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Report : Petition of J. Jones

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

MARCH 11, 1884.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. COCKBELL, from the Committee on Military Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany bill S. 1222.]

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (S. 1222) to place John Jones, late captain First Minnesota Battery, on the retired list of the Army, have duly considered the same, and submit the following report:

A similar bill was presented in former Congresses. John Jones, the claimant, enlisted August 20, 1845, in Company K, First Artillery, and so served until February 8, 1856, when he was promoted to and appointed an ordnance sergeant.

He served as such ordnance sergeant until February 24, 1863, when he was discharged to accept a commission in Minnesota Volunteers. He was mustered as captain Third Battery, Minnesota Light Artillery, to date from February 25, 1863, and mustered out as such with the battery February 27, 1866.

He was on duty as ordnance sergeant at Fort Ridgely, Minnesota, in 1862, and participated in the engagement of August 20, between the Sioux Indians and the garrison.

Your committee have considered the sundry papers connected with this application.

In his petition to Congress Captain Jones gives a brief record of his services, and there is no question that this record is a very honorable one, and his services meritorious, and says:

A soldier's pride prevented your petitioner from appealing heretofore for a recognition of services rendered. But finding that he is growing old and might never be thought of induces him in this manner to ask that his conduct in the defense of Fort Ridgely, Minnesota, when attacked by Sioux Indians in August, 1862, may be passed in review, and, if deemed worthy of recognition, that his Excellency the President of the United States may be authorized to place him on the retired list with rank and pay, or otherwise.

Attached to the petition is a petition to the Secretary of War, signed by all the senators and representatives of the legislature of the State of Minnesota, expressing entire confidence in the integrity and valor of Capt. John Jones; and in consideration of his gallant defense of Fort Ridgely in August, 1862, and his long and faithful services in the Army of the United States, asking that he receive a commission as captain in the regular Army, and is indorsed by the governor and State officers of Minnesota.

There are also sundry testimonials in regard to the gallant conduct of John Jones, then ordnance sergeant, in defense of Fort Ridgely.

Your committee had before them the letter of the Secretary of War of February 15, 1881, transmitting the letter from the Adjutant-General, and copies of reports touching the defense of Fort Ridgely made by Lieutenant Sheehan and Sergeant Jones, all of which are hereto attached and made a part of this report.

Sergeant Jones did his duty faithfully and gallantly at Fort Ridgely, and is entitled to the full credit and meed of praise for duty bravely done.

It would be vain for Congress to attempt to reward by special legislation each one of the noble, brave, gallant soldiers who, at all times and under all circumstances, performed their full duty faithfully and exemplarily.

Your committee can see no reason why Captain Jones should be placed upon the retired list of the Army to draw the 75 per cent. of the salary of a captain that would not equally apply to hundreds and even thousands of other officers and soldiers, and therefore report the bill back to the Senate, and recommend that it be indefinitely postponed.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington City, February 15, 1881.

SIR: This Department is in receipt of a letter from Mr. John Jones, late ordnance sergeant United States Army, dated "Saint Paul, Minn., January 31, 1881," in which he states that he has forwarded to you, for presentation to the Senate, a petition praying for recognition of his services during the attacks on Fort Ridgely by Sioux Indians, in the year 1862, and asks the aid of this Department in the matter.

In view of the facts stated, and in order to your better enlightenment upon the subject, I inclose herewith a report thereon by the Adjutant-General, dated the 12th instant, together with a copy of a report of the engagement with the Sioux Indians, made August 26, 1862, by the commanding officer of the post of Fort Ridgely, and a copy, also, of a report made at the same time by Ordnance Sergeant Jones.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

ALEX. RAMSEY,
Secretary of War.

Hon. S. J. R. McMILLAN,
United States Senate.

WAR DEPARTMENT, ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Washington, February 12, 1881.

SIR: I have the honor to return herewith communication of the 31st ultimo from Mr. John Jones, late ordnance sergeant United States Army, and captain Third Battery Minnesota Light Artillery, requesting the favorable action of the War Department in connection with his memorial to Congress for recognition of his services in the defence of Fort Ridgely, Minn., in 1862, and to report as follows:

John Jones enlisted August 20, 1845, in Company K, First Artillery, and served as an enlisted man in that company until appointed ordnance sergeant, February 8, 1856. He served as ordnance sergeant until February 24, 1863, when he was discharged to accept a commission in Minnesota Volunteers. He was mustered into service as captain Third Battery Minnesota Light Artillery, to date from February 25, 1863, and mustered out as such with the battery, February 27, 1866. He was on duty as ordnance sergeant at Fort Ridgely, Minn., in August, 1862, and participated in the engagement of August 20, 1862, between the Sioux Indians and the garrison of the post named.

A copy of the report of the engagement made August 26, 1862, by the commanding officer of the post and of a report made by Ordnance Sergeant Jones at the same time, are herewith transmitted.

I have the honor to be, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

R. C. DRUM,
Adjutant-General.

The SECRETARY OF WAR.

HEADQUARTERS, FORT RIDGELY, MINN.,
August 26, 1862.

GENERAL: I have the honor to report that this post was assaulted by a large force of Sioux Indians on the 20th instant. The small remnant of Company B, Fifth Regiment Minnesota Volunteers, together with a detachment of Company C, Fifth Regiment Minnesota Volunteers and the Renville Rangers, a company just organized for one of the regiments of this State, were the only troops I had under my command for its defense, and nobly did they do their duty. The engagement lasted until dusk, when the Indians, finding that they could not effect a lodgment, which was prevented, in a great measure, by the superior fire of the artillery, under the immediate charge of Ordnance Sergeant J. Jones, United States Army, which compelled them to evacuate the ravines by which this post is surrounded, withdrew their forces, and the gallant little garrison rested on their arms, ready for any attack.

During the night several people, remnants of once thriving families, arrived at the post in a most miserable condition, some wounded, severely burned, having made their escape from their dwellings, which were fired by the Indians. The people in the immediate vicinity fled to the post for protection, and were organized and armed, as far as practicable, to aid in the defense.

On the 22d they returned with a much larger force and attacked us on all sides, but the most determined was on the east and west corners of the fort, which are in the immediate vicinity of ravines. The west corner was also covered by stables and log-buildings, which afforded the Indians great protection, and, in order to protect the garrison, I ordered them to be destroyed. Some were fired by the artillery, and the balance by the Renville Rangers under the command of First Lieut. J. Gorman, to whom, and the men under his command, great credit is due for their gallant conduct. The balls fell thick all over and through the wooden building erected for officers' quarters. Still the men maintained their ground. The Indians prepared to storm, but the gallant conduct of the men at the guns paralyzed them, and compelled them to withdraw, after one of the most determined attacks ever made by Indians on a military post.

The men of Companies B and C, Fifth Regiment Minnesota Volunteers, aided by citizens, did good execution, and deserve the highest praise for their heroic conduct.

I beg leave also to bring to your notice Dr. Muller, the acting assistant surgeon of this post, who, assisted by his excellent lady, attended the wounded promptly; and I am happy to say that under his careful treatment most all of them are prospering favorably. Mr. Wykoff and party, of the Indian department, with many other citizens, rendered efficient service.

Our small-arms ammunition nearly failing, on consultation with Ordnance Sergeant J. Jones, I ordered the balls to be removed from some of the spherical-case shot, which, with the balls fired by the Indians (many of which we collected and recast), was made into ammunition by a party of men and ladies organized for the purpose, who worked night and day until a good supply was obtained.

The buildings composing the garrison proper are still up, but they are very much wrecked. All of the out-buildings except the guard-house and magazines are entirely destroyed. Most of the mules and oxen belonging to the quartermaster's department were taken by the Indians, and we are left with a scanty supply of transportation.

I adopted every possible means in my power for the defense by erecting barricades, covering the store-houses with earth (to guard against fire-arrows, several of which were thrown), determined to sacrifice all but the men's quarters and store-house, which are stone buildings.

I also herewith inclose a list of the killed and wounded.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

T. J. SHEEHAN,

First Lieut. Co. C, Fifth Reg't Minn. Vol's, Com'd'g Post.

FORT RIDGELY, Minn., August 26, 1862.

SIR: In compliance with your orders I have the honor most respectfully to submit the following report of the artillery under my command during the attack by the Sioux Indians at this post on the 20th and 22d of August, 1862.

The alarm was given about 2 p. m. on the 20th; the gun detachments were promptly at their post, and gave much satisfaction, I am sure, to all who witnessed the action. Aided by the small-arms parties, this attack was repelled, and the guns, under their respective chiefs, drove the Indians from the ravines by well-timed shells and spherical-case shot.

On the 22d of August, 1862, a still more determined attack was made about 2.30 p. m. by a very large force of Indians. The balls fell as thick as hail, and they seemed determined to drive the men from the guns, but they failed in so doing, and I think

I may safely state without flattery that the safety of the garrison was solely dependent upon the superior courage of the non-commissioned officers, privates, and citizens, who so nobly stood to their post; and, in order that their merit may be duly appreciated, I beg leave herewith to append their names. The number of shots fired by each gun it is not at present possible to state, until an opportunity offers of counting the ammunition stored in the several buildings. The small-arms ammunition on hand was all expended, but by your energies in organizing a party to cast balls and make cartridges, we have still a moderate supply. The ammunition for the field guns is in good order, and in quantities sufficient for the emergency.

I cannot close this report without bringing to your notice the brave conduct of the Renville Rangers, under the command of First Lieut. J. Gorman, who stood up to their work like veterans. Their services were under my immediate notice. The other portions of the garrison acted nobly.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. JONES,

Ordnance Sergeant U. S. A., in charge of Artillery.

First Lieutenant SHEEHAN,

Fifth Regiment Minnesota Volunteers, Commanding Post.

True copies.

GEO. D. RUGGLES,

Assistant Adjutant-General.

ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE,

February 12, 1881.