012 Spruce street, Philadelphia.

Margaret E. West, being duly sworn, doth depose and say, that she is the widow of the within-named Robert M. West, and that the facts set forth in the foregoing petition are true and correct to the best of her knowledge and belief.

MRS. MARGARET E. WEST.

Sworn and subscribed before me, a notary public for the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, residing in the city of Philadelphia, this 15th day of December, A. D. 1875.

JAMES S. SMITH,
Notary Public.

From my knowledge of Messrs. Furness and Drayton, as gentlemen of integrity and honor, and with full confidence in their statement, I unite with them in the above petition.

JAMES POLLOCK,
U. S. Mint, Philadelphia.

I fully concur in the above.

ALEX'R G. CATTELL,
Merchantville, New Jersey.

I fully concur in the above certificate of Governor Pollock and Senator Cattell.

M. SIMPSON,
Bishop, &c.

I concur in the above.

I. G. Z. BROWN,
Of The Press.

I concur.

L. CLAGHORN,
222 West Logan Square.

December 21, 1875.

I heartily endorse this petition.

GEO. W. FAIRMAN,
Postmaster.

December 21, 1875.

F. A. DREXEL,
1503 Walnut street.

HEADQUARTERS POST OF FORT ARBUCKLE, INDIAN TERRITORY,
September 3, 1869.

[General Orders No. 31.]

As a tribute of respect due to a most worthy and meritorious ex-officer of the United States Army, the commanding officer announces the death of Robert M. West, late captain in the Seventh United States Cavalry, and brevet colonel United States Army, who died in the vicinity of Fort Arbuckle, Indian Territory, on the 3d instant.

General West served with distinction as colonel of the First Pennsylvania Artillery and Fifth Pennsylvania Cavalry in the Army of the Potomac, and was breveted brigadier-general of volunteers on account of his gallant and meritorious services during the war.

With our country we mourn the loss and cherish the memory of the noble dead, who proved true and loyal to our country's best interests in the hour of danger. The American flag at this post will be duly displayed at half-mast from reveille until retreat. Attendance at the funeral to-morrow at 3 o'clock is solicited.

By order of Bvt. Lieut.-Col. Orlando H. Moore, captain Sixth Infantry.

R. H. DAY,
First Lieutenant Sixth Infantry, Adjutant.

HEADQUARTERS MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MISSOURI,
Chicago, Ill., October 23, 1875.

The late Bvt. Col. Robert M. West, captain Seventh United States Cavalry, served under my command in the Department of the Missouri from 1867 to 1869, and took part in the winter campaign made against the Cheyenne and Kiowa Indians in 1868.

In the war of the rebellion he was colonel of the Fifth Pennsylvania Cavalry, and as a reward for his services was commissioned as a captain in the Seventh United States Cavalry.

Colonel West's standing with his brother officers of the Seventh Cavalry was high, as he was regarded by them as one of the best soldiers in the regiment, and by his early experience in the mounted service on the frontier he was well fitted for an active and independent command.

P. H. SHERIDAN,
Lieutenant-General U. S. Army.

HOTEL BRUNSWICK,
Fifth Avenue 26th and 27th Streets, New York, December 15, 1875.

Mr. E. S. WEST: Yours of November 12th only reached me this morning, having been sent to my address, Fort Lincoln, Dakota, and from there here.

In regard to your father's death I cannot state any particulars, as I was not in the vicinity of Fort Arbuckle at the time, nor have I seen any person who was present with him at the time of his death. Your father, Captain Robert M. West, brevet colonel United States Army, served under my command for a considerable period on the plains, during which time some very important military expeditions and campaigns were executed. I regarded him as one of the most efficient officers I had, and I had frequent occasion to rely upon his superior judgment and extended experience. He was with me during the winter's campaign, south of the Arkansas River, against the combined Cheyennes, Arapahoes, Kiowas, Comanches, and Apaches, and it might well be that the great exposure and fatigues to which he was then subjected had more or less to do in hastening or causing his death a short time after.

Very truly yours,

G. A. CUSTER,
Brevet Major-General U. S. Army.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF ARIZONA,
Prescott, December 16, 1875.

DEAR SIR: In reply to your communication of November 20 I take pleasure in testifying to the services of Col. Robert M. West, of the Fifth Pennsylvania Cavalry and late captain Seventh United States Cavalry.

Colonel West commanded a brigade in my command known as the Cavalry Division, Army of the James, from April, 1864, to the close of the war, and rendered faithful and valuable service during that time, and his name is fully identified with the history of that organization. I recommended him for promotion and take pleasure in testifying to his bravery and valuable services, and so far as my knowledge of him goes he was a brave, honest, and efficient officer.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

AUGUST V. KAUTZ,
Colonel Eighth Infantry, Comdg. Dept.

E. S. WEST,
36 Oliver street, Boston, Mass.

Record taken from "S. P. Bates's History of Pennsylvania Volunteers," Vols. 1 and 2.

Robert M. West enlisted as captain of Battery G, First Artillery or Forty-third Pennsylvania Volunteers, July 26, 1861, for three years. Promoted to major September 13, 1861. Promoted to colonel July 29, 1862. Transferred, as colonel, to Sixty-fifth Pennsylvania Volunteers or Fifth Pennsylvania Cavalry, May 29, 1864. Promoted to brevet brigadier-general April 1, 1865. Mustered out with Sixty-fifth Regiment Volunteers August 7, 1865, at Richmond, Virginia.

SYNOPSIS.

The First Artillery or Forty-third Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers was divided among the different divisions of the Army. Battery G, Captain R. M. West, with others, was assigned to General McCall's division. It participated in the "seven days' fight" on the Peninsula, and at "Gaines's Mill" won distinction.

Colonel West was soon after transferred, as colonel, to the Sixty-fifth Pennsylvania, or Fifth Pennsylvania Cavalry, and took command May 29, 1864.

The regiment was soon engaged upon the first raid upon the works at Petersburg; General Gillmore's division of infantry was to support the cavalry. The outer works were captured, but the infantry failing to come up, the advantage gained was lost. A second assault was made, which proved unsuccessful.

Soon after this movement Colonel West was assigned to the command of a brigade in General Kautz's cavalry division.

Kautz's and Wilson's divisions were united under the command of General Wilson, and started on the 21st of June, 1864, upon what is familiarly known as "Wilson's raid."

During this raid several severe contests took place, they being pursued by Longstreet's division of Lee's army.

Colonel West's command is recorded as having "stood manfully up to their duty, even in the face of overwhelming odds, and escaped from an enemy who was sanguine of their utter annihilation." For gallantly repulsing General Longstreet's assault on the command in front of Richmond, Gen. E. O. C. Ord, commander of the "Department," directed General Kautz to issue the following order, addressed to Colonel West:

"General Ord, commanding the army, desires me to inform you of his gratification at the conduct of yourself and your command on the 10th inst. in resisting the enemy's advance, delaying his columns on that occasion, and finally compelling him to abandon his contemplated offensive movement without obtaining any compensating results. I congratulate you on this merited appreciation of the general commanding, and trust that it is but an indication of still greater services and consequent distinction that await you and your command."

On the 29th of September the regiment crossed the James River and joined General Butler's army. Here it was engaged in numerous raids and contests. On the 28th of March, 1865, it recrossed the James River and became incorporated in General Sheridan's command. The command marched to Hatcher's Run, southwest of Petersburg, where, on the 1st of April, it moved with the cavalry on the last campaign.

The command participated in the final attack upon Petersburg, which drove out the rebels and resulted in the capture of Lee's army at Appomattox.

Colonel West was finally mustered out of service, at Richmond, on the 7th of August, 1865.