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Laura L. Wallen

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LAURA L. WALLEN.

MARCH 6, 1890.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House and ordered to be printed.

Mr. NORTON, from the Committee on Pensions, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany H. R. 4461.]

The Committee on Pensions, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 4461) granting an increase of pension to Laura L. Wallen, have considered the same and beg leave to submit the following report:

The claimant's late husband, Col. Henry D. Wallen, of the Second United States Infantry, was appointed brevet second lieutenant in the U. S. Army immediately upon his graduation from the Military Academy July 1, 1840, and from that time until placed on the retired list as colonel, U. S. Army, February 18, 1874, he was actively engaged in the military service of the country and received promotion to all the grades from brevet second lieutenant to that of colonel.

Colonel Wallen died December 2, 1886, in New York City, of disease contracted in the service and line of duty. His service, as shown by the records of the War Department, was of a high order and (notwithstanding the long period of time covered by it) is without a blemish. He served in the war with Mexico, and for long periods of time was stationed on the extreme Western and Southwestern frontiers of the United States. He also saw service on the Atlantic coast, and for a time after the war of the rebellion was stationed with his command in the Southern States.

The claimant, in her application for increase of pension, calls attention to her husband's honorable and meritorious military record, and declares that he was unjustly discriminated against during the late war, and thereby deprived of the opportunity to gain rank and distinction in that war. That Colonel Wallen was intensely loyal to the Union during the late war is clearly shown by copies of letters written by him just before the war and correspondence on file in the War Department (copies of which are on file with the case) shows that repeated applications were made by him and by others of high military and civil station for him to be allowed to assume his proper command, and participate as a true and loyal soldier of the Union in the war of the rebellion; but for some unaccountable reason his application was persistently denied, and he was placed on duty with but a few companies of his regiment at a New Mexican post, while the greater part of his command was serving in the east under command of an officer his junior in rank.

That Colonel Wallen was harshly and unjustly dealt with in this matter is shown by no less an authority than General U. S. Grant himself (with whom Colonel Wallen was on terms of intimacy and friend-

ship), in a letter written by him in February, 1865, to Hon. E. M. Stanton, then Secretary of War, which letter reads as follows:

HEADQUARTERS ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES,
City Point, Va., February, 1865.

SIR: Whilst in Washington on my late visit I took occasion to examine copies of all the official correspondence between Major H. D. Wallen, Seventh United States Infantry, and army of General Thomas, on the occasion of the major being ordered to New Mexico. The correspondence on the part of Wallen is creditable to him. It shows a desire to get into the field, where he might have an opportunity to earn promotion. It would seem that he was pushed off to New Mexico, where but a handful of his men were serving, while the greater part of his regiment was serving in the east, most if not all the time commanded by his junior. It really seems to me, from a fair examination of these papers, that Major Wallen has been harshly dealt with. I would most earnestly recommend, as a partial reward for past disappointment, which Major Wallen has suffered and for services rendered by him in New Mexico, as testified to by General Carlton, that he be brevetted lieutenant-colonel and colonel in the regular Army.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

U. S. GRANT.

Hon. E. M. STANTON,
Secretary of War.

Under date of January 18, 1862, President Lincoln sent the following communication to the Adjutant-General United States Army:

To-day Governor Crittenden, Senators Hale, Lane, and Nesmith call, and beg that Major Wallen may not be sent to New Mexico for duty, but that he may be retained for duty on this side. I sincerely desire this may be done, if it can be without too much derangement of the public service.

It seems however, that even with this Major Wallen's honorable ambition was not gratified, and he was sent to New Mexico as above stated, where, in obedience to orders most distasteful to an officer anxious for military distinction and rank, he performed faithful and most notable service.

The following is quoted from a report made in the case of Mrs. Wallen by your committee in the Fiftieth Congress:

His (Colonel Wallen's) knowledge of the Indian tribes and his great tact and judgment in dealing with them pointed to him as a man suited to the arduous and delicate task of dealing with the warlike tribes of Apaches and Navajoes on the frontier of New Mexico. Though averse to this service in the condition of the country, as his letters to the War Department, to President Lincoln, and to the Military Committee of the Senate show, he complied with the orders of the Secretary of War with such zeal and energy that, though commanding but three companies of his regiment, composed of fresh volunteers, he kept the frontier, that for a century had been exposed to the violence of savage tribes, in a condition of peace that it had rarely known.

About 9,000 Indians were brought into a reservation, disarmed, and induced to labor; land was reclaimed by irrigation; crops planted and harvested in peace, while all the energies of the Government were engaged in the prodigious work of war. The value of this frontier service can scarcely be overrated; but for the discretion and executive ability of Colonel Wallen the whole frontier of New Mexico would have blazed with the fires of savage warfare and the Government embarrassed at a time when it had no forces to spare.

The high character, military capacity, and executive ability of Colonel Wallen were vouched for in glowing terms in later years by Generals Grant, Sherman, Sheridan, and other distinguished men.

The claimant, Mrs. Wallen, is now advanced in years and has no property from which to derive a support for herself and young daughter, and her pension of \$50 per month constitutes her sole income.

In view of Colonel Wallen's distinguished and valuable services your committee are of the opinion that his widow should be granted such a pension as will afford her an adequate and independent support during her declining years, and the passage of the bill is therefore respectfully recommended.