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Report : Mr. Butler

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Recommended Citation

S. Doc. No. 55, 29th Cong., 2nd Sess. (1847)

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IN SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

JANUARY 11, 1847.

Submitted, and ordered to be printed.

Mr. BUTLER made the following

REPORT :

[To accompany bill S. No. 77.]

The Committee of Claims, to whom was referred the memorial of Alexander Watson, praying to be indemnified for property destroyed by hostile Indians in Florida, have had the same under consideration, and beg leave to report a bill, upon the statement of facts hereunto annexed :

It appears in evidence in the case of Alexander Watson, who prays for indemnity for property destroyed by hostile Indians in Florida, that said claimant was, during the late Seminole war, the proprietor of a large cotton and sugar plantation on the Suwannee river, on which he had erected extensive and costly improvements for planting purposes. It further appears that Major McLemore, a militia officer in command of Fort Dabney, a post within three or four hundred yards of said improvement, took possession of them, and occupied them as places of deposite of stores and for hospitals for the accommodation of his men. It is also in evidence that the above mentioned occupation did not take place at his solicitation, nor for the protection of the claimant's property, he being averse thereto in consequence of the friendly relations which had always existed between himself [and the Indians,] and the belief that he could repel any attack that might be made with his own slaves, and such other armed force as he could procure with his own resources. The occupation, as shown in the testimony, took place for the prevention of hostile aggression beyond the Suwannee river, and the protection of Middle Florida. The immediate cause of the destruction of the claimant's [property] arose, as stated in the evidence, in a skirmish which had taken place a day or two previously thereto, in which several Indians were killed. As the battle was fought in the immediate neighborhood of the buildings, the witnesses are of opinion that the Indians were actuated by motives of revenge for the loss of their friends, and would not, under other circumstances, have attacked the premises.

The claimant has already received indemnity for the loss of a portion of his property, consisting of *corn, bacon, &c.*, consumed by the troops during their stay in the neighborhood, but claims further remuneration for *sugar, molasses, and other articles*, distributed among them by the quartermaster of the station, for which the Comptroller of the treasury did not think proper to make allowance, as, in his opinion, they did not come within the provis-

ions of the law then existing. (See letter of General Gibson, Commissary General of Subsistence, filed with the papers and marked A ; also the letter of Captain Hetzel, of the Quartermaster's department, marked B.)

The fact of the occupation of the premises having taken place at the suggestion of the military officer in command, and in opposition to the wishes of the claimant, is set forth in the depositions of his subalterns, that officer having died soon after the occurrence took place. (See the depositions of John C. Pelot, John H. Patterson, Francis Broward, Alexander Martin, Wm. B. Hooker, and John Miller.)

The respectability of the claimant is attested by a large portion of the members of the legislature of Florida, who express, in strong terms, their belief in the justice of his claim.