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Report : Claim of O. Streeter

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

MARCH 12, 1884.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. MANDERSON, from the Committee on Claims, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany bill S. 1821.]

The Committee on Claims, having had under consideration a bill (S. 1003) to reimburse and compensate O. W. Streeter for moneys expended and services performed in taking the census of Dakota in 1860, respectfully submit the following report to accompany a substitute for said bill:

Your committee find from the proofs on file that in 1860 the claimant was a resident and citizen of the State of Minnesota. In April, 1860, he was appointed the special agent of the United States to take the census of the country west of Minnesota, then known as Dakota. The country mentioned was of vast extent, and was at that time but little known. It was thinly settled, and large tribes of hostile Indians occupied it. The taking of its census required a great amount of extremely hazardous travel in a territory without roads and none of the conveniences of civilization.

The claimant accepted the position tendered him by the Government, but insisted, first, that the time within which the census was required to be taken should be extended; and, second, that some additional compensation, beyond that allowed by the law under which the census of 1860 was taken, should be allowed to him.

Your committee are satisfied from the proof that not only was the additional time asked for granted to claimant, but he was led to believe, by the Government officials having charge of the taking of the census, that his reasonable expenses necessary to a conscientious and painstaking performance of his duty would be reimbursed to him, and fair compensation, in addition to the amount allowed by law, would be paid him.

It was with this understanding that claimant outfitted himself for the performance of his duty. He purchased horses and a wagon, camping equipage, and hired assistants. It is unnecessary to give the details of the taking of the census; suffice it to say, that Streeter and his assistants entered upon this unknown land in May, 1860, and explored it with much hardship, at great cost, and with incident danger for several months. Final report was made to the Census Bureau in December, 1860. The manner of performance of the duty, and the matter received, seemed to be acceptable to the Superintendent of the Eighth Census.

When the original promise was held out to Streeter that he should receive extra allowance and pay for the performance of his duty, the officers of the Census Bureau appeared to be acting under the belief that it was within their lawful power to pay for such extraordinary services and expenses. When the account of Streeter came to be

audited and paid, however, they became satisfied that they had no such power, and he was therefore simply allowed the same sums that were allowed to census takers in thickly populated States, namely, 2 cents for each name returned, 10 cents for each farm returned, and 10 cents per mile for each mile traveled.

The total amount paid Streeter was as follows:

Names returned, 4,843, at 2 cents	\$96 86
Farms returned, 123, at 10 cents	12 30
Pages copied, 260, at 8 cents	20*80
Miles traveled, 10,560, at 10 cents	1,056 00
Total compensation	1,185 96

It will be seen from the above that items that usually go to swell a census-taker's account, such as number of productive establishments at 15 cents each, social statistics at 2 cents each, reports of dwelling-houses, live stock, farms, &c., are not to be found. It is somewhat suggestive, too, of the character of the country that but 123 farms were to be found, and a population made up of whites, half-breeds, and Indians, who had adopted the habits and customs of civilization, that numbered less than five thousand.

It hardly needs proof or argument to show that the service performed was very poorly paid, and common fairness should prompt the Government to add enough to make full recompense for necessary expenses and fair compensation for the time and labor. There seems to have been much neglect in the prosecution of this claim. The claimant shows that his vouchers and receipts were destroyed by fire in 1862, and that his going into the war prevented his presenting his claim to Congress, where only could he find relief, for several years.

He brings forward many letters from 1874 to the present time written by members of Congress from his State, showing that he has urged since 1874 that something should be done in his behalf. His claim has been pending in the House of Representatives since the second session of the Forty-third Congress, but no report has ever been made thereon. There has been great delay in the prosecution of the claim, but it would seem to be claimant's misfortune rather than his fault. He asks that he be allowed \$12,000 for expenses and services, claiming that his expenses have been \$9,675. He brings, however, no such proof before the committee as permits them to act understandingly in the matter of reimbursing to him expenses necessarily incurred, and they are therefore unable to report in favor of the bill S. 1003.

Your committee, however, believe that the claimant should receive such reimbursement and fair compensation, and therefore recommend the adoption of a substitute, herewith reported, by which it is provided that the Secretary of the Interior shall examine the claim of O. W. Streeter for reasonable expenses incurred, and for fair compensation in and about the taking of said census, and shall allow the same in an amount not exceeding the sum of \$10,000, and whatever amount shall be allowed shall be paid by the Secretary of the Treasury.