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Letter from the Commissioner of Pensions, addressed to the Chairman of the Committee on Pensions, in relation to the number of survivors of the Seminole, Black Hawk, and Florida Wars, and of the Mexican War.

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L E T T E R

FROM

THE COMMISSIONER OF PENSIONS,

ADDRESSED TO THE

CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON PENSIONS,

IN RELATION TO

The number of survivors of the Seminole, Black Hawk, and Florida wars, and of the Mexican war.

NOVEMBER 26, 1877.—Referred to the Committee on Pensions and ordered to be printed.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
PENSION OFFICE,
Washington, D. C., November 23, 1877.

SIR: I am in receipt of your note of the 1st instant, inclosing a printed copy of a report of the proceedings of the National Association of Veterans of the Mexican War, at a meeting held in this city on the 22d, 23d, and 24th days of February, 1877, and inviting my attention to pages 28, 29, and 30 of said report.

You request me to state whether I adhere to the estimate of the number of survivors of the Seminole, Black Hawk, and Florida wars, and certain minor disturbances, and of the Mexican war, which was furnished you on the 21st of February, 1877, by this office, after reading the criticisms upon that estimate embodied in the above-named pages.

In response to your request I have the honor, in the first place, to state that that estimate bears on its face evidence that it is a mere approximation, based partly upon authoritative tables of mortality, partly upon observations of the office in relation to soldiers of the war of 1812, and partly upon general conclusions which rest upon a multitude of considerations more or less certain, and does not, therefore, purport to be absolute verity. In the nature of things no estimate of the number of these survivors can be absolute certainty.

The estimate furnished you, not resting altogether upon established data, but in some respects upon data which were also estimated, will not be found to be exactly in correspondence with an estimate based upon exact data and approved tables of mortality.

I have caused the following estimate to be made of the survivors of the Mexican war, based upon official data and the Carlisle tables:

Aggregate force employed during the war with Mexico, (see Executive Document No. 24, H. of R., 31st Cong., 1st session.)

Regulars	26,922
Volunteers.....	73,260
General staff.....	272
Naval forces (estimated).....	5,000
	— 105,454

Deductions for purpose of present calculation :	
Deaths from all causes.....	12, 896
Desertions.....	6, 725
	19, 621
Number honorably discharged from service	85, 833
Further deductions :	
Number pensioned from 1846 to 1861	6, 525
Re-enlistments, (estimated by National Association Veterans of Mexican War).....	13, 221
	19, 746
Basis for pension-estimate	66, 087

The average age of the volunteers during the war of the rebellion was 26 years, (see report of Provost-Marshal-General's Bureau, vol. 1, p. 51.) The same mean age is assumed for the soldiers in the war with Mexico. It was less, probably, inasmuch as only a small number were enlisted, and the first to volunteer are those free from social and business ties.

During the rebellion the average age of the volunteers in 1862 was 25.104 years; in 1863, 25.766; in 1864, 26.067; in 1865, 26.321. It is evident that the assumed mean age of the Mexican war soldiers is high enough. The mean year of that war was 1847, since which time thirty (30) years have elapsed, making the present average age of the survivors fifty-six (56) years.

Of 100,000 births, 58,360 attain the age of 26 years, and 40,000 attain the age of 56 years. (See Enc. Britannica, Carlisle Tables.) It follows, of 58,360 persons 26 years of age, 18,360, or 31 per cent., will die before becoming 56 years old. Therefore, of 66,087 soldiers in the war with Mexico, the same ratio being observed, 20,486 have since deceased, and 45,601 now survive.

It has been the experience of this office that, of a class entitled to pensions, a large number fail to apply, or, having applied, from various causes fail to become pensioners.

A liberal deduction upon this account, and to cover any possible excess in the foregoing estimate, would be 16 $\frac{2}{3}$ per cent. or 7,600 of the whole number, leaving 38,001 as the probable number of pensioners under a provision of law granting the same for one day's service—not including, however, the widows and heirs of deceased soldiers.

It is believed that the Carlisle tables may be safely applied in this instance. They are based upon a given number of persons without selection. The soldiers of the Mexican war were examined at enlistment, and those physically unsound rejected. Weak constitutions and concealed diseases were made known and developed by their arduous service in a foreign climate. These have been deducted in the items deaths from all causes, (only 1,429 having been killed in battle and died of wounds,) and the number pensioned for disability. Those finally mustered out were of proved physical endurance, and were, in fact, a body of men from whose ranks nearly all persons otherwise than sound had been eliminated. Hence they were superior, physically, to the class embraced in the Carlisle tables. The latter included females, and the mortality of that sex at the period of life covered by this estimate is greater than among males. The expectation of life among discharged soldiers, at the close of a war, would be greater than in a miscellaneous collection of persons of the same average age.

I have no means of determining how many survivors of the Mexican

war served in the two contending armies during the rebellion, nor how many were killed while so serving, or have died on account of that service, and I therefore make no attempt to estimate that element of the case.

I have not estimated the survivors of the other wars referred to, because some of the data upon which a revised estimate should rest is unofficial, and cannot be officially compiled without great labor, as I am, upon inquiry, informed by the Adjutant-General of the Army.

I think, however, this revised estimate of the survivors of the Mexican war, with the detailed grounds upon which it rests, will be sufficient to answer your purpose. At all events, I regard it as a vindication of the estimate of last February.

Very respectfully,

J. A. BENTLY,
Commissioner.

Hon. J. J. INGALLS,
Chairman Committee on Pensions, United States Senate.

INVALID CLAIMS.

Date.	Number of claims adjudicated at beginning of each month.			New claims each month.				Claims adjudicated each month.				
	Original.	Increase.	Total.	Original.			Total.	Admitted.		Rejected.		Total.
				New claims.	Reopened.	Increase.		Original.	Increase.	Original.	Increase.	
July, 1875	32,511	4,510	37,021	1,191	138	1,355	2,684	625	557	200	335	1,807
Aug., 1875	32,925	4,973	37,898	1,069	196	754	2,019	535	358	254	176	1,323
Sept., 1875	33,401	5,193	38,594	1,128	162	3,323	3,618	529	354	308	295	1,486
Oct., 1875	33,854	7,872	41,726	1,045	145	2,348	4,538	405	453	215	594	1,667
Nov., 1875	34,434	9,173	43,597	995	89	1,496	5,580	627	503	166	342	1,638
Dec., 1875	34,715	9,824	44,539	1,992	152	1,731	6,575	272	733	306	445	1,756
Jan., 1876	36,281	10,377	46,658	1,494	149	1,512	7,575	355	493	247	434	1,529
Feb., 1876	37,322	10,962	48,284	1,330	168	901	8,399	481	762	265	679	2,187
Mar., 1876	38,074	10,422	48,496	1,688	185	1,582	9,455	564	751	171	334	1,820
April, 1876	39,212	10,919	50,131	1,663	169	1,494	10,326	354	760	220	423	1,757
May, 1876	40,470	11,230	51,700	2,015	194	917	11,126	464	575	125	793	1,957
June, 1876	42,030	10,779	52,809	1,764	199	1,184	12,147	235	1,061	120	947	2,363
Total ....	.....	.....	.....	17,374	1,946	18,602	37,922	5,446	7,360	2,687	5,797	21,290
July, 1876	43,698	9,955	53,653	1,350	101	952	2,403	359	975	274	664	2,272
Aug., 1876	44,516	9,268	53,784	1,431	79	738	2,248	1,170	1,541	305	1,336	4,352
Sept., 1876	44,551	7,129	51,680	1,379	88	1,049	2,516	481	946	265	852	2,544
Oct., 1876	45,272	6,380	51,652	1,145	59	901	2,105	665	737	241	388	2,031
Nov., 1876	45,570	6,156	51,726	978	53	551	1,582	412	930	293	480	2,115
Dec., 1876	45,896	5,297	51,193	1,124	67	826	2,017	324	638	308	434	1,704
Jan., 1877	46,455	5,051	51,506	1,150	147	943	2,240	582	775	400	432	2,189
Feb., 1877	46,770	4,787	51,557	1,254	177	623	2,854	308	499	281	491	1,579
Mar., 1877	47,612	4,420	52,032	1,543	162	1,311	3,016	531	616	462	506	2,115
April, 1877	48,324	4,609	52,933	1,789	188	1,105	3,082	542	460	479	362	1,843
May, 1877	49,280	4,892	54,172	2,029	137	915	3,081	659	656	546	563	2,424
June, 1877	50,242	4,588	54,830	1,631	519	1,417	3,567	1,249	703	806	556	3,314
Total ....	.....	.....	.....	16,503	1,777	11,331	29,911	7,282	9,476	4,660	7,064	28,482
July, 1877	*48,963	*4,546	*53,509	1,401	142	1,010	2,553	639	485	555	450	2,199
Aug., 1877	49,312	4,621	53,933	1,423	68	928	2,419	519	762	436	399	2,116
Sept., 1877	49,848	4,388	54,236	1,237	127	2,128	3,492	451	761	359	475	2,046
Oct., 1877	50,402	5,220	55,682	1,267	110	3,415	4,792	601	509	566	374	2,050
Total ....	.....	.....	.....	5,328	447	7,481	13,256	2,210	2,517	1,916	1,698	8,341
Nov. 1, 1877	50,612	7,812	58,424	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

* Old war and Navy invalids deducted and shown on page 5.

SURVIVORS OF THE SEMINOLE AND OTHER WARS.

WIDOWS' DIVISION.

Date.	Number of claims unadjudicated at the beginning of each month.			New claims added to the pending files each month.			Number of claims adjudicated each month.		
	Original.	Increase.	Total.	Original.	Increase.	Total.	Original.	Increase.	Total.
July, 1875...	33, 129	1, 013	34, 142	416	53	469	493	72	565
Aug., 1875...	33, 052	994	34, 046	451	93	544	164	85	249
Sept., 1875...	33, 339	1, 002	34, 341	416	86	502	209	87	296
Oct., 1875...	33, 546	1, 001	34, 547	400	36	436	261	31	292
Nov., 1875...	33, 685	1, 006	34, 691	395	57	452	329	142	471
Dec., 1875...	33, 751	921	34, 672	439	51	490	462	58	520
Jan., 1876...	33, 728	914	34, 642	472	59	531	605	94	699
Feb., 1876...	33, 595	879	34, 474	423	63	486	541	84	625
Mar., 1876...	33, 477	858	34, 335	499	71	570	530	53	583
April, 1876...	33, 446	876	34, 322	485	92	577	450	129	579
May, 1876...	33, 481	839	34, 320	521	63	584	481	78	559
June, 1876...	33, 521	824	34, 345	564	49	613	848	57	905
Total.....				5, 481	773	6, 254	5, 373	970	6, 343
July, 1876...	33, 237	816	34, 053	516	41	557	551	40	591
Aug., 1876...	33, 926	817	34, 743	474	66	540	641	68	709
Sept., 1876...	33, 759	815	34, 574	536	30	566	232	50	282
Oct., 1876...	34, 063	795	34, 858	453	112	565	381	63	444
Nov., 1876...	34, 135	844	34, 979	408	33	441	149	33	182
Dec., 1876...	33, 507	844	34, 351	407	57	464	448	128	576
Jan., 1877...	32, 767	770	33, 537	455	56	511	418	53	471
Feb., 1877...	32, 804	773	33, 577	443	48	491	385	45	430
Mar., 1877...	32, 862	776	33, 838	485	114	599	470	62	532
April, 1877...	32, 877	828	33, 705	473	71	544	513	96	609
May, 1877...	32, 837	803	33, 640	457	64	521	522	70	592
June, 1877...	32, 772	797	33, 569	522	72	594	573	54	627
Total.....				5, 629	764	6, 393	5, 283	762	6, 045
July, 1877...	32, 721	815	33, 536	395	57	452	415	60	475
Aug., 1877...	32, 701	812	33, 513	469	58	527	465	55	520
Sept., 1877...	32, 705	815	33, 520	472	18	490	364	33	397
Oct., 1877...	32, 813	800	33, 613	426	4	430	401	39	440
Total.....				1, 762	137	1, 899	1, 645	187	1, 832
Nov. 1, 1877...	32, 838	765	33, 603						

SURVIVORS OF THE SEMINOLE AND OTHER WARS.

SURVIVORS 1812, ACT 1871.

Date.	Unadjudicated beginning of each month.	New claims added to pending files.	Reopened.	Total.	Admitted each month.	Rejected each month.	Total.
July, 1877	444	8	.....	8	2	37	39
August, 1877	413	7	.....	7	5	83	88
September, 1877	382	13	.....	13	5	90	95
October, 1877	250	12	.....	12	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	40	.....	40	12	210	222
November, 1877	262	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

WIDOWS 1812, ACT 1871.

July, 1877	540	22	.....	22	7	44	51
August, 1877	511	10	.....	10	4	182	186
September, 1877	335	18	.....	18	9	25	34
October, 1877	319	15	2	17	2	4	6
.....	.....	65	2	67	22	255	277
November, 1877	330	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

BOUNTY-LAND CLAIMS.

July, 1877	1,865	42	.....	42	3	18	21
August, 1877	1,886	21	.....	21	10	85	95
September, 1877	1,812	22	.....	22	12	108	120
October, 1877	1,714	27	2	29	.....	5	5
.....	.....	112	2	114	25	216	241
November, 1877	1,738	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

RECAPITULATION.

Number of original claims pending July 1, 1875	65,640
Number of increase claims pending July 1, 1875	5,523
Total of all claims pending July 1, 1875	71,163
Number of original claims pending November 1, 1877	86,199
Number of increase claims pending November 1, 1877	8,879
Original and increase claims pending November 1, 1877	95,078
Add bounty-land claims pending November 1, 1877	1,738
Total of all claims pending November 1, 1877	96,816